

# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

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



**65th EDITION  
JANUARY 2021**



**Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall  
attending the Cross Planting Ceremony  
in the Garden of Remembrance on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

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**DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE CANCELLATION  
OF THE REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY CENOTAPH PARADE  
FOR MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ORGANISATIONS DUE TO  
COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

**LOOKING FORWARD TO A BRIGHTER FUTURE WITH  
THE START OF COVID VACCINATIONS**

**DISAPPOINTMENT TOO AT THE GHASTLY 'SINGAPORE GRIP' DRAMA**

**WISHING YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR AND A BRIGHT AND HEALTHY  
COVID-FREE 2021**

Plans by the Royal British Legion to arrange a reduced Cenotaph Parade of 2,000 marchers on Remembrance Sunday in Whitehall by offering each organisation a maximum of 8 tickets had to be cancelled, due to a surge in the cases of the Corona Virus in London and elsewhere in the country in October. Nevertheless, the service and march past which was held on Remembrance Sunday had all the elements of a normal ceremony except with vastly reduced numbers taking part and no members of the public watching. The massed bands played the familiar, stirring music as religious leaders and invited dignitaries took their places, followed by the Bishop of London and choirboys from the Chapels Royal resplendent in their livery of red and white. Just before 11 a.m. members of the Royal Family, led by His Royal Highness The Prince Charles, emerged from the Foreign Office to observe the 2 minutes silence. They laid their wreaths, as Her Majesty The Queen looked on from a balcony above the Foreign Office, together with other members of the Royal family. Wreath-laying continued by the Prime Minister and Government members, followed by Ambassadors, High Commissioners and military personnel, all socially distanced from each other. After the short service, during which the choir sang the traditional hymn, "O God our help in ages past," the Royal Family and other dignitaries departed and chosen members of the military marched past the Cenotaph and handed in their wreaths. After the ceremony, soldiers laid more wreaths on the Cenotaph steps each with a message from organisations which had been unable to march, including one from the MVG which read:

**"In memory of all those who were prisoners of the Japanese, both military and civilian, and in celebration of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V-J Day."**

It was a very well organised, moving and dignified occasion, and the Royal British Legion should be congratulated on upholding this traditional Act of Remembrance, albeit on a very much reduced scale.

Remembrance Ceremonies were held in other parts of the world – in Toronto, Canada, a socially distanced service was held on Armistice Day itself, 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020, attended by **Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario**. Our Secretary in Canada and the USA, **Sallie Hammond**, arranged for a wreath to be laid at the Memorial Wall on behalf of the MVG. This was carried out by a Government official, and the MVG was named in the list of wreaths laid. We thank **Sallie** for her part in arranging this.

In Penang, the ceremony at the Cenotaph on the Esplanade in George Town was attended by only a few committee members of the Penang Veterans' Association, but permission was given for our secretary, **Richard Parry**, to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November. We thank him for the lovely wreath of red roses, poppies and white flowers.

A wreath was also laid on behalf of the members of the Malaysian British Society at the Cenotaph at Tugu Negara in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November.

We also thank **Revd. Pauline Simpson** for ordering and planting the MVG cross in the FEPOW Plot on Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> November in the Garden of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey, together with the Cross representing the SSVF, FMSVF and UFMSVF which is kept from year to year by the RBL Poppy factory. The Cross Planting Ceremony was held without members of the public or attendees at the Plots, and was attended by HRH The Duchess of Cornwall and the Clergy.

### **The 'Singapore Grip'**

Those of us who watched the tedious dramatization of the novel, "Singapore Grip" were rightly appalled at the inaccurate portrayal of a Tuan Besar, his family and the life out there at the time. Although the novel was supposedly satirical, as the Guardian reviewer pointed out after the first programme, it was neither funny nor biting enough for such and wasn't even good farce. It was an extraordinarily inaccurate portrayal of colonial life in pre-war Singapore, and an insult to our families who lived and worked in Singapore and Malaya and loved the country and her peoples.

**J.G. Farrell**, the author, was born in England but of Irish descent, and spent much of his childhood in Ireland. Although British by nationality, his attitude towards the British, and his anti-colonial views, must have been coloured by his upbringing and are summed up in his remark to **George Brock** in an interview for the Observer when he said, **"The really interesting thing that's happened during my lifetime has been the decline of the British Empire."**

As various members pointed out, who on earth decided that in 2020, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War 2, it was a good idea to dramatize a novel about fictional and totally unbelievable characters in Singapore in pre-war times, written by a

man with such biased views? Insensitive at best, insulting, crass and grossly unfair at worst.

A letter of complaint was sent to the Chief Executive Officer of ITVplc., **Dame Carolyn Julia McCall**, about the suitability of using such historically inaccurate material, particularly in this important year. Needless to say, the letter was neither acknowledged nor answered.

#### **Albert Henry (Bert) Warne**

Our congratulations to **Bert** on his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday in October were a little premature because his birthday was not until 10<sup>th</sup> December! We sent him a card to celebrate this wonderful milestone and wished him a **Very Happy 101<sup>st</sup> Birthday**. **Bert** wrote to say that he was in convoy with the 18<sup>th</sup> Division in December 1941. They had called into Cape Town for 4-5 days of shore leave and he celebrated his 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday there. They were not told about the loss of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse on the 10<sup>th</sup> December, or about the bombing of Pearl Harbour on the 8<sup>th</sup> December.

#### **Jane Nielsen's "Guide to Singapore" booklet**

The grand total raised by **Jane's** booklet now stands at £373. This is a wonderful amount. Thank you very much to everyone who has donated money for this booklet, which will be put towards the Long Nawang Memorial in Batu Lintang Memorial Park in Kuching. [See Ps. 15 & 16 for details about this memorial.]

#### **Dr. Nigel Stanley**

We are very grateful to **Dr. Nigel** for his generous donation to MVG funds from the sale of his book, "**Twists of Fate**," which was advertised in the October 2020 edition of *Apa Khabar*. His donation has been put towards the purchase of an Ambulance for Muntok on Banka Island, Sumatra, which is being co-ordinated and financed by **Dr. Judy Balcombe** in Australia. **Dr. Stanley** has agreed that this would be an appropriate project for his donation since Banka Island was the site of so many wartime atrocities – the massacre of Australian Army nurses; the sinking of many of the evacuation ships in the Banka Strait and the incarceration of men, women and children, both military and civilian in primitive prison camps. At the time of writing, the Ambulance Fund stands at AU\$11,000 and the total cost of the Ambulance is AU\$30,000. If anyone wishes to donate to this fund, please let **Rosemary Fell** know, or contact **Judy Balcombe** for details. [See **Judy Balcombe's letter below**.]

#### **Annual Subscriptions – IMPORTANT NOTICE**

Please note that Barclays Bank has **changed the SWIFTBIC and IBAN codes** for the MVG bank account. The new codes are given in the enclosed leaflet about the Annual Subscriptions, which are due in April 2021. Most members do not need to use these codes, but if you wish to pay in money from abroad, then you may need the new codes.

#### **Corrections and queries to articles in Apa Khabar 64 – October 2020**

1. With apologies for the typing errors in the spellings of "**Alexandra Hospital**" on P.11 of **Dr. Nigel Stanley's** article, "British Malayan Medical Services 1941-1945."
2. Please note that in **Dave Croft's** article, "**The RAF Far East Prisoners of War Medical Officers**" the drawing of the splint on P.7 is incorrectly labelled, it should read, "**Thomas's Splint**."
3. On P.3 paragraph 2 in **Rosemary Gransden's** article, "**The Japanese Invasion Force**," please note that the town named in the incident should be "**Kangar**." The "**Kangar Incident**" mentioned in the article has caused some discussion as to what actually took place. Further investigation is being undertaken and is welcomed by **Rosemary Gransden**. If anyone has any knowledge about the subject, please let **Rosemary** and the editor (**Rosemary Fell**) know.

**Congratulations** to **Kenneth Lai** on his appointment as **President Air Line Pilots Association Singapore** for Singapore Airlines. **Kenneth** has been a long serving member of MVG in Singapore.

### **FUNDING AN AMBULANCE FOR MUNTOK - A LETTER FROM DR. JUDY BALCOMBE - 28/10/2020**

Dear Friends,

I hope you will pardon me for writing a collective e-mail. I have written to many of you recently to tell you about the new Singapore Far East Moon Rose, which has been named for the Vyner Brooke Australian Army Nurses and in memory of all Far East Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees. The very good news is that the Rose will be grown by a South Australian rose nursery and will be available for sale by mail order in 2022, the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fall of Singapore in 1942. "**Singapore Far East Moon**" is a hush rose, suitable for gardens or pots. It is a yellow rose, to symbolize Friendship, Mateship and Compassion. The expected price will be about \$25 per plant plus postage. Further details on ordering will be available later.

My second reason for writing now is to pass on the very sad news that the Covid-19 virus has reached the historic town of Muntok on Banka Island, where many of our families suffered and died in WW2. There have been 47 confirmed cases (**Ed: at the time of writing on 28<sup>th</sup> October**) 1 death and 790 exposures. Muntok is the main seaport for goods and passengers arriving from Sumatra to Banka Island, and the town is thus very vulnerable.

Muntok has 3 ventilator units in the hospital, but from now on all new Covid cases will need to be taken to the Covid hospital in the capital of Pangkalpinang, 3 hours away by road.

Following our visit to Muntok this February for the annual commemorative services and Walk for Humanity, I set up a **GoFundMe** site to help the Muntok Red Cross buy blood transfusion equipment. Later, when the threat of Covid loomed, **Drs. Rafael Hendra** and **Dery Aryandi** from the Muntok Red Cross asked if the remaining funds could be used to buy masks for the people of Muntok and to assist in Covid work.

I would like to thank the people who have donated to the Muntok Medical Equipment **GoFundMe** site. Now that Covid has arrived in Muntok and the people will need to be driven safely to Pangkalpinang, often needing oxygen and

medical care en route, I would like to suggest that we could try to help the volunteer Muntok Red Cross to buy an ambulance, which they currently do not have.

In 2014, we fundraised to build the Muntok Peace Museum (<http://muntokpeacemuseum.org>) which opened in 2015. Here in Melbourne, we have just been released from 3 months in strict quarantine and aim to hold garage sales and a film night at the Australian Nurses' Memorial Centre to help support the Muntok Red Cross Ambulance Fund. Many will know how, on their return from Belalau prison camp in Sumatra, Australian Army Nurses **Vivian Bullwinkel** and **Betty Jeffrey** drove around Victoria in a little car, lecturing to hospitals about the planned Nurses' Memorial Centre. This became the largest fundraising activity Victoria had ever known. **Vivian Bullwinkel** later became Matron of Melbourne's former Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital after the War, so there is an ongoing link with Muntok and infectious disease control.

The people of Muntok have shown us great warmth and hospitality during the past 10 years and shown a great and ongoing interest in our history. They have allowed plaques to be installed and the building of the Peace Museum. The WW2 area of the government Timah Tinwinning Museum is named "**The Vivian Bullwinkel Galleri.**" Annual Memorial Services occur and the Walk for Humanity is held near Radji Beach, the site of the 1942 massacre. In February, we planted a tree for peace.

Now the town is facing an unprecedented humanitarian disaster and I would like to ask if we may please try to help with their health care by contributing towards an ambulance for the Muntok Red Cross. In 2012, the Regent of West Banka addressed us and the town, saying that "We are all one family now."

Thank you very much for your time in reading this e-mail. Any donations can be made to the **GoFundMe Muntok Red Cross Medical Equipment Site** or I am happy to forward received donations. All will be promptly forwarded to the Muntok Red Cross. Please feel free to forward this e-mail and my details to family and friends and to any others you think may be able to help.

With all very best wishes,

**Judy Balcombe (Dr. Judy Campbell)** 98 Spensley St., Clifton Hill, Victoria 3068, Australia. Tel: +61 413 628 463  
e-mail: [jdhalcombe@gmail.com](mailto:jdhalcombe@gmail.com)

**Late Press:** The 2020 Radji Beach Oration was delivered on 16<sup>th</sup> February by **Gary Quinlan**, the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta, on the headland overlooking Radji Beach and the Banka Strait where so many people died in February 1942. The Oration can be heard by clicking on the following link, which shows **Gary Quinlan** standing in front of the Radji Beach Plaque: <https://publish.viostream.com/play/6aoztqdb019uh>

## **THE BETRAYAL IN WW2 OF BRITAIN'S COLONIES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA – Part 2**

**By Rosemary Gransden**

[Editor: Some of the comments in this article may seem highly controversial, but they are quotes taken from various sources including transcripts from a BBC programme and a YouTube posting.

In 2012, historians Richard Aldrich and Anthony Best reported on material recently released from the National Archives about treachery at the heart of government in WW2 in a programme called, "The Fall of Singapore: The Great Betrayal." See A.K. 31. More information has now become available, and this article articulates the treachery.]

When Churchill learned about Semphill's activities, he was terrified that the world would ultimately find out that he, the British Prime Minister, had spoken out of turn about the war and casually chatted about Britain's military secrets to a friend, who had then repeated everything to an enemy, a friend who over many years had already been responsible for passing on British military technology and expertise to enable the enemy to become a serious threat to this country. In spite of so much damning evidence in reports from British intelligence since the 1920s about Semphill, it does seem incredible that Semphill was actually given a position in the Department of Air Material at the Admiralty, which gave him access to both sensitive and secret information about the latest British aircraft.

In 1941, MI5 intercepted messages between London and Field Marshal Yamagata's Tokyo headquarters and Semphill was suspected of passing on top secret information about Fleet Air Arm aircraft. The matter was referred to both the Attorney General and the Director of Public prosecutions but Churchill said no to Lord Semphill's arrest and prosecution and so the Attorney General advised against prosecution.

Instead, Semphill was given a "strict private warning at a meeting with the Fifth Sea Lord," but incredible as it is, as part of Churchill's inner circle, Semphill continued to have access to ever more valuable information about British and allied war-plans which he was passing on to the Japanese, including the details of a highly secret meeting which took place in August 1941 on board the ill-fated battleship, *Prince of Wales*, in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, between **Winston Churchill** and **President Roosevelt**. Bletchley Park code breakers intercepted Semphill's messages which were extremely accurate transcripts of the conference notes taken at this meeting during which the British and American leaders discussed the military threat posed by the Japanese and agreed the Atlantic Charter, a statement outlining the goals and aims of the Allied Powers concerning the war and the post-war world.

**Churchill** had been working to try and get America into the conflict as Britain desperately needed the help of the United States in the war against Germany. At the secret meeting which took place on the *Prince of Wales*, it was agreed between the British Prime Minister and the President of the United States that the Japanese had to be seen to be the aggressor both in Malaya and at Pearl Harbour in order to get the agreement of the U.S. Senate for the United States to go to war. There is evidence that both **Churchill** and **Roosevelt** knew the actual date and time of the "surprise" attacks planned by the Japanese on Pearl Harbour, Northern Malaya and Singapore and **Churchill** took the risk that Malaya and Singapore would have to be sacrificed in order to bring the Americans into the war. Later more notes and information from **Churchill's** personal agenda and inner circle were intercepted as they were being sent by the Japanese Embassy in London to Tokyo's Foreign Ministry, all believed to have been passed to the Japanese Embassy by **Semphill**. Eventually in October 1941 a signed note from **Churchill** read, "*Clear him (Semphill) out while time remains*", but **Churchill** later backtracked yet again and **Semphill** was neither arrested nor prosecuted but just employed elsewhere, this time in the north of Scotland. **Semphill** was eventually forced to retire from public office after he was caught passing secret information to Tokyo just before the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbour and Malaya and a few days later a search of **Semphill's** office revealed a number of secret documents that he should have handed back to the Admiralty when he left. Despite the evidence of wartime treason, **Semphill** was never arrested or prosecuted and when he died in 1965, his prized possession was a Japanese national decoration, the Order of the Rising Sun, an honour awarded to him by the Japanese Government together with a personal letter from the Japanese Prime Minister, Tomosaburo Kato, thanking him for his work with the Imperial Japanese Navy and for his services to Japan!

The second traitor to Britain, **Frederick Joseph Rutland**, another decorated ace fighter pilot of World War 1, had for nearly two decades been under surveillance by British Intelligence. As early as 1922, **Rutland** was known by MI5 to be helping the Japanese Navy develop their aircraft carrier force which in 1941 would be used against both the British in Malaya and the Americans at Pearl Harbour. **Rutland** had unique knowledge about aircraft carriers and deck landings and the experience he gained in the RAF proved invaluable to the Japanese. Thanks to the help and assistance given by **Semphill** and **Frederick Rutland**, in just a few years the Japanese had a carrier fleet equal to that of the British Royal Navy and the fighter planes to match those of the RAF.

**Frederick Joseph Rutland**, the son of a labourer, was Britain's finest carrier pilot who, like **Semphill**, had joined the RFC in 1914 and previously been a pioneering, highly decorated, ace fighter pilot during WW1 when he received the **Albert Medal**. Later he had risen through the ranks to become **Squadron Leader** of the *Eagle*, an early aircraft carrier, super-dreadnought and sister ship of *HMS Argos*. Aware that he was under suspicion, he resigned from the RAF in 1923 and in 1924 he moved to Japan where he was initially put to work and helped in the design of the aircraft chassis for the Japanese Air Force. His cover was the **Mitsubishi Company** in whose Tokyo building he had an office. The **Mitsubishi Company** was, in fact, the Japanese Government and **Mitsubishi** would later manufacture the **Mitsubishi A6M Zero** fighter planes which brought about the Fall of Singapore and cost the lives of thousands of Allied Service men and civilian men, women and children. In 1923, the Japanese aircraft carrier, *Hosho*, was in ocean going service and **Rutland's** paymasters announced that they had a much more important job for him to do and agreed to increase **Rutland's** salary if he would train the Japanese pilots in the techniques of taking off and landing from the decks of their new carriers. They were so pleased with the results they gave him a year's leave on full pay.

In 1932, **Rutland** was recruited by **Lt. Cdr. Takasu** of the Japanese Navy as an intelligence agent, and sent to the United States to create a foundation for future Japanese intelligence effort in Hawaii where his code name was "*Shinkawa*", New River. He is known to have been paid handsomely by the Japanese, and for a short time he lived the life of a millionaire in a mansion in Beverley Hills. In 1941, he was eventually arrested for spying by the Americans and returned to Britain where he was imprisoned until the end of the war. **Rutland**, unlike **Semphill** did not have the right connections in high places to save him from imprisonment but he, too, like **Semphill**, was never prosecuted because the British Authorities did not want to make public the scandal of a British RAF officer being an enemy spy. After the war, **Rutland** committed suicide by placing his head in a gas oven.

There is no doubt that the earlier **Semphill** mission and the information provided by **Rutland** during the 1920s laid the foundation for the establishment of the Japanese Air Arm and during their respective periods in Japan, **Semphill** and **Rutland** formed a close bond with their Japanese hosts, a bond which they did not want to break and which would continue right up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Both men developed an affinity with the Japanese and were instrumental in helping Japan to develop her aircraft carrier force and the naval planes which they were able to use so effectively in their attack on Pearl Harbour, in their successful invasion of Malaya and Singapore and the other countries which they conquered in the Far East.

It is unlikely that the Japanese would have had the technical capability to have achieved what they did in 1941 and 1942 without the information and help given to them by these two traitors who, in turn, were later assisted by the complicity of **Winston Churchill** in order to avoid embarrassment both to himself and to the British Establishment. *The Japanese pilots who destroyed the British Colonial City of Singapore and who attacked and destroyed the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour learned their flying skills from Semphill and Rutland or from Japanese instructors who themselves had been trained by Semphill and Rutland. HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were sunk and destroyed on 10<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, at Kuantan by a Japanese Naval Air Force which had originally been trained and advised by Semphill and Rutland and the evacuation ships, Spooner's Little Ships, many of these vessels flying white ensigns, ill-manned with largely improvised crews and poorly armed, which left Singapore just prior to surrender, and were exposed to the full force at sea of the Imperial Japanese Navy, were bombed and sunk by ships and planes of a Japanese Navy built with the help of Semphill and Rutland.*

*The Japanese pilots who flew the enemy planes which gunned down thousands of innocent men, women and children in the waters between Singapore and Sumatra after their ships were sunk during the final evacuations, acquired their skills and expertise from the WW1 experiences of Semphill and Rutland as ace fighter pilots in Britain's Royal Flying Corps, which techniques these two traitors had passed on to an enemy of this country. During the 1920s and 30s, a generation of decent, hard working British men and women were actively encouraged to go out to the Colonies in the Far East, to Malaya and Singapore, in order to manage the rubber estates, mine the tin, work for the trading companies and bring immense wealth back to Great Britain, and this generation of British men and women were led to believe that they and their families were protected by their Government at home and were safe from Japanese aggression whilst all the time their own Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, knew otherwise and did nothing whilst allowing British subjects to be lulled into a false sense of security by British Government propaganda that Singapore was a well-defended fortress and that the Japanese were a weak and inferior race without the necessary ships and planes to pose a serious threat to those living in the Far East.*

The main objective of the British Government's propaganda, centred on Singapore's huge, new naval base, the many RAF bases both in Singapore and throughout Malaya and the powerful Big British Guns, was, of course, to deceive the Japanese, but it was not the Japanese who were deceived but the British subjects, civilians, local Chinese, Malays and Indians, and the Colonial government officers and the military who were stationed in the Far East. Japanese intelligence was only too well aware of the British weaknesses and the true vulnerability of the so-called "Fortress."

The senior British military commanders in Malaya and Singapore were also kept in ignorance about the extent of Japan's military strength and, not surprisingly, how the enemy managed to build carriers and planes in the first place to enable them to achieve what they did in 1942.

The British failure in Singapore can be traced directly to Churchill's inability to read, examine and fully understand the intelligence reports that were available to him and he didn't listen to people either those in his War Cabinet or in the military. Certainly by 1937 there had been several reports sent to the British Government stating that the landing places for a Japanese invasion would be Northern Malaya and southern Thailand and that therefore strong land based defence in North Malaya was essential along with the need for considerably more planes and men.

**Air Chief Marshall Brooke Popham** was made head of British Far East Command on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1940, the first time an RAF Officer was given overall command of all land, sea and air forces. The appointment by Churchill of an RAF Officer to head the defence of Britain's biggest Naval Base outside the UK was an odd one and, although Churchill made the correct conclusion in 1940 that air power would be the deciding factor in the defence of Malaya and Singapore and that the defence at Malaya and Singapore was based entirely on the assumption that the RAF and the RAAF would oppose the Japanese when they landed, strike the enemy invasion force before they could disembark their troops, Churchill never sent either the planes that would be needed nor the men to defend these important airfields and air bases in Malaya.

There was no really effective plan to stop the Japanese by land if the RAF failed, other than **Brooke Popham's** and **Percival's Operation Matador**, which would have been a strong defensive plan for Malaya, but when it desperately needed to be put into operation, permission to enter neutral Siam to put in forward defences was denied to **Brooke Popham/Percival** due to political pressure directly from **Churchill** about breaching Thailand's neutrality which decision by the British Prime Minister delayed and in the end stopped **Operation Matador** being implemented at all.

Even with the war in Europe, Britain had the resources to defend Northern Malaya. They had surplus aircraft that would have matched the Japanese aircraft in the lower altitude battles but **Churchill** insisted these aircraft be sent to Russia, and more Naval units could have been spared for Force Z including another Illustrious-class carrier to replace **HMS Indomitable**. British India could have supplied ample manpower against the Japanese threat and Churchill could, and should, have deployed an entire army corps to the Malay Peninsula in 1939 or early 1940 had them trained, properly based and supplied and as well prepared as the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were in jungle warfare. Britain struggled to supply the Far East with enough quality armour in the way of tanks but surely after **Churchill** ordered that the 300 or so tanks that were in Singapore be sent to Russia, Britain could and should have supplied enough in the way of both anti-tank guns along with anti-aircraft guns. But Britain didn't, and that was solely because of **Winston Churchill** and nothing to do with any shortage of resources due to the war in Europe taking precedence.

**Air Marshall Brooke Popham** and **Lt. General Percival** are often blamed for the fall of Singapore but examination of the records shows them both to be intelligent, brave men whose requests for the right equipment and to commence pro-active military action were ignored by **Churchill**. Just before **Air Vice Marshall Pulford** left the burning and besieged city of Singapore with **Rear Admiral Spooner** on Black Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1942, taking with them 3,000 military and technical men and several thousand civilian men, women and children on the last evacuation ships, the **AVM** said goodbye to **Percival**, who later described their final farewell in the following words: *"I shall never forget that parting. Pulford and I had become firm friends since we had been together. He offered to stay with me if I wished it but I told him he ought to go as there was no more that he could do at Singapore. I little knew that I was sending him to his death. He had been very keen on his job and was terribly disappointed at the way things had gone in Malaya."*

*"I suppose you and I will be held responsible for this,"* were his last words to me, *"But God knows we did our best with what little you had been given to do the job."*

*By 1940, Britain had been on the point of bankruptcy and the awesome threat of a possible invasion of England by the Germans hung over Churchill's head. Churchill knew that by whatever means necessary he had to get America into the war and to this end there was a plan devised whereby double agents were used by British Intelligence to infiltrate Japanese militant groups, encouraging and coercing them to persuade the Japanese military government to attack America and so get the backing of the US Senate for America to go to war.*

*Once Japan attacked America, the Americans would automatically join the Allies bringing much needed money, large numbers of fighting men and, above all, the vast war-making industrial capacity of the United States to help Britain win her war against Germany.*

*These double agents were able to advise Churchill roughly when the attack would come. Unfortunately, they also advised Churchill that the Japanese were war weary and in no fit state to pursue another war following their long campaign in China. So it was assumed that the British and the Americans would therefore be able to defeat Japan within weeks, so quickly that there would be no need for reinforcements to be sent to British bases in the Far East. Britain and America had been breaking the Japanese codes for many years and much was known about Japanese military intentions well before the war with Japan began. The Dutch and the Australians were also well briefed, having cracked the Japanese codes themselves, but it was the British in particular who held the precise knowledge of what was to happen in December 1941.*

*A few top British Intelligence officers and a small number of Churchill's closest war office colleagues, who were in the know, were able to inform their American counterparts that the Japanese would commence their attack in the last month of 1941 or the first month of 1942, and later were able to pinpoint the actual week that the Japanese planned to attack Pearl Harbour. This information was known by the American President Roosevelt who, like the British Prime Minister, kept secret what he knew from all but a few of his top aides and there is no doubt that he did this to help Churchill by bringing America into the war.*

*On that infamous day in December, claimed by Roosevelt as a day of ignominy, the supposedly secret and surprise attack on Pearl Harbour was being tracked by Allied Intelligence (along with the invasion made at the same time by the Japanese of Northern Malaya and the Japanese attacks on Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines). On Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> December, 1941, a coded message was sent by the Japanese confirming that their attack on Pearl Harbour was to commence on the 7<sup>th</sup>, this information, although known by both Churchill and Roosevelt, was withheld from those who would be on the receiving end.*

*Had the leaders of Britain and America stopped the Japanese before they hit Pearl Harbour, Malaya, Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines, it would have exposed Britain and America as the 'agent provocateur' and in order to get the US Senate agreement to go to war, Japan had to be seen as the aggressor. It also explains the delay in firm and decisive orders by Churchill for the invasion of Siam and the implementation of Matador to put paid to a Japanese invasion of north Malaya and for the lack of proper defence of both Singapore and Hong Kong.*

*Yes, it was necessary to persuade America to enter the war but not in the treacherous, underhand way it was achieved by the connivance of Churchill and Roosevelt, which resulted in the deaths and incarceration of not just thousands of their own countrymen, their soldiers, sailors and airmen, but both Churchill and Roosevelt have the blood on their hands of the many thousands of civilians, people of different nationalities across the Far East, who were killed or who were interned and who suffered horribly for three and a half years at the hands of the Japanese.*

*On 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1942, Churchill made a speech in the House declaring that he had dreamt of, aimed for and worked at America's entry into the conflict but he kept secret from his trusted colleagues and the British People the fact that he had known the actual date and time of the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines. In a later speech he stated that he had expected more from those men fighting in the Far East, implying they were all cowards, but all he was doing was covering up his own dishonest, unscrupulous, heinous actions by laying the blame for the loss of Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong on the defenders, the men of the British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, the forces of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the different local volunteer forces, who had had to fight without tanks, properly trained men and enough modern planes and ships. The British people at home were unaware, as most still are, of the true circumstances in which their husbands, fathers, brothers and sons were sacrificed and betrayed, nor are most aware that Churchill sacrificed, not only thousands of British lives, but the lives of many thousands of people from across our Empire – "Winnie" willed away our Empire and the respect that this country, Great Britain, once had as the most powerful nation in the world and leader of the greatest Empire and family of nations there has ever been.*

*There was never an official enquiry into the loss of Singapore and the absence of this was to save Churchill's reputation and secure his place in history as a great wartime leader. There is no doubt that such an enquiry would have made public, not just in this country but across the world, the fact that Churchill, senior politicians and leading members of the British Establishment had known about the activities of Semphill and Rutland, therefore been aware of the actual strength of the Japanese, known the date and time of the Japanese attacks and yet did nothing either to warn or to prepare British subjects and those living in the Far East against such a powerful foe. Had British military Commanders and Colonial Government officers and administrators posted to defend and manage British territories in the Far East been advised of the very real threat posed by the Japanese and had they been warned just how strong the enemy in fact was in reality, the Generals and the Colonial Governors would have been in a much better position to have acted earlier and more decisively against such an enemy and the outcome might have been very different.*

*Wartime leaders and military chiefs of staff at their desks in Whitehall calculate possible loss of men and equipment before a campaign, then when the fighting is over and, assuming they have won, they put on their best top hat and frock coats or dress uniforms to accept the accolades of victory. However, if a campaign is lost, they will seek ways to excuse their failures and in the case of the loss of Singapore, this was achieved by altering the figures, undercalculating the numbers of the enemy forces against exaggerated numbers of their own forces, refer to their men as cowards, infer that they themselves were misinformed, change the pages of history so the blame attaches*

itself to the men on the ground, those from whom the truth was hidden and who were shamefully misled and betrayed.

The day after Singapore fell to the Japanese, the British Prime Minister faced an angry and shocked House of Commons, although most of their anger and concern to start with was about the successful escape up the English Channel of two German battleships which had avoided British attempts to sink them. The loss of Singapore was only the second matter brought up by Churchill in Parliament that morning, and his brief comment on the loss of this important part of the British Empire was that there should be no recriminations and that he did not think a debate was appropriate!

Several members replied as to their dissatisfaction at not being permitted to raise questions including Earl Winterton who called for a "Grand Inquest of the Nation on all that has gone on and is going on for the country was profoundly concerned." Churchill angrily tapped his foot against the floor of the House whilst the Deputy Prime Minister, the Labour Leader, Clement Attlee, continued to perfect an elaborate doodle on a piece of paper in front of him.

The Labour MP, Frederick Bellenger, refusing to be put down, confirmed the nation's deep disquiet and added that there was the feeling both in the country and indeed in the House itself that "we do not have the right kind of persons to direct this war to a satisfactory conclusion – and we do not have the right kind of government." Mr. Bellenger's words resulted in almost universal cheers from the House after which Churchill's complete refusal for a debate on Singapore changed to a promise of one at a future date, adding that it would be wrong to debate the subject in the present moment of panic and anger.

Churchill then stalked out of the House of Commons followed by several members of his party and, although he had got his way and a debate had not taken place that morning, as he left the Chamber, Mr. Willie Gallacher, MP for Fife, said of him and his colleagues, "The Fuhrer goes, the Yes-Men follow. Is it any wonder we are losing the war, is it any wonder the Empire is lost when we have such men as these.....?"

Churchill was, however, quite confident because he knew that the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbour and in the Far East had brought America into the war and therefore whatever happened, victory was ultimately assured and Britain (and therefore he) were now saved. He also knew that Singapore and Malaya meant little to most people in this country; they were far-away places the other side of the world, and few would recognise the significance of the loss of the valuable rubber, tin and oil which came from these distant foreign lands, commodities which Britain needed so badly when this country had stood alone in her fight against Germany.

The full facts about the Fall of Singapore are not to be made public until the year 2025, a decision Churchill made because by 2025 he knew that enough time will have elapsed to ensure that those who were there in 1942, the British, Australian and Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen, the British residents and the local populations across South East Asia, who suffered at the hands of the Japanese and who survived, will all have died and the war with the Japanese, the invasion and loss of Malaya, the Fall of Singapore, Hong Kong and other British colonial territories will just be another piece of history.

Churchill's words at the time were, "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it!" and thus he allowed men like Air Marshall Brooke Popham and Lt. General Arthur Percival to become his scapegoats and take the blame in his place for what happened in the Far East in 1942.

So in 2025 will the truth which survives be simply the lies that people want to believe about this man, Churchill, or will the actual truth, all the facts, eventually come out ..... about the lies told by Churchill, the covering up of the truth of his betrayal of thousands of British subjects living and working in the Far East, the English, Scots, Australians, Indians, Chinese, Malays and the other different nationalities of people, who were intensely loyal to the British Crown and to Britain, and who for over a century had contributed to the wealth of Britain's great Empire and particularly in helping the British war effort against Germany during both the First World War and the earlier years of WW2. Could Britain have survived on her own as long as she did against Germany, won the Battle of Britain, without the rubber, tin and oil from her Eastern colonies with which to make her ships, planes and armaments?

Above all, the truth should be told about Churchill's betrayal of the British, Australian and British Indian Empire soldiers, sailors and airmen, who fought so valiantly in the defence of places like Hong Kong, Malaya and Singapore against such impossible odds, the thousands of men who died in battle and the many men, women and children who were taken prisoner and endured such terrible suffering for three and a half years, a third of whom perished at the hands of the Japanese..... and those who survived internment, when they returned to their homeland in 1945, ordered not to talk about the Fall of Singapore or of their experiences between 1941 and 1945 for no other reason than to protect the reputation of Britain's great wartime leader, Churchill.

Hopefully, if the truth is at last told in 2025, then V-J Day marking the end of the war with Japan will and should become as important a day to remember in this country as V-E Day marking the end of the war with Germany, and FEPOW (Far Eastern Prisoner of War) Day, 15<sup>th</sup> August, will become an officially recognized National Day of Commemoration worthy of the courage and the sacrifice which was made by many thousands of people, both those who fought and died fighting the Japanese and those who later were interned and lost their lives at the hands of the Japanese in the truly infamous Japanese Prisoner of War camps across South East Asia.

It would certainly appear that the main talents of Britain's great wartime leader, Sir Winston Churchill, were making verbose speeches, writing self-indulgent and self-glorifying personal memoirs, gambling, drinking and smoking large cigars..... and re-writing history to save his own reputation whilst leaving the reputation of other far better men than he in shreds.....



## REMEMBRANCE CEREMONIES ACROSS THE WORLD IN 2020

The FEPOW Plot at the Garden of Remembrance Westminster Abbey



On Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2020, Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cornwall attended a socially distanced Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey in the Garden of Remembrance.

In the photograph on the left, the MVG's 8" black crosses can be seen in the FEPOW Plot at the back on either side of the main cross, with the SSVF, FMSVF and UFMSVF cross behind the COFEPOW cross.

The ceremony took place without any members of the public present – in line with the COVID rules. Only the Clergy and invited officials were present.

We are grateful to the Royal British Legion for planting these crosses, including the individual ones, and we thank Rev. Pauline Simpson, Secretary of the NFFWRA and FEPOW Chaplain, for organising the FEPOW Plot and ordering the crosses for us.



Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Cornwall inspecting the plots. The FEPOW Plot can just be seen in front of the Clergy.

## MALAYSIA

Wreath laid at Tugu Negara in Kuala Lumpur on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> November, by the Malaysian British Society.



LEST WE FORGET

## ARMISTICE DAY IN TORONTO



Wreaths laid at the Memorial Wall in Toronto by Government officials, including one on behalf of the MVG.



Premier Doug Ford of Ontario  
Armistice Day 11/11/2020

### Wreaths will be laid on behalf of the following groups and organizations

- Army Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada (Organization 4028)
- Archives of Ontario
- Consulate General of Australia
- Consulate General of Bangladesh
- Consulate General of Bulgaria
- Consulate General of Czech Republic
- Consulate General of Denmark
- Consulate General of Hungary
- Consulate General of India
- Consulate General of Israel
- Consulate General of Italy
- Consulate General of Korea
- Consulate General of Malta
- Consulate General of Netherlands
- Consulate General of New Zealand
- Consulate General of Pakistan
- Consulate General of Philippines
- Consulate General of Poland
- Consulate General of the Republic of Costa Rica
- Consulate General of United Arab Emirates
- Consulate General of United Kingdom
- Consulate General of France
- Consulate of Paraguay
- Celtic Canada Human Rights Trust
- Embassy of Belgium
- Historic Canada
- Italian Women's Group
- Naval Club of Toronto
- Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs
- Ontario Black History Society
- Ontario Braille Pathway Association
- Ontario Teachers' Federation
- Police Association of Ontario
- Sikh Motorcycle Club of Ontario
- Soldier's Aid Commission of Ontario
- The Salvation Army
- Toronto War Veterans

List of wreaths laid at the Memorial Wall including the Malayan Volunteers Group

## REMEMBRANCE DAY IN PENANG

### Quiet ceremony to honour fallen wartime heroes



PVA committee members posing for a photograph at the Cenotaph in Penang. Photo: LIM BENG TAT The Star

Participants lay a wreath at the foot of the Cenotaph during the 20th annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Penang.

Participants and a friend laid a wreath at the foot of the Penang 'Titanic' Cenotaph. PVA committee members from throughout the area of the Cenotaph at the Cenotaph in Penang.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, only the committee members were invited to attend the 20th annual Remembrance Day ceremony in Penang. The ceremony was held at the Cenotaph in Penang.

PVA vice-president Tan Kuanlin said the ceremony was held as quietly as possible.

"We followed the standard operating procedure strictly by practicing social distancing and wearing face masks at all times," he said.

Meanwhile, PVA secretary secretary Victor S. S. S. gave a speech on behalf of the association's president who was unable to attend the ceremony due to the national movement order in Kuala Lumpur.

"Unfortunately, we had to cancel our Remembrance Day 2020 celebration."

"For the past 19 years, the celebration was attended by the chief minister as well as high commissioners and deputy high commissioners of Commonwealth countries."

"Armed and military personnel, around 200 people would also attend the event in the past."

"Nevertheless, the pandemic will not stop us from remembering our fallen heroes," he said at the ceremony.

All guests observed two minutes of silence, one minute for the fallen and one minute for those who returned.

Several representatives laid wreaths at the foot of the Cenotaph as a symbol of appreciation for the fallen soldiers.

Also present in the ceremony were PVA vice-president Tan Kuanlin and PVA member Tan Kuanlin.

Penang Cenotaph with MVG Wreath



Richard Parry lays the wreath on 6/11/20 after permission is granted by the PVA Municipality



## THE RAF FAR EAST PRISONERS OF WAR MEDICAL OFFICERS – Part 2

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

*“Dr. Henri Hekking, Medical Captain KNIL (Burma Railway). Doc’s working day started before dawn, at sick call, with the Japanese breathing down his neck, harassing him to get the work details out. A man might be so sick that work would kill him, but if he did not look so awful, the Japanese would send him out anyway. With sixty or seventy men at sick call, the Japanese gave Doc half an hour to examine and diagnose the lot. If he did not classify enough men as fit to work he got a beating. There never was a morning when his numbers came up to the Japanese quota, so they beat him every day.”*

From **“Prisoners of the Japanese: POWs of the Second World War in the Pacific.”**

### **2. 78656 Flt. Lt. Courtney Willey RAFVR (1912-2004)**

**Courtney Willey** volunteered for service with the RAF in 1940. Prior to overseas service in the Far East, he was stationed at RAF Tangmere (in Sussex), attached to No. 601 (County of London) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force. It was while at Tangmere that he was awarded the Military Cross for ‘gallant conduct’ on 16<sup>th</sup> August 1940 during a daylight attack by the Luftwaffe. **Courtney Willey** was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in April 1941 and posted a few months later to RAF Seletar, Singapore, arriving in Singapore on 7<sup>th</sup> November. On the ship he shared a cabin with another RAFVR medical officer, **65439 Flt. Lt. John Simpson (1917 – 1987)** who became a lifelong friend. His duties as MO included being in charge of the Asiatic Sick Quarters which covered the care of 600 members of the Special Technical Corps and 1400 Tamil labourers. Following the Japanese invasion of Malaya and subsequent bombing of Singapore with RAF Seletar being a prime target, the Tamils evacuated the base but the STC stayed put.

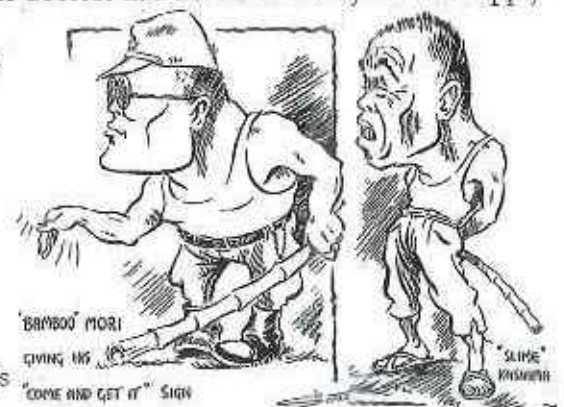
On 30<sup>th</sup> January, he accompanied the RAF’s Deputy Principal Medical Officer on the *SS Takliwa*, converted as a hospital ship after unloading the 44<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry reinforcements, for Palembang with the sick and wounded. Following a review of the facilities available in Sumatra both travelled to Bandoeng (on Java) to discuss medical supplies with the Dutch Army medical people. **Courtney Willey** made to return to Palembang on 13<sup>th</sup> February but on reaching Oosthaven Port he received the news of Japanese troops capturing Palembang airfield. However all was not lost as in the meantime, whilst he was at Bandoeng, other medical staff had evacuated the sick and wounded by train to Oosthaven to be transferred by ship(s) to hospitals in Batavia. The last of the casualties left Oosthaven on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942.

Back on Java, **Flt. Lt. Willey** was posted to Air Headquarters and attached, with the DPMO and four other RAF doctors and RAF nursing orderlies, to the Australian Infantry Force No. 2 Casualty Clearing Station in Bandoeng. Following the surrender to the Japanese the clearing station was closed, the serious cases being sent by train and road to a former Dutch military hospital, the rest walking to an old school some three miles away. All hospital equipment and medical drugs were confiscated by the Japanese. **Courtney Willey** and an Australian doctor went to the hospital, dealing mainly with dysentery cases.

During October 1942, all British doctors and orderlies were moved to Batavia and redistributed to POW camps on Java. **Flt.Lts. Courtney Willey, John Simpson and Ronan McSwiney (87989)** were ‘posted’ to Boei Glodok, the old native jail, which now housed large numbers of POWs, including some 900 RAF personnel. During January 1943 all the British POWs were moved to Tanjong Priok POW Camp, and towards the end of February, RAF doctors **23275 Sqn.Ldr. Robert Cumming** and **Flt. Lts Willey and Simpson** embarked from the port for a journey by sea and train to Chungkai Base Hospital (where they were to be based) in Thailand. Initially, after the sea journey to Singapore, they disembarked on 2<sup>nd</sup> March and were taken to Changi before travelling on by train some two weeks later. The ‘hospital’, if it could be called that, had at the time some 1,200 seriously ill patients suffering from various tropical diseases, who had been evacuated from work camps along the railway. The doctors had access to a very limited supply of medicines and losses of sick men each week were high.

Some two months later the three RAF doctors were moved 200 miles to a cholera outbreak where they were put to work for a Japanese Army anti-cholera and malaria hygiene unit. The unit moved out to Burma in September and the doctors were put to work as labourers – woodcutting, rice gathering and tasks in the Japanese cookhouse. Requests to be involved in medical work or to return to a POW camp fell on deaf (Japanese) ears.

On completion of the railway in October 1943, survivors of the railway were collected together in large camps on the Thai plain. The three doctors looked after a mixed camp of British, Australian and Dutch POWs



of which only seven were RAF or RAAF. Work still continued on the railway, being mainly repair work but conditions also improved, especially with the arrival in mid-1944 of US Red Cross parcels containing drugs. Despite the 'improved' situation the Japanese were all for sending out sick men on work details even though the doctors were against it. However, the improved conditions and medical care enabled the survival rate of the POWs to improve to the extent that only three died in the camp in an eighteen month period.

An official announcement of the end to the war was made to the camp on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1945 although from 15<sup>th</sup> August (V-J Day) preparations were being made to locate POW camps and drop supplies before repatriation could commence. The camp received supplies in an air drop on 1<sup>st</sup> September and on 4<sup>th</sup> September evacuation by train to Bangkok commenced. They were then flown from Bangkok to Rangoon by 9 Casualty Evacuation Unit, then by air to Calcutta, Karachi and on to the UK. **Courtney Willey** was released from the RAF in January 1946. He was awarded the MBE in recognition of his medical services to POWs.

**Flt. Lt. John Simpson RAFVR (Medical Branch)** was posted to Singapore at the same time as **Courtney Willey**. During his time as a POW he kept records of nutritional deficiencies in the various camps he was sent to. In his notes of dietary deficiencies he noted the absence of protein, fats, vitamins and mineral salts. He also made note of the first weeks of Japanese control of food issued to them as being 'poor quality rice; 350g of polished rice and a few ounces of watery stew' – this was issued daily. The sudden change of diet resulted in a series of functional upsets. He also noted that beginning around July 1942 the start of 'burning feet' among POWs, his observations contributing to his MD thesis "*Burning Feet' in British Prisoners of War in the Far East*" submitted after his return to the UK.

In 1949, he became the first consultant physician to be appointed to the West Cumbria area and in 1951 he invited **Courtney Willey** to join him as a consultant physician at Whitehaven Hospital.

At the age of 55, he went on secondment to Uganda where his interest in tropical diseases and nutrition was awakened and found to be of value to developing countries. He resigned his post in the UK and went to work in Zambia and the Persian Gulf until retirement.

1a Apa Khabar 52 Ed. October 2017 – Recruiting Volunteers for RAF Malaya – The Special Technical Corps.

2a Siam or Thailand. The name Siam was changed to Thailand in 1939, reverting back to Siam in 1945, then back to Thailand in 1948. Some references consulted use one name or the other!

3a The 'train journey' from Singapore Station was usually to Ban Pong, the start of the Burma Railway, and made over a period of days. Passenger accommodation for POWs was in the form of metal container wagons that were completely enclosed, with double sliding doors, no ventilation, no seating and no toilet facilities on board...POWs were crammed into the wagons!

### **HIROSHIMA SAVED MY LIFE**

#### **AN EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF HUMANITY SHOWN TO THEIR CAPTORS BY THE POWS**

**As told to Jenifer Rohde by her father**

My father, **Dr. Brownlow David Molesworth**, was a prisoner in Changi. He became a distinguished Leprosy specialist working in Malaysia, Ghana and Malawi after the war. At the height of the nuclear disarmament demonstrations in the 1960s, I asked him his thoughts. He said bleakly, "Hiroshima saved my life." He did not talk about the war or of what he had been through and my mother said she knew more of how he had suffered from the things he said in his nightmares than anything he ever told her. Almost uniquely on this occasion he did tell us how he knew about Hiroshima. Apparently it was known in the camp that there was the possibility of a mega bomb being deployed. Dad and his group, by then pitifully thin (he weighed less than 6 stone on release) and dressed in "Jappy Nappies", were taken by their guard into the jungle where they had been building a road. On the way they saw a Chinese man hiding in the bushes. This was unusual, as the Japanese did not hesitate to kill the local population. When they got to the site their guard, instead of bullying them to work as he usually did, went off into the jungle. They decided to make a fire and brew some tea with jungle leaves rather than working. Meantime, their guard had built himself an altar of stones and had started to pray with tears running down his cheeks. In my father's words "so much so that we felt sorry for the poor little bugger and gave him some tea." It became obvious no work was to be done so they straggled off back to the camp. At this point, the Chinese man they had seen earlier, threw a stone wrapped in a piece of paper into their midst. A brave person picked it up and concealed it. On returning to the camp, they found it was a brief newspaper account of the atom bomb being dropped on Hiroshima. They knew at once why their guard was distressed. He and his family were from Hiroshima. A few days later the camp was liberated.

**WW11 EXPLOITS BY CAPTAIN R.G. BANKS VDR, OBE**  
**C.O. MRNVR (SINGAPORE DIVISION) & HMS LABURNUM**

With thanks to Lt. Adrian Villanueva

As recorded in his book "Naval Reservists in Action: WW11 (Far East) & Confrontation."

**Start of Real Action**

On 6<sup>th</sup> December 1941, *Kampar* was in harbour and I was Officer of the Day. I received a signal to the effect that we were to man anti-aircraft armament and generally go to 3<sup>rd</sup> degree of readiness for action. All officers and ratings ashore were recalled.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941, Singapore was bombed and the war was on. We put to sea on patrol as Japanese submarines were reported to be in the vicinity to torpedo ships entering Penang.

Japanese planes were continually flying near us at a low height causing us a fantastic number of "Action Stations." They didn't attack us as their objectives were Sungei Patani and Butterworth aerodromes. We had a grand-stand view of this and our six Buffalo fighters had a ghastly time.

About the third day we proceeded into Port and anchored (single anchor, short stay) as reserve (duty) ship. Penang Town (250,000 inhabitants then) had not one single anti-aircraft gun or a Bren Light Machine Gun, and war was on. We put to sea on patrol as sure enough, later that morning, two flights of twenty-seven bombers escorted by about a hundred and twenty fighters appeared and dropped their entire load indiscriminately over the town. They hit the fire-station first go, resulting in complete disorganisation of the fire services. In the afternoon another two flights of twenty-seven came over, followed by two low-flying flights of nine each which attacked the densely packed shipping. However, the only casualty was a water boat alongside the 10,000-ton *Sudan*. It was then followed by low-flying planes which machine-gunned the streets for 1½ hours. We now know that the casualties were over 5,000 that day, of which 2,500 bodies were buried later. The entire town took to the hills except for the Europeans and Services, and the place became absolutely dead and ghostly. *Kampar*, having retrieved their cook from under a trolley bus, put to sea, as did all the merchant shipping, for it was then obvious that the port as such was untenable.

One of the two 6" coastal defence guns at Fort Cornwallis got so browned off with nothing to do but be bombed that they fired at a low-flying aircraft, causing the pilot some astonishment.

The next morning we sighted four Japanese dive-bombers approaching us and went into action stations. I had everything that would fire readily and was myself on the gun with my Malay gun crew.

These planes circled us and then one peeled off. I waited till the pilot was about 500ft up and then blazed away with the 4" gun. He sheared off without dropping his bombs. However, he came down again, I let fly and so did he. Every one of the four planes dived and dropped two bombs and then circled and subjected us to severe machine-gunning which bored a hell of a lot of holes in our funnel and wounded a leading hand in the leg.

The skipper handled the ship magnificently and but for his handling we should have been hit fore and aft twice, as we were straddled causing a signalman to be blown on to the lower bridge, and also causing the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant's cabin aft to be in a state of great disarray.

I was told later by an RN observer ashore that they thought we were finished several times as we completely disappeared in fountains of water.

My own impressions of my first action were a desire to spend a penny and no appetite, followed by a great exhilaration that the round was ours. Standing on a gun platform in an exposed position was alarming as it appeared that every bomb could bounce off your head. Yet, you cannot show that you are afraid to people who depend on you.

In the afternoon we sighted, amongst others, nine JU 87 dive-bombers and went to action stations. Two of these went for *HMS Sin Aik Lee* (Lt. JM Brander), two for *HMS Ban Hong Leong*, and five came for us. Very unfair treatment I reckoned.

These five dived and machine-gunned in turn and dropped one large bomb apiece. That is to say, one would dive-bomb and then machine-gun and then the next would peel off. We were hit on the water-line directly below the bridge (30ft from me) by the last plane which was very unfortunate. The JU 87s came down at a very steep angle

and my 4" low angle gun would not bear. However, we fired it for morale. When the bomb hit I thought the ship had blown up, for the funnel nearly came out of its stays, the masts whipped like canes, the whole ship bucked from end to end, and I thought the gun platform had taken off.

The engine staff was terrific and bunged the hole in spite of the pumps losing ground to the water. We had no casualties. The Malay Leading Telegrapher who had no moral support, but with an unexploded bomb just below him, carried on throughout.

I was later told that because of our proximity to Penang Island and the elevation of our gun, we had been heavily bombarding part of the foreshore with our 4" gun. I wasn't aware and could not have cared less at the time. We staggered into Penang and made signal for more tubes for the 4" gun as we had fired over forty rounds during the day.

It is interesting to note that just a few days before the balloon went up, we received a signal to the effect that all Light Machine Gun spare parts were to be landed. I decided to hang on to mine as long as possible, and it was just as well as one of our only Lewis Gun's ejectors broke after the first action and I was able to put the gun in working order again with the spares.

As the water was making fast into the vessel, and no repairs could be effected in Penang, we were ordered to beach the ship hard on to the middle bank 2½ miles from the Railway Pier. The bank was covered except at low water. We rammed full ahead on to the bank at about 1830 that evening, and stopped the pumps. The three engineer officers, the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant, the skipper and I then adjourned to the wardroom for a noggin or two and an animated discussion.

### **Japanese Attack of Singapore**

Then battle raged and at dawn swarms of enemy planes were sighted and appeared to be hammering our land defences.

Shells started exploding rather haphazardly in our vicinity and six large bombers came over low and opened up on us with everything they had got, but dropped no bombs. Planes were everywhere and I could see that we would never be left to tow our junks back in relative peace as such a tow would be far too conspicuous, particularly as we were on the western flank of the battle line. I therefore decided that it would be better to return to *Laburnum* and arrange for the six junks to be sunk or rendered useless by gunfire, either from the shore or by a naval craft with a 12 pounder gun.

We therefore proceeded to Singapore at action stations with the air a milling mass of enemy planes.

Just inside Keppel Harbour twenty-seven enemy bombers let go their eggs, many of which plopped around us, but the majority landing on the wharves, godowns etc. Added to this the 9.2 inch guns on Blakang Mati were firing over our heads across Singapore Island.

The final touch was being attacked by two dive bombers but they both missed and so did we, unfortunately.

We made fast alongside the wall ahead of *Laburnum* and I reported to Lt. Poole who remarked, "Good Heavens, where have you been! I assumed you had been sunk!" Apparently Lt. Cdr. Redgrove had omitted to tell Lt. Poole that he had ordered *Dymas* to carry out an operation. Dickie Poole was furious.

### **Engaging the Enemy**

Whilst alongside near *Laburnum* that day, I mentioned to Dickie Poole that I was anxious for some action and he promised to let me in on any. Sure enough that evening (the second night after the Japanese had landed on Singapore Island) Dickie asked me to join him for a shooting spree up the Western Straits of Johore. I left *Dymas* in the temporary command of my 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and boarded one of the two *Fairmiles* (*ML 432* I think), which were to be used in this rather hazardous operation. Dickie went in command of the operation in *ML 431* and the aim was to proceed up the Western Straits as far as the Causeway, shooting up anything attempting to cross the Straits – the Japanese were ferrying troops across in sampans etc.

I recollect that Lt. Johnny Bull, RNZNVR, was in command of *ML 431*, and *ML 432* was commanded by an Auckland Barrister with Lt. Bourke RNZNVR as his No.1.

I went along as a spare hand and manned the Lewis Gun on the port wing of the bridge.

The orders were that if either *Fairmile* was crippled by gunfire, it was to be abandoned to its fate by the other which was to fight its way up and back again to Base. As surprise was on our side, we considered that we were

unlikely to be seriously fired at until our return journey when the Japs would have had time to bring guns to the shore.

We entered the Western Straits after dark and proceeded in line ahead at slow speed, working close into the shore. *ML 431* had most fun as she was leading and several loaded sampans were fired on with gusto. Further up the Straits, we were fired on by the Japanese with guns evidently hastily brought down to the Johore shore. However, they were too late and they were only firing wildly in our direction. There was nothing to shoot at on the port side and I was chafing a good deal as everyone else seemed to be pelting away at sampans. However, it was all very exciting and I never knew when a target would pop up under my Lewis Gun.

I cannot now remember how much damage was done by both craft, but it was considerable and certainly scared off a lot of intended crossings, for we were making one hell of a row shooting up the sampans and the Japanese had little idea of what we were or how many of us there were in the Straits.

Up by the Causeway, we could see the glare of the burning oil tanks at the Naval Base and, what with the racket we were making and the racket of the war on Singapore Island, it was all rather exciting.

We turned and proceeded slowly close to the Singapore shore, investigating each bay and inlet as we went. Suddenly, whilst about 100 yards from shore, three quick firing guns opened up on us with a hail of 2 lb shells. We immediately went "Full Ahead" and fired everything that we could bear at them – two six pounders, two single Lewis Guns and four twin Lewis. I got off 2 pans from my Lewis and could see my tracer arching into the enemy gun flashes. What actual damage we did will never be known but we completely silenced all three enemy guns before we were out of range.

We had no more action after that and we dropped our hooks off Tanjong Kling and had a look round to see if we had suffered any damage, and had a conference aboard *ML 431*. *ML 432* had lost a bit of woodwork and the mast was scored, but otherwise we were unscathed. I think the enemy were firing high when they fired at *ML 432*. *ML 431* had a very lucky escape. Apart from superficial damage to woodwork like *ML 432* a shell had entered her side, stranded the port steering wire-cable, missed the high octane fuel tank by half an inch, went through the bulkhead and fetched up comfortably on the wardroom settee. On examination, the shell proved to be a 2 lb armour-piercing anti-tank shell.

After a noggin or two, during which we had to sit on **Dickie Poole** who wanted to do it all again the next night, we returned to *Laburnum*.

It was pointed out to **Dickie** that next time the Straits would be stiff with guns, and not two-pounders either. For this operation, **Dickie** was subsequently awarded the DSC KIV.

[To be continued in April 2021].



### THE LONG NAWANG MASSACRE MEMORIAL – An Update

[Editor: Following **Melissa Murphy's** article in April 2020 [A.K. No: 62 Ps. 27 - 29] about the Long Nawang wartime massacre, and her plans for a memorial to the victims, the MVG received this information in October 2020 about the construction of the memorial, for which a donation of £500 was sent. We are delighted that **Melissa's** plans have come to fruition. She has sent the following information.]

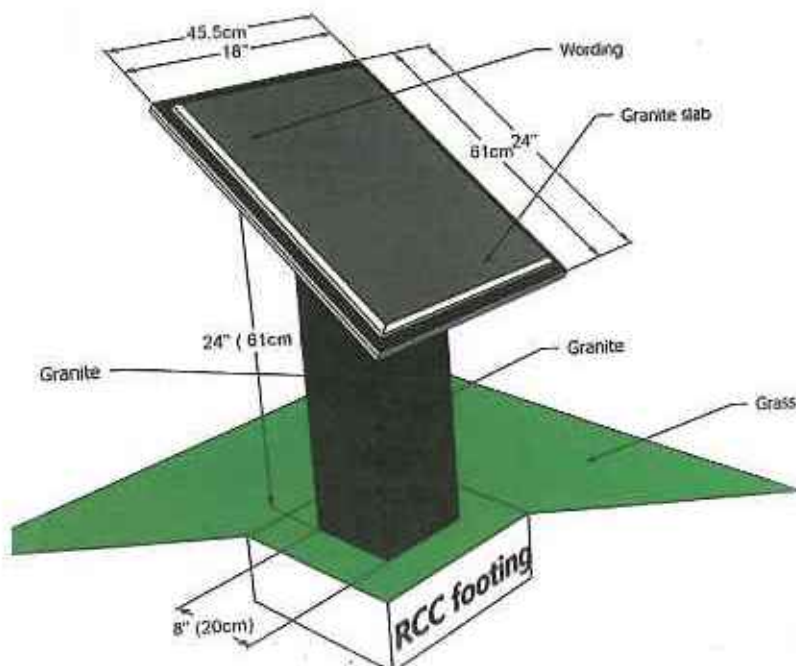
#### **REQUESTING DONATIONS TO CONSTRUCT A WAR MEMORIAL PLAQUE FOR 'LONG NAWANG' VICTIMS**

In memory of the victims of the Long Nawang massacre, and as a passionate descendent of one of the Sarawak Civil Service Officers killed there, I am pleading for some accreditation for this very atrocious event committed on innocent people by virtue of being at their rightful place, not in a war zone to cause issues, and not wishing to be combatants against the Invaders who had no respect for fellow human beings.

I have written and shared this story of the Long Nawang massacre in International publications in the UK, in print and electronically, in the past few years. One particular publication – "My Family History" - a UK journal, caught the attention of the War Museum and they have included the story of the Long Nawang atrocity in their archives.

This Memorial will be a lasting testimony for the next generation, who will have the knowledge that their History and Heritage will be maintained for ever.





The Memorial Plaque is to be placed in the Batu Lintang Memorial Square in Kuching, Sarawak. The Batu Lintang Memorial Square is also part of Sarawak's history and an important tourism site for tourists and visitors. With this memorial plaque, other next-of-kin of the victims will be able to visit Kuching to see the names of their loved ones who served Sarawak loyally under the Rajah of Sarawak Administration.

We are looking to raise RM 5,000 which is the total cost of the proposed memorial and ongoing maintenance costs. The construction and maintenance costs will be funded solely by donors. The detailed drawing showing the dimensions (height, length, width and total, ground area) is shown on the left.

The wording on the black granite slab will have the Kingdom of Sarawak Flag at the top followed by the memorial heading and names of all the victims, (Given in April) in gold lettering. The dedication underneath will mention the MVG as a donor.

Permission to erect the Long Nawang Memorial Plaque in the WW2 Batu Lintang Memorial Square has been granted by the Batu Lintang Campus Teachers' Education Institute.

This project is also in collaboration with the Sarawak Tourism Federation (STF).

If any MVG member would like to make an individual donation to this project, please contact **Melissa Murphy** for the bank details. Donations will be acknowledged. **[Info just received – the Memorial has now been paid for.]**

As mentioned in the Editorial, all proceeds from **Jane Nielsen's** Singapore Guide booklet have been donated towards this Memorial.

#### Batu Lintang Memorial Square, Kuching



#### Site for the Construction of the Memorial



#### **PENANG – THE EXODUS OF 'WHITES' – DECEMBER 1941**

By David Brent

**[Editor: David Brent's article, "The Matchbox" was serialized in 3 parts in the January, April and July 2015 editions of A.K. It was his own story about his evacuation from Penang with his mother. This article, written in 2013, gives the historical facts about the evacuation from Penang.]**

There is absolutely no doubt that in the face of the rapid advance of Japanese troops, the evacuation of 'white' women and children from Penang in the north of Malaya on the night of 13<sup>th</sup> December 1941, has become a rampant 'beatup' for the media, historians and political opportunists. There was also absolutely no doubt at the time that it was a huge shock for the public in Singapore who were convinced of the absolute supremacy of the British Military and had absolutely no concept of what was happening in north Malaya and the extent of the rapid Japanese success in defeating Allied forces. In vague ways Singaporeans assumed and wanted to believe that somehow all would be alright and that the Japanese military presence in the north was a passing matter and soon all would return to normal. Long past decades, isolated and very far away from the horrors and the aftermath of the First World War on the other side of the world, and the current tyranny of distance from the massive destruction of the Second World War tearing Europe apart far away on the other side of the world, had insulated as easy living and complacent society that was completely lulled into a false sense

of security. So used were Singaporeans that nothing could ever change their security and lifestyle that they felt that those in Penang had let them down by actually 'fleeing' from the Japanese. They couldn't digest the unbelievable. They still lived in wonderland. While shocked and exhausted women and children from Penang, who had suffered from days of repeated bombing, clutched their suitcases in the dead of night and crowded onto a ferry and then suffocating, hot train carriages travelling south on a nightmare journey to safety, Singaporeans still enjoyed an evening at the cinema or dinner and dancing at hotels and clubs, oblivious to the horror and drama happening just across the causeway to their north. When they then learned about it the next day, they could hardly believe it. Suddenly, the horror of the fact that they could be the next victims instilled a shock realization that a massive, brutal change in their lives could be about to happen and that they may all be in very grave danger.

**Penang woke them all up!** Penang also later became a symbolic target for criticism and attack because the 'white' population was perceived to be the first to 'flee before the enemy'. All manner of contrived myths and dramatic accusations erupted from narrow minded parties with absolutely no concept of the speed of events and the immense difficulties faced by those whose whole world had suddenly and horrifically been turned upside-down. To this time in 2013, 72 years after those tragic events, the emotional falsehoods about Penang still persist and no more so than by those with political agendas who wish to make controversial capital for their own ends and ambitions. For example, there was no awareness that on 9<sup>th</sup> December, the Sultan of Kelantan and family and all European women and children from Kota Bahru had already been evacuated south to Kuala Krai and thence by rail further south. Remote Kota Bahru didn't register on the public's mind. But Penang was dramatically highlighted as a much more important symbol of long-established British power and supremacy in South-East Asia, established even before Singapore. Added to Kota Bahru in the north-east, other 'white' families in north Kedah state in the west, urgently advised by the military, had already hurriedly left south to escape death or capture in the mayhem of the rapid, roller-coaster Japanese advance. There have been a number of different, sometimes conflicting, sources of what happened in Penang. Aside from the personal experience of this author, evacuated from Penang at the age of 11, he has come across all manner of different versions and stories, some of them digging for evidence of failure. For example, there have been accusations that those in Penang later failed completely to disable the radio station before they withdrew south after the island was cut off by Japanese force, and that the Japanese were later able to broadcast propaganda from Penang. However, in "**The Fall of Singapore,**" [Hardie Grant Books] it states that the British did dismantle the radio station. But after they had withdrawn, a local man, **Saravanamuttu**, Editor of the 'Straits Echo' and member of the Penang Wireless Society, connected the emergency electricity plant from the General Hospital to the radio station and installed the Society's transmitter. Announcements commenced the next day from 9a.m. for three hours that Penang was now 'free' as the British had left and that the Japanese should therefore stop bombing Penang. This story is also recounted in **Saravanamuttu's** book, "**The Sara Saga**" published by **Areca Books** [ISBN 978-967-57190-3-5]. This appears to give the lie to the story of failure to dismantle the Penang Radio Station. This is an example of the many wild accusations that accompanied the emotional shock of the British exit from Penang. There continues to be picky criticism and demonization of the British in Penang based on spurious sources and exaggerations and by those with personal political agendas. In the finality, there is nothing to be shamed of in Penang. Deep-felt sadness and regret, yes, but no shame for responding rapidly and responsibly. The authorities responded to an incredibly unusual and sudden dangerous situation under conditions of the most extreme urgency and difficulty that saved many lives. For example, the local crews of the ferries on Georgetown waterfront had fled for their lives away to the hills to avoid the repetitive Japanese bombing. Royal Navy personnel from the Singapore Naval Base were rushed to Penang by train on the 13<sup>th</sup> December to crew the ferry to get the women and children off Penang Island to Prai on the mainland and thence by train to Singapore. In many of the post-war historical records and books, this well-organized operation has not been mentioned. History records that in war, nothing ever goes completely as planned. There is rarely ever a perfect military campaign. The unexpected is always a vital factor and Commanders have to rapidly adjust to meet sudden changed circumstances, hoping that their decisions are right. Sometimes they're not. The human factor in judgment always rules in the end. But everybody does their very best at the time. And so it was in Penang with a very sudden, unexpected, urgent catastrophe urgently staring all in the face.

At the commencement of the Japanese invasion of Malaya in early December 1941, the unpredicted speed of events was almost unimaginable as the Japanese army made rapid advances down the East and West coasts of the peninsular. The Governor of Singapore had decreed that there should be no evacuation of 'white' women and children from Penang lest this affect the morale of the general population. This was the same ridiculous mind-set as the WW1 high command which decreed in the early WW1 years that pilots should not be issued with parachutes to escape from their flimsy, flammable and frequently shot-down flying machines. The Governor expected all the women and children in Penang to horribly suffer incarceration as Japanese prisoners and possible death so that the society of Singapore could feel good!

How absolutely unbelievable! Fortunately, sensible and resolute individuals countermanded the Governor's ridiculous decree and on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1941, all 'white' women and children were evacuated from Penang Island. – just in time!

When the women and children on the train from Penang arrived in Singapore, they were rapidly taken by military transport to a cargo-passenger ship in nearby Keppel Harbour. As all the passenger accommodation on the ship was already full they were crowded into the stern cargo hold and finally, luckily, escaped the rapidly unfolding tragedy as the ship left under cover of darkness and made its way south via Batavia in the Dutch East Indies to Fremantle in Western Australia. Only three days later, on the 16<sup>th</sup> December, the rapidly advancing Japanese army had by-passed the island of Penang and cut it off. The situation was hopeless for the military and civilian 'whites' on Penang and with no time to be lost they withdrew, some commanding a ship in the harbour under cover of darkness and escaped from Penang making a course for Singapore. One might hazard that had they been more prescient of the actual future fate they may have thought of an alternative course across the Andaman Sea and Indian Ocean for India or Ceylon. However, they were under orders and their objective was to rejoin with the main forces and to their ultimate and tragic cost, they arrived in Singapore for further duty.

There has been occasional criticism of this early organized exodus of 'whites' from Penang citing desertion of the local population. However, it must be remembered that to the Japanese the principal enemy was the British 'whites' who ruled and who directed the military opposition and not the general local population. In an occupation the Japanese would "rule" and "administer" the general population. But they would immediately kill or incarcerate enemy 'whites' as prisoners with very dire consequences which many would not survive. It was therefore imperative to avoid capture of women and children under any circumstances. While less critical, the same applied to local 'white' males.

An interesting reference from "**Battlefield Guide – The Japanese Conquest of Malaya and Singapore**" published by Media Masters Pte. Ltd. Singapore states – "**December 14 1941: Britain's Far East War Council decided that as Penang can only be held another three to four days at best, it will be abandoned.**" This was also officially recorded elsewhere. While the bad morale effect of withdrawal from Penang was acknowledged it was agreed that it had to give place to military necessity. The withdrawal from Penang by the British was an official decision by Malaya/Singapore Command in communication with Penang Command. It was not, as many controversy-seeking critics would later dramatize, a helter-skelter rush to save their necks. The decision was made, as many other regrettable decisions were made, as part of the overall ongoing military planning to meet the rapidly developing exigencies.

At the time of the evacuation of 'white' women and children, the 'white' [military and civilian] men remained at their posts. The enemy was still to the north and at that time there was no way of telling whether they could be stopped and possibly forced to retreat back over the Siam border. However, events moved with unexpected and increasing speed. The collapse of the British resistance had taken all by surprise and by the 16<sup>th</sup> December the rapidly advancing Japanese army had by-passed Penang island, cutting it off from all other units in Malaya. Those on Penang island were trapped behind enemy lines. A point overlooked by critics is that some of those 'whites' in civilian departments and commerce were also members of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force [SSVF] and on full active service alert, armed and on duty. There was no scope for further defence of Penang at that stage. It was all over. End of story for Penang. The few military forces of regular army support units and volunteers in Penang were ill-equipped to combat the Japanese. And any attempted attack upon the landing Japanese troops would have endangered the local population. It was a total final disaster! Furthermore, Penang had no strategic value or any importance in the battle scheme and its long coastline was indefensible. The decision had been made, and the order given to withdraw from Penang. There was no time for futile heroics! The situation was desperately urgent – stay and surrender [which was pointless, very likely fatal and definitely not the military option] or organize an escape by secret withdrawal at night. Neither was there time to debate the matter. At any time the Japanese troops could start to arrive. Action had to be immediately decided and carried out. There was only one alternative and it was taken. The ship in the harbour was commandeered and boarded by the remaining military and some civilian 'whites' and under cover of darkness left Penang for Singapore. Those military and volunteer military personnel took their weapons and equipment with them for continued operations, thus denying possession to the Japanese had they stayed and surrendered. As much material and equipment as possible in Penang was destroyed to deny use by the enemy. The Japanese victory, the surrender of Singapore, and their subsequent appalling atrocities against those interned or prisoners of war and some hapless segments of the local Chinese population is now a history of inhuman Japanese barbarity. Sadly, this author's father, **Captain Lionel Brent**, the founder-principal of the Penang Government Trade School and **O/C 'B' Company, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force**, was captured in Singapore when it fell, and as a POW was transferred to the Japanese labour camps of the 'Death Railway' in Thailand where he died in 1943.

There has been much conjecture and feeling regarding those who stayed and were captured by the Japanese and those

who escaped, some to return and fight again. **Claude Fenner** of the Malayan Police Force managed to escape and later returned by submarine and into the Malayan jungle to help train the Chinese guerrillas operating behind enemy lines during the Japanese occupation. He later returned to the Police Force after the war and, including highly distinguished service during the Emergency and Confrontation, rose to become Malaysia's first Inspector-General of Police in the early sixties. In 1988, I discussed the matter of the exit from Penang of Straits Settlements Volunteer Force [SSVF] 'white' members with **Captain Dato Haji Mohamed Noor bin Mohamed**, former 2 I/C of 'C' Company 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion SSVF, Penang, and a retired official of the Education Department, aged 88. He remembered my father, **Captain Lionel Brent, O/C 'B' Company** and recalled that the dreadful event of the impending arrival of the Japanese in Penang was discussed sensibly and with complete understanding of the impossible situation that faced all at the time. The British 'whites' had no alternative but to escape the Japanese in a secret and organized withdrawal by ship at night in order to remain operational while the Asiatic members remained as civilians with their families and kept a low profile, some hiding or disposing of their uniforms. While regrettable, all knew it was vital to follow orders and to keep operational for as long as possible and that it would be insanity for 'whites' to remain, as following events in Malaya and Singapore tragically proved. There also still remained anticipation of an early reversal and final defeat of the Japanese and a return to normality. It is very easy for those who have an 'axe to grind' to criticize the 'whites' for their actions and response to such an incredibly unexpected situation when life or death were the only two possible alternatives staring them in the face. Survival was critical. Importantly, with survival came at least the opportunity and the duty to remain operational and apply invaluable experience to fight another day, as some did. The withdrawal finally was an order which was efficiently carried out in a well disciplined and organized manner.

Chief amongst the vitriolic critics of British behaviour has been a vocal Singaporean who revels in scathingly exaggerated narration of British failures [and cowardly behaviour of 'whites'] at the time of the Japanese attack and occupation. He referred to the civilians and government officers who 'fled' from Penang on the night of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1941, abandoning the local population. Reference is made to hospital, public utilities and essential services unmanned. No firemen to fight fires, no-one to regulate water supplies. However, it is self-evident that any 'white' staying behind, trapped on the island behind enemy lines, would have served absolutely no useful purpose whatsoever to anyone as immediate incarceration or death would have followed. Furthermore, one has to observe the prejudiced hyperbole in reference to unmanned posts to fight fires and regulate water supply. Any reader would recognize that the departmental heads do not themselves drive fire engines and use hoses or operate water supply, and that there was very adequate management and officers to maintain authority and instructions for the continuation of these services. With regard to the evacuation of 'white' women and children from Penang, Australian readers should also note that when the Japanese attacked Papua New Guinea all 'white' women and children were rapidly evacuated to Australia for their safety. In addition, it is important to understand that the Australian military had a very tough mission ahead of them against a remorseless, determined enemy in very tough terrain. The last thing they wanted was to worry about the Australian women and children and to divert resources to protect them. In war, much better that the women and children are removed from the scene [*bouches inutiles*] and let the military get on with the job. The only main difference was that in Papua New Guinea there was ample forewarned anticipation of a Japanese attack well after the fall of Singapore. In Penang, the situation was quite different. By 12<sup>th</sup> December 1941, there was little expectation of any urgent danger. By the morning of 13 December overnight the situation had disastrously changed. Japanese unexpected successes and extremely rapid advances decreed that it was vital for 'white' women and children to be instantly evacuated that same night.

Of course, the defence against the Japanese was a monumental military failure by the British which is now shamefully recorded in the annals of British Military history. Notwithstanding this, the rational observer understands that in 1941, Britain was stretched to its limits, fighting for its life against Germany and Italy on the European, Atlantic and Middle-East fronts. At the same time, the USA completely failed to comprehend what was at stake for global security and to join Britain in a desperate World War. A monumental historical blunder. Added to this, a worst case scenario for any nation is to have to stretch its resources to fight a war on multiple different fronts. All these factors, ultimately contributed to spell the doom of Malaya and Singapore when Japan attacked in 1941. Naturally, radical blame seekers ignore these real truths in order to reinforce their views and to gain popularity among a certain community milieu.

[David Brent – April 2013.]

*David Brent later served as a platoon commander in the defence of NATO 1949-51 and after special training with the London Metropolitan Police, returned to Malaya in 1952 as an assistant superintendent in Malaya's para-military police force at the height of the Emergency, the war against the Communists' attempt to take over Malaya and Singapore. He commanded several large police districts in Malaya's hinterlands with counter-insurgency roles and also served in Special Branch, the nations' paramount secret service. The defeat of the Communists was the pivotal factor which then allowed Malaya and Singapore to achieve independence and to become the prosperous nations we see today.]*

## And the guns were pointing the wrong way .....

By Graham Lee

In 1925, His Majesty's Government was considering the creation of the future Singapore naval base and its defence from a possible Japanese attack. Malaya was much less developed than 16 years later. It was agreed that any such attack would likely be from the sea, so fixed heavy artillery positions around the island would be the core of its defence.

Eleven years later, with Japanese belligerency in East Asia continually on the rise, the new GOC Malaya, **Major-General William Dobbie** and his chief of staff, **Colonel A.E. Percival** (yes, the same man who would later command in Malaya – see footnote) were compiling a report on the defences of the peninsula. The west coast now had a good network of roads along its full length. **Dobbie** and **Percival** believed that any attack by Japan would be made in northern Malaya and south Thailand. The official strategy was to send a large Royal Navy fleet from home to counter this, but both men knew the chances of this being realised were virtually nil, because of the mounting British tensions with Italy and Germany from 1936 onwards, but especially after 1938.

In November 1934, my father, **Cecil Lee**, landed in Malaya to work for **Harrison's** and **Crosfield's** rubber estate agency. One of his first jobs was supervising Chinese contractors in clearing rubber trees and jungle for the construction of Tengah airfield, Singapore, in 1935. **Dobbie's** counterpart, **Air Commodore Arthur Tedder**, AOC Far East, had initiated a programme of airfield construction all over Malaya, especially in the north. **Tedder** and **Percival** were friendly, but there was no consultation with the Army over the location of the airfields which, if the Japanese landed, would have to be defended by troops. But **Dobbie** and **Tedder** soon left Malaya, and their successors – **Major-General L.V. Bond** and **Air Vice-Marshal J.T. Babington** – found each other antipathetic. **Babington** was dismissive of **Bond's** concerns over airfield defence, even though he had few aircraft to put on them.

For instance, the RAF airfield at Alor Star in north-west Malaya was 30 miles south of the Thai border. This forced the army to build a poorly situated defensive line at Jitra, 10 miles to the north in mainly flat country. If the airfield hadn't existed – and there were two more in the north-west near Penang – then a much stronger defensive position could have been prepared at Gurun, some 20 miles to the south of Alor Star. Here the main road and railway, in a narrow valley, were overlooked by forested high country. In this event, however, the Sultan of Kedah would probably have complained that his capital, Alor Star, was being effectively abandoned, in breach of a treaty with Britain – a major political headache. Although Malay nationalism was in its infancy, disaffection did exist in Kedah in 1941. To add to the irony, the RAF abandoned Alor Star airfield after heavy enemy air attack, but before the battle at Jitra began. The Raja of Perlis, a tiny state north of Jitra, did complain it was being abandoned by the British.

In August 1940, the War cabinet decided on strategy in the Far East: the Army would be reinforced by a strong component of 336 aircraft. This belatedly accorded with **Dobbie** and **Percival's** thinking. Appointment of an air chief-marshal to head land and air forces seemed to be a sign of strong intent. But when **Percival** arrived in Singapore in May 1941, RAF Far East was still pitifully weak. Not a single fighter squadron was operational. In February 1941 came the first of the controversial American fighters, the Buffalo – abandoned operationally by the USA itself by June 1942. With a small and inexperienced staff, **Air Vice-Marshal C.W.H. Pulford** worked hard for six months (while suffering from dengue fever) to shape up RAF Far East, improving maintenance of aircraft, training many novice pilots and trying to set up a radar system (only successful for Singapore). On 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, it had about 160 aircraft operational, including four Australian and three seconded Dutch squadrons, plus one non-operational RNZAF Buffalo squadron and 24 obsolete bi-plane bombers. Reserve aircraft stood at 55. It also contained light aircraft of the Malayan Volunteer Air Force (MVAF). This contingent was far short of the chiefs of staff 336 aircraft target. About the same time this target was formulated, the local commanders in Malaya proposed a target of 566 aircraft. This could be regarded as a bargaining figure, but initially RAF Far East faced some 600 IJA and IJN military and naval aircraft, including 100 reserves, on the outbreak of war with Japan. Leaving aside the contributions of allies, the British provided 66 operational aircraft. The guns of Singapore were in place and ready for action in 1938, but time had moved on and circumstances changed since 1925, as we have seen. Soon these metal monsters would stand as a monument to failed strategy, obsolete power and official self-deception.

After the disaster, the British press in large part accused, or implied, that the main cause was 'lack of moral fibre' in the armed forces in Malaya and Singapore. HMG was happy to accept, if not promote, this verdict. After the surrender, the BBC took **Vera Lynn**, the Forces' sweetheart, off the airwaves for a time on the basis that troop morale was reduced by her 'sloppy songs'. But the main cause of the fall of morale was continuous defeat and little prospect of relief.

As defeated British forces in central Malaya scurried southwards, abandoning most of the peninsula and vast amounts of equipment and stores, my father finally accepted that the game was up in mid-January 1942. But he had an investment in and liking for the country. To the average British, Indian or Australian soldier, Malaya was strange and alien. **Churchill** was an enthusiast for the British Empire, but to the ordinary soldier that concept

was largely abstract, meaningless or repulsive. Cooped up in Singapore, under constant artillery and aerial bombardment and without hope of outside naval or aerial succour, you didn't have to be a coward to despair and desire to escape. Many senior figures did so.

In the last days, my father was accosted by an Australian soldier, "Tell me, cobber, why am I here fighting for a load of bloody boongs?" To have replied, "You are fighting for the honour of the British Empire," would, I suspect, have invited injury.

**Footnote: Arthur Percival**

**Percival's** rise was rapid: in 1939-40 he was Brigadier, General Staff, to an army corps in France. He thus had experience of helping to conduct a retreat. In 1940-1, he became a Major-General in England, commanding a division, and in 1941 Commander in Malaya. He was the blue-eyed boy of **General Sir John Dill**, chief of the Imperial General Staff, May 1940 to December 1941. **Dill** was keen on the rapid expansion of the army in Malaya/Singapore. This annoyed **Churchill**, who was worried about Britain's tenuous hold of North Africa and Malta during 1941, and considered Far East defence as a strategic necessity but of lower priority. He could not deny the logic of **Dill's** position but resented his insistence.

**Note on Geoff Fischen RNZAF.** (See A.K. 64 P.5 for his obituary – with thanks to Graham Lee.)

The IJN Zero was 45 to 50 mph faster at top speed than the Buffalo, had a greater rate of climb and better manoeuvrability. Allied pilots in Malaya often mistook the Japanese Army One fighter for a Zero. The former was slightly slower, more lightly armed and less agile than the Zero, but still probably more than a match for the Buffalo. Of course, pilot proficiency was a prime factor in this equation.

The other fighter **Fischen** encountered was the Japanese Army 97 biplane, some 30 mph slower at top speed than the Buffalo and inferior to it.

Intelligence reports on the Zero reached Singapore in 1941. By September, the Air Ministry and RAF Far East knew, fairly accurately, details of its performance, but as the latter had no intelligence section of its own, these details never reached the squadron pilots. Earlier, a US naval attaché in Tokyo had, by a fluke, inspected a new IJN fighter at an air show. He reported its high quality in detail to Washington. This intelligence was dismissed on the basis that no US aircraft could match the IJN fighter at that time, so it must be untrue.

#### SOME INTERESTING WEBSITES SENT BY CHUNG CHEE MIN FROM CANADA

**Chung Chee Min** attended the Victoria Institution [VI] in Kuala Lumpur from 1953-1959 and returned to teach mathematics there from 1965-1967. Since 1997, he has been co-pagekeeper of the VI Website – an unofficial site financed by an Old Boy of the school. Apa Khabar's editor, **Rosemary Fell**, got in touch with **Chee Min** over an article he had written for the VI website about the school's war memorial which mentioned her late father, E.W. Reeve, who taught history at the school from 1929. See <http://viweb.school/Warmem.htm>

Other stories of interest about the **Tallala** brothers, who were at the school, are as follows:

<http://viweb.school/tallala-bros.htm>

This has links to 2 related videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&feature=youtu.be&v=1b0rhnPWmFQ>

<https://vimeo.com/141922630> (produced by Chee Min's son Martin in Normandy). Two of the Tallala brothers are still alive.

**Recollections of the Stratton Brown brothers, Henry and Charles**, who attended the VI in the 1920s. **Henry**, a keen aviator, died in a plane crash in May 1941 in Malaya. **Charles** joined the Royal Navy and survived when his ship, HMS **Barham**, was torpedoed. <http://viweb.school/Stratton.htm>

**Surrender of the Japanese at the VI the day after the surrender in Singapore.**

<http://viweb.school/japsurr.htm>

**Chee Min** also mentions the former headmaster of the VI, **Gerwyn E.D. Lewis**, who was also a POW and wrote of his experiences on the Death Railway in his memoirs, "Out East in the Malay Peninsular." His brother, **T.P.M. Lewis**, was headmaster of Clifford School in Kuala Kangsar in 1941.

Finally a non-war account of another former teacher at the VI, **William Proudlock**. <http://viweb.school/proudlock.htm>

**Chee Min** also mentions translating the war diary of **Brewer** who was a POW in Sumatra. Written in his Romanisation system of Cantonese, including his depiction of the 6 tonal sounds, it was a challenge. However, far from being a secret diary of **Brewer's** POW experiences, it turned out to be about the peasant's revolt during the Hundred Years War!

#### FOUR MORE WEBSITES TO BROWSE

[http://english.radio.cz/batamen-singapore-story-silvestr-nemec-and-batas-interwar-expansion-overseas-8702541?fbclid=IwAR2dug7Jq2eXIBbR5a4efkehxCWRwlyUpVB4\\_BosVyBsNWY04oN1lzc8](http://english.radio.cz/batamen-singapore-story-silvestr-nemec-and-batas-interwar-expansion-overseas-8702541?fbclid=IwAR2dug7Jq2eXIBbR5a4efkehxCWRwlyUpVB4_BosVyBsNWY04oN1lzc8)

- an English Language interview with **Jan Beranek** about his recent book, "Patrani po Silvestrovi," and the research involved. [See Books - P.29]

<https://publish.viostream.com/play/6aoztgdbo19uh> - The 2020 Radji Beach Oration delivered on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2020 by **Gary Quinlan**, the Australian Ambassador in Jakarta. The photos show **Gary Quinlan** standing on the headland overlooking Radji Beach and in front of the Plaque and Banka Strait where so many people died in February 1942.

<https://1drv.ms/b/s!AqHRhVE7eNINg8UKjXcMmuKaSN0F1w> - **Judy Balcombe's** cookbook containing recipes from the people of Muntok. The proceeds from the sales of this cookbook will be put towards the Muntok Red Cross Ambulance Fund. Please donate towards this worthy project. [See **Judy's** letter on Ps.2 & 3].

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/7066663/a-champion-for-veterans-and-pows/?fbclid=IwAR1USd-Q3e0PotGIZYJbz156rtmHnK5QdASBEprijAjhKTrGnhH7iYrto> A tribute to **Di Elliott**, tireless FEPOW researcher [See **Obit**]

## THE JAPANESE SURRENDER ON BORNEO (SARAWAK)

With thanks to **Liz Moggie** for this information

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1945, the Japanese Government unconditionally surrendered in a war-ending ceremony aboard the American battleship *USS Missouri*, while anchored in Tokyo Bay. This surrender officially ended the hostilities in the Pacific between the Allies and Japan, but many of the Japanese field troops did not surrender until later. Portions of the Japanese 37<sup>th</sup> Army did not capitulate until they were overcome by Australian Special Forces at the end of October 1945.

**General Imamuro** and **Vice Admiral Kusaka**, commanders of the Rabaul, New Britain Forces surrendered to **General Sturdes** on 6<sup>th</sup> September. On 8<sup>th</sup> September, **Vice Admiral Kamada** surrendered all Japanese forces in Dutch New Guinea to **Major General Milford**, commanding officer of the 7<sup>th</sup> Australian Division. **Lieutenant Colonel Robson** accepted the surrender of **Major General Uno** at Bandjermasin, Borneo. There was another surrender on 8<sup>th</sup> September at Bourgainville. **General Blamey** accepted the surrender of the Japanese 2<sup>nd</sup> Army's **Lieutenant General Teshima** on Morotai Island on 9<sup>th</sup> September. On 12<sup>th</sup> September, **Lieutenant General Adachi** of the 18<sup>th</sup> Japanese Army surrendered in New Guinea. **General Wooten** accepted the surrender of **Lieutenant General Baba's** 37<sup>th</sup> Army on Labuan Island. Then there were surrenders at Wewak, Papua New Guinea, at Kuching, Borneo and Singapore. Since the Australian Armies were charged with the duties of clearing by-passed pockets of the enemy, it became their lot to accept the surrender of these areas.

The following is a memo from Regimental Headquarters to 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Headquarters informing them of the surrender negotiations in the Balikpapan Area:

**Headquarters:** 593<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Boat (EB) and Shore Regiment (SR) 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade APO 928 31 October 1945.

**Subject:** Surrender Negotiations, Balikpapan Area. To: Commanding Officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, APO 928.

1. Enclosed is an account by **Captain John C. Seale**, commanding "A" Company, 593<sup>rd</sup> EB & SR, extracted from "A" company operation report and forwarded for your information, describing initial contact with enemy forces in the Balikpapan Area by Allied Officials for surrender negotiations.

**For the Commanding Officer:** sg. **Zachary Buchalter**.

**Account of Surrender Negotiations, Balikpapan Area, 10<sup>th</sup> September 1945.**

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1945, the gunboat **M9G3** and the **MGA15** departed from this base to make the first formal peace negotiations, in this area, with the Japanese. **Lt. Kluba** was mission leader and **T/Sgt Titus** and **S/Sgt Black** were the Non-Commissioned Officers. Three Australian Officers were present to conduct negotiations, they were **Captain Jacobson**, **Captain Smith** and **Lieutenant Smith** of the 7<sup>th</sup> Division Headquarters. "A" company personnel were dressed in sunbans and carried arms. The men were not at the gun during the trip upriver, but were in a position where no time would be lost getting the guns into action. The two LCMs proceeded up the Semoi River to Semoi Village where the first Japanese were sighted. Two enlisted Japanese men on shore motioned the gunboat to beach at the river bank, but the Amphibs elected to make fast to a Japanese barge moored against the shore. Japanese asked that negotiations be conducted ashore, but again the Japanese desires were not adhered to and negotiations were held on the deck of the gunboat.....

**Liz Moggie adds:** With reference to: **Case and Pounds**, "Operation Borneo" and **Bob Reece**, "Masa Jepun."

**Bob Reece** gives the following chronology:

11 Sept – surrender on board **Kapunda** and liberation of Batu Lintang

12 Sept – Betong

17 Sept – Simanggang ( now Sri Aman)

16/17 Sept – Sibul

26 Sept – last oil wells put out at Miri and Seria – surrender took place a few days before.

29 Oct – surrender of Fujino Force – this was the last Jap force which had retreated to the areas of Upper Limbang and Trusan.

There was a gradual progression of surrenders – some taken by **Harrison's** 'irregulars' (Betong, Simanggang and Fujino Force) and some by the Australians. 29th October appears to have been the final date for surrenders.

## OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the deaths of former FEPOWs, FEPOW researchers, MVG members and the post-war Iban Tracker **Awang Raweng**.

### MVG member John Penn – died on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020

We send our very sincere and heartfelt sympathies to **John's** widow **Sue (nee McLaren)** on learning about his death. **John** was the son of a Hong Kong Volunteer, who returned to the Colony in June 1940, but left his family in Canada when all British families were evacuated from HK that year. **John** and his mother returned to the UK in 1943 in convoy. In 1941, his father was shot by a sniper as the Japanese closed in on Hong Kong but having discharged himself from hospital in Stanley on 24<sup>th</sup> December, he avoiding being massacred there on Christmas Day by the Japanese.

**John** joined the Hong Kong Volunteers himself post-war and served with them for 8 years. He remained a member of the Sydney Association of Hong Kong Volunteers and ex-POWs.

**John's** wife **Sue** had been evacuated from Hong Kong to Sydney, Australia in 1940. In March 1942, her family (mother and sister) decided to return to England from Sydney. They embarked on the Blue Funnel Line's Passenger/Cargo boat called the **SS Ulysses**. After crossing the Pacific Ocean, via Wellington, New Zealand, they entered the Caribbean Sea through the Panama Canal, where the **Ulysses** was torpedoed by a U-Boat off Cape Hatteras. In 2010, **John** got in touch with A.K's Editor (**Rosemary Fell**) who was also a passenger with her mother on the **Ulysses**. He said that he had researched the passenger lists and discovered what had happened to the **Ulysses** and her passengers. This bond of friendship remains between all those of us who were torpedoed by U-Boat U-160 captained by Georg Lassen.

### Former MVG member Angela Giacometti Geiger (nee Willmot) - 1938 – 2020

As **Angela's** first cousin, her closest relative along with one other first cousin, **Michael Willmot**, who lives in South Africa, I will try to give a brief account of her very full life. Unfortunately, mainly because both of us spent much of our life abroad, details and dates are necessarily vague and approximate.

She was born in Singapore in 1938, where her father, **Roger Willmot**, worked for the British Board of Trade as Trade Commissioner.

Only three years later, the Japanese invaded Malaya followed quickly by surrender in Singapore in February 1942. **Angela** and her mother were lucky to escape on one of the last crowded evacuation ships, arriving a few days later in Batavia (now Jakarta) in Indonesia, having experienced frightening attacks from Japanese aircraft on the voyage. Her father was less fortunate, being interned and enduring severe hardships, but survived although, like so many, suffering from malnutrition and very much underweight.

From Batavia, they travelled on another ship, eventually arriving in Durban, South Africa. **Michael Willmot's** family then lived near Salisbury (now Harare) Southern Rhodesia, and kindly welcomed them both to stay with them. They were there for some months, possibly up to a year before boarding a ship in Cape Town for the dangerous voyage, with lurking German U-Boats, back to UK. Wartime Britain was, of course, no luxury either, with food rationing, bombing etc. and her mother may have wondered why she left the comparative comfort of southern Africa.

Eventually her father arrived back from captivity, but after rehabilitation and recovery, he was posted back to Singapore in his former job, but without his family. This was relatively temporary, however, as he was soon promoted to become Senior Trade Commissioner in Wellington, New Zealand, where he was joined by the family. During this period, I know the family visited Australia on holiday.

So **Angela** spent most of her school years there, where she made some lifelong friends who are remembering her today. She visited New Zealand with her second husband a few years ago, meeting them, and having her name inserted on the School's Honours Board, in recognition of her MVO.

Her father retired back in UK, where they lived near Camberley, Surrey, and **Angela** trained as a highly-qualified secretary. This led to a job in Tripoli, Libya, about 1962 working for one of the American Oil Companies there at the time. By coincidence, I also worked there from 1963 to 1965, fortunately years before the revolution led by Gaddafi (1969), so life was quite enjoyable, although I then had a family with small children, and our paths did not cross that often! I remember that among other relaxations, **Angela** frequently went water-skiing with her friends. It was in Tripoli that she met her first husband, an Italian Doctor, **Pierluigi Giacometti**. I think they had a quiet wedding in Italy as he had been married before. I met him in London later, about the late 60s, when he was studying at the School of Tropical Medicine, eventually being posted with **Angela** to various not-so-desirable places overseas. These included, not necessarily in the correct order, South Sudan, where there was a civil war, Islamabad Pakistan, where I visited them when I was there on business about 1981, and Muscat, Oman, probably the most pleasant of their postings. I have been to the latter myself, but not during their time there. **Pierluigi** and **Angela** moved near Geneva, where I think he was engaged in his last job, at WHO HQ, possibly part-time. They lived just across the border in Divonne, France. Sadly, he died of cancer in the late 80s. My wife and I visited **Angela** in her apartment there in the summer of 1990 on our way by road to Italy.

Soon after that, she was appointed to what was probably her most exciting and prestigious job. This was with the World Wildlife Fund, working for HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. She used to travel ahead of him to his destinations to exotic places around the world, organizing and ensuring accommodation and arrangements were all in place. She still lived in France, but frequently visited Buckingham Palace for briefings, when she stayed at the then Private Secretary's home. **Lady Hunt-Davies**, the Private Secretary's widow, and indeed some of the staff in the office, remember her fondly. For this work, **Angela** was awarded the MVO (Member of the Royal Victorian Order), doubtless well-deserved.



I remember in particular that she reported seeing gorillas in the wild, in Ruanda, I think, though whether connected with one of HRH's tours I am not certain.

She subsequently married **Max Geiger**, a Swiss widower, and they lived near Nice, in Vence. Initially they travelled quite widely, including a visit to my home in Shropshire for a family anniversary, to South Africa where they were entertained by her cousin, **Michael Willmot**, and the New Zealand visit mentioned above, when I think they also called in at her birthplace, Singapore. They moved to Rolle in Switzerland, near Geneva after a few years. Altogether, a life well-lived.

She was a good correspondent, every Christmas sending details of her travels to me and our cousin, **Michael**; until suddenly, about five years ago, they stopped, and letters, e-mails and phone-calls were all unanswered. This was, of course, very upsetting, and it was purely by chance that, through an apartment owner in the same building, **Helen Bernard**, I learnt that about two years ago she had developed severe Alzheimers, and eventually moved, in about 2016, to Meadowfield Residential Home, near Chichester. Having seen her there a few times since then, we should be thankful that she has received the most dedicated and appropriate care possible.

This tribute would not be complete without conveying our grateful thanks to **Karen** and all her staff at Meadowfield from my family and all of **Angela's** friends.

May she Rest In Peace.

Compiled by **Gerald Lindner**, with thanks.

#### **Robert Boocock – born 7<sup>th</sup> January 1919, died 7<sup>th</sup> September 2020 Aged 101**

**Robert Boocock** was an airman and FEPOW who survived Japanese POW Camps; one of the infamous "Hellships," 22 months in a labour camp and the atom bomb being dropped on nearby Nagasaki. Of the 257 men in his 242 RAF Squadron, only 51 came home.

When war broke out, **Robert Boocock** was 20 and he joined the RAF hoping to become a pilot. In October 1941, he joined 242 Squadron and sailed on the "Empress of Australia" in December for an unknown destination. They landed in Jakarta on Java. Within weeks, Japan overran Java and he was captured. He spent the next 18 months filling in craters and runways and making sisal rope.

In 1943, he was transferred to Changi in Singapore, and then moved to Japan on the "**Seishin Maru**" – an unmarked hellship which sailed in a convoy which was attacked by US warships. Many of the FEPOWs on board died of thirst, heat, beatings and executions. The voyage lasted three weeks.

They arrived in Moji and were taken to Fukuoka Camp 8 on Kyushu to mine coal. Over 22 months many died. **Robert** was lucky to work above ground, but he contracted dengue fever. Their only food was a small ladle of rice in the morning, and a bowl of watery soup with a few cabbage leaves floating in it at lunchtime.

In 1945, they had to dig a mass grave and were told they would be executed if US troops landed on Japanese soil. Luckily, the US dropped the atom bombs. Nagasaki was only 40 miles from the camp, and they sheltered in a tunnel.

**Robert Boocock** started his journey home 6 weeks later. He was flown to San Francisco and took the train across America to New York, from where he sailed home on the Queen Mary.

#### **K.T. Mathew – died in Kerala, India, in September aged 104**

In the early 1940s, **Mathew** was serving with the British Military Police in Malaya. He refused the Japanese order to serve their 'Liberation Army' along the Thailand-Burma border in WW2. After capture, and as he was being driven along a country road for certain execution, he made a dramatic escape into the jungle where he remained for the duration of the war, only emerging after the Japanese surrender in 1945. It is presumed that he aided the stay-behind parties with his expertise and knowledge of the jungle. After the war, he returned to his native Kerala, but after a break came back to Malaya and served as a civilian in the Malayan Police, specifically in the Finance Department, until the 1960s. He was a prolific writer and contributed regular articles to the Malayan Police Magazine – amusing anecdotes about life in the office. He is buried in the Mar Thoma Church in Kerala – built by his late father the Reverend KT Mathew of the Syrian Church, thought to be the oldest Christian Community outside Palestine.

#### **Awang anak Raweng, GC – born April 1929 died September 2020, aged 91**

**Sergeant Awang anak Raweng** was awarded the George Cross in 1951 while serving as a tracker in Malaya in operations against the Communist insurgents. An Iban from Sarawak, he had honed his skills hunting animals in the jungle and was able to travel light and live off the land. These skills were invaluable to the British in tracking down the enemy. In May 1951, he was attached to "D" Company of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Worcestershire Regiment which was detailed to hunt down 2 communist organisations. The patrol was ambushed by about 50 terrorists and during the fight, despite being shot through the thigh, he saved the life of a British soldier who had also been wounded. Under intense fire, **Awang** dragged the soldier under cover and continued to fire until shot again in the arm. He then took a grenade from a wounded comrade and pulled the pin. He held the enemy at bay for 40 minutes until reinforcements arrived and the wounded were evacuated to safety. **Awang's** citation said that he "showed coolness, fortitude and offensive spirit of the highest order." He received his medal from **Sir Anthony Abell**, the Governor of Sarawak, in Kuching in 1952. In 1953, he joined the re-organised Sarawak Rangers – formed by **Sir James Brooke** in 1862 as a peace keeping force - as a tracker. His talents were put to good use again during the Indonesian Confrontation when he volunteered for service and rose to the ranks of sergeant. In 2018 he was honoured by the Sarawak Government with the title of "Datuk."

His funeral in Kuching's Heroes Graves' Cemetery was attended by the British High Commission's Defence Adviser, **Group Captain Simon Hindmarsh** who conveyed a message of condolence to **Awang's** family from **Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth**

and the British Government. **Awang Raweng** met the Queen on several occasions, and is the only Malaysian to receive the George Cross named after the Queen's father King George VI.

The eulogy at the funeral was given by Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Amar Douglas Uggah, who said that Awang was a hero in every sense and lived up to the Iban war cry, "*Agi idup agi ngelaban*" – As long as I live, I shall fight.

**Heroes' Graves Cemetery, Kuching**

**Awang Raweng's Grave - with the white cloth Behind are headstones of other Iban trackers brought back from Malaya and Singapore**



**Dick Jolley MC and Bar – born 10<sup>th</sup> July 1922, died 7<sup>th</sup> August 2020 aged 98**

**Dick Jolley** was awarded the MC and Bar during the Burma Campaign. In April 1944, the Japanese cut the road between Imphal and Kohima. As acting captain, **Jolley** was one of the 200 reinforcements formed into a company of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion 2<sup>nd</sup> Punjab Regiment. He placed his men in defensive positions around Jail Hill, but after 3 days of heavy fighting and reduced numbers, withdrew to Garrison Hill. He was ordered to move to the District Commissioner's bungalow which overlooked the road up which tanks would have to travel. The Japs were dug into the hillside, and after a series of attacks and counter-attacks, each side held part of the bungalow's garden – except the tennis court which was no-man's land. Hand grenades were being hurled across the tennis court like tennis balls. **Jolley** and his men ended up in a trench almost out of ammunition, but ordered to keep the last bullet for themselves. They were relieved by the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Division.

He was treated for shrapnel wounds, and on his recovery rejoined his regiment. In March 1945 he was ordered to infiltrate his company into a Japanese stronghold at Meiktila, inflict as much damage as possible and then withdraw which he did successfully causing the enemy considerable losses.

In May 1945 he was in command of a company under heavy fire when he was shot in the knee. He ordered his company to withdraw and leave him. Later he was rescued by **Havildar Major Abdul Malik** who was awarded an MM. **Jolley** was awarded a Bar to his MC for his readiness to sacrifice himself for the sake of his men, knowing that he could be taken prisoner. This was an inspiration to the whole battalion. He was taken to hospital in Calcutta and discharged in October 1945.

**Ron Bridge – born 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1934, died 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020 aged 86.**

**Ron Bridge** was born in the British enclave in Tianjin, where Welsh missionary families had settled in this part of north east China in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. His father ran an import-export business, but on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941, 24 hours after the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbour, **Ron** witnessed the arrival of Japanese soldiers. He hid under the bed while his mother, **Margot**, looked after his 2 month old brother, **Roger**. His father, **Leo**, was taken away for questioning and the family was put under house arrest. They lived under curfew, and had to wear red arm bands when out in the city.

On 30<sup>th</sup> March 1943, the family was told to pack and they were marched to the station. After travelling many hours by train and truck, they arrived outside a 16 ft wall topped with barbed wire and broken glass. The sign in Chinese read, "Courtyard of the Happy Way." This was their internment camp in Weihsien, Shandong Province, where 2,000 westerners (mainly British and American women and children) were imprisoned. The camp commandant, **Captain Tsukiyama**, called it "a civilian assembly centre" but as **Ron** testified to British MPs many years later, it was "a concentration camp."

The food was adequate at first but the living accommodation was spartan. The children went to school, but paper and pencils were only allowed when the children were well behaved. In winter they froze and in summer they suffered from the heat. As the war started to go badly for the Japs, **Ron** overheard his grandfather saying that they were all to be eliminated if the Allies set foot on Honshu or Kyushu. Luckily the atom bombs saved them. They were liberated by American paratroopers 17/8/45. After the war, **Ron** became an RAF Officer and then a commercial pilot. 50 years later, he became a campaigner for the Civilian Internees in the Far East, and was on the ABCIFER (Association of British Civilian Internees Far East Region) committee fighting for compensation for civilian internees. He found documents at the NA at Kew which showed that the Foreign Office, "had not done its best for British subjects in the 1950s." Japan paid **SOME** British internees £48.10p in 1955, but there were caveats about who was British. **Ron Bridge** proved that the British Government could have claimed up to £2,000 for each internee, and fought hard for support. Finally in 2000, the Blair administration granted an ex-gratia payment of £10,000 to each surviving prisoner of war and to "British civilians who were interned by the Japanese" or their widows or widowers. More than 25,000 applied but some were (again) excluded because of lack of so-called "BLOOD LINK." **Ron** was appalled when the "*Ministry of Defence decided .....that British passport holders who were interned by Japan were not British if they were born Jewish, were coloured, born in Ireland or were women who had obtained British Nationality by marriage prior to 1941.*" [Editor's note: *MVG member Ian Aviet of Armenian heritage, whose father held a British Passport, was denied this compensation on the grounds that he didn't 'qualify'. Ian was interned as a boy in Bahau. He died before his 'qualification' came through.*]

Ron said, "If you were British enough to be interned by the Japs, you should be British enough for compensation." After the war, the family returned to Tianjin. Ron wrote about his life in a book, "No Soap less School" which was published last year.

#### **Maurice Naylor – born 20<sup>th</sup> December 1920, died 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 aged 99**

Maurice was a gunner in the 53<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division which was sent to Singapore after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, arriving on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1942. On 15<sup>th</sup> February, he was in the Bukit Timah Road where he witnessed the 2 jeeps, flying the Union Jack and a white flag, carrying Percival and his officials on their way to the Old Ford Factory to surrender Singapore to Yamashita. At first there was a sense of relief after weeks of fighting, but then they feared how they might be treated. His unit was moved to Changi where they destroyed their weapons and waited 2 days for the Japs to arrive. In May, they were marched to Bukit Timah golf course where they had to build a shrine to the fallen Japanese soldiers. 4 months later, they were sent by train to Thailand to build the Death Railway, and encountered the terrible conditions in which they had to live always under the threat of beatings and executions for infringement of the rules. At Tamarkan Camp, he was part of the group which built first the wooden bridge over the River Kwai and later the steel and concrete one. By this time Naylor had malaria and diarrhoea and spent some time in hospital, but also worked loading rails, sleepers and cement etc. He witnessed the RAF bombings of the railway which, sadly, killed many of the POWs and injured hundreds more. Early in 1945 he was moved to Ubon in north-east Thailand to build an airstrip for the Japanese. It was there on 17<sup>th</sup> August they knew that the war was over – they locked the Japanese in their guardroom and took over the camp. Maurice was repatriated on the SS *Orbita* to Liverpool, given a travel warrant and sent home on indefinite leave without any medical examination. As with so many stories of FEPOW homecomings, his mother had prepared a rice pudding for him. As Maurice said, "It was 20 years before I could bring myself to eat rice again and 40 years before I could talk about my experiences of the Second World War." He did, however, keep a diary on scraps of paper which he hid in a hollow bamboo. After the war, he worked for the health service and was a key member of its strategic leadership with responsibility for hospital supplies, patient transport services and reorganization.

#### **Vale – Di Elliott – died 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020 aged 71**

Lynette Silver and Di Elliott



Di Elliott, a tireless Australian researcher of POWs in the Far East, who was known to many FEPOW families, died in Canberra on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020, after a 15-month-long battle with glioblastoma multiforme, a most aggressive & incurable brain cancer. She died exactly one month short of her 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

She never said much or even complained about her illness and just soldiered on with whatever treatment was necessary to extend her life. She had set various goals after her diagnosis in July 2019 – 71<sup>st</sup> Birthday, Christmas, her 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in January. Despite undergoing intensive treatment, and only able to walk with the aid of a stick, Di was able to accompany her best friend and co-researcher on 15<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Singapore Day, to lay a wreath in memory of POWs at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. This event, and an exciting joy flight over Canberra, in a helicopter, piloted by Lynette's son, were her final outings before her condition worsened and she eventually became completely paralysed. She did all of this and more, in the short time she had left, with the grace of the lady she was and forever shall be.

Di, who was born in the NSW country town of Boorowa, had spent the last 30 years of her life researching POWs in the Far East, especially those on the Burma-Thailand Railway, where her father, Sgt Fred Howe, of 2/19 Australian Infantry Battalion, was

sent with "A" Force to Burma from Changi in May 1942. He then moved on to Thailand, where he remained until war's end. Like so many POWs, Fred suffered from undiagnosed post-traumatic stress and, almost 20 years after his rather premature death in 1975, Di decided to see if she could understand his often erratic and volatile behaviour. In the process she became an excellent researcher and a recognized expert on the railway, which she visited several times. She generously shared her vast knowledge with FEPOW relatives and visitors to the War Memorial, where she worked as a volunteer in the public research area for 20 years, and provided invaluable input into a dozen books written by military historians.

Di also worked tirelessly to correct an astonishing number of errors on various honour rolls, to add names that had been left out and overhaul nominal and other rolls in unit histories. A champion for POWs, she was successful in having several returned soldiers, who had died after returning home, recognized as official war casualties.

With Lynette, Di helped expose a number of military frauds, the most notorious of which was a fake POW, who was gaoled for defrauding the Australian Government of hundreds of thousands of dollars in false pension claims. Her final piece of research, in 2019, was to do the lion's share in compiling the names of 4,500 Australian nurses who served in World War 2 – an exacting and tedious task as no list had even been created. The results of her efforts were published in Lynette's book, "Angels of Mercy." [Ed: See under BOOKS for details]

Di left a wonderful legacy, but never sought glory or recognition for herself. Her sole aim was to ensure that the sacrifice and suffering of those who had fought or died for their country were remembered and honoured.

Compiled by Lynette Ramsay Silver  
October 2020.

## ADDRESS AT MUNTOK PEACE MUSEUM – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2020

By Judy Balcombe

My name is **Judy Balcombe**, from Melbourne in Australia. My grandfather, **Colin Douglas Campbell** was a rubber planter in Malaya. He left Singapore in February 1942 on the *Giang Bee*, one of the many boats carrying evacuees which were sunk in the Banka Strait near Muntok. My grandfather reached shore in a lifeboat and was placed in the Muntok Jail where he died in August 1944.

I first came to Muntok in 2011 with **Mr. Anthony Pratt** from England, looking for our families' graves. Very sadly, 88 graves of the Australian and British civilians and the one NZ civilian who died in Muntok were left behind in the town cemetery when all Dutch military and civilian graves were moved to Jakarta in 1964.

The men who died in Muntok Jail were buried in the Town Cemetery by their friends. The women were moved from their graves under the rubber trees at Kampong Menjelang into the Town Cemetery by the Dutch authorities after the war. We found that part of the former Town Cemetery now lies under houses and the Pertamina petrol station in Muntok's main road. In 1984, 25 bodies were found during the construction of the Pertamina petrol station and these were moved to a single grave in the Catholic Cemetery.

In 2012, **Anthony Pratt** and I returned to Muntok with **Margie** and **Stephen Caldicott**. **Margie's** mother and grandmother had been in the camps and her grandmother had died in Muntok. **Margie** brought her mother's cemetery map and list of graves. This Town Cemetery map shows that the 25 bodies were those of the women who had died in the camp and who were not moved to Jakarta in 1964. We wished to remember our families and help the people of Muntok.

In 2013, **Margie Caldicott** helped to organize a concert in Chichester, England, where the music of the original Palembang Women's Camp Vocal Orchestra was sung. Money from this concert was donated by the Malayan Volunteers Group to help the Kampong Menjelang School and also paid for a plaque with the names of all the British, Australian and New Zealand internees who are still buried in Muntok in unnamed graves.

In 2014, former internee, **Neal Hobbs**, aged 89 visited Muntok. Later that year, **Mr. Ivor Bowden**, son of the former Australian Official Representative to Singapore killed in Muntok on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1942, visited with his family and me.

2015 saw the opening of the Muntok Peace Museum, built with contributions from **Ivor Bowden**, former internees and their families, and the Malayan Volunteers Group, and attended by **Ivor Bowden** and his 2 sons, **Anthony Pratt**, **David Man**, whose grandfather died in Muntok, other internees families, **Robert van de Rijdt**, Director of the Netherlands War Graves Foundation in Jakarta and Sisters from the Charitas Hospital in Palembang. The Plaques with the names of those in the 'lost' graves were blessed by **Father Paulus Kara** of Muntok's Santa Maria Church and placed on the Women's Grave in the cemetery.

In 2016, **Michael Noyce** whose aunt, **Kathleen Noyce**, died on Radji Beach, visited Muntok. 2017 saw the visit of family members of the Australian Army Nurses, Army Nurses and the Australian and British Defence Attaches. The serving Army Nurses linked arms and walked towards the water as they had done in 1942. Indonesian nurses and doctors threw flower petals into the sea and thus the "Walk for Humanity" was started and has become an annual event.

We came to Muntok looking for our families' graves. We did not find them, but instead we found our history, new friends and a new family. Our sadness has been eased by the warmth of our new friendships, remembering the events of the past but helping to build a better future.

We have placed plaques donated by the Malayan Volunteers Group, so that the unnamed dead now have a memorial. Information has been placed in the Tinwinning and Peace Museums so that people can learn about what happened in the war. We have helped to build a new well in Kampong Menjelang and helped the school with equipment and repairs.

L. to R. **Judy Balcombe**, **Arlene Bennett**,  
**President of Nurses' Memorial Centre, Melbourne**,  
**Mr. Fakhrial of the Tinwinning Museum**  
**Personal Assistant to the Australian Ambassador**



The Australian government has provided 2 scholarships to Indonesian students in memory of **Mr. Vivian Bowden**, and we are planning a Nursing Scholarship for a Women's and Children's Health Care Centre in Muntok.

In 2009, UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, assessed Muntok as being a place of great historical significance. In particular it was praised as a place where people of many religions and origins live together peacefully.

In 2012, the Regent addressed the people of Muntok, explaining that their ancestors and our ancestors had all lived in Muntok at the same time, meaning we are all part of the same family now.

**Professor Gary Topping**, biographer of internee **William McDougall** said: "It gladdens his heart to know Muntok can become a place of beauty and education and not only a place of dread."

## BOOKS

**"Angels of Mercy. Far West: Far East."** By Lynette Ramsay Silver. Published by Sally Milner Publishing Pty. Ltd. ISBN 978-1-86351-500-9 Softback. 442 pages.

This book follows the gripping stories of two different Australian nursing sisters, who overcame the challenging adversities of two very different circumstances.

In the 1930s, **Marjorie Silver**, the outback's flying sister, fought almost single-handedly against the isolation, poverty, heat and dust of the far west of New South Wales to bring vital medical assistance to her far-flung patients.

**Sister Pat Gunther**, who served in the Far East on the battlefields of Malaya and Singapore, then fought a desperate battle for survival in the prison camps of Sumatra.

These two remarkable, highly resilient women may not be remembered as great Australians, but they will be remembered for making Australia great.

MVG members will be particularly interested in Part 2 which details **Pat Gunther's** story and unravels more of the story of the plight of the civilian internees shipwrecked and captured on Banka Island, and their subsequent prison camps there and on Sumatra. Although this book is essentially about Australians, some of the British internees in the camps are also mentioned. The book is available at bookshops in the UK.

**"Patrani po Silvestrovi."** By Jan Beranek. ("Searching for Silvestr").

MVG member, **Jan Beranek**, has written this book in his native Czech language. An English Language edition of his book is anticipated in early 2021, but this has not yet been confirmed. The English language interview with **Jan** is very informative about his book and the research involved. Much of it is the story of the Czech community, largely Bata Shoes' employees, in Singapore before the war. **Jan's** great uncle **Silvestr Nemec** was born in 1919 in Moravia, and lived in Krumlova, Czechoslovakia. In 1939, he moved to Singapore to work as an assistant with the Bata Shoe Co. Pte. He served as a private in "B" Company with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion SSVF before moving to SSVF Armoured Cars and then, in December 1941, to Carriers. He fought with the Malay Regiment on Pasir Panjang Ridge, but was reported missing on 15th February 1942 – presumed killed in the Gap area, Pasir Panjang, or at the Alexandra Hospital. Various theories are discussed in the book as to what happened to him. See details of the interview in Websites on P.19.



Jan with his book

**"Escape to Japanese Captivity."** Compiled by Sally Jennings. Published by Pen and Sword Military. ISBN 978-1-526-783-097 See details in A.K. 64 October 2020. This book is now available for sale.

**The Story of the Lives of Captain Mick Jennings and Margery Jennings** by Sally Jennings.

**Captain C.O. (Mick) Jennings, RE**, was born in Yorkshire in 1899 to **Walter** and **Edith Jennings**. He served with the Royal Engineers in Mesopotamia from 1917 to 1920. He spent the next two years at Sheffield University and then his building and surveying work took him from Yorkshire to the Gold Coast (now Ghana), back to Kent and finally to Malaya, where he became municipal architect at Kuala Lumpur in 1935. He was again serving with the REs when Singapore fell and his amazing bid for freedom began. After the war, he was briefly repatriated to the UK before being asked to return to Kuala Lumpur to rebuild housing for which he received an MBE. He continued working for the colonial government until the mid 1950s when he set up his own practice. He retired to New Zealand in 1958 and died of cancer in 1964, aged 64.

**Margery Hellewell** (1909 – 1945) grew up in Otley, Yorkshire, with her parents **Florence Beaumont Hellewell** and **Arthur Coates Hellewell**, grocer, provision merchant, confectioner and corn merchant. **Margery** was very musical. She became a nurse in the Medical Auxiliary Service in Singapore in the months leading up to the Japanese invasion. In POW Camp in Sumatra she was involved in the Vocal Orchestra (Singing to Survive) singing and playing the piano, when they had one. She died on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1945, aged 36.

**Margery (nee Hellewell)** and **Mick** had been old family friends in Yorkshire where both had been born and brought up, and had written to one another when **Mick (then Cyril)** went first to the Sudan in 1924 and then to the Gold Coast (Ghana) in 1926 as a surveyor with the colonial government. While on his first tour of duty in West Africa, he began to think of marriage. It was always difficult to find an English wife from such a distance and indeed being married was often impossible until you reached a certain age, perhaps 30.

In the Sudan, he had lived in the bush in a tent. He slept with his rifle at his side and both flaps of the tent left open so that if a lion walked in, it could walk straight out the other end with a bit of luck! In the Gold Coast, he would be away surveying with a party of Ghanaians for three weeks at a time.

Now in Accra, he had a government bungalow, drove a Riley and could accommodate a wife. He made a list of all the girls he knew back in England. **Margery Hellewell** had written regularly and rather opened her heart to him. Perhaps she should be the one. He probably wrote to her to that effect. Anyway, they were married on his first long leave in England.

**Mick's** wedding present to her was an upright double-strength piano which they took to Accra. They were given a little wire-haired fox terrier they called Smut because he rolled in the coal under the house one day. He came to Africa, too, as

company for **Margery**.

The first eighteen months in West Africa must have been a difficult and often lonely time for **Margery** with **Mick** away so much. Consequently, she concentrated on her piano playing and became an accomplished musician. This proved to be a boon later in the prisoner-of-war camp in Sumatra where music featured so strongly. Both **Mick** and **Margery** had lovely voices; **Mick** used to sing on the radio in its fledgling state in Malaya.

They had decided not to have children because they lived overseas in conditions with limited health care and schools. Children would have kept **Margery** busy, but perhaps it was just as well in the long run.

In 1930, **Mick** became Town Board Building Inspector in Kuala Lumpur. **Margery** adapted well to Malaya, learning Malay, playing the organ in the Church and later nursing as the war came closer.

**Mick's** hobby was motor racing his many MGs, which is where his nickname came from because he used to have a Mickey Mouse badge on the front fender of his car. Perhaps it brought him luck.

It was hard for them to realize the growing threat of the Japanese invasion, believing in the might of the British Forces and the impregnability of Singapore. The diary begins with her playing at Church services, for weddings and doing her nursing duty.

**Mick** rejoined the Royal Engineers (he had fought in World War 1) and implemented the scorched earth policy, destroying bridges to halt the Japanese advance, and smashing bottles of whisky to deny the enemy the chance of getting unpleasant.

Even though people were escaping in February 1942, many wanted to stay and uphold the cause, especially the nurses.

Only at the last minute did **Mick** and **Mr Hinch** decide the ladies should leave.

For the next three years, **Margery's** diary records the daily misery of camp life and her longing to be back in a normal world with **Mick**. As the prisoners' health eroded with the poor food and many diseases, the deaths increased until a third of the women succumbed. She kept her faith and looked to the skies for freedom and beauty.

**Mick** had not seen her for over three years. It was not until he was in Raffles Hotel after the war that the kind woman, **Pip Meyer**, who had looked after **Margery** at the last, recognized **Mick** from her description. She told him about her death and gave him **Margery's** wedding ring, which he wore for the rest of his life.

On the troopship, **SS Antenor** which repatriated troops from Singapore, **Ruth Stay** was a member of the Red Cross helping POWs to contact their families and get appropriate clothes and necessities. **Mick** had seen **Ruth** walking up the gangplank and thought, "That's the girl for me!" And so it proved. They were married in 1946 in Chichester. **Mick** had to return to Kuala Lumpur, urgently needed as an architect to re-house people. When **Sally** was four months old, **Ruth** and she travelled to KL to live there for the next twelve years.

In 1951, anticipating retirement, the **Jennings** family went to Perth, Western Australian for six months, where **Deborah** was born, and then spent two months travelling across Australia and throughout New Zealand with a view to choosing where to live. They decided New Zealand was a green and pleasant land. In 1957, **Sally** went to boarding school in Whanganui and the family followed in 1958. They established a home in Torbay, Auckland, where **Ruth** lived for the next forty years before moving to Australia to be near **Deb**. She died aged 97 in 2015.

## Those Magnificent Men in their [obsolete] Flying Machines

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

Nos 36 and 100 Squadrons 1941-1942

[N.B. from Dave Croft. This account was prompted by stories told to me by RAFSA member **Peter Masters** who flew with 36 Squadron Radio Calibration Flight and from copies (on file) taken of 36 Squadron at Seletar. The main photograph was headed, "*The Ill-fated 36 (Torpedo) Squadron Royal Air Force 1939-41 Singapore,*" and this forms the basis of the story. It is also the story of 100 (TB) Squadron who fought alongside 36 Squadron until both squadrons were decimated during the Japanese advance in the Far East. Some discrepancies of detail are to be found between official and non-official references and here I take a line between both as it is a story of people fighting against overwhelming odds and small discrepancies do not change the heart of the story.]

Vildebeest releasing torpedo  
36 Squadron - 1/2/40



Both 36 and 100 Squadrons were based at RAF Seletar from the early 1930s and flew the Vickers Vildebeest torpedo bomber bi-planes with defensive armaments consisting of a Vickers .303 belt-fed gun for the pilot and a Lewis 90 round drum-fed gun for the air gunner. Attached to 36 Squadron were two aircraft of the Radio Calibration Flight "1, each squadron donating an aircraft from their reserve stores. The RCF was formed in early October 1941, the aircraft being delivered in peacetime livery but rapidly changed to an underside duck egg blue with a standard topside camouflage pattern.

**8<sup>th</sup> December 1941:** The Japanese invasion of Malaya began with a landing north of Kota Bahru. Seven aircraft from 36 Squadron, led by **Sqn. Ldr. Graham Witney RAF** were standing to at Gong Kedah, and went into immediate action against the invasion fleet. After returning to Gong Kedah to rearm, they took off again to continue the attack against the Japanese fleet, this time during the monsoon storm. Following this attack, they landed at Kota Bahru with three aircraft then taking off to attack landing barges and to strafe the beaches. By late afternoon the detachment of seven aircraft moved to Kuantan, the remaining RAF ground staff and 11<sup>th</sup> Indian Division fighting a rear guard action against Japanese troops over-running the airfield at Kota Bahru. Eventually, the hard pressed ground staff escaped and made their way towards Kuala Lipis, then by rail to Singapore.

**9<sup>th</sup> December 1941:** The seven Vildebeest aircraft returned to Seletar from Kuantan. Of the seven, six along with three Hudsons, led by **Sqn. Ldr. Graham Witney**, were to make a night attack at Beserah. Because of heavy rain the operation was delayed until the early hours of the 10<sup>th</sup>. During take-off **Sqn. Ldr. Witney** collided with a taxiing aircraft, followed by an explosion that killed him and his crew. **F/O Kenneth Langley RAF**, the pilot of the other aircraft, later died of his injuries. The wireless operator, **Sgt. Philpot**, although on fire, managed to extinguish the flames by rolling on the ground. His injuries were serious enough for him to be medically evacuated to the UK.

**12<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> December 1941:** Torpedoes stored at Kuantan were returned to Seletar and the Squadrons (36 & 100) maintained a permanent standby.

**9<sup>th</sup> January 1942:** Twelve 36 Squadron aircraft, fitted with long-range fuel tanks and armed with bombs, attacked Ipoh without casualties. Similarly the squadron bombed Japanese barges at Muar (south of Malacca) and also dropped provisions to beleaguered troops up country.

**18<sup>th</sup> January 1942:** The Seletar squadrons' inventories for this date were given as 4 (five) Albacores ('borrowed' from the Fleet Air Arm) and 10 Vildebeests (36 Sqn), 15 Vildebeests (100 Sqn), 3 Catalinas (205 Sqn) and 21 Hurricanes (232 Sqn, A and B Flights being based at Seletar and C Flight at Kallang).

**20<sup>th</sup> January 1942:** Aircraft from 36 Squadron and Blenheim IVs from 34 Squadron (RAF Tengah) attacked the Japanese-held airfield at Kuala Lumpur, with major damage being inflicted on the enemy. Similarly, Vildebeests from 100 Squadron, along with 6 RAAF Hudsons attacked Kuantan resulting in a number of Japanese aircraft being damaged. The last Vildebeest calibration flight took place on this date.

**25<sup>th</sup> January 1942:** Vildebeests of both squadrons covered the evacuation by sea of Australian troops from the Batu Pahat (Johore) area with two more Vildebeests dropping medical supplies to nearby units.

**26<sup>th</sup> January 1942:** The beginning of the end for the Vildebeest squadrons. Two RAAF Hudsons reported a large



36 Squadron Officers taken on 20/1/42

Japanese invasion convoy north-east of Endau moving southwards. This was followed shortly after by confirmation from **Squadron Leader C.R.G. Lewis (RAF)**, flying the long range No. 4 PRU photo-reconnaissance Brewster Buffalo, who reported the enemy were now at Endau. Previous to the 26<sup>th</sup>, both 36 and 100 Squadrons had been on night time operations for several nights over Johore and on the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, their aircraft were still stood down, as were their exhausted crews! However, due to the allied aircraft situation at the time, the main response was to be down to the Vildebeest squadrons and support aircraft, with the first strike force consisting of ten 100 Squadron aircraft, 9 Hudsons and the mixed fighter escort of Buffaloes and Hurricanes. Unfortunately, due to the understandable delay in

bringing the Vildebeests up to operational readiness, the Japanese convoy had reached shallow waters making a possible torpedo attack ineffective - the alternative, 5,000lb bombs, were to be used instead. No. 243 (Buffalo) Squadron was delegated to escort the strike force - A Flight (**Flt. Lt. Mowbray Garden RAFVR i/c**) to accompany the strike force to the target area with B Flight (**Flt. Lt. R. Bows RAF i/c**) covering the returning aircraft. In comparison to the Buffalo aircraft from 243 Squadron, the Vildebeests were slow, forcing the fighter escort to fly just above stalling speed in order to provide cover.

In the following air battle with the Japanese<sup>2</sup>, 5 Vildebeests were downed. Later, a second force consisting of 9 Vildebeest (36 Squadron) and 3 Albacores with an escort of 4 Buffaloes and 8 Hurricanes were 'jumped' by a large number of enemy aircraft with, again, 5 Vildebeests being shot down, along with the Albacores and 1 Hurricane. In the battles **Sqn. Ldrs I.T.B. Rowland** (100 Squadron) and **R.F.C. Markham** (36 Squadron) were killed.

**Sqn. Ldr. Richard Frederick Cyprian Markham** was a Straits Settlements Volunteer Air Force pilot (SSVAF) until the outbreak of war when the SSVAF was disbanded and a number of 'ex-pat' aircrew became RAFVR. On 19<sup>th</sup> December 1941, he took command of 36 Squadron. His lead Fairey Albacore aircraft, carrying bombs, approached

the Japanese convoy at 10,000ft and attacked the transport *Canberra Maru* before being shot down. Lost with **Sqn. Ldr. Markham** were his crew, **Flt. Sgt. Humphrey Hicks RAFVR** and **Flt. Sgt. John Seaton RAF**. Another 36 Squadron crew, comprised **F/O Gilbert 'Jock' Forbes RAF** (Vildebeest pilot), **Charlie MacDonald RAAF**, his navigator, an Australian of Scottish origin, and air gunner, **Sgt. John 'Jock' Grant RAFVR**. Their aircraft was intercepted by an enemy fighter, wounding both the navigator and air gunner, the latter receiving a serious cannon wound to one of his legs. The aircraft was literally an un-flyable mess but the pilot managed to bring it down, with difficulty, on a forest road ripping the wings from the fuselage. The badly injured air gunner turned the weapon on the Japanese who arrived at the scene with the inevitable result to his own fate. **'Jock' Forbes** the pilot, whilst uninjured, was captured and beheaded, later being identified by another shot down Australian airman, **H Graham McCabe**, from 36 Squadron. The navigator, **Charlie MacDonald**, having a serious arm injury made his escape from the downed aircraft to meet up eventually with a group of British sailors, survivors from *HMS Thanet*, sunk in action at Endau. It was to their advantage, in terms of survival, that he was a navigator. Eventually, arriving on the coast near Mersing they came upon a boat drawn up on the beach. It was at this point that the group's naval skills came into their own. Their passage in the requisitioned boat down the Johore coastline ended when they were taken aboard a British naval vessel at the approaches to the Straits of Johore. Here they were unloaded at Pulau Ubin, just off Changi, where the navigator made his way to the pre-war RAF Hospital at Changi. Amazingly, **McDonald's** injured arm was saved from amputation, and he from death through gangrene, by a new drug, sulphonamide antibiotic (M&B 693).

His story continues. On 13<sup>th</sup> February, he fell in with an escape party leaving Singapore in a Straits Fisheries motor launch, the *Kembong*. After experiencing a long and torturous journey to and across Sumatra, **Charlie McDonald** ended up at Padang, and then made his way to Tjilatjap in Java where he managed to talk his way on board a ship bound for Fremantle taking the survivors of the American 19<sup>th</sup> Bomber Group to safety. He escaped the Japanese! Also a victim of the Battle of Endau, 36 Squadron RAAF navigator **P/O Elwyn Cummings** had bailed out from his Vildebeest when the pilot went down to low level over nearby jungle canopy to avoid his attackers. Stuck up a tree, he cut the cords of his parachute to improvise a rope to lower himself to the ground. Without maps or compass he decided that the Endau River was his only hope of escape. Inflating his Mac West and pretending to be a corpse he planned to float down the river until he reached the sea. That evening he took to the water, drifting down stream until he reached the estuary and passed a makeshift Japanese camp. On reaching the shore, past the Japanese camp, he started off on his long trek to Singapore. After a gruelling day suffering from the intense heat, hunger and thirst, plus a chance encounter with two Japanese soldiers, he eventually met up with a British patrol who delivered him back to Seletar three days after the battle.

On this same day, **Cpl Pete Masters** was detailed to accompany **Sgt. Donald R. Parker**, a New Zealand pilot on his first flight in a Vildebeest, a familiarisation flight of only 30 minutes!

29<sup>th</sup> January 1942: A decision was made to withdraw all aircraft from Singapore within the next few days.

31<sup>st</sup> January 1942: The remaining aircraft (5 Vildebeests and 2 Albacores from 36 Squadron, 2 Vildebeests from the RCF and 8 Vildebeests from 100 Squadron) were loaded with torpedoes and flown to Palembang (Sumatra) then on to Kemajoran, near Batavia (Java). **Sergeant Parker**, with only 30 minutes experience in the aircraft and accompanied by **Cpl. Pete Masters**, successfully completed the flight, landing in the middle of a heavy storm with the aircraft creating a speedboat-like wake.

2<sup>nd</sup> February 1942: Ground crews from both squadrons sailed on the *SS Perak*, eventually to join up with their aircrew and aircraft in Java.

8<sup>th</sup> February 1942: Nos. 36 and 100 Squadrons were amalgamated under the command of **Sqn. Ldr. John Wilkins RAF**. No. 36 Squadron (comprising the remnants of 36 and 100 Squadrons) continued the fight against the Japanese in Java, going into action bombing enemy transports. There were losses, one being **Sqn. Ldr. Wilkins RAF** who crashed in a padi field, along with his navigator **F/O Wallace Chisholm RAAF** on 1<sup>st</sup> March. The air gunner, named as **Booker** was injured and ended up in hospital.

Operational personnel, including what was left of 36/100 Squadrons, were moved to the airstrip at Tasikmalaja.

4/6<sup>th</sup> March 1942: 3 Vildebeests remaining! Two successful night attacks on Kalidjata airfield (in Japanese hands) were carried out over these dates, with another planned for the night of the 6<sup>th</sup> March. Prior to this Japanese fighters beat up the airfield at Tasikmalaja and surrounding jungle where the remaining Vildebeests were hidden, followed by 4 bombers unleashing their deadly load. The Vildebeests escaped damage! On the 6<sup>th</sup>, Kalidjata was clearly visible in the moonlight and the attack was carried out on aircraft parked round the airfield perimeter. However,



Cpl. Pete Masters RAFVR



the last aircraft to go in on the attack was apparently (at the time) hit by AA gunfire and didn't return to base.

**7<sup>th</sup> March 1942:** Two of the crew of the missing Vildebeest (above) unexpectedly arrived back, courtesy of the Dutch army, at the school used as the makeshift squadron HQ. The survivors were **Warrant Officer John Ralph Blunt** RAAF, the air gunner, and **Atherton** (Australian), the navigator. Their pilot, **40955 Flight Sergeant Bruce Appleby** RNZAF, was killed when the aircraft crashed when crossing the mountains. Again, another remarkable story of survival was described by the survivors. On dropping their bombs on their selected target they were raked by gunfire. The pilot turned and made for the mountain crossing to get back to Tasikmalaja. Engine trouble was experienced on the crossing and the crew were instructed to bale out, but before they did the engine picked up and gave sufficient power to scrape over the mountain top. Then the engine trouble started again and a bale out order was re-issued. **John Blunt** jumped and landed safely in a bush in a deep ravine. **Atherton's** parachute failed to open fully and he plummeted safely into a tall tree. The pilot didn't get out of the aircraft. **John Blunt** eventually escaped from the ravine, finding a small unoccupied hut in which to ponder his fate. **Atherton**, after removing himself from his life-saving tree, found a track that eventually led him to the same hut in which his gunner was resting. Both crossed the ravine and headed for lower ground where rescue by local people was at hand. Another group of locals arrived with news of the finding of the crashed Vildebeest. **John Blunt** returned to the scene of the crash to see for himself the fragments of the aircraft scattered over the mountainside with the pilot sitting on the slope looking to be gazing across the valley, except that he was dead.

Only two aircraft now remained serviceable and the order was given by Air HQ to destroy all remaining aircraft on Java. **Ft. Lt. Allanson** RAF (36 Sqn) proposed that the remaining 2 aircraft, each with a crew of four, should attempt an escape by flying along the Sumatra coast until forced to ditch by running out of fuel. Surprisingly the plan was accepted by HQ and the crews selected by 'lucky dip'. The 'lucky' volunteers were: **Ft. Lt. Allanson**; **F/O Basil Callick** RAF and **W/O George Peck** RAF from 36 Squadron; **F/O Reginald Lamb** RAFVR; **F/O T. Lamb**; **F/O Taylor**; **F/O Gotto** and **Ft. Sgt. Melville** (100 Squadron). On a previous incident when the squadron was based in Singapore, **Ft. Sgt. Peck**, as he then was, was injured in his Albacore, landing without both navigator and W.O but gaining a large hole in the cabin. Both crew members returned to base a few days later after joining up with an Australian Army patrol.

Departure time was planned for midnight, so their fuel would run out around dawn (range of the Vildebeest was about 500 miles) and, on time, both heavily laden aircraft lumbered away from the airstrip, though not without some difficulty. The intention was to ditch the aircraft at the point of fuel exhaustion near to a junk or small craft, seize it and hold the crew and sail it to Australian or Ceylon, even India! Not until war's end did the full story become known! The heavily laden aircraft of **Ft. Lt. Allanson** ditched in the sea south of Benkoelen (sic) in Sumatra. All the crew survived the 'landing', swam ashore and proceeded to move north through Sumatra. Inevitably they were captured and imprisoned in Palembang, but survived the war. Of the other aircraft, **Flying Officer R. Lamb** ditched some distance from the shore. All survived the ditching, but only **Ft. Sgt. Melville**, drifting through periods of unconsciousness for many hours and kept afloat by his Mae West, eventually made it to dry land. He also ended up as a POW with the others in Palembang.

\*1 The Radio Calibration Flight (RCF) was formed with two pilots and two 'volunteer' ground radar mechanics replacing the usual aircrew wireless operators/air gunners. The role of the two Calibration Flight aircraft was to assist in the calibration of early warning ground radars. Calibration was necessary because of the reflective nature of the ground terrain when viewed from different directions. The Vildebeest calibration aircraft flew circular and radial tracks and had direct wireless communication between the aircraft and ground radar station.

\*2 The Japanese Army aircraft involved in the battle of Endau were Nakajima Ki-27 *Nate* and Nakajima Ki-44 *Shoki* (demon), based at Kota Bahru and Kuantan airfields previously occupied by the RAF and RAAF. There were mentions in combat reports of a Japanese Type O, Zeros and Fighter 97s. Of these the Type O and Zero are the alternative names for the well-known Mitsubishi A6M2 Zero of the Imperial Japanese Navy with the Fighter Type 97 referring to the Ki-27 of the Japanese Army. At the time the Japanese aircraft carrier, *Ryujo* (Prancing Dragon) was on station in the vicinity of Pulau Redang, carrying both Zeros and Fighter Type 96s (*Claude*). It is thought they took no part in the action.

**Notes on some personnel involved in the early days of the campaign.**

1. **Aircraftman Peter 'Pete' Masters:** Initially he was attached to 511 AMES RDF unit at Bukit Chunang (Selangor) when he was taken ill with Malaria and casevaced back to Singapore by RAF 100 Class High Speed Launch. When recovered he joined the newly formed Radio Calibration Flight along with A/C Leonard 'Lenny' Marchant (both

served together in the UK). On the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942, the two RFC aircraft, including the 'specialist' operators, left Singapore and flew to Palembang and then onto Batavia. He eventually escaped the advancing Japanese when ordered to leave on a vessel bound for Ceylon. Later he became a wireless operator on the RAF Auxiliary vessel *SS Shenking* for the rest of the war. The *Shenking* was on lease to the British Government and used to transport fuel and ammunition to remote camouflaged island dumps in the Indian Ocean.

2. **Flight Lieutenant Maurice Henry 'Blondie' Holder (RAF):** Pre-war a Sergeant Pilot (580816) in 36 Squadron; commissioned (44070) June 1940 and remained with the squadron until March 1941 when he transferred to 243 Squadron (flying Brewster Buffaloes) as **Flying Officer 2<sup>nd</sup> i/c 'B' Flight**. He was at Kota Bahru with a squadron detachment in November 1941, then Ipoh. During his time flying in Malaya and Singapore he acquired a black flying suit which he continued to wear throughout his time at Singapore despite the issue of white flying suits. The white suits were intended to help with spotting the wearer should he be forced down in the jungle! He was eventually evacuated to Ceylon and returned to England. He died in a flying accident on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1942.



Flt. Lt. M.H. Holder 36 Sqn 1940

3. **Flight Lieutenant Mowbray Garden (76482 RAFVR):** Previously a member of the Straits Settlements Air Force (SSVAF) and assistant to a firm of solicitors, he was 'transferred' in September 1939 into the RAFVR. **Mowbray Garden** joined 243 Squadron in March 1941, without formal fighter or air gunnery training, as a flying officer 2<sup>nd</sup> i/c "A" Flight. Although 243 Squadron was officially an RAF squadron, apart from the four RAF officers and one RAAF Sergeant Pilot, all the other pilots were RNZAF.

4. **Squadron Leader C.R.G. Lewis:** Air HQ Chief Photographic Officer was transferred to command the highly secretive aerial photo reconnaissance unit (4PRU) formed in late 1941. 2 Buffaloes were taken from reserve stocks and stripped of guns and armour plating in order to help attain a higher speed than the standard fighter model in use by the squadrons. Two pilots were transferred from other units to fly the aircraft. One of the unarmed PR aircraft was equipped with a single camera sighted through the observation window in the cockpit floor, the other was fitted with additional fuel tanks for long range flights, and three cameras. The first operational flight of the single camera aircraft was to photograph Singora (southern Thailand) at the start of the war – navigation was aided by a page taken from a World Atlas purchased in Singapore, as at the time the RAF maps in use only covered Malaya! Later **Sqn. Ldr. Lewis** escaped from the advancing Japanese and eventually arrived in Australia where he was involved with advising on the conversion of 6 B339-23 Buffaloes (from a redirected Dutch order) to be used for PR duties with the 1 PRU (RAAF).

5. **Squadron Leader Richard Frederick Cyprian Markham (76479 RAFVR):** Previously SSVAF, he arrived in Malaya in 1924 to take up the post of Assistant Inspector of Schools for Perak. He transferred to Singapore in 1935 and joined the SSVAF being commissioned as a pilot officer in March 1937. He transferred to the RAFVR on the closing of the SSVAF at the outbreak of WW2 in 1939, and commissioned as a Flying Officer. He was promoted to Flight Lieutenant in November 1940 and promoted Squadron Leader on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1941, taking command of 36 Squadron. He died, with his crew, 755320 **Flt. Sgt. Humphrey Frank Hicks, RAFVR** and 535269 **Flt. Sgt. John Binning Seaton RAF**, during the battle of Endau when the Faircy Albacore he was piloting was attacked by enemy aircraft. [N.B. January 2021 is the 79<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Endau.]

6. **Flying Officer/Flight Lieutenant Basil Ashmead Gotto (88207 RAFVR):** Believed to have been a member (700147) of the SSVAF and also having experience of Malaya and speaking fluent Malay. He flew with 100 Squadron RAF and became a POW after a daring attempt to escape by flying in one of the last 2 serviceable Vildebeests out of Java at midnight on the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> March 1942. He was the son of the sculptor **Basil Gotto**, who served as a staff officer in WW1 and who designed the caribou statue for the Newfoundland Battle Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel in France.

#### References:

"Buffaloes over Singapore" by **Brian Cull**.

"The Remorseless Road" by **James McEwan**

"Axis Aircraft of World War 2" by **David Mondey** and "British Aircraft of World War 2" by **David Mondey**

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### MUNTOK – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2021 – Zoom Memorial Service.

Following the cancellation of the annual Service and "Walk for Humanity" Ceremony on Radji Beach in Muntok this year, we have now heard that **Mr Fakhrial** (Director of the Government PT Timah Tinwinning Museum in Muntok) and his assistant **Agung** are planning to produce a Zoom Memorial Ceremony on 16<sup>th</sup> February. There will be wreath laying at 3 sites:

SS Vyner Brooke Nurses' Memorial near Tanjung Kalian Muntok Lighthouse

Muntok Peace Museum

Radji Beach Headland Memorial

And sowing flowers on Radji Beach

The wreath laying and flower sowing will be carried out by one person only - **Hanni Fadila** - due to the virus pandemic.

Videos of these ceremonies will be made and broadcast on 16<sup>th</sup> February via Zoom.

### PERTH W.A. – February 2021. Stirling Memorial Garden Service (Fall of Singapore) & Bicton Service (Nurses Service)

Please contact MVG secretary in Australia **Elizabeth Adamson**, for information about the Fall of Singapore Service and **Robert Gray** for further information about the Australian Army Nurses' Service.

### LONDON – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Postponed Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club – CANCELLED

Due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions and uncertainty about when hospitality venues will be allowed to open again, it has been decided to **cancel this event** but keep the date in October which has also been booked for our annual reunion and lunch. Further details will be given in April, when we may have a clearer idea about its viability in October.

### WYMONDHAM – Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Annual Service at the FEPOW Church in Wymondham, Norfolk – 12.30p.m.

[Editor: Please note this date which is correct. It was incorrectly given as 12<sup>th</sup> May in the October edition of the newsletter.]

Although Norfolk is currently in Tier 4, the Church is planning to hold the Service as usual on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> May.

**Peter Wiseman**, Church Archivist and Historian, has sent the following message:

*Seasonal and socially distanced greetings to all Newsletter/Journal Editors, from Wymondham.*

*It is with great pleasure I can share with you the news that recently the facility to Livestream services and events has been installed in the Catholic Church of Our Lady and Saint Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham. The FEPOW service on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 will be streamed. Anyone unable to attend in person is welcome to join in the occasion virtually.*

*The Church website has been modified, and is updated more frequently. The website address remains as before:*

[www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk](http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk) This gives general information about the Church.

*FEPOW information can be accessed by menu on that page or via:*

[www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow](http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow)

*With the retirement of the FEPOW secretary, there is a new e-mail address for enquiries:*

[fepow@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk](mailto:fepow@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk) It is primarily for all enquiries about our Annual Memorial Service.

*Peter Wiseman is still available for other enquiries about the books, visits and other FEPOW information at:*

[phandtmwiseman@gmail.com](mailto:phandtmwiseman@gmail.com)

*We are planning to hold the next FEPOW Memorial Service on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 12.30p.m. It would be helpful for interested attendees to communicate via this e-mail address to give us an idea of numbers and also update our circulation list since COVID.*

*The live stream is available at:*

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmPstVjBimy3N0oC3Zmln8g/videos?view=57>

*Having found the YouTube site, you may like to subscribe to our channel for easy access and bookmark it.*

*I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and Healthy New Year from Wymondham, with the hope to see you on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Signed: Peter Wiseman*

The events itemized on the following dates depend on the state of the COVID epidemic and our freedom of movement.

### MALAYSIA – June 2021. MPOA Commemoration Service in "God's Little Acre" Batu Gajah

Further details will be given in April, if this service is to be held this year.

### NMA – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2021. Annual V-J Day Service in the Chapel at 12 noon and MVG's Memorial Garden.

We are hoping that we will be able to hold this service in August, as usual.

### MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA – September 2021. Australian Nurses Centre

TBA

### LONDON – Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club – 12 noon to 5p.m.

Details to be announced in April.

### LONDON – November 2021. Cross Planting and Remembrance Sunday March in Whitehall.

### MALAYSIA – November 2021. Remembrance Services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang

### CANADA – November 2021. Armistice Day Service

### NMA – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.

## ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS – Please Note

Annual subscriptions are due in April, and we are keeping the rate at **£20** for a family membership for 2021-2022. We have been able to keep the same rate for next year thanks to the generosity of members who have sent donations in addition to their subscriptions.

The MVG is not a profit-making group. The funds collected are used to cover the cost of producing the quarterly newsletters and to sponsor projects in the Far East. This year we have donated funds towards the Long Nawang Memorial in Kuching and the Muntok Ambulance as well as sending money towards the cost of electricity in the Muntok Peace Museum.

Along with all banks, Barclays Bank, which holds the MVG's Account, has become stricter in accepting new payments in the form of bank drafts from abroad. It requires the full name in which the account is held, to be written on the payment as well as giving the sort code and account number.

If you are paying your subscription by cheque, please would you write the full name of the account as follows:

**Mrs. R.A. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group**

Enclosed is the subscription letter.

The restored plaque on the Memorial on Green Ridge at Kampar



Not shown to the right of the map:  
The British Battalion formed from the survivors of  
the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion East Surrey Regiment &  
1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment

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

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