

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**69th EDITION
JANUARY 2022**



**MVG Canada/USA Wreath
laid at the Veterans' Memorial Park
in Toronto on Armistice Day, 11th November 2021**

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

69TH EDITION
JANUARY 2022



MVG'S LUNCH TAKES PLACE IN LONDON AFTER A YEAR'S ABSENCE AND MEMBERS MARCH ON REMEMBRANCE DAY, TO LAY A WREATH. WREATHS ARE ALSO LAID IN CANADA AND MALAYSIA. WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR AND A RETURN TO NORMALITY IN 2022.

Annual Reunion and Luncheon.

It was good to see so many members enjoying meeting their friends once again at our Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club on Saturday 16th October 2021, after a 2-year absence due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite a change in venue from the Sovereigns' Room to the Battle of Britain Suite due to fewer members attending, nevertheless there was plenty of conversation and it was good to see old friends and meet new members attending for the first time. We were delighted that **Colin Hygate** was finally able to give his talk about his father, after a wait of 2 years. Entitled, "**Len Hygate, Accountant, Cricketer and Soldier. A Far East Adventure,**" we were all absorbed by his remarkable story which is still unfolding as **Colin** gathers more information about his father's wartime experiences and the history of "E" Force. With a slice of luck, and being in the right place at the right time, **Len Hygate** survived his time as a FEPOW in Sarawak. Firstly he was hospitalized with malaria and secondly on recovery, he was given light duties around the hospital instead of returning to his unit. This meant that he didn't travel to Labuan with the rest of "E" Force, where all the prisoners died as a result of Japanese brutality, and this saved his life.

The Battle of Britain Suite, where the lunch took place, is down in the basement of the RAF Club. It holds a maximum of 40 people for a sit down meal at one long table, but the venue is not conducive to easy movement in and around the table or in the small area outside the Suite where the bar was set up. The Club has also suffered from staff shortages during the pandemic and during its re-opening. As a result of this, the lunch was not quite up to its usual standard, and was somewhat disappointing. A report was sent to the Club stating our disappointment with the mushroom pate starter in particular.

We have booked the Sovereigns' Room for October 2022, and we hope our numbers will enable us to keep our booking for this hospitality room which is so much better than the Battle of Britain Suite.

Despite the lack of room, we thank **Mary Harris** and **Penny Dembrey** for selling the draw tickets and we thank our members for their generosity in raising a wonderful total of £205 for MVG funds. This money will be put towards the MVG's donation to the Muntok Peace Museum to pay for the electricity. A big thank you to everyone who brought a prize for the draw. There was a huge and interesting selection. Thanks also go to **Mary Harris** for helping to choose the draw tickets.

Before **Colin Hygate** gave his talk, members were given the final sum of money raised for the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum. It had come to our notice, quite by chance, that the Museum's overseas visitors had dried up due to the Covid travel restrictions early in 2021, and that they were receiving very few local visitors. As a privately owned and run company, they were finding it difficult to keep their experienced and loyal local staff with virtually no income. Many MVG members whose relatives worked on the Railway have received wonderful help and support from **Rod Beattie, Terry Manttan** and **Andrew Snow** in finding out which camps they were in and other details about their illnesses and burial sites if they died. It was felt that, in turn, we should try to support them and, as a result of our appeal for donations, a wonderful total of £27,750 has been sent to the TBRC, plus \$1,000 Australian Dollars from our members in Australia. This total includes donations from individual members of other FEPOW organizations and a £4,000 donation from the Birmingham FEPOW Association. It also includes a gift aided donation of £5,000 which raised an additional sum of £1,250.

Before the lunch, **Terry Manttan** had sent the following message in early October:

"Currently there is only Phuket open (limited and experimental) to international travellers and quarantine and very restricted movements apply. This is to be increased by 6 additional zones in November, not including our AREA. So early 2022 would seem to be the best we can expect although far from certain and then it will be slow. There will be no real improvement for us until unrestricted and free travel applies to our area and more countries open their international borders, plus people regain confidence to travel in large numbers.

Anyway, once again I want to thank you most sincerely on behalf of all our TBRC Team (including 5 Covid patients, all now recovered and thankfully none having been particularly sick) for your most excellent and quite amazing success in generating such a sizeable total in donations. Difficult to find adequate words but A HUGE THANK YOU!! The fundraising support in general has stretched beyond the UK and Australia to the USA, New Zealand and the Netherlands."

Rod, of course, is still in Australia where he has been since the start of the pandemic and he cannot return to Thailand until the travel restrictions are lifted.

Donation of money for a Bench

A donation of £500 sterling has been sent to **Judy Balcombe** as a contribution towards the purchase of a bench in memory of the civilians and Australian Army Nurses who died in POW camps in various locations in Sumatra. The bench is to be placed in the Menteng Pulo War Cemetery in Jakarta, with a plaque inscribed as follows:

*In Memory of the Civilians and Australian Army Nurses killed
After leaving Singapore, those killed on Radji Beach and
All prisoners in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau Camps.
Donated by Malayan Volunteers Group and Nurses' Families.*

[See P.35]

Annual Accounts – Please note this important message from our accountant:

“Several members have experienced difficulties setting up online payments to the Group’s UK Barclays Bank account this year. There has been a change in the UK banking system’s practice when setting up a new payee whereby the sort code and account number must match the first line/name of the account holder. The first line of the UK Barclays Bank account holder details is Mrs. R.A. Fell. MVG falls on the second line and therefore does not appear in the matching process. The correct details to achieve a match are given on the Income and Expenditure sheet.
The type of account is Personal – MVG is not considered by Barclays to be a business.”

Also please note that Barclays Bank has changed the **SWIFTBIC** and **IBAN** codes for the MVG bank account for those members paying in money from abroad. These are given in the enclosed leaflet about the Annual Subscriptions. Once again we are indebted to our Accountant **Miss Sara Haines**, who has audited the MVG accounts without charge to the Group. This is a very generous offer of her time and we are very appreciative. The Income and Expenditure Account is enclosed separately. A full set of accounts is available on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope. MVG funds are dependent on the annual collection of subscriptions and the kind donations from members. Members are reminded that subscriptions fall due in April, regardless of when you joined the Group. This year, we are trying a different approach to the collection of subscriptions which has become increasingly onerous. Subscriptions will be regarded as ‘donations’ to MVG funds, thus passing the onus of payment on to you – our members. Without your ‘donations’ the MVG cannot continue to exist. Members who have not paid their ‘donation’ by July will not be reminded, and their membership will be suspended until payment is received.

We hope this will remove some of the pressure of collecting subscriptions/donations and make the running of the Group easier. We are very grateful to those members who have set up standing orders to pay their subscriptions. These have to be set up by you with your bank. As reminded by our accountant, the MVG does not hold a business account and therefore cannot set up Direct Debits.

News in Brief.

On 18th October the Malaysian Sun Newspaper reported:

Kishida sends offering to Yasukuni shrine.

Tokyo: Japan’s new prime minister yesterday sent a ritual offering to the controversial Yasukuni shrine that honours the war dead but is seen by neighbouring countries as a symbol of Tokyo’s past militarism.

Fumio Kishida sent the *masakaki* tree offering under his name as prime minister to celebrate the shrine’s bi-annual festival held in the spring and autumn. Two of **Kishida’s** ministers also offered sacred trees.

Yasukuni honours 2.5 million war dead, mostly Japanese, who have perished since the late 19th Century. But the central Tokyo shrine also honours senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes by an international tribunal.

Earlier this year, three top ministers paid their respects at the shrine on the anniversary of Japan’s World War 11 surrender. But a Japanese prime minister has not appeared there since 2013, when **Shinzo Abe** sparked fury in Beijing and Seoul and earned a rare diplomatic rebuke from the US.

Kishida, who became Japan’s prime minister on 4th October, does not plan to visit the shrine during the two-day autumn festival Seoul urged Tokyo’s leaders to “squarely face history and show by action their humble introspection on and genuine self-reflection for the past history.”

Letter from Graham Lee.

Following receipt of the October 2020 newsletter, **Graham** sent this letter:

"Dear Rosemary,

I was very impressed by **David Croft’s** article in your last edition. I thought it a valuable addition to the history of the air aspect of the 1941-42 campaign in the Far East. **Mowbray Garden’s** assessment of the Buffalo reflects the recorded opinions of contemporary pilots there in 1941-42.

So why was this very deficient fighter selected by the RAF, one might ask?"

Graham goes on to say that he intends to write an article encompassing this and the history of the Buffalo (FZA).

BRITAIN’S FORGOTTEN WARS – MALAYAN EMERGENCY

Some of you may have watched this 6-part series on Channel 4, made by the Woodcut Media Company. The 5th part on the Malayan Emergency was shown on Saturday, 16th October. As with so many recent documentaries it was felt that the content was poor and somewhat misinformed, relying heavily on the information provided by Cambridge historian **Rachael Leow**. The programme missed out on the contribution made by the Police, Special Branch and the work involved with preventing the local population from helping the Communist Terrorists. **Jonathan Moffatt’s** report on P.7 was sent to **Kate Beal** the CEO of Woodcut Media on headed MVG notepaper, but no acknowledgement or reply has been received.

Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday in London – November 2021.

Both Armistice Day on 11th November, and Remembrance Sunday on the nearest Sunday to November 11th were remembered by MVG members – Armistice Day by our Canadian members and Remembrance Sunday in the UK, Malaysia and other parts of the world. But despite worldwide covid restrictions once again curtailing attendances at these services, wreaths were laid in memory of the Malayan Volunteer Forces in Canada, Malaysia and the UK. Before the covid pandemic affected our lives and limited our annual attendances at services to remember our loved ones in the time honoured way, the 75th anniversary of V-J Day in 2020 was to be MVG's last march at the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday. However, after last year's march was scaled down to a few selected marchers due to the Covid pandemic, it was decided that we would march once again in 2021, particularly as this was also the Royal British Legion's 100th Anniversary. Anno domini had caught up with several of our regular marchers, and for various reasons we were unable to fill our usual allocation of 12 tickets this year.

Sadly, the decision to march one more time proved to be a disappointment, to put it mildly, due to the extraordinary decisions made by the Royal British Legion Cenotaph Team. It has to be said that the organisation of the parade was, without doubt, a shambles. Why the RBL decided to change the previously well tried and tested format which worked is still a mystery. There were mistakes from start to finish, beginning with numerous incorrect details printed on tickets issued to MVG marchers and ending with the extraordinary arrangements for entry into Whitehall and on to Horse Guards Parade, resulting in a complete lapse in security issues on the day.

The e-tickets issued to 6 of our 7 marchers had incorrect details about the point of entry to the Parade and the Column letter. Despite pointing out the errors on the tickets several times, they were not corrected. However, as it turned out, the details proved to be irrelevant in the rush to get everyone into position on Whitehall by 11 o'clock.

At 8.15 a.m. **June Jackson** and her daughter **Heather Cox**, together with **Rosemary Fell** and **Jan Beranek**, walked from the RAF Club to join a huge queue in the Mall snaking in a great coil in front of Admiralty Arch. Instead of allowing us to enter Horse Guards Parade, as in previous years, through multiple 'gates' from Horse Guards Road, the RBL had decided to set up 1 point of entry to Horse Guards via a 'gate' in The Mall at the entrance to Horse Guards Road. Meanwhile, following the instructions on their e-tickets, **Mary Harris** and **Anthony Cooper** had joined another very long queue stretching back from the entrance to Whitehall almost to Charing Cross Station. Despite the long delay in getting into Whitehall, they were able to access Horse Guards through the Archway and joined us in time for the parade.

By 9.30 a.m. it was quite obvious that it would not be possible to process all the people still waiting in the queue through the one entrance onto Horse Guards, so they opened the barriers and told us to walk onto the Parade ground without any security checks of tickets or identity. This was fortunate for **Heather Cox**, who had her father's ticket, because it enabled her to march with us. By this time **Imogen Holmes** was already on Horse Guards having walked straight on to the Parade ground from St. James's Park without being challenged or asked to show her ticket or any identity.

Having collected our new Arm Bands (we still have 2 other sets) and radio identity badge, (so that the BBC could identify each group, but subsequently didn't manage to identify anyone!) we then proceeded to find our marker board in Column "D" as instructed. The numbered board allocated to the MVG said on it, "Burma Star Association." We found another board with a different number which said, "Malayan Veterans." We commandeered this board and changed the wording to "Malayan Volunteers Group" so that **Mary Harris** and **Anthony Cooper** would be able to find us in the chaos. As we were trying to get into line we were joined by 3 members of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, **Tony Parrini**, **Roger Hughes-Jones** and **Colin** (surname unknown) who were unable to find the NMBVA Group with which they should have been marching. Thus the MVG Group became 10 in number at this stage.

Shortly after 10 a.m. we were marched through the Archway into Whitehall and lined up in 2 lines of 5 marchers. Sadly we were nowhere near the Gurkhas who should have been marching in front of us.

As the guns boomed out and Big Ben struck 11 o'clock the Parade fell silent and came to attention for the 2 minutes silence. We watched on the big TV screens as the members of the Royal Family, led by HRH Prince Charles, laid their wreaths followed by the Prime Minister, members of the Government, Opposition and other Politicians. Sadly at this point **Rosemary Fell** felt unwell and had to leave the Parade together with **Mary Harris** who kindly offered to accompany her.

We were pleased that the MVG wreath was given to **Jan Beranek** to hand in at the Cenotaph. **Jan** had come over to London from Amsterdam for the march, and we were delighted that he could join us. After the Parade, the MVG contingent returned to the RAF Club for lunch, as our usual venue at Westminster Abbey was closed.

It was agreed that it had been a disappointing end to our attendance at the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday, but it has been decided that next year, the MVG will attend a service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields – the FEPOW Church – where we hope we can lay a wreath in memory of our fathers and other relatives who suffered as Far East Prisoners of War both military and civilian.

ARMISTICE DAY IN CANADA

Sallie Hammond sent this report:

During **World War 11** the Japanese Armed Forces captured nearly 140,000 Allied military personnel (from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the United States) in the Southeast Asia and Pacific areas. They became prisoners of war and were forced to engage in the hard labour of constructing railways, roads, airfields and other sites to be used by the Japanese Armed Forces in the occupied regions.

About 36,000 were transported to the Japanese Mainland to supplement the shortage of the work force, and compelled to work in the coal mines, mines, shipyards, munitions factories etc. By the time the war was over, a total of more than 30,000 POWs had died from starvation, diseases and mistreatment both within and outside of the Japanese mainland (Forces War Records).

On Remembrance Day, 11th November 2021, a wreath was laid at the Veterans' Memorial, Queens Park, Toronto on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group CANADA/USA to remember those who were victims of war during the Japanese Occupation in Malaya, 1942-1945.

Men, women and children, young and old Canadians of British, Australian, New Zealand, Dutch, Indonesian and Chinese heritage became prisoners of war of the Japanese. They suffered starvation, disease, terror, fear and extreme hardship in the camps. Many died.

Twenty six Canadians will be remembered for their stoicism and courage when they volunteered for the Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces in February 1942. They were captured by the Japanese Army in Singapore and sent to prisoner of war camps in Malaya, Sumatra and Thailand. Twenty survived the camps – six died in captivity. Their loved ones at home were unaware of their fate until the war was over.



REMEMBRANCE DAY IN PENANG

A report in the Star Metro said:

"About 20 members of Penang Veterans' Association (PVA) attended a wreath-laying Ceremony to honour fallen heroes who died defending the country during the wars. It was held at the Cenotaph (Penang War Memorial) at Esplanade in George Town. The event was in remembrance of those who had sacrificed their lives during World War 1, World War 11, Malayan Emergency, Indonesian Confrontation and other armed conflicts.

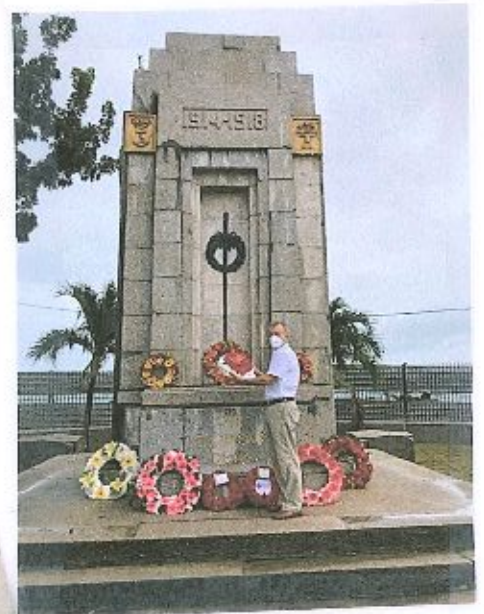
PVA president **Maj (R) R. Sivarajan** said that although the event was on a smaller scale due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was still significant, although it only involved a wreath-laying ceremony and a short speech.

At the Ayer Itam War Memorial Park, more than 100 people, including Chief Minister, **Chow Kon Yeow**, gathered to observe the Penang Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese War Memorial World Remembrance Day, held to remember the members of the armed forces who died during the Japanese Occupation."

We thank our secretary in Malaysia for laying a wreath on behalf of the MVG before Remembrance Sunday as he was unable to attend the ceremony due to the covid restrictions.

Richard Parry lays the wreath

MVG's wreath 2nd on the right



Penang Wreath
14th November 2021
Remembrance Sunday

WREATH LAYING AT TUGU NEGARA IN K.L.

We are grateful to **Leo and Liz Moggie** for attending the Remembrance Day service, arranged by **His Excellency Charles Hay MVO** at Tugu Negara, and for laying the wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces. Also present at the service, representing Australia, was the Australian Defence Attache – and MVG member – **Michael Doncaster**.

Leo and Liz Moggie after laying the wreath



The service sheet not only contained the order of service but also gave other poignant information. At the beginning of the booklet was the 'Story of the Poppy.' Then came the order of service which contained various well known readings associated with Remembrance, including the poem, "The Soldier" by **Rupert Brooke** and the verse from "The For the Fallen" by **Robert Lawrence Binyon**.

At the end of the service there were 4 short articles. The first was in memory of 80 years since: 'The Start of the Malayan Campaign 1941-42' Then came a reminder of the work of **Sir Fabian Ware** in establishing "The Commonwealth War Graves Commission."

Thirdly, a reminder that it is 80 years since "The Sinking of HMS PRINCE OF WALES & HMS REPULSE." And finally the gallantry of **Dato' Awang anak Rawang GC** during the Malayan Emergency was recorded, "in memory of a Local Hero."

Leo and Liz Moggie with a group of retired servicemen after the Service and Michael Doncaster (rt)



REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 14th NOVEMBER 2021

On Horse Guards with the marker board
Imogen Holmes and Rosemary Fell



Moving through the Archway into
Whitehall



MVG members assemble in Whitehall



Tony Parrini and Jan Beranek salute
as they pass The Cenotaph



Rosemary Fell with MVG's wreath



After the march – l to r Imogen Holmes,
Heather Cox, Mary Harris, Rosemary Fell,
June Jackson & Jan Beranek



The FEPOW Plot – Garden of Remembrance



BRITAIN'S FORGOTTEN WARS – MALAYAN EMERGENCY EPISODE [UK Channel 4 TV]
Report by Jonathan Moffatt

From time to time the Malayan Volunteers Group is asked to provide TV documentary researchers with information and potential interviewees relating to British Malaya. Invariably the outcome is disappointing from our point of view and so it was with the Malayan Emergency episode of 'Britain's Forgotten Wars' which was full of misinformation and insinuations. I think it is still important to put our message out there, though some may feel enough is enough and we can't hope for sensible, objective Historical documentaries in the present 'Woke' media climate.

I thought the main culprit for this in the Malayan Emergency programme was University of Cambridge revisionist historian **Rachael Leow**, not just in what she said but what she failed to say. She made no clear mention of the horrors of the Japanese Occupation, nor of the many Communist atrocities committed against the civilian population. On the murder of the first three British planters she said "it was 'probably' a planned execution," and gave credence to the notion that **Chin Peng** had nothing to do with it. She spoke of the British 'disproportionate response' to these killings, making no mention of the many political killings by the Communists of Chinese KMT supporters, two on the same day as the three planters were murdered. These had a big impact on the British response for there was a lot of public pressure to deal with the issue. There was no mention of the many other European planters and miners killed and the hundreds of estate workers, Malayan Police etc. She took the view that the murdered **High Commissioner Gurney** was not targeted – having read the Police report on the subject and other statements, I'm certain he was. Had **Dr. Leow** read such Intelligence documents?

Tony Robinson spoke of the Emergency in his introduction as 'Britain's Vietnam' and later of there being 'no winners' when the whole point was that the CTs were defeated by British/Malayan Forces. Early in the programme both he and **Dr. Leow** gave the impression of majority Chinese support for the CTs – news to me. The Batang Kali atrocity was rightly mentioned. **Tony Robinson** spoke of the British "subjugating the 'Malay' people" – [the New Villages intended to deny the Communists in the jungle their food supply etc. from the 'Min Yuen' at the jungle's edge, were compared to Concentration Camps] then **General Templar** from 1952 winning them over 'by kindness.' Really? **Templar** was more a 'stick and carrot' man – friendly but could be tough on uncooperative locals and officials – ask the citizens of Tanjong Malim collectively punished by him after the ambush in which **Michael Codner MCS** and others were killed. Of course poor **Tony Robinson** wasn't to know this – he looked to be reading from a prepared script – but researchers and historians should have done their homework.

I think only the British national servicemen describing the conditions they fought in had any authenticity. Even then one RAF man (**Don Brereton**) was identified as being in the British Army and aircraft shown were from a different era. Quoting **David Croft** (RAFBPA), "*An RAF Javelin was shown alongside the RAAF Lincoln bombers – the Javelins first saw action in the Indonesian Conflict in the 1960s. The Emergency RAF fighters were Tempests to start with and the Hornets. Simple errors that could have been easily corrected in the research stage.*"

It is disappointing that the defence of plantations and families on them – our main input – was given nil coverage despite plenty of interesting material being presented to the researcher. To quote the son of a planter: "I had geared myself up with memories/pics/anecdotes ready for the call – which never came ... Failure to acknowledge the many 'unsung' hero planter deaths is troubling for me. Altogether a disappointing experience.

Other comments received:

Jonathan's report raises many points covered by 'real' people and books on the subject. I also noted his comments about Associate Professor **Rachael Leow**, which in general agrees with what others have said about her input. I read her career profile (Cambridge University) – she is a Malaysian citizen and her subject is, in general, South Asian Chinese. I feel she is very much a product of those who believe Malaysian history only starts from 1957 ... her age also puts her into the 'New Malaya' category following Independence. The programme also missed out on the contribution made by the Police, especially the Police Field Force, Special Branch (secret messages, wireless 'modifications' etc.) and the work involving knowing the mindset of the CTs through the distribution of leaflets by air and the use of aerial loud speaker aircraft ... to mention only a few of the tactics used to defeat those in the jungle.

The report on **Sir Henry Gurney's** assassination (printed in A.K. 67) was sent to the researcher. It is obvious from the report that the ambush was well-planned at a bend in the narrow hill road, hidden by jungle. At the time it was well known that there was a CT 'mole' within the **Gurney's** domestic staff – possibly a Hainanese cook. When the woollies were taken out of camphor wood chests to air, everyone knew the Gurneys were going to a Hill Station. As for the 'Concentration Camps' [New Villages] – they were indeed no holiday camps. The Chinese mostly wanted to get on with their lives – unless they were genuine Commie supporters when they were fighting the Japanese. Yes, the war was initially begun to support the British mining and plantation investments, but it was fortunate for the country that they did.

SECRET RADIOS

With thanks to Dave Croft MA [RAF BPA]

Part 2: continued from April 2021 (with apologies for the gap in completion) Kuching. Hurricane pilot **Sgt. J.P. Fleming** (Royal Canadian Air Force) of 605 Squadron was captured on Java and ended up at Batu Lintang (Kuching) POW Camp in Borneo. He said of the camp, which housed both POWs and civilian internees, that the majority of the prisoners of war were forced to work on the aerodrome building new landing strips and dock facilities at Kuching, and also laying keels for new ships. They were forced to work from 7 o'clock in the morning until 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. Three British officers were strong characters and as the Japs left the running of the camp pretty much in their hands, it was well run, conditions being comparatively good. **Sgt. Fleming** took on the role of being the officer responsible for the security of the receiver until the camp was liberated.



Len Beckett with his radio & generator

The Batu Lintang POW radio receiver was built, and operated, by RAF Corporal **Leonard Beckett**, who was assisted by others in the construction, operation and concealment of the set throughout the duration of captivity. The radio was constructed from scrap materials obtained from a variety of sources and completed within four weeks. During the period of assembling the two valve radio, the components were hidden in a cooking pot, and on completion buried in a biscuit tin. At times, one of the temporary hiding places was in a false bottomed table in the stores.

In March 1943, electricity to the POW compound ceased, and the loss of electricity meant an alternative source of power had to be found. – batteries were, or would be, unavailable, so **Leonard** decided to build a generator from material provided willingly by RAOC POWs. The construction of the generator was unwittingly aided by the Japanese who provided tools for the 'watch repair factory.' The generator (handcranked?) was a success from the beginning.

Freedom. On 5th September 1945, towards the end of the surrender ceremony, when **Major General Eastick** (Commander of the Australian Kuching Force) accepted the sword of surrender from **Lt. Col. Tatsuji Suga**, it was said that **Cpl. Len Beckett** stepped forward and placed the 'secret' radio and generator in front of both parties – apparently **Suga** was not amused! He committed suicide on 16th September. (1945 Ref: AWM).

Following the surrender, Japanese soldiers were held in Batu Lintang Camp and a return by a previous internee, **Mr. J.B. Archer**, Chief of Section, Sarawak Civil Service, led to the comment that *'it was difficult not to feel aggrieved about the good treatment they were receiving compared with what we had received at their hands. Their lunch of fried rice, fish, vegetables and dried fruit was shown to me. This, I was told, was just an ordinary sample.'*

Makasser POW Camp – Java. This account is by **Ft. Lt. B.J. (Jerry) Parker** (232/242 RAF Squadrons).

"A large number of the RAF officers were either recent enlistments into the Air Force from civilian life as engineers or planters in Malaya or new recruits from England. One pilot officer under training as an air controller had been a bank official until three weeks before he'd been put aboard a ship for Singapore. Our first camp at Semplak was in an enormous farmhouse near the airfield and there were 50 RAF officers and 300 airmen... (incarcerated there.)"

Sqn.Ldr. Ivon Julian RNZAF; Ft. Lt. 'Doc' Morgan (previously SMO RAF Kallang); **Pilot Officers Ernie Gartrell RNZAF, Reg Bainbridge RAF, Jeff Skinner** (RAF Signals Officer), **Mike Fitzherbert RAF** and *I had a stone-floored room to ourselves. The next room, a much larger one, was occupied by eight senior officers including Wing Commander Alexander. One of our officers, Pilot Officer MacDonald, had studied the Japanese language sufficiently well to be able to help in the interpretation of the Camp Commandant's wishes when he held discussions with the Wing Commander. He was something of a portly academic, although portliness was not an attribute he was able to maintain much longer, and apt to attract to himself rather more authority than he actually possessed."*

The next camp was Makasser...a transit camp where POWs were 'posted off' to the far reaches of the Japanese empire. At Semplak, **Pilot Officers Skinner and Fitzherbert** started the construction of a radio receiver using small dry batteries and acorn valves retrieved from their sabotaged Hurricanes at Tasikmalaja. Other components were obtained from Dutch POW arrivals at Makasser and a soldering iron was obtained from the airmen making model aircraft out of crashed aircraft duralumin. The batteries didn't last very long so **Jeff Skinner** constructed '*a transformer system and plugged it into the mains after the (mosquito) nets were up every night.*'

News from the BBC in 1942 was '*generally discouraging, but at least it was real...we were aware that this true world news would reach the NCOs and men, but we were really anxious that the reality of the radio was not generally known.*' **Jeff** also constructed (at Makasser) a radio small enough to fit into a water bottle which contained a separate compartment for water. When operated the radio was tuned into the station using a small screwdriver with **Jeff and Jerry (Parker)** sharing the earphones, one (**Jeff**) for tuning into the broadcasting station, then other (**Jerry**) for making notes.

The radio was carried and used in Makasser until the camp was closed down and the POWs moved to Boei Glodok, taking their radio in one water bottle and earphones and power pack in others.

Changing Camps. In early 1944, all were moved to a camp at Tandjong Priok where changes in concealing the radio were made. POW clogs had, by this time, become fairly sophisticated and **Mike** being handy with tools, carved a pair of clogs '*deep enough to accommodate two earphones in the heels and the power pack and radio in the soles.*' Also, through the Senior British Officer in the camp, the three of us became nominal American citizens and moved into the small American sub-camp, which was, more or less, a guard-free zone!

Subsequently, a large aerial was erected and the broadcast station at San Francisco came through! At the last camp for the duration (Cycle Camp, August 1945) the radio was operated from the camp storehouse each night around 10 p.m. On one evening, after being delayed by a sentry for a few minutes, '*Ernie and I locked ourselves into the storehouse and tuned into London. We found the reception poor and, having been delayed by the sentry, we were a few minutes late. I left before dawn as usual for the bakery and noticed no changes from our guards and had to wait until my return to Cycle Camp on the following morning for the news of the atom bomb which had been dropped.*'

For all POWs and civilian internees, the end of the war saved many lives, especially notable was that of **Sqn. Ldr. Julian** who, after leaving Makasser, had travelled a number of tortuous journeys from Java to eventually arrive at Mukden in Manchuria, close to Harbin where germ warfare experiments (Unit 371) were performed. **Ivon Julian** was next on the list! (Ref: "Aces High and Hurricanes over Singapore.")

References:

1. A.W.H. Phillips MBE: 1914-1975 Economic Record 51(3) 1975
2. Bill Phillips: Remarkable Economist, a Remarkable Life. 2009
3. Buffaloes over Singapore. 2003
4. Construction of Radio Equipment in a Japanese POW Camp. 1995
5. Hurricanes over Singapore. 2004
6. Last Stand in Singapore – 488 Squadron RNZAF. 2008
7. The Japanese Occupation of Borneo 1941-45. 2011.
8. The Radio Handbook. 1946

POW Camp Bandoeng



Len Beckett showing his radio equipment to senior allied officers post-war



THE NAKON PATHOM INCIDENT
Translating and Interpreting in Thailand POW Camps
An account by John Hay

John's Introduction:

*I am trying to compile an account of how, in the Thailand POW camps, some news of the war was learnt by translating newspapers, Chinese, Japanese and Thai, that were brought into the camps. It's part of the larger story of how individual POWs, with their individual backgrounds, used their various skills to further the common interest, helping all their companions to stay sane. Reading newspapers was not as dramatic as hiding radios nor perhaps, initially, as dangerous. I concentrate on it because of my father's history and would be very grateful for any further information. This particular story culminated in what may be called (thanks to **A.E. Nellie's** accounts) the Nathon Pathom Incident.*

*To summarise – this is what I have learned and I have listed the names of all the POWs whom I know were involved. Many thanks go to Keith Andrews, John Pollock and Mike Nellis who have already been so helpful. A different kind of thank you is for eight extraordinary POW friends who contacted my mother after the war: **G.M. "Tiger" Coltart; Percy McNeice; Eric Nonweiler; Arther Jordan; P.N. Knight; A. Noel Ross; Ronald Tytherleigh Wait; R.P.S. Walker** and a Major in the R.A. c/o The Conservative Club, St. James's Street, London, whose name I have been unable to read. Eight ex-POWs, each of whom, in the maelstrom of the war's ending, separately sought to contact the widow of a friend who had died in captivity, and who subsequently more or less disappeared from sight in the enormous chaos that enveloped so many people immediately thereafter.*

There were a number of POWs who knew Chinese. Probably most of them had been trained in the Malayan Civil Service. In particular (in order of age), **Arthur Jordan, Alistair Hay, Jim Rea, Percy McNeice** and **Robin Band**. The attempt to glean information from Japanese newspapers began at Changi. **McNeice** described this: "We used to get bits of news – this Japanese paper that was printed in English, you know, in Singapore, that used to be brought in. And if you read it carefully, and then occasionally a name would be mentioned and if you thought about it, you could draw some conclusions and we used to have these discussions. And I remember I used to have a little group and we used to say: 'Well, the Japanese wouldn't have printed so and so if it didn't mean something.'"

More unusual were those, often not in the Civil Service, with a knowledge of Thai, such as **Walter Pollock**, and of Japanese (**Tytherleigh Wait**). Many of these, perhaps because they had been captured as Volunteer Soldiers, were shipped to Thailand together. The POWs at Changi had evidently been re-organised into their original units after the chaos of capture.

Hay, McNeice, Pollock and **Band** left on 28th October 1942, and all had finished up at Kanyu 2 by early 1943. **Wait** was not shipped until "H" Force in May 1943. So it was probably at Kanyu 2 that their translation activities started, as a way to back up news gained from the wireless. There must have been newspapers available in Thai and Chinese, locally published for civilians and Japanese, and for the army. I would like to know (but I am not optimistic) exactly what newspapers were read, so as to find out what news was learned.

A note on languages: The peculiarities of the translation work arose from the peculiarities of the languages. All three belong to entirely different language families. All three can be spoken without having any idea how to read or write them. Chinese and Japanese can be read with little or no ability to speak. Thai can be read only if its phonetic script (or its sources) is known. For Chinese, every single word is a distinct character and must be learned individually. Phonetic Japanese (i.e. kana) can be written and read fairly easily once 52 symbols have been learned. But each Japanese kanji must be learned separately.

Thai is related to some other Southeast Asian languages and is written in a phonetic script derived from South Asian forms. Chinese forms its own family and is written in an ideographic (not pictorial) script that had reached its essentially modern form by around the 1st century A.D. Japanese also seems to define its own family, although origins in the Altaic and relations with other Pacific languages have been suggested. The Japanese language is entirely and profoundly different from Chinese but, since originally Japan had no script, it had begun to borrow the Chinese written language by the 5th century A.D. Unfortunately, Chinese written forms were seriously unsuitable. To begin with, Japanese borrowed Chinese characters, meanings plus pronunciation (now called kanji). Then it began to use Chinese characters as phonetic elements to represent Japanese words and sounds. This happened in several stages and, as a result there can be up to four different ways to pronounce a kanji in Japanese today. The Chinese characters adapted as phonetic elements are called kana. There are two kana syllabaries (each symbol represents a sound rather than a letter). Hiragana is used to represent native Japanese sounds. Katakana is used to represent non-Japanese sounds. Up until WW11, the Japanese language used a very large number of kanji. Since WW11, the number of kanji has been much reduced. Thus, up until WW11, someone who could read Chinese could, if they had a teacher or a lot of ingenuity and energy, learn to read a Japanese newspaper.

Japan had humiliated China in the 1890s (acquiring Taiwan among other prizes). It invaded Manchuria in 1931 and opened full-scale war on China in 1937. Virtually every Chinese hated the Japanese. In Western (Nationalist) China, Japan was the enemy. Many Chinese lived in Thailand and Chinese newspapers were published there but they would have been subject to Japanese control. Thailand was very suspicious of Western nations, being flanked on the west and south by English colonies and by French colonies to the east. To begin with, Thais were understandably either neutral or even pro-Japanese (as were also, for similar reasons, the Burmese, formerly under British rule). But much news could be gleaned from all these newspapers, although much interpretation was also necessary. Since even knowledge of war news was a reason for great suspicion by the Japanese, since wireless was the obvious source, and since the Japanese frequently searched for radios and being discovered with one was generally fatal, reading newspapers was obviously a good alternative, if they could be read. The Japanese in general did not even suspect that Westerners might be able to read Chinese or Japanese. The experiences of those like **Wait**, I believe, who already knew Japanese, would be very interesting to hear about.

The issues of language had already arisen in Changi, in relation to self-education, as men began to exchange their individual skills, and as initial efforts were made to understand Japanese newspapers (I do not know whether **Wait** worked on newspapers – I think I have seen a reference to his work as an interpreter?) **Hay** had fallen ill on the way up to Kanyu 2 and, when he rejoined his friends, brought with him a small Japanese dictionary that he was delighted to have found.

It seems, therefore, that **Band**, **Hay** & **McNeice** formed a translation team in Kanyu 2. But many of them were in poor health, the older men especially (**Hay** was already 44) and on 30th March, 1943, **McNeice** was moved to Chungkai. On 4th April, 1943, **Hay** also was invalided back to Chungkai. A statement by **A. Noel Ross** notes that, at Chungkai, **Hay** continued translating newspapers "at great risk to himself." Later recollections by **McNeice** confirm that the Kanyu team reconstituted itself for the year they were in Chungkai.

Max and **William Webber**, brothers from pre-war employment in Malaya, operated a radio in Chungkai. **McNeice** remembered that "we were ... so careless ... the news was sent round to us in the form of a written news sheet headed 'BBC News' with the date." A group of them was discovered reading such a sheet by a Korean guard. The sheet was resting in a hymn book and the men immediately started singing a hymn. The guard eventually retired in confusion.

McNeice was moved to Tha Muang on 28th May, 1944. **Band** must have gone with him, since **McNeice** recollected that the two of them continued to translate Japanese newspapers there. There was also a radio, so news from the two sources could be compared. On 27th January, **McNeice** was moved to Kanburi. There was still a radio there, but the Japanese were by now stricter that even, confiscating paper and pencils to prevent the circulation of news.

Jim Rea left a record that, in June, 1944, **Hay** was moved to Nakon Pathom when it was opened as a hospital camp. By now, the radio as a source for news was increasingly unavailable (**E.E. Dunlop** notes that, after he had been worked over by the Kempeitai, he had passed his radio to **Clive Wallis**.) Whether it was operating at Nakon Pathom, I don't know. (**Wallis** seems to have been a Medical Corps Major, a letter written by **Hay** to **G.M. Coltart** three weeks before **Hay** died states that "**Wallis** is pretty fit." I don't know whether this is the same person.) But the Japanese, as their military situation worsened in Burma at last, as well as in the Pacific, were often even more severe than before and became even more determined that no news at all should reach POWs. Equivalently, once there was knowledge of the Normandy landings on 6th June, 1944, POWs must have finally foreseen the first incontrovertible hope of release and become even more desperate for news. Newspapers were by now more strictly forbidden. It seems that **Hay** very soon became involved in translating.

A Dutch POW, **Mark Van der Valk**, arrived in Nakon Pathom on 20th August, 1944. As a scholar of Chinese, he was immediately introduced to **Hay**, who already had a Chinese newspaper "kept under the blotter of his desk" (a surprising image!) "Soon afterwards," their reading of Chinese novels was replaced by Chinese newspapers, "which then began to come in more frequently." **Hay** "had also acquired quite a lot of Japanese, enough to read a paper at least." The two of them would co-operate on translation and together issue a 'communiqué.' Some accounts hint at a third person. The earlier painful experience had taught them to be very careful about revealing any knowledge of outside news. The communiqué was passed to hut commanders and they, after a delay, would disseminate it more widely. Writing anything down was forbidden by the POWs themselves.

During the Allied advance through France, **Bryan Young(?)** looked at the maps, **Bryan Green**, **Eric Nonweiler**, **O'Reilly** (first name?), **George** (half-American born in the Philippines) and others "in the neighbourhood" took part. **Van der Valk** wrote that he never really knew from where the paper came, perhaps thrown over the fence. But other accounts, although not entirely consistent, are more informative. At some point, **Hay** had been placed in the "Dying Hut," part of the hospital complex where those with little hope of recovery were allowed, in the words of **A.E. Nellis** "to sleep and pass away in as dignified a manner as possible." An advantage of this area was that the Japanese were generally reluctant to penetrate, and illicit activities were consequently safer.

I am not sure how long **Hay** was in this hut (and therefore how long the translation enterprise was centred there), for in some reports he sounds very active, at least intellectually. **Van der Valk** records that a Japanese guard who liked to come in to play chess was "allocated" to another POW whose job it was to pin him down in a game. The remarkable Canadian surgeon and man of considerable learning, **Jacob Markowitz**, worked in this section and used to visit **Hay** to discuss Greek and Latin verse. I now wonder whether **Hay** had been deliberately moved to the "Dying Hut" in order to isolate the work of translating newspapers. **McNeice's** recollections suggest that this may already have been the case in Chungkai. However, in late September, **Hay** did, in fact, fall seriously ill with malaria and pneumonia. In October, this news-gathering enterprise, perhaps the final organised effort, came to grief. One account, that of **A.E. Nellis**, relates that two Australian Privates, **Wellock** and **Price**, had gone outside the camp and were bringing back newspapers. Probably their purposes were multiple, including cashing a cheque for an officer **Lt. Col. Parker**. According to one account, the Australian soldier(s) was/were caught by the Thai police. According to another, someone had informed the Japanese.

A roll-call was called in the middle of the night, including all the hospital patients. **Major Finch-White**, unable to account for the missing men, was beaten up on the parade ground and had an eardrum broken. **Lt. Col. Parker**, described as an instigator of the events in one account, and probably implicated at once by having given one of the soldiers a cheque to be cashed outside the camp, "took the blame for everything." Referred to by **Hayward** as "the indomitable **Parker**," he was sent to Bangkok and sentenced to five years hard labour. **Hayward** says that "we never saw him again." **Wellock** and **Price**, badly beaten to start with, were then sentenced to life imprisonment.

It seems that the unfortunate results of the Australian soldiers' arrest, although dire, were initially limited in scope to the matter of unauthorized absence and the cashing of a cheque. However, since the purchased newspapers were linked to the news-gathering service, and since everyone knew of the terrible consequences when other such work had been uncovered, a good many people were extremely worried. According to **Nellis**, it also seems that, in a search provoked by the arrests, a piece of paper was discovered on which someone, against orders, had written down an item from the news service, and that it was this that, belatedly, brought in the Kempeitai, the Military Gendarmerie. The Kempeitai put two and two together. Several people were brought under suspicion and interrogated, including **Van der Valk**, **Roland Lyne** and probably others.

Providentially, **Hay** had fallen into a coma and at 1.30 a.m. on 21st October, 1944, he died, perhaps on the very night that the operation was discovered. There was an immediate agreement to identify him as entirely responsible. As a result, there was no further persecution. **Lyne** wrote, "I believe the plan worked and I was relieved that my evidence was accepted without the usual 3rd degree accompaniment." **Hayward** wrote that the procession at **Hay's** funeral was the longest he saw for any POW. Apart from any other factors, I would like to read this as an indication of how important the acquisition of outside news was to the POW community, and as an acknowledgement to all who had been involved in the efforts to achieve this. The translation of newspapers actually went on for another month or so. **Van der Valk** wrote that fresh newspapers were awaiting them when they returned from **Hay's** funeral. By December, however, according to **A.E. Nellis**, POWs were left only with verbal reports from Thais and Chinese. **Hayward** wrote that **Hay** had also been acting as a camp interpreter, to the stress of which he partially attributed his death. For someone coming from knowledge of the kanji, learning to converse usefully in Japanese, oddly enough, would be much more complicated than learning to read it. Japanese is a highly inflected language (achieved by the kana), unlike Chinese, in which the characters are impossible to modify. Functioning extensively as an interpreter would have been possible only after considerable experience.

The role of interpreters differed from that of translators, less dangerous but perhaps more stressful. If they came from the Japanese side, they were sometimes more inclined than their Japanese officers to understand the values of the POWs. If they came from the POW side, they were forced to stand a kind of No-man's land, often in a position to help their own but also open to attack from both sides. I have not seen any other references to **Hay's** work as an interpreter and would very much like to know more about this aspect (and that of interpreters in general).

Hayward apparently wrote that, as a result of this incident, the officers were sent to form an officers' camp at Kanburi. I think it is more likely that the Japanese already had other reasons for doing this. I would very much like to know what happened to **Wellock**, **Price**, **Finch-White** and **Parker**.

WEBSITES

[https://www.britain-at-war.org.uk/ww2/Death Railway/html/nakon_pathom_incident.htm](https://www.britain-at-war.org.uk/ww2/Death%20Railway/html/nakon_pathom_incident.htm) - Nakon Pathom Incident

<https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-naval-evacuation-of-singapore-february-1942/> - Naval Evacuation of Singapore -1942

<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/one-womans-war-and-another-ottawa-womans-search-for-the-complicated-truth?fbclid=IwAR3HiPpuV9R4CNth5wJROuSKWeTlc4kvuixJ1dfN59RcJiqSk0EnhPvtdo> One

Woman's War – Canadian Ethel Mulvany

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/12/29/kuala-dipang-iron-bridge-site-of-fierce-battle-during-wwii-to-be-made-part-of-kinta-valley-geopark> - Kuala Dipang Iron Bridge

PALEMBANG, SOUTH SUMATRA, P.O.W. CAMP
THE NEWS SERVICE -- By "Mata Hari"
From POW-WOW Magazine No: 3 June 1952

During 1942 and early 1943 the P.O.W.s. in Palembang were all concentrated in schools and buildings in the town area. Electric power was available and it was not long before radio receiving sets were in operation. This state of affairs was far too dangerous and all sets, except one, were destroyed. Not long after Christmas 1942 a friendly Japanese soldier told a Japanese speaking British Officer that the Japanese Military Police had information about the one set still working and strongly advised its immediate destruction. Some of the people concerned were willing to take a chance as they felt that once the set was destroyed it might never be possible to replace it. However, on previous occasions this same Japanese soldier had given information about searches which had proved to be accurate and the Camp Commander ordered that the set should disappear at once. It was fortunate that the order was carried out because that very night the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) descended on the Camp and went straight to the place where the set had been concealed only a few hours previously - up among the rafters of the building. How they got the information nobody knows but it was accurate enough. Only four men knew where the set was concealed, as far as could be ascertained, and they would not have given the information to the Japanese willingly as they were the operators. There was a theory that one of the operators had talked in his sleep while the suspected pro-Japanese fellow listened. What is more probable is that the Japs found the set by some sort of listening device.

On the formation of a new Camp in the jungle where no electric power was available and batteries could not be obtained, the news service failed completely apart from wild rumours brought in by the troops who had been working along with the Indonesian coolies at the docks. Unfortunately, many men believed these stories although to anybody with the most elementary ideas of geography they were obviously untrue and quite impossible. When rumour had had American and Australian troops within 100 miles of Palembang for several weeks and yet there was no sign of anything happening, the believers began to realise that they had been fooled and the reaction was rather sad to see. Many men just wilted and literally gave up the ghost. However, the crops of rumours came in waves and there were always believers in spite of warnings to the men by their officers and N.C.O.s. It is the opinion of the writer that many of the stories were started by the Japanese for the sole purpose of breaking morale as they knew that would be the ultimate effect.

Eventually, and owing to the obstinacy and stupidity of a Japanese officer, news began to come in again. It happened in this way. The Camp had to provide work parties for the Japanese Army stationed in the district and the work consisted of unloading ships, moving heavy stores, machinery and weapons, driving and repairing cars or trucks, cleaning out barracks and every possible kind of manual labour which the Japanese thought might be done better by our troops than by local coolies. One evening the Japanese Headquarters asked for a working party of six expert radio mechanics. Somebody thought very quickly and informed the Japs that there were no such men in the Camp, although, in fact, there were at least a dozen whose skill in that line was of the highest. The Japs were told that there were plenty of ordinary mechanics but that their knowledge of radio was almost nil. Then the Japs became obstinate and made an order that six experts would parade in front of the Guard Room on the following morning.

Six really good men were picked out, one of whom was a highly qualified engineer, previously employed by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. The party was taken in a truck to the H.Q. of one of the Army Units and there shown a heap of radio sets which they were ordered to repair. The play was carried on and they explained to the Japs that they did not know much about that sort of work but the whip was cracked and they were ordered to get on with the work. They removed the 'innards' from one of the sets and in a short time the room was strewn with wire and all the other component parts of a radio receiver. What the Japanese did not know was that the set, in spite of its scattered look, was actually receiving within a very few minutes and the Australian (he was a sergeant) was making mental notes of all the important items - obviously he could not write down anything. After about three days the set was re-assembled and the Japanese were delighted to find it in working order and rewarded the men with extra food and cigarettes.

This party continued on the same lines for months and months and brought back the news faithfully every night. It was not until a War Crimes Trial in Singapore in 1946, that the Japanese ever knew that the Camp was getting real news, apart from that issued in the English editions of the *Singapore Times* or the *Nippon Times* which were sometimes supplied to the Camp as propaganda.

One great difficulty was to pass the news to the men in the Camp without causing any danger to the men who were risking their lives to get it. Apart from the working party only four others in the Camp knew from where the news was coming. The sentries wandered in and out of the huts at all hours of the day and night

and they had sharp ears. Many of the men had loud voices and some were lacking in common sense and would think nothing of shouting to a pal at the other end of the hut, "That's good news about Tobruk, isn't it?" or similar remarks bringing in the names of places in the battle areas which were probably known to the Japanese or Koreans. This was got over, as far as possible, by withholding all news for some days so that if it was talked about and the guards did hear, the excuse could be tried that some Indonesian coolie had mentioned it on a working party. The above mentioned English versions of the Japanese papers also helped as they mentioned place names.

The Japanese interpreter was cunning and he strongly suspected that the Camp was getting news and often tried to trip up the officers with whom he talked by means of trick questions. The safest course with him as always to say, "I don't read the *Nippon Times* because it is propaganda and I don't listen to rumours." Perhaps it was fortunate that his false pride would not allow him to cross question some of the more ignorant types who might have been led into talking about things of which they were supposed to know nothing.

The worst time came when a few in the Camp knew that Japan had capitulated but which news had to be kept from everybody except the few in the inner ring. The Japanese made no sign and the working parties continued. The guards beat up the prisoners as usual. There was no let-up. Under the circumstances it was quite impossible to risk letting the cat out of the bag as some foolhardy characters might have been stupid and lost their own lives as well as those of others.

However, after several days of mental torture the Japs announced that the war was over. It transpired later that the reason for the delay was that they were making up their minds whether to fight on in Sumatra and Java which would have meant the murder of all prisoners.

This account ended with a joke aimed at the Japanese guards:

Scene - A F.E.P.O.W. Camp Jap - "All men number!!"

Thirteen Gentlemen in G-Strings - "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, Jack, Queen, King!"

Jap - "O.K. Ka!"

SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE THE LOSS OF HMS PRINCE OF WALES AND HMS REPULSE

Report by Bob Hall

This year marked the 80th anniversary of the loss of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, Britain's capital ships from WW2. The ships were destroyed on 10th December 1941 by Japanese aircraft, with the loss of over 800 men. Many of the survivors were eventually captured and became prisoners of war in the Far East.

At the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, we assembled for the midday Memorial Service.

We were honoured to have two survivors with us, Royal Marine **Jim Wren** from HMS Repulse and Royal Navy **George Pulford** from HMS Prince of Wales both being 101 years old. We were also joined by a contingent from the new aircraft carrier, HMS Prince of Wales, which carries the former ship's name. The **Reverend Dr. Mark Davison**, Chaplain from HMS Prince of Wales began the service with the hymn, "I Vow to Thee, My Country" followed by a reading of Psalm 23. After prayers the service ended with the hymn, "Eternal Father Strong to Save."

The ship's bell from HMS Repulse was temporarily installed in the Chapel and Royal Marine **Jim Wren** gave it two sounding rings before we left to continue 'The Act of Remembrance' which was held at the Memorial Stone, a short distance from the Chapel.

The weather was cold but dry except for a sprinkling of rain as we congregated around the Memorial Stone. Here the Chaplain reminded us of those who had served and those who had lost their lives from both ships. Then, as we stood in silence to remember them, a lone bugler played "The Last Post" followed by "Reveille."

Finally wreaths were laid, firstly by the granddaughter of **Captain Leach** from HMS Prince of Wales, followed by family and friends.

At the close of the ceremony, we participated in the customary tradition of receiving a 'tot of rum' before returning for refreshments where we enjoyed a relaxed time of fellowship together.



ESCAPE FROM PENANG – DECEMBER 1941 – By Tony Cave-Penny

Tony writes: Eighty years since my escape! I am sending the attached account because at noon on 13th December 1941, my mother and I were embarked on a ferry in Penang harbour at the start of our escape journey. We left my father on the jetty to face the advancing Japanese army and an unknown future. I know we were one of the very lucky families but I cannot forget all the men and women both civilians and servicemen who lost their lives in action as well as many others who were incarcerated. The information is all that I have been able to find out. The invasion of Malaya is now known by those who were there as the 'Forgotten War.'

Escape from Penang



This is written in two stories – first my escape with my mother and second, my father's experiences and escape after we had left Malaya. After his escape he wrote in detail of his experiences and in 1942 sent it to Shell head office in London and I have a copy. I have therefore only given an outline below so that it is easier to understand the sequence of events. My personal information has been further enhanced on many points from Nigel Stanley who wrote the book *'Twists of Fate'* published in 2020. I made contact with him and found out that he and his mother and sister were evacuated on the same boat and we travelled together out of Malaya to Java. I have since joined the Malayan Volunteers Group and found half a dozen others who escaped on the ss Nellore.

Father had enlisted into the Straight Settlements Volunteer Force (SSVF) in 1940 as a private and posted to number 1 Platoon in 'S' Company. He said he did not wish to become an officer as he wanted to be led by professional soldiers. He had to attend camp for two months each year, attend evening training each week and occasional weekends. As he was in an essential occupation he was not expected to go into action if action took place.

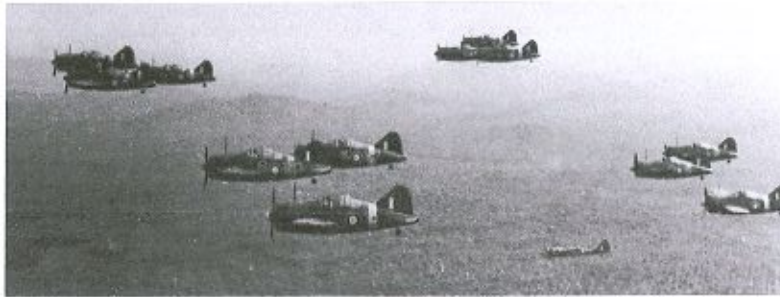
December 1941

- 8th Japanese forces landed in the north of the Malay peninsula at Kota Bharu, Pentani, Singore and south Siam and advanced quickly down the peninsular.
- 11th On that Thursday at 11am Japanese planes flew over Penang Island for the first time and people came out to see what was happening and then the bombing started. The first stick of bombs fell right across Chinatown and surrounding streets causing pandemonium as people ran in all directions. Further bombs fell from the 27 planes across the town and machine gun bullets increased the panic. The hospital (where I had been born) soon became full of wounded people. The casualty numbers were very high and many people died. The streets became full of carts and anything with wheels all stacked high with personal possessions as hundreds of the local men, women and children frantically jostling in the very crowded town streets headed into the relative safety of the countryside, hills and villages.
- 12th At noon on Friday the bombers came over again. (This same regular hour each day became the norm throughout the campaign) There were fewer people about as the shops were empty and looting took place as the police were carrying out other vital duties. Only the Cold Storage was open and a few petrol stations. There was no real law and order in George Town. The fire brigade was still operating

and father was organising supplies of fuel to the RAF at Butterworth and other places on the mainland. The ferry service was not running but a navel launch was pressed into service.

Over 1000 civilians were killed with 3000 wounded during the first five days of bombing of Penang. Deaths on the first day were nearly twice as many as those sustained in Coventry, a similar sized population, in its heaviest much cited German attack on 14 Nov 1940. Others reported later in the war that Penang's bombing was the most intense and nothing else compared in Malayan conflict.

I can remember taking shelter under a bridge during a raid, but cannot recall what the bridge was over or who was with me. But I did ask why single engine fighter planes (Brewster Buffalos) were being chased by the twin engine bombers (Mitsubishi). The simple answer was that the Mitsubishi were much faster than the American built Buffalos and that was all the British and Australian pilots had.



13th Father had discussions with the Fortrose Commander as things were so bad and with the fear of disease, all European women and children were ordered to be evacuated immediately. (This was contrary to the Governor of Singapore's orders as he did not want to panic people in Singapore) Each family was allowed one suitcase and meet at Swettenham Pier at 6.20pm. But time had to be changed to 10.30pm. As it was impossible to inform every one of the change it was broadcast on Singapore Radio so that everyone knew (the Japanese also listen to the broadcasts!). Father, Mother and I sat close to each other on the jetty anxiously waiting for what was going to happen -- we thought the Japanese were bound to bomb us but luck was on our side as it was pouring with rain which stopped the Japanese flying. Even so, there were two air raid warnings. There were about 520 (to 600) women and children packed into 200yd x 75yd quay. I can remember someone shouting '*Turn those bloody lights out or I will shoot them out!*'. Lots of the men seeing their families off on hearing the alarm rushed back to their cars and turned their lights on as they drove away lighting up the dock area, which also added to the chaos. Slowly the panic died down, car engines went quiet and car lights turned off, it was all a false alarm. Also I remember the harbour full of floating money, presumably discarded to stop the Japanese getting hold of it.

The last thing my father saw of us was me tied to mother by a long leather belt and her dragging our suitcase and me tightly holding Pooh bear. I still have him.



At 2 am we eventually sailed to the mainland on the ferry manned by navel seamen from the recently sunk warships Prince of Wales and Repulse, arriving at 2.20am. There we went straight onto a waiting train which had insufficient seating for everyone and little water and few toilets. Our destination was

Kuala Lumpur, then on to Singapore. Mother got us onto the train and we met up with another mother and her two children. She left her children with mother whilst she went off to look for seats for all of us. She came back some time later, summoned her two children leaving us behind to sit on the floor. We learnt later she was one of the passengers who lost their suitcase – lots of cases were lost, either left on the ferry or stolen.

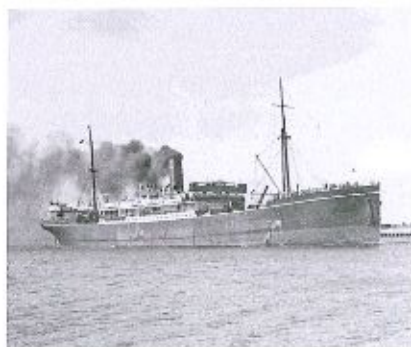
14th At 9am we stopped at Ipoh. The WI had set up a canteen and produced breakfast for all of us.



European women sharing tea while being evacuated from Penang Island to Singapore by train in December 1941.

We arrived at Kuala Lumpur at 1.30pm where we stopped for several hours and were taken to lunch at the Station Hotel. We embarked again at 8.30pm for the overnight run to Singapore. The Selangor Club members hastily supplied us with hundreds of bottles of water for our journey.

15th We arrived at Singapore 27 hours after leaving Penang – We were told that women with children would go direct to Batavia in Java. Single women were told to disembark but women with children were told by Government officials that they were ‘useless mouths’ with no room in the city. (Government policy was only to feed people who could actively help). Each family was given a slip of paper saying they had to leave by Government Order with no right to appeal. Local women volunteers then brought breakfast which they passed through the carriage windows as the doors had been locked to prevent anyone escaping. Each family was allowed send a telegram to their husbands in a pre-prepared telegram to say ‘*Leaving now for an unknown destination.*’ Later army Lorries took us to Kepple Harbour to board the *Nellore*, a small cargo ship with 8 cabins which were already occupied. Coco and bread was issued for a meal. A RN Petty Officer with six ratings (again from sunken RN ships) were on board to ‘keep’ control. We all settled down for the night huddled together wherever we could find space. There were no chairs or bedding, many stayed on deck as it was cooler.



ss. Nellore

16th We woke up next morning to find that we were back in Kepple Harbour. We had set sail but the Captain had learnt that there were Japanese submarines about so returned to safety.

16/17th We set sail again that night with a Royal Navy escort. Later that night they handed over their duties to the Dutch navy. The Captain announcing the changeover through the ship's speaker system '*Transfer duty is now with our gallant Dutch allies*'.

Unknown to us, father had evacuated from Penang arriving in Singapore on the 18 December.

On the first night at sea some women were smoking on deck so the Captain ordered all 287 mothers and children from Penang below. Below there were only straw filled paillasses which had been laid out above the propellers and near the engine room. It was very hot and noisy with no water or toilets and the only way out was up a very steep metal ladder which was difficult to climb, especially for small children.

Engine problems slowed the ship down which meant the 2 day voyage to Java took 5 days. The lack of fresh food forced the ship to call in at Tenjin Api-api, the port for Palembang on Sumatra. Luckily we had not been seen by any submarines, they that must have been busy on more lucrative targets.

19 Today was my mother's 36th birthday

19/20 ? We reached Tanjung Priak the port near Batavia (now Djakarta many names have changed since the war). Mother sent a cable APC office in Singapore in the hope it would get to my father, asking him to arrange for money and telling him that it had been suggested that we should move to a hill station near Batavia and wait there until the Japanese had been driven back.

A cable came back next day giving details on money and to say we should leave as soon as possible for Australia as it was expected the Japanese would soon invade Sumatra and Java. I assume she would have been given a contact to the local APC agent in Batavia to arrange our onward travel.

We spent a week (I am as yet unable to confirm any dates) in Batavia. The wives applied lipstick and dressed in their best clothes in a vain effort not to look to the billeting officer like ragamuffins. We were all billeted with British expats or Dutch families. We celebrated Christmas together with other children where the local people looked after all of us very well and even gave the children toys. Apparently during this time we were told that Penang had been evacuated and all evacuees had reached Singapore by sea. However, Christmas Day was blighted by the news that Hong Kong had fallen to Japanese forces.

After Christmas some evacuees considered staying on in Java so they could return to Malaya as they still believed that the British would defeat the Japanese. The British Council persuaded them they should continue with the plan and travel to Australia. Some of the evacuees had arranged to travel on using their own arrangements. We were one of those and I presume that APC (Shell) had organised our onward voyage.

1942

The original evacuees re-embarked on the *Nellore*. During the time the ship was in the harbour the accommodation had been made more habitable. The *Nellore* then sailed to Tjilatjap (on the south coast of Java now called Cilacap) Mother and I disembarked there. Those passengers who were to continue on the *Nellore* were allowed off to buy fruit and other food to help sustain them for their onward journey to Australia. We then boarded the *ss Swartenhondt*, a Dutch owned vessel, with 51 from the *Nellore*. (29 women, 18 1to12 year old children and 4 babies). We sailed to Sydney.



PASSENGER LIST—INCOMING PASSENGERS.

Return of Passengers Brought to the Port of SYDNEY from Places Outside Australia.

Note.—1st Class, 2nd Class, and 3rd Class Passengers are to be entered in separate groups

| Name of Ship | Official Number | At Port of Registry or Home-Port | Master's Name | Arrival of Ship at Port | Date of Arrival | Origin |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| "SWARTENHOND" | 101 | BATAVIA | J. H. W. SWARTENHOND | 5034-22 | 12/1/42 | From BATAVIA |
| | | BATAVIA | | 5037-22 | | To SYDNEY |

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF PASSENGERS.

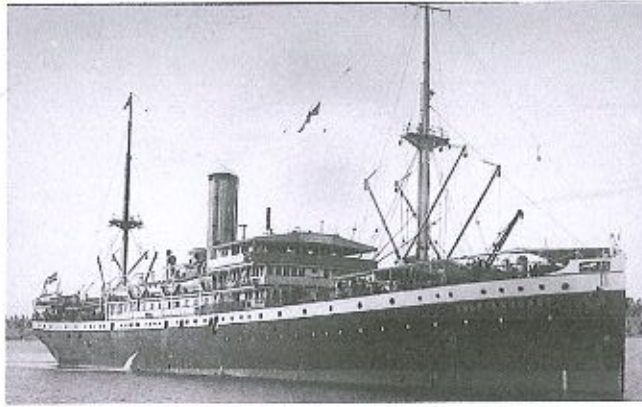
| No. | Sex | Name | Age | Rank | Profession | Place of Birth | Place of Origin | Remarks |
|-----|-----|----------------|-----|------|------------|----------------|-----------------|---------|
| 1 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 2 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 3 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 4 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 5 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 6 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 7 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 8 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 9 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 10 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 11 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 12 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 13 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 14 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 15 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 16 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 17 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 18 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 19 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 20 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 21 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 22 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 23 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 24 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 25 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 26 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 27 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 28 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 29 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 30 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 31 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 32 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 33 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 34 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 35 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 36 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 37 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 38 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 39 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 40 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 41 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 42 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 43 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 44 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 45 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 46 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 47 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 48 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 49 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |
| 50 | M | ALBERT ALBERTS | 1st | 2 | 25 | Netherlands | Netherlands | |

Passenger manifest - see entry 16 and 17 ss Swartenhondt

(The Nellore then sailed to Fremantle WA arriving 8 January 1942. It was the first evacuation ship from Singapore and those on board travelled in the most overcrowded conditions with impetigo spreading amongst the children. Over the next eight weeks many other refugees followed from Malaya but sailed in comfort in passenger liners.

January

12th We arrived at Sydney. I can remember saying 'We won't fit under the bridge the ship is much too big'. From the deck looking up to the top of the mast and the angle before going under Sydney Bridge I can understand my reasoning!



ss Swartehondt

I guess we must have been met by someone from Shell Company (APC) who would have been aware of our arrival and arranged everything for us including our accommodation. As far as I know we stayed with a family. All I can vaguely remember is a woman, but no name, who lived in Adelaide.

We stayed in Adelaide hopefully waiting for my father to join us and far as I am aware we had no idea where he was but assumed that he was still in Singapore. It must have been a very anxious time for my mother.

We did cable APC in Singapore to pass on the message that we had arrived safely in Sydney and had been met by a member from Shell but we did not get a reply.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF TAN CHIN TOCK, 1918-1942

By Chung Chee Min

He is just one name among the hundreds of civilian names on the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore. Born in Johore, Malaya, in 1918, **Chin Tock** grew up with five brothers and seven sisters in Singapore in the typically large Chinese families of that era.

In 1940, **Chin Tock**, married **Doris Chung**, a cousin of my father, five times removed. **Doris'** father was a much respected family genealogist in Kuala Lumpur.

When the Pacific War broke out, their infant son **Peter**, was only three months old. **Chin Tock** and his brother **Chin Lim** volunteered with the British Forces in Singapore, and joined the Signals Section in the 2nd Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (2/SSVF). He was a telegraphist. As a Lance Corporal in the Signals Section, **Chin Tock** was skilled in tapping Japanese communications, a skill which probably made him a marked man.

After the British capitulation in Singapore, he was ordered by his Commanding Officer to surrender, which he did. He was released for a day, then returned to the Japanese HQ. **Chin Tock** was never seen again. No one, to this day, knows what happened to him. His brother, likewise, also disappeared without a trace.

Doris took **Peter** back to Kuala Lumpur where her parents helped to raise him. **Peter** grew up living about half a mile from where I lived; we occasionally played together, swapping comic books. We went to the same secondary school. At the end of each school year, I would bring a batch of my used school textbooks to **Peter** and pass them to him to use.

Today, **Peter** is 80 and has retired as a librarian at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia.



His name at the Kranji War Memorial



Chin Tock and Doris



Chin Tock's posthumous medals.
From left: 1939-1945 Star; Pacific Star; Defence Medal; War Medal 1939-1945

His life in Malaya 1935 to 1947.

A Far East Adventure.

Len was born in Sussex and grew up in Grove Road, Acton, London, where his father worked as a toolmaker for **D. Napier and Sons Ltd.** making motor cars and aero engines. He attended Acton County School and, after obtaining a Higher School Certificate, was articled to **R. Richards**, an accountant in Chancery Lane, London. He was successful in the Chartered Accountants Examinations of 1934 and sought employment with an international firm of accountants **McAuliffe, Davis and Hope** who had offices in Malaya and were among the ten largest accounting companies at that time. The annual salary for a five-year contract was three times that of an equivalent position in the City. It also provided a first class sea passage to Malaya and 6 months leave at the end of the contract - an exciting prospect for a 22-year-old, with the world at his feet and leaving the economic depression of the 1920s behind and with the sun never setting on the British Empire.

So it was that **Len** boarded the R.M.S. *Chitral* at King George V Dock in London on Friday 16th August 1935. The tickets were for Singapore, but until he reached Penang when the Senior Partner (one of the **Gummit** brothers who owned the practice) had assessed him and the company's requirements, he was unsure if he would be working from an office in Kuala Lumpur, Penang or Singapore. His father had the foresight to send **Len** to a good London tailor to equip him with a dress suit and a grey flannel suit. In addition, he also purchased a number of Sea Island cotton shirts from Austin Reed in Regent Street at 2 guineas each.

He was to share a cabin with another young Assistant Accountant appointed at the same time. At the cabin on "C" Deck they were met by their Goanese steward who was described as 'a charming man of great experience and tact, only too willing to make sure that as new boys we did not give offence by unwittingly breaking any of the rules.' As P&O had both the Royal Mail and the Government contract, the other first-class passengers were "Judges, Senior Civil Servants and other luminaries with their wives returning from leave, mainly to India." Despite being two almost penniless young men starting their careers in the far east, they found that by simply observing the rules they gave no offence and found the others 'to be the most friendly and amiable fellow passengers.'

The ship was not particularly full even after collecting passengers from Southampton and then calling in to Gibraltar where a number disembarked. He learned that a number of passengers joined the returning P&O ship back to England having had a six-day cruise holiday! However, the ship filled almost to capacity in Marseilles where those passengers returning to India and the Far East had gained an additional week's holiday in England before taking the Blue Train to Marseilles. His journey through the Suez Canal, Bombay and Colombo passed in pleasant company as rules were observed and consequently 'no offence caused.'

On arrival in Penang, **Len** had his first taste of Colonial Malaya and where he learned from **F.H. Grummit** (the senior partner who had the wit to have married the daughter of the firm's founder, **Sir Henry McAuliffe**) that he would continue to the Singapore office of **McAuliffe's** the following day.

Bruce Hembry's book, "Malayan Spymaster," provides a 1930 version of the same journey where also on arrival in Penang he met the Estates representatives of **McAuliffe, Davis and Hope** as they acted as agents for the **Ridsdell's** rubber estates for whom he initially worked. Amusingly, **Hembry** comments that "he was to learn later they were known as **McAuliffe, Davis & No Bloody Hope**." He also provides a further anecdote referring to the nickname given to the **Grummit** brothers as "**Grubitt, Grabitt and Keepit!**" His book does provide many insights into both the working and social life **Len** was just entering, including service in the Malay Volunteer Force. Landing in Singapore's Main Wharf on 13th September 1935, (a Friday) **Len** went directly to **McAuliffe's** office in Hong Kong Bank Chambers on Collyer Quay where he was allocated to a desk in the general open plan office with five fellow accounting assistants and the senior partner, **Mr. A. Dobson**.

A Colonial Life in Singapore – Accountant

His living accommodation, similar to most unmarried European men, was provided by **McAuliffe**, where they were cared for by a number of servants. **Len's** accommodation was at 1, Bishopsgate Road, Tanglin, which **McAuliffe** rented from the Anglican Dioceses of Singapore. The house and its location provided pleasant accommodation with a camaraderie that came with spending time with colleagues, enjoying evening meals and the occasional *stengah* (whisky and water).

Len was engaged primarily on rubber estate auditing although that also extended to a range of other industries to whom **McAuliffe** provided accounting and agency services. As an international accountancy group, they handled a number of mercantile audits for the London-connected agency houses. One such business was **MacLaine Watson and Company** who provided agency services to many of the rubber, tin and pepper producers. It was here that a lasting friendship started with **Colin McLean** who worked for them. He, too, was a member of the Singapore based Straits Settlements Volunteer Force and, sadly, was one who did not survive, although **Len** christened his son **Colin** as a living memory to his friend.

During these pre-war days, **Len** made visits to rubber estates in Johore and Malacca. He also enjoyed travel to Penang and Kuala Lumpur, where **McAuliffe** had offices and clients, when they needed additional support from Singapore. These secondments provided opportunities to visit islands, beaches and mountains at these localities. The improvement in the world rubber trade, during that time, provided a growing workload for the practice. With this growth and the general development of the Accountancy profession there was an amalgamation on 1st January 1938 with **Turquand Youngs & Co.** to form **McAuliffe, Turquand, Youngs & Co.**

There would have been many office related social occasions but one that is recorded was in February 1939 when **Len** acted as Best Man to his colleague **George Walker** at his wedding to **Violet** at the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Queen Street, Singapore. Other colleagues included **J.H. (Johnny) Phillips** (Managing Partner 1939), **W. McArthur**, **E.A. Corless**, **T. Leffan**, **C.E. Firkins**, **R. Beale** and **G.E. Bondwick**.

Cricketer

Sunday, 1st March 1936, saw the first trial match that year for the Singapore Cricket Club on the Padang. **Len** was one of three new players that year to play in the trial. He played primarily as a spin bowler and enjoyed a lifelong love of cricket. That was the first of numerous matches over the years as he played regularly for the Club. Easter 1936 saw the Club's first tour where they played at Kuantan and Pahang on the east coast of Malaya and were not only victorious but also at *'tiffin time'* the team were presented to the Sultan of Pahang at the Istana.

Back in Singapore a few months later another match was reported in the Singapore Newspapers with a photograph of **Len** bowling.

Len's playing record continued through until 1940 with very regular appearances not only at the Padang but also on Hong Lim Green and the Tanglin Club. He was a spin bowler and generally batted at 8 or 9. His membership of the Club and love of cricket gave him a wide circle of friends beyond his accountancy colleagues and clients.

He would have been familiar with the Padang, the Changing Room, which has changed little since **Len** changed there, as well as the view from the Balcony, if not the present-day back drop!

The Singapore Cricket Club played a central part of **Len's** life between 1935 and 1940, particularly as it was located between the office on Collyer Quay and the Straits Settlements Volunteer Reserves' Drill Hall on Beach Road.

Travel at Easter and Christmas was a further opportunity **Len** took.

Climbing Mount Ophir in Johore with a rubber planter friend, **John Cotterill**, on Christmas day 1937; a sailing trip on the *Seri-Medan* during Easter 1938; and another during Easter 1939, both with cricketing friends, **A.H. Murray**, **Grumley** and **Charles William Auchmuty** on the *Anak Marai*. They were joined by **Eric Corless** on the earlier Easter '38 trip.

Leisure time was spent playing at the Cricket Club, attending drills and training with the SSFV, travelling around the Peninsular and serving as Treasurer to the Friends of Singapore Society. There were many other social activities as **Len** enjoyed the life of a colonial accountant in Singapore, including one occasion in August 1938 when he performed well in a comic sports meeting of the Springgit Harriers on the Malacca Padang where he came first in the biscuit and water race and second in the three-legged race!

Soldier

He joined the 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force in 1936 and by 1939 was a Corporal Machine Gun Section Commander of No. 3 Section of Headquarters Company. Training camps were organised during the pre-war period and particularly after conscription started on 1st November 1939. As one of the serving members of the SSVF, **Len** attended a number of such training camps.

In January 1940, he travelled back to England on leave as part of his overseas service contract which, since 1st January 1938, was with the newly merged **MacAuliffe, Turquand, Youngs and Company**. Whilst on leave, and with the country at war with Germany, **Len** applied to transfer his military service to an English Regiment. However, this was refused by the Colonial Office as he was already a serving member of the SSVF and his contract with **MacAuliffe's** required him in Singapore.

Before his departure he became engaged to **Joan** in June 1940. So, in mid-July **Len** left England with a heavy heart and some trepidation to return to Singapore. Poignant war time correspondence made it clear of his need to ensure matters were settled in favour of his new fiancée should he not return. **Joan** joined the Wrens and served in a shore station at Bordean House in Hampshire whilst **Len** returned to his office on Collyer Quay and re-joined his Battalion in Singapore.

His return to Singapore was in time to attend a one-month long training course at the Siglap Camp, which was reported as being completed on 2nd November 1940.

Len is included in the photo taken at the break-up of the camp, which shows the full company of infantrymen and machine gunners of the SVC Depot at the end of their one-month intensive training.

Interestingly, **Len** is described as a Corporal although all his POW Records list him as a Private. It is unknown when or for what reason he was demoted although it may have simply been his break in service on leave in England. Also, standing next to him in the photo is a **Private J.G. Baker** who, we believe, could be **Joseph G Baker**, 13506 and who was a life-long post-war family friend fondly known as "**Jack**."

Whilst such training was required for those with little military experience, exemptions were granted to more experienced men for whom their employers made the request. Exemptions were requested to a Tribunal by employers and **Len** was given exemption for the period February and March 1941, along with his colleagues **Phillips** and **Walker** but not granted to **Westworth**. However, with the imminent Japanese invasion of Malaya (8th December 1941) **Len** was "Embodied" into the full service of the 1st Battalion SSVF on 1st December 1941.

Japanese Invasion and British Surrender

The beginning of December 1941 saw full time service for **Len** in his machine gun section of 1/SSVF and he described being located overlooking the Johore Causeway in a "Pill Box."

He always described, quite vividly, being equipped with a Vickers Machine Gun. He described in correspondence that he was in a Pill Box at Christmas 1941 when a present of a writing case from **Joan** was delivered there.

Records show that the 1st Battalion was withdrawn from the Causeway and positioned in a defensive position east of Singapore. [To be continued in April 2022].

Chapter 1. Malaya pre-war 1934-1939

I have told how I sailed from Birkenhead on the S.S. "Patroclus" in October 1934, my father trailing on to the quayside, late as usual, to wave goodbye as I sailed down the Mersey. I first saw the sub-tropical in Marseilles, the tropical in Port Said, Port Suez and Colombo, and arrived in Penang early in November 1934.

For the impression the tropics made on me, I find irresistible my memory of reading **George Otto Trevelyan's** Life of his Uncle, **Lord Macaulay**, who arrived in Madras 100 years before, 10th June, 1834. His impressions, by and large, serve well to describe my own.

I sailed on the local steamer from Penang, the S.S. Kinta, to Port Swettenham, and for the first time had a view of the mangrove flats of the coast. I travelled to Kuala Lumpur from Port Swettenham with kind friends, the **Jefferies**, who had met me, and we passed the rubber estates and bits of jungle of the lowland area, to Kuala Lumpur and the foothills of the main range, largely jungle with rubber estates along the fringes of the main trunk road. Later I was to visit the two main hill stations, Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands, and enjoy the cosiness of fires in the evening, and the scent of home flowers such as dahlias, zinnias and even roses.

Macaulay refers to the strange land he has come to: "The dark faces with white turbans, and flowing robes; the trees not our trees; the very smell of the atmosphere that of a hothouse, and the architecture as strange as the vegetation." He sees "a boatman with nothing on him but a pointed yellow cap." He soon travelled up to the Neilgherry Hills, and is amazed how small a part of the country is under cultivation; "Two thirds, it seemed, was in the state of Wandsworth Common." This was land apart of which would be covered with rice when the rains came. It was much the same in parts of Malaya. He was grievously disappointed with the plains, but the two months he spent in the hill station he found the climate "as equable as Madeira and invigorating as Braemar; where thickets of rhododendron fill the glades and clothe the ridges; and where the air is heavy with the scent of rose-trees of a size more fitted to an orchard than a flower bed, and bushes of heliotrope thirty paces around."

Perhaps the winding roads up to Fraser's Hill or Cameron Highlands cannot equal in beauty that of the famous Indian hill stations, but his reactions to similar journeys, were not far removed from mine when I first went to these hill stations on holiday from the heat of the plains. "Every turning in the road showed the boundless forest below in some new point of view. I was greatly struck with the resemblance which this prodigious jungle, as old as the world and planted by nature, bears to the fine works of our great English landscape gardeners."

I must confess here that I was struck more by the contrast than the resemblance in Malaya's jungle, and since I returned home and have visited Chatsworth, Woburn, Stourhead, Polesden Lacey and such places, I would confirm this, but perhaps 100 years ago England was wilder and more wooded.

When I come to the tropical fruits I am more in agreement with **Macaulay**, though I would not go the whole way with him. He says "the tropical fruits are wretched. The best of them is inferior to our apricot or gooseberry. A plantain is very like a rotten pear ... A yam is better. It is like an indifferent potato." I agree, however, when he says he would give all the fruits of the East for a "pottle of Convent Garden strawberries."

He tasted palm wine, which he thought was like ginger beer with the ginger sparingly used, and that was my experience of the toddy, distilled from the coconut, which in their toddy shops the Indian labourers regaled themselves after hours. I have seen some very happy Tamils, as happy as any of us after a session in the local.

I took up residence in the Empire Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, rather a come down from what I imagined of the Purple East. The "thunderbox" sanitation, embrowned mosquito nets, by no means free from holes, and the general ambience was depressing, especially on the first night when, after a rain shower, flying ants of large size came through the window, and I had to dive into my mosquito net to avoid them. One memory I have imprinted on mind and that is of a Chinese rickshaw puller, resting, asleep, exhausted, on the shafts of his vehicle in the moonlight beneath the rain tree outside. It is a killing business, or was, and it was a picture worthy of some great painter. Later, the "Empire" improved under an amiable remittance man type with a double-barrelled name and a good taste in wine.

It was "de rigeur" to join the Volunteers. There were battalions in the main states, Singapore and Penang. Regular officers from home were attached as Colonel Commandant of the F.M. S. and Straits Settlements (Singapore, Malacca, Penang) forces, with adjutants of the battalions, a brigade major, a Staff Captain, and sergeants or sergeant majors attached as permanent staff instructors.

Some were keen; I was not in that category, though when war broke out in 1939, I took a great interest in learning all I could about the use of the Vickers Machine Gun and became an instructor.

An inducement was that one got one's wife's maternity expenses, and for planters the travelling allowance into the local centres was useful. I used to say we consisted of reluctant bachelors and expectant fathers.

Some of the P.S.Is were characters. There was before my time a famous Guards Sgt. Major nicknamed "Slosher." It is

said that giving a pep talk to the ranks, he started off, "In volunteering there is some 'as is keen." Then there sloped on, late on parade, with the *syce* helping them to put on their web equipment over their white office clothing, two well-known upholders of the long bar of the Selangor Club. Espying them, he went on, "and there are others ----- here the buggers come."

We had a genial fellow from the Royal West Sussex, and I heard him drilling the Volunteer Band, a mixed force of all races. Bringing them to attention, I heard him say, "Fall out the gawbstickers, **Private Doraisamy**, and give 'em 'alf-hour, Lily of Laguna."

He was a great favourite with the Malay platoon. On one occasion after an exercise they were served a chicken curry but would not eat it as for some reason they suspected the chickens had not been killed according to Muslim custom i.e. their necks rung as required by their religious law. Called upon, he came bustling up, "What's all this, you know me, never let you down, I can assure you all these chickens were killed kosher fashion, facin' East."

We had an annual general inspection, and the first I recall a general, **Dobbie**, famous in the war as Governor of Malta, was G.O.C. It is curious that he, and his principal staff officer, a **Colonel Percival** (later to command our army in 1941-42) produced an assessment of Japanese intentions in which they predicted an attack on the East coast would be in the autumn monsoon when cloud cover would impede aerial reconnaissance on our part. It is more curious that later as Army Commander **General Percival** seems to have ignored this sage prognostication, for I have it from the late **H.P. Bryson, M.C.S., M.C.**, then (in 1941) the Governor's secretary that the military advised him as late as November 1941, that there was no likelihood of any Japanese aggression or move before the following spring!

I enjoyed, nevertheless, many happy occasions, and healthy exercises in the mid-day heat on some obscure manoeuvres through pineapple plantations or mining flats at Sungei Besi, or camps at Port Dickson, where we dined in black ties and white bumfreezers, drank port to the King's health, with the famous Colonel of the Malay Regiment, formed at Port Dickson in 1933, **Mr. I. Bruce, M.C.**, as our guest. He later commanded a division in Arakan, and was a born soldier, and much respected by his Malays. **Major Denaro**, who won a D.S.O. in Singapore, and later became a Brigadier, told me a story typical of him. When **General Dobbie** inspected the Malay Regiment, he said to **Bruce**, "Does that man know where H.Q. is?" **Bruce** said to the Malay soldier, "*Mana H.Q.*" (where is H.Q.). He replied, "*T'a Tau.*" (don't know). **Bruce** relayed to **Dobbie**, "He says, 3 miles back, sir."

My work was at first the auditing of the accounts of the rubber and coconut estates in our agency, and later, in what was known as Estates Department, administration generally. My firm **Harrisons & Crosfield**, was described by my Malay *munshi* (teacher) as the "firm besar" (the great firm). So here began an association with that by now almost extinct species, the British tropical planter, and I count myself lucky in this. I had much pleasure in visiting their estates and enjoying their always bountiful hospitality. They were, of course, a varied collection of men, some considerable characters, and it angered me later, when press correspondents, here today and gone tomorrow, referred after the disaster of Singapore, and the search for scapegoats, to "whiskey-swilling planters." Few classes of men suffered more, in the campaign or as prisoners of war, and some I knew, **Vanrennen, Harvey** and **Graham** served behind the Japanese lines with great courage and were executed by the Japanese. **Harvey** I recall particularly on one of our estates, a typical specimen and a brave man.

I used to go down quarterly to the Banting district to audit the books of the New Crocodile Company, and there I met and became a friend of one **C.B. Colson**. He brought back to me echoes of the pioneering past when the white man first planted rubber in the early part of the 20th century, when he came to Malaya. He had been a classical scholar at Cambridge and a schoolmaster, but some love affair that went wrong caused him to come to Port Swettenham and obtain employment under an old friend, **A.K.E. Hampshire**, of the well known **Hampshire** brothers, who originated the famous firm of **Boustead and Company**. **Sir Eric Macfadyen**, then starting on rubber planting recruited **Colson**, and he remained on Lunderston Estate for the rest of his career. He was a good planter, and also grew pedigree roses, not normally possible in the plains, but he bought roses each year from Australia and by dint of much good soil and manuring produced excellent roses which he displayed, somewhat incongruously, in Shippam paste pots on his table. How I remember those days returning from the Club to the dim lamp light of his open bungalow, whilst he sipped whiskey, and a silent Tamil watered the lovely ferns and tomatoes in and outside his verandah until, gasping for my food, he called the cook and we had some famous repast of what he called "pigswill" – a splendid hotpot, or a delicious ham boiled in Guinness and parsnip juice.

He was the only man I know who refused a rise in salary because he said he was not worth it. The Estate was small, he said, and could not afford it, but **Sir Eric** insisted!

He was a man of education, wit and charm, who had come unexpectedly to a life, for which one would have not thought suited him. He was regarded as an oddity but genuinely liked and respected, and I am glad I visited him with my family in his old age and declining years in Chertsey, and attended his funeral as a representative at the special request of **Sir Eric Macfadyen**.

Colson had about 90 acres of very poor coconuts, and sitting in the Banting Club one evening with his cronies, he was lamenting their poor productivity, saying that he thought the explanation was that his palms were all *jantans* (Malay: males), whereupon his friend "**Sinbad**" **Barkway** chipped in, "No, **Coley**, they could not be *jantans* for *jantans* must have two nuts,

and yours have not got one." **Barkway** had been a sailor. The planter was a great man for nicknames. There was a Banting planter named **Eagle-Bott**; he was fated to be known as "**Hawk's-Ass**."

Colson used to write his monthly progress reports in his own classical hand, and amusing they were sometimes. I once learnt a valuable lesson from him. He had a dispute with the local Government Education Officer over his Estate School and wrote him a furibund letter, demanding answers to a series of questions, "Yea" or "Nay." The Education Officer unsheathed his pen and replied in kind, answering his questions, "Yea" or "Nay." **Coley** disarmed him completely, however, by replying, "I think that is game and set to you."

Progress reports from planters could be vehicles for their rough and ready wit. One in the slump of 1930/33 when salaries had been cut severely, concluding his report by noting that it was the day of the "Feast of the Circumcision" but he hoped the directors were not contemplating a further cut.

This planter was **H.V. Puckridge, D.F.C.**, and **P.O.W.** of World War 1, noted for his waggery and witticisms. Presiding at an Ex-Service Men's dinner in Klang, he introduced a distinguished guest, a rather unpopular old planter who had won the D.S.O. in the Boer War, by announcing, "And we have here tonight, **Colonel X, S.O.D.**"

Old Puck was quite a legend, and in the last desperate days of Singapore, I met him coming out of a shelter after one of the, by now, frequent air raids. Pulling at his "prawn" moustache, and with a jaunty air which contrasted with my own rather depressed mood, he summed up the situation into which our great Empire was now falling, "As my old father used to say in the Blitz in London, what a pickle, Ha! Ha!"

Puckridge got away in a boat after the fall of Singapore (it is said he called to a passing destroyer, "Are you going my way") and reached Ceylon where he did good work.

Such were some of the good men and true in the planting profession whom it was my good fortune to know.

There are many names of good friends amongst planters I could mention, pre-war and post-war, and it is invidious to select, but I must mention the names of my dear old friends, **Jock** and **Sandy Porter** of Kundong/Engkee Estates, Johore, which I first visited about 1935, partly educational, but I shall not forget their hospitality not the impression this solid, staunch, uncompromising Aberdonian planter made on me. His abilities would have adorned any profession but as a planter he was beyond compare in the opinion of many good judges. He was my mentor and a father figure. Sadly he is no longer with us, but his wife, **Sandy**, is still and she has been a great friend, and a kind and faithful godmother to my **Susan**.

To give my grandchildren some idea of what it was like rubber planting in those days when I first came out I quote from a letter just received (1980) from an old planting friend, **Stephen Taylor**, who in 1933 had to do a rush job planting up 3,000 acres of rubber before rubber restriction began on 1st January, 1934.

*"I was sent to Johore Bahru in 1933, first to spend 3 days in the Supreme Court in Johore Bahru with the firm's lawyers, paying out the 62 owners of the land purchased from towkays and chetties, then to find the place, of which I had no plan. A cable from London ordered the whole 3,000 acres to be planted by 31.12.33. It consisted of chipped lallang and tapioca. **Harry Corrie** was sent to help me and shortly large quantities of Prang Besar clonal seed began to arrive. We lived in Johore Bahru Rest House 22 miles away from the place Kelan, Kulai. There were no buildings on the property except an old sago mill, and no resident labour. All work was done by Chinese contractors. We built hurriedly three large **bangsals** (sheds) to house 300 Chinese labourers (then called coolies!)*

Clearing, felling and half-hearted burning had been done, and we decided it must be terraced, and a contractor was engaged for the work. I spent 2 or 3 nights measuring up for terracing as there was no time to spare.

I gave out my first contact to the least villainous local Chinese who started to swarm around as it was then a slump time. We signed in a coffee shop in Kulai - \$45,000 (about £5,000) to eradicate lallang. The Chinese contractor after signing asked if I wanted 15% or would 10% do! I exploded!

I had no clerks, and all correspondence was done at night in J.B. resthouse in long hand.

*I went to and from in a Baby Austin, which it was impossible to use on rough tracks, so I asked if I could purchase a motor bicycle, and **Harrisons Barker** (as it was then) replied yes, but it was not to be a good one!*

This was for 3,000 acres needing intensive supervision. The last plant was put in on 31.12.1933."

Poor **Stephen Taylor** did not get much kudos or monetary reward for all this labour, but such it was in those days.

I came to know Kelan Estate when it was a prosperous and thriving estate, bringing much profit to its owners, but **Stephen** was not the one to reap his reward.

During the early thirties controversy raged at home about progress of India to at least Dominion Status. It was **Baldwin** (whom I admired and still do) against the wayward, flamboyant **Winston Churchill** with his antiquated die-hard views.

Our local vicar, **Revd. E.R. Shattock**, had a son in the Indian Civil Service, and was a liberal minded man. He used to have down to our village hall quite distinguished speakers on the subject. One in particular, an Indian Labour leader, **Mr.**

Shiva Rao, I recall very vividly saying to us, "How would you feel that no matter how able and eloquent, you could never cross from the opposition benches and take your place on the Government side?"

I found no sign of any agitation in Malaya. The British Raj reigned placid and supreme. The British Resident of the State was all powerful, and the Sultan confined himself to ceremonial and the religious needs of his Moslem subjects. On the King's birthday, flanked by the Resident and other officials he took the salute in the local equivalent of the King's

Birthday Parade on Horse Guards Parade, with the Volunteers, the Police, and the Boy Scouts doing the honours. Our training for this event was the despair of our instructors. Our advance in review order was a serpentine display, and he once told us that on the day there would be need to form a square for the presentation of Jubilee medals, but "You won't need to form a square; you'll be in a bleedin' square anyway."

The Malayan Civil Servants were able, liberal and concerned to protect Malaya, the pleasant, easygoing Malays, from the encroachment of European entrepreneurs or more pushing and forceful Chinese or Indian. The Resident then in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, was named **Adams** a gifted man, who was said to be in every sense pro-Malay. To illustrate the plenitude of residential power he decided that the Sultan of Selangor's two eldest sons were such rascals they must be deposed for the third son. The Sultan objected, went home and enlisted the aid of his old friend **Sir Frank Swettenham**, a famous former High Commissioner of the F.M.S., but to no avail. The decision stood, but as a sop, **Adams** was transferred to be a Resident Commissioner in Nigeria.

His successor, **S.W. Jones**, was a forceful character, equally able, and brooked no nonsense. He was ex-officio President of the Selangor Club, and when a few of us youngsters and also some older men including members of the M.C.S. raised a protest when the popular band leader, a white Russian from Shanghai was sacked summarily by, we thought, an intrigue on the part of the secretary and one dominant member of the Club, he ruled us out of order at the meeting we called, and was quite ruthless in the process. The decision stood, and we could not help the poor chap, very popular, and much cut up. He was later found a job as head of the Volunteer Band, and prospered.

As "**Daddy**" **Hawkins, M.C.S.**, was to make the main speech proposing the motion we put down which regretted the "abrupt dismissal" of our band leader, I suggested to him that he might say that history records only one example of such abrupt and ruthless dispensing with a musician, and that was when King David dismissed his harpist with a javelin. This went down very well, and emboldened, I essayed a bit of mine own, and later said that I had heard of "death by a thousand cuts," but our little motion, modestly submitted with due deference, had suffered "death by a thousand rulings." **Hawkins** who was a friend of the Resident later told me that **Jones** was not at all amused with my juvenile pleasantry, and warned me kindly that one should not ridicule the British Resident, the representative of the Crown. In fact, it was respect for the British Resident that assured our motion in defence of the band leader would fail.

Few famous people then visited Malaya, or Kuala Lumpur in particular, but I heard the great Indian Liberal, **Srinivasa Sastri**, sent over to inspect the conditions of the Indian immigrant labourers, speak to a great concourse and he said to them that in Malaya they reached a standard of living quite unattainable in their villages in India. I was one of the few Europeans at that meeting.

In 1935, the Silver Jubilee of King George V took place. I and a colleague in the firm as the two juniors, were given \$50 (pretty stingy even in those days) and bidden to decorate suitably our office in Market Square, which then housed the main European mercantile firms, with its Corinthian columns haunted by bats, amid the flamboyant trees of the square, so unlike the present day Kuala Lumpur with its concrete towers and great office blocks. We enlisted some Chinese carpenters, quite excellent at this sort of thing, and they swathed the columns in Union Jacks, cut shields, and we obtained a lorry load of stagmoss (a weed not allowed on efficient estates) from nearby, and put up a presentable show. We then went off to Port Dickson on holiday and as we went down through Selangor and Negri Sembilan, every little kampong (village) had its Union Jacks and portraits of King George and Queen Mary.

When King George V died in January, 1936, I was down at Banting on the coast auditing an estate's books. The planter got the news by telephone and we went off to the little local club at Banting and solemnly lowered the Union Jack to half-mast. Strange now, to think that was happening all over our Empire in such little out of the way places.

The great celebration, however, was the Coronation next year, and everyone went to town. All communities had great and garish coloured floats. I was the backside of a dragon in a tableau by the St. George's Society of George and the Dragon with one of **Harrison's** and **Crosfield's** charming wives as the Princess. It was very hot work and there were thunderous cheers as we wound our way through the main streets of Kuala Lumpur amidst vast crowds. I found later one reason for the vociferous cat-calls of the crowd was that I was given a large motor horn to blow and make a noise which was quite useless. So as I bent over to my task this hung down below the dragon, and the Asian crowds caught on quickly to this seemingly phallic symbol.

I had no idea, nor had anyone else I suspect, how evanescent all this was, and certainly in my wildest imagination the events of 1941/42 never entered my head. I am sure we expected war to come, especially in Europe with **Hitler** and **Mussolini** for ever bawling on our screens in the Pathe Gazette which accompanied all cinema shows.

There were a few military men who sensed the danger, and one, **Major Yeo**, the Brigade Major, used to inspect the East coast, and prepare tactical exercises in which the "Ikanese" were the enemy. He was a voice crying in the wilderness, and anyway departed for Europe before the war in Europe started. I often wonder what happened to him. I cannot say much heed was paid to him the, though later when France fell, and the Japanese started their progress south to Indo-China, the menace was evident though, perhaps, thought fairly distant. We now know that military intelligence was poor, and the civil authorities were kept in ignorance of the menace of the Japanese encroachment and its danger, southwards. Everything concentrated on the War in Europe, and Spitfire funds and such like abounded.

[To be continued in April 2022]

BOOKS

“**Frank Pantridge MC.**” By Cec Lowry. Pen and Sword. Hardback

See: <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Frank-Pantridge-MC-Hardback/p/17757>

“**Yates McDaniel.**” The biography of American War Correspondent Yates McDaniel.

This book comes out in 2022. **McDaniel** reported from Nanking in 1937 and Singapore in 1942. He survived the Kung Wo sinking and was on Pom Pong Island where the book cover photo was taken. Both **Michael Pether** and **Jonathan Moffatt** have been in touch with the author.

See W.H. Smith and Amazon Co.UK website:

<https://www.whsmith.co.uk/products/last0-one-out-yates-mcdaniel-world-war-iis-most-daring-reporter/jack-torry/hardback/9780764362682.html>

The following 3 novels have been reviewed by **Liz Moggie**:

“**912, Batu Road.**” By Viji Krishnamoorthy. Published by Clarity Publishing, Penang.

This is an enjoyable easy read which focuses on adjustments that have to be made in a Brahmin Hindu Malayan family in the 20th and 21st centuries. I was rather mystified by the “ever silver” utensils until the author explained that these are the familiar aluminium items one sees in Indian restaurants. The book’s appeal to me was that it encompasses the period of the Japanese Invasion and Occupation and features real conditions and the heroic actions of real characters. We meet **Gurchan Singh** who bravely travelled around putting up posters in public places. These helped to inform people of the progress of the war overseas at a time when listening to foreign broadcasts was a capital offence. My personal hero, **Sybil Kathigasu**, who gave medical help to wounded members of the MPAJA, also makes an appearance. The evident careful research into the facts and conditions of the times makes for a very satisfactory and confident read.

“**Blue Sky Mansion.**” By H.Y. Yeang. Published by Epigram Books, Singapore.

This is another good read although about half of the book is set in China and Harbin before the main characters emigrate to Malaya. Readers who enjoy pursuing the details of the Chinese customs will find much of interest. The second half of the story was of more personal interest to me after the younger characters had made a new start in Penang. Life for immigrants could be very insecure for various reasons, some of which we learn. This author has also researched thoroughly which is borne out by one example of his account of rubber estate life in the Lunas area of mainland Penang. It is always satisfying to learn something that is new to one. It appears that the Japanese Air Force was not a stand alone service but was an extension of either the Navy or Army. The Mitsubishi Zero was the Navy’s iconic aeroplane, whereas the Nakajima Oscar was identified with the Army.

MVG readers will be delighted that the well known Volunteer, the late **Harold Speldewinde**, makes an appearance in the very last chapter. It was a satisfying conclusion to a good read.

“**Beyond Yamashita and Percival.**” By A Shaari Isa. Published by ITBM, 2019, Kuala Lumpur.

This was not such a smooth read, but it is also well researched. The author attempts to reveal the thoughts and actions of a number of characters. In addition to posing the battle plans of **Yamashita** and **Percival** we read about a Japanese spy, a rubber planter and his wife, the manager of the Penang Ferry Service who is hidden throughout the Occupation by a Malay couple, a fighter pilot based at Sungai Petani and his girlfriend who is a nurse on the Island. **Tunku Abdul Rahman** and the nascent Malay Nationalist Organization SABERKAS are mentioned. The story is mostly set in the North of the Peninsula and recounts the interweaving of the lives and actions of these people as well as of others. It is an ambitious undertaking that doesn’t quite jell but is, nevertheless, very much worth reading. It was long listed for the Dublin Literary Award.

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Wanted to loan or purchase:

“**British Civilians and the Japanese War in Malaya and Singapore 1941-45.**” By **Joseph Kennedy**.

If you have a copy of this book to loan me for a few weeks and then return, please contact:

MVG member **Tony Parrini** on 07809 154 999 or e-mail tony@parrini.co.uk

OBITUARIES

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the deaths of former MVG members and their relatives, as well as members of the Armed Forces who fought in the Malayan Campaign or saw action in the Malayan Emergency or the Indonesian Confrontation.

MVG member John Evans – died in October aged 90.

We send our heartfelt and very sincere sympathies to **John’s** widow, **Ann**, on learning about his sudden and unexpected death. **John** and **Ann** have been active and long serving members of the MVG, and we will miss **John’s** feedback into various articles which have appeared in the newsletters. His valuable contributions and succinct, pertinent remarks have always been helpful and much appreciated with his intimate knowledge of Malaya and the Malayan Campaign. We

missed his presence at MVG's recent reunion and luncheon, and we were very pleased that **Ann** and their friend **Ann Peck** were able to come. It was very brave of them both to attend and we much appreciated their presence.

A summary of **John's** life was written by his son **Fergus** and read by their son **Philip**:

"Our family would like to thank **Reverend Pete Molloy** for being so kind, sensitive and helpful during this time.

This eulogy for my father has been mainly written by **Fergus** in an effort to keep me on message and brief...

Dad was born in Swansea in 1931, the youngest of four children – with **Florence, Jean** and **Brian** preceding him and sadly predeceasing him. He went to Llandovery College and while his brother **Brian** joined the Royal Navy, after school Dad was called to National Service, was commissioned into the army and sent to the Canal Zone in Egypt. He claimed to have climbed the great pyramid at Giza during this time, but this was always a matter of some debate in the family as he was not known for having a head for heights.

After National Service, Dad had a scholarship to go up to New College, Oxford, but it was conditional upon him passing a Latin paper. He hadn't looked at his Latin while he was doing National Service and he ended up failing the test which meant he lost the scholarship and, as a result, had to find a job rather quickly.

He was offered a job by British American Tobacco but ended up taking a job with Paterson Simons, a then well known Eastern trading firm. After initial training with Mundays, the ship brokers in London and Liverpool, he stocked up at Lillywhites in Piccadilly Circus for his tropical suits and went out to Singapore by a Ben Line ship disembarking at Clifford Pier in 1952.

John Gourlay, a colleague, met him off the ship and took him to the Paterson Simons bachelors' mess in One Tree Hill, a house originally built by the East India Company. On his first Sunday he was taken by his fellow bachelors to the Islamic Restaurant in Little India for a riotous curry, wearing his Lillywhite's tropical white suit which saw its first and last outing ...

On his second day in Singapore he was summoned to see the Commanding Officer of the Singapore Volunteers and was immediately drafted to join the Singapore Volunteer Artillery. A year later, he was promoted to Captain and appointed as one of the Governor's ADCs at the age of 22.

He was an active sportsman and joined the Singapore Cricket Club. He represented the Club at rugby, hockey and cricket and, while playing wing on the rugby pitch as known as the "Padang Flash" – not really on account of his speed, but more due to a prominent white streak in his hair.

After Singapore he was posted to Penang in 1956 and, after that, to Port Klang and, on his 27th birthday, met our mother **Ann** who found him rather stuffy. Obviously, that first impression soon mellowed as they were married before he turned 28! Turning 27 was important at the time as it meant a small pay rise and, more importantly, being allowed by your company to marry!

They were married in February 1959 and took four months honeymoon leave to the UK to introduce each other to their respective extended families. They went back to Europe by sea in the owner's cabin of a Swedish East Asia Lines ship and had to endure a toast every evening from the Captain to "**Yon and Ann** who have yooost got married." They got off the ship in Genoa and took a train to Malaga in Spain where they stayed at the only hotel in a small fishing port called Torremolinos. Many years later, they were in the area and were astonished by the tourist metropolis which Torremolinos has become.

They flew back to Singapore in June 1959 and Dad started work with Malay States Shipping. I was born in November 1960 and they moved to Hong Kong in February 1961 but were only there for 6 weeks before being sent to Tokyo to cover for the manager who had gone on leave. They returned to Singapore in late 1962 just before **Jonathan** was born. Order was maintained at home by the threat of a whack with the "Pink Paper" (aka the Financial Times), a wave of the rolled up paper normally being sufficient to stop **Jonathan** and me fighting.

Fergus followed in 1969 along with the flimsy airmail version of the Daily Telegraph, the threat of which was much less effective at instilling order than the pink paper!

We all enjoyed an idyllic ex-pat life in a gorgeous colonial black and white house with a huge garden in Kay Siang Road which **Fergus** is now about to replicate in an even larger colonial house in Alexandria Park to which I am sure everyone here will be invited to stay. All three of us boys were put through the British private school system, and travelled back and forth to Singapore during the holidays which must have been ruinously expensive especially as given the age gap between the three of us, meant that Dad paid school fees and air fares for twenty years between 1967 and 1987...

Dad became managing director of Malay States Shipping an Orient Lloyd in the 1970s. By some strange quirk, he also became the Honorary Vice Consul (later promoted to Consul) for Spain even though he couldn't speak a word of Spanish and represented Spain in Singapore until he retired. A highlight was the visit of the King and Queen of Spain and a private dinner with them at the Shangri-La Hotel. For services rendered to Spain he was awarded the highly coveted Officer's Cross of the Isabella la Catholica Order as well as the Naval Cross of Merit for looking after the Spanish Tall Ship Juan Sebastian de Elcano on its visits to Singapore...

He was very involved in the Missions to Seamen (now Missions to Seafarers) and became Chairman of the Singapore branch and was instrumental in their acquisition of a new seafarer's centre which was officially opened by Princess Anne. Visitors to my parents' house will have seen the photo in the downstairs loo of my father ushering Princess Anne down the front steps of the new Mission building!

He also chaired the Singapore international chamber of commerce for 2 years, at the end of which time he was awarded the OBE for services to the British business community in Singapore.

My parents retired to East Sussex in 1989, initially to Danehill where Dad continued his work with the Mission to Seafarers in London as well as joining the Danehill PCC and local Conservative Association. Along with our mother he became a keen visitor to the opera at Glyndebourne and in time the metropolitan opera shows at the Uckfield Picturehouse.

He used to be an active golfer in Singapore, and carried on playing at Piltdown which he loved dearly and where he was a regular player with the Tuesday boys.

After moving to Buxted and then to Five Ash Down, Dad became involved with the Friends of St. Margaret the Queen, the Church in which we are here today commemorating his life.

He loved serving food and wine at the head of a large dinner table. He was a great family man especially with our mother's extended family and was very close to his grandchildren, **Hugo** and **Harriet** and loved speaking to them (particularly as they were too polite to complain about being regaled with the same stories!) He was also a proud great grandfather to **Seth** and missed the arrival of his second great grandchild, **Jolene** by a day.

In summation, our father lived a full and active life across the world right up to the end and together with his brother **Brian** they were both modest and proud examples of the currently much maligned phrase – true officers of the British Empire.

We send our sincere condolences to **Hugh** and **Elsbeth Chaplin** on learning of the death of their mother aged 102. Their father **Edward (Ted) Chaplin** was a member of the SSVF/SRA and was sent with "D" Battalion to Thailand on 12th October 1942. His diaries can be read on the MVG website.

We are also sorry to announce the death of **George PETERSON**, aged 100, in September 2021 in Canada. **George** was a member of the Winnipeg Grenadiers sent to defend Hong Kong in 1941. They were captured on Christmas Day, 1941, by the Japanese when they over ran Hong Kong. He was President of the Hong Kong Veterans Association for many years, and was instrumental in gaining recognition for Canada's Hong Kong Veterans, including a Memorial in Ottawa and another at Brookside Cemetery in Winnipeg. His funeral was attended by MVG member **Stephen John Fletcher**, who sent this report. **George Peterson** was buried a few meters away from the Hong Kong memorial in Winnipeg. For further information, see the following websites:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-s-arden-7-honoured-for-service-in-the-battle-of-hong-kong-1.2705134>

https://passages.winnipegfreepress.com/passage-details/id-301312/PETERSON_GEORGE

Stephen's reflections of **George** can be found on the comments section of the obituary.

The death of **Colonel David Mitchell**, aged 92, was announced on 11th November 2021. He was a Royal Marine Officer who commanded No: 2 Special Boat Section in the Far East during the Konfrontasi. He pioneered new techniques of clandestine reconnaissance in 1964-65 when the Communist-backed, Indonesian-led series of armed incursions into Malaysian territory was intended to destabilise the newly formed Federation of Malaysia. In early 1964, 2SBS was sent to the border between Sarawak and Kalimantan where **Mitchell** established a covert observation post, and pioneered a new technique for exiting canoes from a submarine underwater. This proved successful for his team in carrying out missions in enemy territory, by paddling silently up rivers to achieve their goal.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2021/11/21/colonel-david-mitchell-led-high-risk-clandestine-missions-paddling/>

On 14th December 2021, the death of **Vice-Admiral Sir John Forbes** was announced in the Telegraph. He served as a midshipman under training for much of the war, taking part in the landings on Sicily, Italy and Normandy and in the final months of the war in the Far East. As a sub-lieutenant in **Nelson** he was responsible for 100 men and commanded a 16 inch gun turret – living in the turret for several days at a time. On 2nd September 1945 (aged only 20) he commanded the motorboat which brought **Japanese Rear-Admiral Uozumi** from the jetty in Penang to **Nelson** to surrender 26,000 Japanese troops. Post-war he was appointed second-in-command and operational commander of the Royal Malaysian Navy (1966-68) during Konfrontasi. Between 1972-1974, he returned to Dartmouth as the Captain of the Royal Naval College, having been appointed as second-in-command in 1964 when he oversaw the tightening up of discipline after a series of pranks for which his "rollockings" became legendary.

Major Kit Maunsell MC – Gurkha Officer and business man has died on 6th October 2021. In 1965, towards the end of the Konfrontasi war with Indonesia, **Captain Kit Maunsell** was in command of a company of the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles in an attack on an Indonesian base near the border town of Serikin in Sarawak. The action was one of the British Army's most ferocious since the Korean War and recognized by an unusual number of gallantry awards, including the VC awarded to **Lance-Corporal Rambahadur Limbu** for his bravery in trying to rescue three men who were killed in the action. The assault on Gunung Tepoi and ensuing battle depicting Rambahadur Limbu's VC was captured in a painting by Terence Cuneo and gifted to the Gurkha Museum in Winchester.

On 30th October 2021, a "Lives Remembered" tribute to **Robert (Bobby) Kennard** (who died 40 years ago) was given in the Times. He was an Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Company Commander during the Malayan Campaign.

Wounded in the thigh during the fighting, he managed to rejoin his regiment but was moved to hospital in Singapore.

Invited to join an escape attempt, he sailed for Sumatra before the surrender and from there made it across to Ceylon with 200 men. On recovering from his wound in India, he was involved in training for retaking Burma and saw action at the Battle of Imphal in 1944. For his leadership between April and July 1944 he was awarded the MC.

THE STUBBS and PATON FAMILY TREE

By kind permission of Vilma Howe

The Stubbs /Paton Family tree can now be viewed on the Muntok Peace Museum's website by following the link below -

https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page_id=3870

together with **Vilma's** story about her internment in Muntok and Palembang, Sumatra, and finally Sime Road Camp in Singapore. Her story about evacuation on the "Mata Hari" was printed in the 51st Edition of Apa Khabar in July 2017.

Vilma says that she has been fortunate to connect with and talk to the late **Ralph Armstrong** and the **Stanley/Nunis** family as well as to **Jane (Reid) Elgey & Olga Henderson**, who shared the same Sime Road Hut with her.

THE DEVIL'S FOLLOWER

Tsuji Masanobu, Chief of Planning and Operations – Malaya 1942

With thanks to Dave Croft MA



Tsuji Masanobu

At dawn on 22nd October 1941 an unmarked Imperial Japanese Army Air Service fast reconnaissance aircraft left Saigon for north Malaya with **General Staff Officer Lt. Col. Tsuji** (*Family name first*) **Masanobu** replacing the observer crew member for this flight. His self imposed task was to view the northern British airfields as part of his planning for the Japanese invasion of Malaya. Although the aircraft (a Mitsubishi Ki-46 Mk 11 'Dinah') was unmarked and had a maximum speed and ceiling height way above the British aircraft in Malaya at that time, just in case of a forced landing in British territory, **Tsuji** wore an air service uniform under his flight suit – for obvious reasons.

Planning for war. During 1939, officers of the Japanese Army General Staff made discreet visits to a number of 'colonial' countries in South East Asia to assess how receptive the 'natives' would be to ridding their country of its colonial government. The result showed many 'natives would welcome the overthrow of a colonial government' and planning how to do

this using military force was started.

In December 1940, three Japanese Army divisions based in China were placed on standby for tropical warfare training. **Lt. Colonel Tsuji** was posted to the planning unit of the Taiwan Army Research in January 1941 to study warfare and its associated problems in a tropical environment. He also sent (in disguise) a staff officer, **Captain Asaeda Shigeharu**, to gather information from northern Malaya and southern Thailand that would be useful in the planning of an invasion – his main task being to provide details of beaches and tides. **Asaeda's** report suggested 'it would be difficult to disembark at Singora and Pattani during the winter months because of the north east monsoon.' He also found out 'that the locals' fishing boats did not put out because of the nine-foot waves, and these might cause losses during a mass landing.' Also reported was, 'The airfields at Singora and Pattani were very poor compared with those the British had built at Kota Bahru and Alor Star. It would be essential to control the British airfields as soon as possible.'

The tropical training of the Japanese troops to prepare them for the invasion of Malaya took place on Hainan Island under the supervision of **Tsuji**, who also wrote a manual for each soldier, *Read This Alone And The War Can Be Won*. The manual was intended to be read quietly and intently, even in the cramped conditions (even by Japanese standards) of a transport ship. The contents included notes on tropical warfare, why they (the Japanese) have to fight and whom they should fight, and how to march and camp in the tropics. Also included was a section on South Asia, describing it as 'A treasure house of the Far East, seized by the British, the Americans, the French and the Dutch. To remove the colonial powers and replace them with Japanese overlords is *'Obeying the Emperor's august will for peace in the Far East.'* On 4th December the invasion convoy sailed, reaching the Malayan coast on 7/8th December 1941.

Singapore 1942. The Battle of Singapore started on 8/9th December 1941 when Japanese troops attacked Singapore Island, culminating in surrender to the Japanese on 15th February 1942. On the 14th February, the massacre of staff and patients of the British Military Hospital (Alexandra Hospital) took place. A number of possible explanations have been given since then, but there is another one which is that **Tsuji** authorized the massacre. Several sources state that he was in the vicinity of the hospital and others that 'he authorized the massacre to make **Yamashita's** demands for surrender to be hastened.'

Tsuji had timetabled the capture of Singapore by 13th February 1942! The first Japanese military to enter Singapore City was a 2nd Field Kempeitai garrison force formed of a mixture of regular Kempeitai and auxiliary military police personnel. The later role of one **Shinozaki Mamoru**, a Japanese citizen described as Japan's Forgotten Humanitarian (The Japan Times 2019), during the systematic purge of 'so called' possible hostile elements of the Singapore Chinese by the Japanese military is worthy of note.

Shinozaki Mamoru was appointed press attaché on the staff of the Japanese Consul General in Singapore in 1938. Later he was 'requested' to report on local conditions relevant to the British Military Defences of Singapore...this was taken further by socialising with British servicemen at functions he organised and passing on useful information gained at the time.

Shinozaki eventually came to the notice of Special Branch and was placed under surveillance in July 1940. In early September he conducted two Japanese military officers to areas of military interest in Singapore and southern Malaya in order to gather intelligence useful to **Tsuji** for his planning of the invasion of Malaya. He was arrested on 21st September 1940 and found guilty of two charges relating to 'spying' and sentenced to 3½ years of hard labour and a fine of \$1,000...the sentence to be served in Changi Prison. He was released from Changi by the Field Kempeitai on their arrival in Singapore City (February 1942) and appointed as Special Advisor to the Singapore Kempeitai with the civilian equivalent rank of Lt. Col. This was to stand him in good stead when taking on his 'humanitarian' role during the

forthcoming purge aimed to eliminate all opposition to Japanese rule starting on 18th February 1942 (some references give slightly different starting dates of the start of the massacre). The planning of the execution programme was Chief of Planning and Operations **Tsuji Masanobu**, who started the screening and executions, initially using the Kempeitai to start the task. However, with the enormity of the task rapidly growing, other Japanese Army units, such as the Imperial Guards, were moved in to ensure the pace of killings was maintained.

Note (1). **Shinozaki Mamoru** provided evidence during the 1946 War Crimes Trials relating to the massacre of Singapore Chinese saying... 'Although the Sook Ching was supposed to last three days, it went on for much longer.' According to **Shinozaki**: "**Colonel Tsuji** went to **Onishi's (Major Onishi Satoru)** collection centre to urge the Kempeitai on to greater efforts in obtaining more Chinese for massacre. They had been searching houses and clubs, had obtained the member lists of the Chinese Volunteer Army and the China Relief Fund. They had collected a lot of evidence, so there was no need for them to have a general round-up. They could make individual arrests. Still, **Major Hayashi (Hayashi Tadahiko)**, described in '*Kempeitai, Japan's Dreaded Military Police*' as a creature of **Tsuji** felt this was not enough...a new round-up was started by the Kempeitai. **Shinozaki's** evidence continued by stating he 'had used his authority as a Japanese officer to issue passes to as many Chinese as he could so that they could get through the screenings safely.'

Note (2). From *Syonan Years 1942-1945 pp23-24*, **Shinozaki** recounted: "When I came back to my hotel I found a Chinese nurse waiting for me. She told me her father and brother had been taken away to the River Valley Road centre and they were in great danger...I took her in my car (to the screening centre). There I saw six thousand Chinese gathered inside the rope under the burning sun. The investigation was just starting. A young Kempei and some soldiers were questioning in Japanese! The Kempei came to me, "Who are you?" he asked me roughly. "I'm **Shinozaki** of Defence Headquarters." "Sorry, sir, please wait a moment I will talk with my officer." The Kempei lieutenant came over from the other side. He recognised me as we had met two or three times at the Kempeitai HQ. A brief discussion followed which resulted in the release of the relatives of the nurse as they worked in the Japanese hospital. **Shinosaki** went on to say, "It was a very difficult matter to approach the Kempeitai to ask them to release anyone. I knew it was mainly because they had heard about me from Changi and that the Kempei had rescued me from Changi, and they sympathized with me that I had suffered so long. Therefore for me it was not so difficult to ask the Kempei to let them out." **Shinosaki** also recounted a failure when dealing with a **Captain Mizuno** at Tanjong Pagar! **Mizuno Keiji** received a life sentence for the part he played in the Singapore massacre. He was released in 1952 and repatriated back to Japan. In April 1942, whilst still being involved with the Kempeitai, **Shinosaki** in his role of identifying 'hostiles to Japan' arrived at the Raffles Museum to arrest **E.J.H Corner** as a 'hostile' because the wife of the Swiss Consul, **Mrs. Gritli Arbenz**, had made a complaint about him. Apparently she was mentally affected by the Japanese Occupation! It would seem he left the Museum empty handed.

Note (3). Second Lieutenant **M.M. Pillai** of the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners Indian Army became a POW in Selarang Barracks when the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese Army in February 1942. He later escaped by hiding in a drum and then disguised as a Singapore local posed as a merchant. He was successful in obtaining a permit from the Japanese before finding his way to Burma, accompanied by a medical officer and a civilian friend **V. Radhakrishnan**. On reaching Burma, the medical officer remained there, while the other two made their way up the Irrawaddy and then towards the Allied front line at Fort White in the Letha range of hills. To help get Radhakrishnan, a civilian, through the Allied lines he was passed off as a lieutenant of the Singapore Volunteer Corps. Both reached India after being several months on the 'run.' **Radhakrishnan** was later formally commissioned into the Royal Bombay Sappers and Miners, but not before both had been awarded the Military Cross, although **Radhakrishnan** had been a civilian at the time! Later, in India, **Lt. V. Radhakrishnan MC** was able to report to the British authorities of the brutal treatment he observed of the Chinese during the purge of supposedly 'hostile' Singapore citizens.

Lt. Col. Tsuji after Singapore. '*Tsuji was the most insidious, calculating, coldly brutal and singularly successful mass killer in the entire Japanese war criminal line up.*' (**Ian Ward** Daily Telegraph South East Asia correspondent 1962-1987)

Following Singapore, **Tsuji** was posted to the Philippines. The Battle of Bataan had started on 7th January 1942 and on 9th April 1942, the defending American and Filipino soldiers surrendered to the Japanese. In mid-April during the Bataan death march, the Pantingan River massacre of Filipino soldiers took place – the massacre being attributed to **Tsuji*** and a clandestine order issued to 'summarily execute all American captives.' He was also responsible for the execution of a number of the Philippines Government.

*Quote from "*Prisoners of the Japanese*" – '*Out on the East Road, an officer who looked like **Tsuji** was seen behaving like **Tsuji**, a Japanese lieutenant colonel killing a surrendered prisoner...*'

Later in 1942, **Tsuji** arrived at Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands), still as a staff officer in the planning role and then in action 23rd-24th October where he suffered a defeat. He was posted to Army Expeditionary Forces HQ in Nanking, effectively to keep him out of trouble, and where he was now in a position to make contact with Chinese members of Chiang Kai-Shek's government. In 1944, **Tsuji** was posted to Burma

where he was held responsible for the execution and cannibalism of **Lt. Benjamin Parker** (USAAF)¹ on 26th September 1944 following his aircraft being brought down by AA fire during a raid. **Major Abe Hiroshi**** was present at the interrogation of **Lt. Parker** and suggested he was 'killed trying to escape.' On 25th August 1945, **Tsuji** and **Abe** went on the run (to Bangkok) when a senior US military police officer arrived to investigate the cannibalism of **Lt. Parker**.

**** Abe** was later tried as a war criminal from the time he was a lieutenant of the IJA Fifth Railway Regiment involved in the construction of the Burma Railway at Songkrai. He was sentenced to death by hanging, later commuted to 15 years imprisonment. He was released in 1957. Much later, in admitting his part in the building of the railway, he stated, '*The construction of the railway was in itself a war crime. For my part in it, I am a war criminal.*'

1 This seems at odds with the declassified CIA document (2005) entitled "**Tsuji Masanobu**" in that there isn't mention of the death and cannibalism of **Lt. Parker**, or that '**Tojo** transferred **Tsuji** to Burma as the end of the Pacific War approached.'

Tsuji on the run. '*Tsuji is the type of man who, given the chance, would start WW3 without any misgivings.*' (CIA Assessment 1954)

In Bangkok, in order to avoid capture by the Allies and be tried as a war criminal, **Tsuji** disguised himself as a Buddhist monk and with other Japanese Army escapees from justice, hid himself in Bangkok's Ryab Temple. The publication, '*War, Conflict and Security in Japan and Asia-Pacific 1941-52*' explains: "The Japanese Ambassador, **Yamamoto**, had approached the Siamese Premier and Minister of Education on **Tsuji's** behalf and obtained permission for him to stay as a monk at the Ryab Temple, which had been used as an ossuary for the Japanese community in Siam for fifty years. The head of the Religious Bureau in Bangkok put **Tsuji** through a mild Buddhist catechism after he was allowed to stay. He was not the only stay-behind Japanese, and occasionally officers from headquarters came to the monastery and reported on the British occupation. Then the British cracked down and issued an order that all Japanese priests were to be placed in detention camps. **Tsuji** realized the net was closing in and he began to put out feelers to the Chinese.

Tsuji left Bangkok by train on 1st November 1945 and eventually arrived by air at Chungking on 9th March 1946 after a stay in Laos. Chungking was, at the time, the provisional capital of Chiang Kai-shek and **Tsuji**, along with other previous Japanese military and Kempeitai on the run, started working for the Nationalist Chinese. Throughout this period the British were still active in tracking him down for the Singapore massacres, but he remained elusive as ever.

On 16th May 1948, he travelled incognito to Japan and from there was moved from safe haven to safe haven, meeting up at one point with **Asaeda Shigeharu** (Note 4) who was also on the run from the British.

Note (4). Whilst the army career of **Asaeda Shigeharu** throughout the war is fairly well documented, post war when wanted for war crimes by the British he, like **Tsuji**, just seemed to disappear...however there is a mention of a report (26th August 1945) of a communication from Staff Officer **Asaeda Shigeharu** to **General Vasilevsky** of the Russian Army regarding the future treatment of Japanese internees....*Siberian Detachment: The Asia-Pacific Journal, November 2009.*

On the run...again! **Tsuji's** war criminal charges were officially lifted in 1950 leaving him to come out in the open and publish his memoirs in '*Underground Escape*' and then embark on a political career. The publication of another book, '*Guadalcanal*' led to **Tsuji** being exposed by **General Kawaguchi** (whose downfall in Guadalcanal was caused by **Tsuji**) for his atrocities - these being the 'Singapore massacres, the Bataan Death Marches, the slaughter of medical staff and patients at the Alexandria Medical Hospital in Singapore.' Also included was a long list of atrocities against individuals such as the murder of the Philippine Chief Justice **Jose Abad Santos**, as well as detailing his associations with and use of the Kempeitai.

Note (5). The death of **Lt. Parker** in Burma in 1944 occurred after **Tsuji's** involvement with **Kawaguchi** in Guadalcanal in 1942, and this, possibly, would not have been known to **Kawaguchi**. Following **Tsuji's** public exposure by **Kawaguchi**, he left for a tour of South East Asia on 4th April 1961. He was seen in Laos, believed to be en route to make contact with Pathet Lao rebels, and then sighted boarding an aircraft for Hanoi on 10th June 1961. That was the last recorded sighting of **Tsuji** and he was officially presumed dead on 7th July 1968.

T.E. Lawrence and the Seletar Connection

By Dave Croft MA

T.E. Lawrence, more recognizable as 'Lawrence of Arabia' had, during his RAF career, made vast improvements to the design of RAF marine craft during the 1930s. But his contacts went much further than this, important work that it was, he was also connected in an obscure way with Seletar!

The story starts with RAF Mount Batten (then called Cattewater). In January 1929, **Wing Commander Sydney Smith OBE** became Officer Commanding of the flying boat station. **Aircraftman Shaw (Lawrence)** arrived at Mount Batten in March 1929 (both having served at Cranwell in 1926) and **Lawrence** eventually became socially friendly with both the CO and his wife ... *not really normal in the RAF of those days!* **Lawrence** was entrusted with a number of technical projects,

Normally beyond the 'job description' of an AC1, including being given responsibility for the Schneider Cup ground organisation.

Following posts as OC No. 204 Squadron and RAF Manston, **Sydney Smith** arrived at Singapore/Seletar in 1933. Records show he was Officer Commanding/AOC RAF Far East, 7th October 1933 and Officer Commanding RAF Base Singapore, 10th November 1933. **Wing Commander E.J.P. Burling** became OC RAF Mount Batten on 3rd January 1933 and later followed as CO of Seletar (and of Yacht Club fame). **Lawrence** served at Mount Batten under both officers!

RAFA Aquarius

From **Jeremy Wilson's** book 'Lawrence of Arabia' – "In late March (1934), after the new target launches had been completed, **Lawrence** had gone to Northwich in Cheshire, for the acceptance trials of a small cargo vessel which the RAF had purchased for use in Singapore. By the time **Aquarius** sailed for Plymouth, with **Lawrence** on board, the press had learned of his presence! The Air Ministry had been looking for a small ship to carry stores for the Air Force, and the **Aquarius** was extremely suitable." Thus there was an almost 100% certain connection between **AC1 Shaw**, **Air Commodore Smith**, RAF Seletar and **RAFA Aquarius**. It also begs the question as to why **Shaw (Lawrence)** didn't accompany the **Aquarius*** out to Singapore? The truth is that **Lord Trenchard** had, at this time, put a ban on him leaving the country while still service with the RAF... the RAF/Air ministry had become very embarrassed by the 'Lawrence of Arabia' publicity surrounding their marine craft 'expert'.

**The Aquarius was launched on 14th February 1934 as an air craft tender, arriving at Seletar 28th May 1934. Aquarius sailed from Singapore on the night of 12/13th February 1942 and was sunk north of Banka Island by Japanese aircraft.*

Air Commodore Sydney Smith OBE was Air Officer Commanding RAF Far East during the time of the disappearance of **Air Commodore Sir Charles Kingsford Smith RAAF** and **Captain Pethybridge** whilst flying the Lockheed Altair **Lady Southern Cross** between Rangoon and Singapore on 8th November 1935. Part of his report shows that in the long search that followed, Vildebeests of 36 and 100 Squadrons based at Seletar were involved, as were two 205 Squadron Flying Boats.

Wing Commander (Group Captain from 1st January 1936) E.J.P. Burling DSC, DFC, AFC initiated the very successful Seletar Yacht Club project and became the first Commodore of the Club. He also designed the pram type dinghy that became a favourite with club members.

What a pity **AC1 Shaw (Lawrence of Arabia)** didn't get to Seletar. His only connection is through the two commanding officers he served under when in Great Britain. A tribute to the lasting friendship between **AC1 Shaw** and **Sydney Smith** was paid at Bridlington on 25th September 1953 when a small sundial was unveiled by **Air Commodore Smith** 'dedicated to the memory of **Lawrence of Arabia**, who as **Aircraftman Shaw** served in the Royal Air Force in Bridlington between 1929 and 1935.' *These dates include detachments to Bridlington prior to finishing his service career there.*

RAFA Aquarius at Seletar



RAFA Aquarius berthed



80 YEARS ON – 30/12/2021 – WE REMEMBER THE BATTLE FOR KAMPAR HEROES.

Two websites appeared in the Malaysian newspapers on 30th December 2021, in Remembrance of those who fought and died in the Battle for Kampar.

In Free Malaysia Today:

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/leisure/2021/12/30/80-years-on-first-remembrance-day-for-battle-of-kampar-heroes/>

In The Star:

https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/12/30/indian-high-comm-hopeful-towards-realisation-of-battle-of-kampar-memorial?fbclid=IwAR1ee4B9COIx0V42O8aI2YF5EG13EkBfDXhjhCr_JAaBT6CQIxcTXtcVEH8

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

The following events have been arranged for 2022 to date. We will have more information in April.

SINGAPORE- 15th February 2022 – 80th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

We hope there will be a service in Kranji to mark this notable date, but have heard nothing.

MUNTOK – 16th February 2022 – 80th Anniversary of the sinkings of ships in Banka Strait & Radji Beach massacre

A Zoom service is being organised by **Michael Noyce** and **Judy Balcombe**.

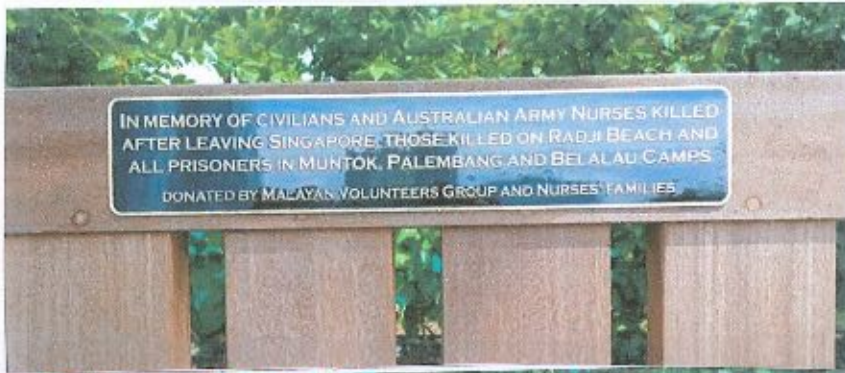
WYMONDHAM – Sunday 15th May 2022. Annual Service at the FEPOW Church at 12.30p.m.

Further details for be given in April.

LONDON – Saturday 15th October 2022 – Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly.

Our speaker this year is **James Wilson** who will be speaking about his father, **Leonard Wilson**, Bishop of Singapore in 1942.

THE BENCH DONATED BY THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSES' FAMILIES AND MVG



Photos sent by **Robbert van de Rijdt** of the Netherlands War Graves Foundation, of the donated Bench which has been placed in the Menteng Pulo War Cemetery in Jakarta. Run by the Netherlands War Graves Foundation, it opens into the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery which is maintained by the NWGF.

A number of graves were moved from Muntok post-war to these cemeteries, either by their employees, such as Cable and Wireless, or by the crew of the Empress of Asia, or because as Volunteers officers, the Dutch considered them to be military personnel.

Annual subscriptions

The subscription letter is enclosed. Please note the information about making online payments to the account, given by our accountant on P.2.

Also please note that this year we are placing the onus of payment of your subscription on to you. As mentioned on P.2 we are trying a different approach to the collection of subscriptions. They will be regarded as 'donations' to MVG funds. Without your 'donations' the MVG cannot continue to exist. Members who have not paid their 'donation' by July will not be reminded, and their membership will be suspended until payment is received.

We are very grateful to those members who have set up standing orders to pay their subscriptions. These have to be set up by you with your bank. As reminded by our accountant, the MVG does not hold a business account and therefore cannot set up Direct Debits.

If paying by cheque, please write the full name of the account:

Mrs. R.A. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

This year we have sent funds to the Muntok Peace Museum for their electricity, a donation towards the Memorial Bench seen in the above photograph, and included a donation in the wonderful total of £27,750 raised by your generosity for the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum, to help keep them afloat during the pandemic and subsequent loss of visitors.

It has been a difficult but rewarding year.

CONTACTS

ELIZABETH ADAMSON – MVG Secretary in Australia

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

bunneyelizabeth5@gmail.com

SALLIE HAMMOND – MVG Secretary in Canada and the USA.

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

RICHARD PARRY – MVG Secretary in Malaysia and Singapore

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

rbpary@hotmail.com

JONATHAN MOFFATT – MVG Historian and Archivist

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

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

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