

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**70th EDITION
APRIL 2022**



**Ms. Teresa Teo Guttensohn, Assistant Director,
Sports Heritage@Sport Singapore,**

**lays the wreath, on behalf of the MVG, during the Service in Kranji, CWGC,
to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 15/2/2022,
in memory of the Volunteer Forces who fought in Malaya and Singapore in WW2.
[With thanks to the Singapore History Consultants for the photographs].**

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THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE REMEMBERED IN CEREMONIES IN MELBOURNE, KRANJI, MUNTOK & THE UK.

Having heard nothing in January about any events being arranged to mark the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 15th February 2022, MVG members in Australia, Singapore and the UK resolved to make sure that this notable date was not forgotten. Much was planned in a very short time, resulting in events taking place in Australia on Sunday, 13th February, at the Melbourne Shrine; two services in Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Singapore, on Tuesday, 15th February, and one in Carlisle, UK; and on Wednesday, 16th February, a Zoom Service from Muntok.

Last Post Service from Melbourne.

We thank **John Pollock** for attending the Last Post Service at the Melbourne Shrine's Second World War Memorial Forecourt on Sunday, 13th February. A service takes place there every Sunday at 4.45pm local time, during which wreaths are laid, a piper and bugler play the Last Post and Rouse and the Shrine Guard lower the flags. **John** was invited to lay a wreath at the special service which was held on Sunday, 13th February to commemorate the Fall of Singapore, together with another FEPOW family. The wreath acknowledged the Australian Volunteers, who numbered about 150, as well as **John's** father, **Walter Pollock** who served in the FMSVF. The wording on the wreath read:

"In memory of all Australian civilians, including those who died on land and sea, who served in the Federated Malay States, Straits Settlements, and other Malayan Volunteer Units during the Malayan Campaign – December 1941 – February 1942."

The Last Post event was live streamed on the day at:

<https://www.shrine.org.au/last-post-service-13-february>

Service at Carlisle's War Memorial.

We are very grateful to **Tony Parrini** for organising a service at the War Memorial in his home town of Carlisle in honour of those who served their country in the Far East during WW2. An article in the local newspaper reminded the people of Carlisle of this important date, with an invitation to attend the gathering at the War Memorial at 11 a.m. on the morning of 15th February, for a service and wreath laying by the Lady Mayor with a Trumpeter and Piper. Attendees were invited for coffee afterwards. **Tony** reminded people that the 75th anniversary of V-J Day in 2020 was not celebrated due to Covid, and because the Japanese didn't surrender until the August after V-E Day in 1945, there was little celebration when the men finally came home from the Far East. He said, *"This was the forgotten army who came home and received no appreciation."*

During the pandemic **Tony** researched his family history and discovered that his uncle was a Volunteer who worked on the Burma Railway before being shipped to Japan. There, he worked in a mine within 150 miles of Hiroshima where the first atomic bomb was dropped. After the war, his uncle returned to Malaya and resumed his work as a rubber planter, but died within 18 months.

Private Ceremony in Kranji.

In Singapore, the apparent absence of an official service being organised in Kranji, CWGC, and with very little, if any, information available, we are very grateful to **Michael Pether**, who was staying with family, for taking on the difficult and lengthy task of arranging a private ceremony to mark the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. Held at 3 p.m. on 15th February, the service was attended by seven people, **Michael** and **Lesley Pether**, **Lt. Adrian Villanueva**, **Cdr. Tony Wong**, **Jonathan McAuliffe**, **Dr. Wei Shin Leong** and **Christopher Leong**. Two beautiful floral crosses made for the Commonwealth Nursing Services and the Civilian Internees in Singapore, Malaya and the former Dutch East Indies, were laid by **Lesley** and **Michael** respectively. **Adrian Villanueva** laid a traditional poppy wreath on behalf of all the Malayan Volunteer Forces, Army, Navy and Air Force. **Dr. Wei Shin Leong** laid a poppy wreath on behalf of the Birmingham area FEPOWs, and flowers were laid on behalf of the Romushas – the local races, taken from Malaya and elsewhere as slave labourers and forced to work on the Burma/Siam Railway. The event was filmed and placed on YouTube as follows:-

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86Rp_L5eYfQ&t=1102s [or type in: "Malayan Volunteers Group 80th Anniversary Surrender Singapore Kranji."]

While **Michael** was making the complex arrangements for holding this private ceremony (due to the many covid restrictions still in place in Singapore) we learned that the Singapore History Consultants had finally been given permission by the Singapore Government to organise and hold a service in the morning of 15th February to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

ones' wartime experiences.

Through this sharing, a most remarkable group of people has formed from around the world, willing to relate their own stories and learn about the past. Members of the Malayan Volunteers Group; Australian Army Nurses' families; the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre and the Muntok Nurses and Internees Association have joined with historians and other interested people in Muntok and worldwide.

A new family has been created, in lieu of the many families which were lost. Each person has brought forward details to help complete our understanding of the past. In this way, we have now all contributed to the permanent recording of history.

For many years after the war, there was no recognition of the Civilian War Victims. However, this has now been rectified. The Australian, New Zealand and British Embassies now remember the Australian Army Nurses, Mr. Vivian Bowden and all war victims.

The wonderful people of Muntok, whose story we share, have graciously helped to preserve and present our shared history. Historical markers are in place, there is the Vivian Bullwinkel Galleri in the Timah Museum, the Muntok Peace Museum with its website found by many prisoners' families, and the Civilian Memorial Grave to remember the many who died in camp and whose graves were left behind after the war and were then built over.

In Australia, we now have available the new Singapore Far East Moon Memorial Rose, named for the Vyner Brooke Nurses and in memory of all Far East Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees. This rose will help us to remember the World War 2 victims both this year and into the future.

We are honoured and humbled to have been part of this recording of history and to be deeply involved with the people of Muntok. Our ancestors and their ancestors were present in Muntok together during the war and we are now indeed all part of one family.

On one postcard my grandfather was permitted to write from the prison camp before he died, he said. "Remember Always." We continue to preserve the war victims' memories and work together in our new extended family, hoping for a peaceful and safer world."

Michael Noyce was interviewed on radio about the Zoom Memorial Service and the massacre on Radji Beach. The 9 minute audio recording can be heard on the following link:

<https://www.2gb.com/80-years-on-since-the-horrific-radji-beach-massacre/>

80th Anniversary Memorial Rose – created in Australia.

This rose was named and registered in Australia to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore in 1942.

Called **The Singapore Far East Moon Rose**, it is named for the Bangka Island Australian Army Nurses and is in memory of all Far East Prisoners of War and Civilian Internees. It is now available for pre-order mail order **only** in Australia and will be posted as a bare-rooted rose from July to September. [See enclosed leaflet.]

For other MVG members who would also like to plant a rose in memory of their loved ones, there is a yellow rose available in the UK called **Belle de Jour**. It was the 2021 rose of the year and has frilled golden-yellow petals and an intense fruity-vanilla fragrance. The blooms are long lasting and make good cut flowers. It can be grown in borders and patio pots and also grown as a low hedge.

Letter to the New Straits Times.

We are grateful to **Liz Moggie** for highlighting the state of the Kuala Selangor War Memorial in a letter she sent to the NST. The letter was printed on 15th February 2022 – the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore which had such a devastating effect on Malaya and her neighbouring countries as well as the Allied Forces who were surrendered to the Japanese that day. In her letter, Liz mentions the part played by the men of the Malay Regiment and the Volunteer Battalions in the Malayan Campaign. She said that, according to official records, there were about 3,000 European Volunteers and more than 7,000 local Volunteers of all races. Although trained in their local units, after the Japanese invaded, the Volunteers were assigned to, and fought under, the command of the British, Indian and Australian regiments.

Liz mentions that during research she was shown a list of names of men from the Kuala Selangor district who were killed in action. Of the 23 names, 16 were European and 7 Malays. Research into the names of the Europeans had been done, but the names of the Malays on the list were queried by the son of one of the Malays. This resulted in Liz doing some research into the Malays at Arkib Negara Malaysia [ANM]. Coincidentally, the son of one of the Europeans on the list produced a letter to his mother, dated 15th February 1951, which informed her that a Memorial Plaque with all the names had "**just been unveiled in Kuala Selangor.**" Research revealed that 3 were Malay Regiment soldiers, and 3 others were members of the 2nd [Selangor] Battalion, Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces. The 7th Malay was also probably a Volunteer but Liz was unable to find out any information about him.

The reports of how these Malay Volunteers died was corroborated by Lt. **Wickens**, who reported that on 10th January 1942, No.14 Platoon 2/FMSVF was ordered to move out of Klang and head towards the Bukit Raja Estate before going into action. As they retreated towards Batu Tiga, their trucks were ambushed and several men were wounded and subsequently died.

The former plaque on the Kuala Selangor War Memorial read:

TO THE MEMORY OF THE
MEN OF THIS DISTRICT
WHO DIED AS A RESULT
OF ENEMY ACTION
DECEMBER 1942 – SEPTEMBER 1945

SERVICES TO COMMEMORATE THE 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE



Axminster War Memorial



MVG Wreath - Axminster



The Shrine, Melbourne



SHC Ceremony – Kranji

In memory of the volunteers who fought in Malaya and Singapore

MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP

15 February 2022



Last Post Ceremony, Melbourne



Private Ceremony – Kranji



Inscription on MVG Wreath



Carlisle War Memorial



MVG Floral Wreaths - Kranji

DIARIES AND OTHER PERSONAL ACCOUNTS by MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS

By Jonathan Moffatt

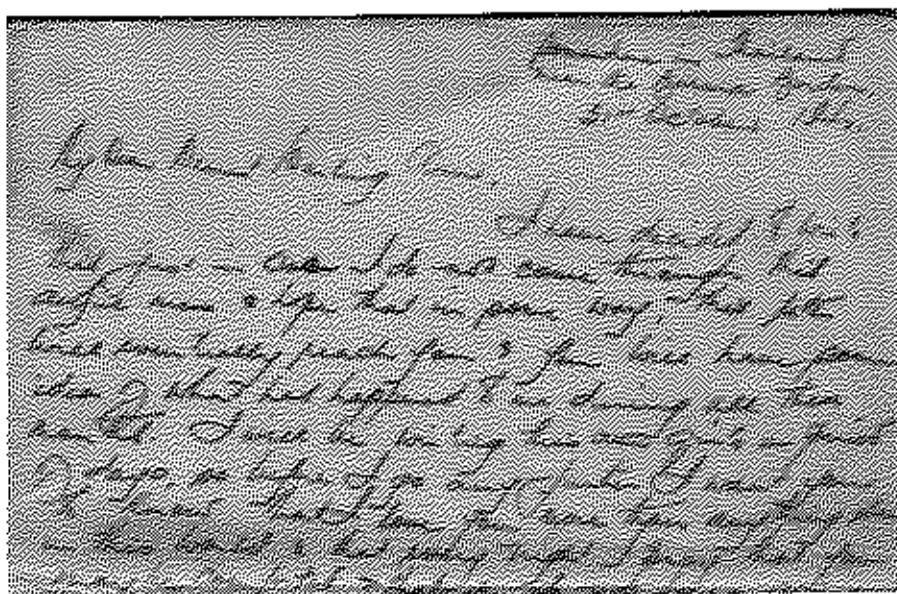
The first Malayan Volunteer captivity diary I read was that of **C.R. 'Ronnie' McArthur** of Straits Trading. He was a Company Sergeant Major in the Selangor Volunteers [2/FMSVF], but in late January 1942 volunteered for service in the Argylls and was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant. Wounded by Japanese mortar fire in the Upper Bukit Timah Road fighting, he was fortunate to be sent to Singapore General Hospital, not the Alexandra Hospital where the massacre took place. In Changi POW camp he began writing a diary of his experiences. He recorded the various overland departures to Thailand with the names of friends and comrades in these parties, then in April 1943 his turn came with the notorious F Force to Thailand. Written in the form of letters to his wife, evacuated to New Zealand, and not delivered to her until his repatriation in September 1945, the diary is held by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regimental Museum, Stirling Castle.

Here he writes on the all too familiar theme of food:

'Our food rations are slowly improving (rice now 2oz. daily) and though it still chiefly consists of rice, the other items have increased slightly too, except flour which has decreased and no milk at all! As anticipated I have been very busy with the Battalion Vitamin "B" drink. We got the original yeast from the Hospital. It was only a cupful to begin with and I have to add daily some rice-water, sugar and ripe cherries (local variety off a tree outside our mess). They are not real cherries, but the sort we had just on the front left-hand side of the porch at Kampar. The quantity has now increased to 8 quart Tiger Beer bottles, but has to reach 30 gallons before I can begin issuing to the Battalion!'

Another FMSVF Volunteer who wrote in the form of letters to his wife was **Jack Slater**, an Australian Anglo-Oriental Mining Company engineer in Perak, a Military Medallist, and a sergeant in the FMSFV Armoured Cars Regiment. In the long 'imaginary' letter written in Thailand at a time when he thought he was going to die, **Jack Slater** described the dramatic events including the Japanese bombing of Ipoh Railway Station; an attack on his armoured car; being wounded in the final days of fighting in Singapore and surviving the Alexandra Hospital atrocity. He was a POW at Changi, Havelock Road, then with "D" Battalion to Thailand in October 1942.

Sgt.J. Slater



In a section of the letter he writes:

'Retreated to Pontian Kechil, finally arrived at our Singapore barracks on January 31st and after being bombed and under rifle fire for days on February 13th two large shells landed amongst us and I collected a piece of shrapnel in the thigh; BOB VEITCH in the leg; LEN BEST in the chest; PETER LUCY in the arm and DAVE ALEXANDER in the leg. LEN BEST died that night in Alexandra Hospital. We were all taken to this hospital. The next day, without any warning, the Japs swarmed into the hospital owing to the fact that Indian troops

retreated through the hospital firing on the enemy as they did so. In the heart of the battle the Japs killed quite a lot of patients and hospital orderlies: among the patients was poor Bob Veitch, only three weeks after he arrived back from his shortened leave in Australia.

On Sunday, February 15th about 6.00 p.m. Singapore was in the hands of the Japs. I will not dwell on our horrible conditions in the hospital: suffice to say that I will not forget them to my dying day. The following Sunday, February 22nd, I had recovered sufficiently, able to walk, but the shrapnel still in my leg, and was ordered to march 18 miles to the Changi POW Camp. I just staggered into Changi about 5.00 p.m. and rejoined the other members of the Volunteer Armoured Car Company.'

"D" Battalion which left Singapore for Thailand on October 12th 1942 included many FMSVF and SSVF Volunteers and some of these were among the most prolific diarists of the captivity: to mention a few: the diaries of **James Taylor Rae**, **Roland John Godber** and **John K. Gale** held by the Imperial War Museum; the family-held diaries of **David Rintoul** and Australian E.T. 'Paddy' Miles, and the now online diary of **George Wiseman**. Personal accounts were later written by "D" Battalion men, some during the process of repatriation and some in their later years, among them **Dr. Stanley Pavillard**; **Edward Chaplin**, and years later our old MVG friends, **Ron** and **Ian Mitchell**, and **Ian Denys Peek** whose book became the bestseller '*One 14th of an Elephant*.'

I am left wondering if a similar proportion of POWs from regular Army units kept diaries and if not, why not? Would the regular soldier be more likely to obey orders and destroy or not keep diaries? Was the level of literacy of Malayan Volunteer other ranks higher than their regular Army counterparts?

Perhaps my favourite diary to read is that of **James A. Richardson** of the Geological Survey Department. He served in the FMSVF, seeing considerable action with the Perak River Patrol then the Independent Company. Together with his friend **Walter Pollock**, another diarist, he obtained an Intelligence Corps commission in late January 1942 before becoming a POW in Singapore, then Thailand. His diary, covering both the Malayan Campaign and captivity, is concisely detailed and informative. Here he describes a contrasting Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 1942:

'Thur 24: A hard day on the pile-driver. Drove 11 piles of which our gang was on 7 of them. The last 6 struck hard ground and work was very gruelling. Much cursing. More than 150 pulls for some piles. 7 of our men passed out in the afternoon: reason – temperature, squitters etc. Mess Meeting in evening. Xmas Cards from other Battalions (sic) auctioned and realized \$36. Taramoto's Christmas Speech: "Tomorrow, Christmas Day – Holiday. Go Home!" Many officers not pulling in the P.D. gang – makes very hard work for those who do. Frid 25: Xmas Day: A day's feasting. Breakfast: Porridge with milk and sugar, 2 fish, roll and butter, biscuits and marmalade; coffee with milk and sugar. Tiffin: Curried meat and veg: curried prawns: fruit salad. Dinner: Soup; ¼ chicken each; 2 mince pies; coffee with milk and sugar. An excellent day's feeding. Major Billy Innes P.d.C. worked very hard. Spent the morning tidying up table and chairs. Fisher went into hospital with fever and squitters. Concert p.m. – very good indeed. Cheery songs. Bobby Spong, Leo Britt, conjuror. Had an evening song-song with Alan Close, John Chator, Innes, Tom Hinde, 'Swerver' Brooke, Phil Rogers and van Rennen. 'Swerver' very tight and was very amusing. Several chaps rather tight on samsu and other local brews.'

Elsewhere he rages in particular against two regular S.B.Os [Senior British Officers], the text additionally annotated with expletives! I won't name the officers for fear of offending any East Surrey or Gordon Highlander enthusiasts!

Captain Harry Malet of the Kedah Volunteer Force, then 4/FMSVF, was one of the many Volunteers in 'U' Party leaving Singapore on October 28th 1942. He described in the last entry in his diary on 3rd May 1943, then exhausting work undertaken by his officers' work party at Kanyu:

'The work itself is just killing in the open cuttings – the heat beating down in almost visible waves – the handles of the tools becoming almost red hot – even the wooden shafts, but the crowbars being iron and heavy as hell anyhow – just blisters one's hand as one picks it up! Working on solid granite rock face, we somehow manage to shift the stuff – it's almost a miracle.' [Ed: Capt. Malet's diary is also in the TBRC.]

Both he and his workmate, **Dick Duke**, middle aged Kedah planters, died within weeks of this entry.

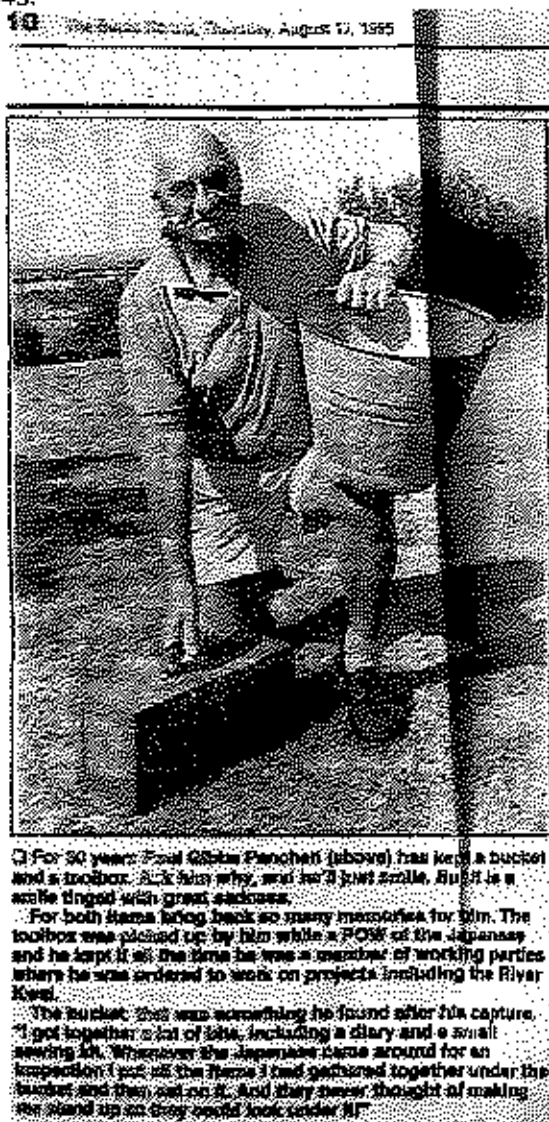
Another FMSVF diarist in 'U' Party was **Major Eric Willbourn**. His account may be read in his post-war diaries, published in the October 2015 edition of Apa Khabar.

Paul Gibbs-Pancheri 1/SSVF

Paul Gibbs-Pancheri 1/SSVF left for Thailand with 'H' Force in May 1943. He often kept his diary in a bucket sitting on it to avoid searching Japanese guards. His diary also contained designed drawings of his ideal home and sports car. Years later, he wrote a good anecdotal account of his captivity in his biography, "*Volunteer!*"

Members of the Johore Volunteer Engineers were also writing captivity diaries, including **Sgt. Robert Willacy** and **Sapper Alastair McKenzie**. **Willacy** wrote of the final days of action in Singapore then his captivity in Changi POW Camp. **McKenzie** kept a detailed diary in Singapore and Thailand camps. His writing is hard to decipher and contains some unusual spellings of place names. He mentions many of his J.V.E. pals and is rather good on the subject of rumours.

'March 21st 1942. Before continuing with general camp life, I must give the news which was read out to us to-day. Firstly a few words about news ... We have no daily papers nor have we an official wireless set. It is amazing to think that in this day and age of telephones – wireless etc. etc. that 32,000 can be entirely and absolutely cut off from any real authentic news, it seems more incredible when one considers that a World War is raging. The rumours that flow about are weird and wonderful. I intend recording them and hope some day to compare them with what really did happen. It is important for me to remember these rumours as they have occurred, and there have been so many but here are a few examples which we heard during March. Russians 50 miles from Berlin – 72 hour bombing of Berlin – Germany asked for a 3 day armistice to bury her dead – Refused by B & R – March 12th Peace in Europe. These are just a few examples but they will suffice.'



Q For 50 years Paul Gibbs Pancheri (above) has used a bucket and a toolbox. Ask him why, and he'll just smile. But it is a smile tinged with great sadness.
A For both items being back so many memories for him. The toolbox was picked up by him while a POW of the Japanese and he kept it all the time he was a member of working parties where he was ordered to work on projects including the River Keel.
The bucket, that was something he found after his capture. "I got together a lot of bits, including a diary and a small sewing kit. Whenever the Japanese came around for an inspection I put all the items I had gathered together under the bucket and then sat on it. And they never thought of making me stand up so they could look under it!"

Even members of the dreadful 'F' Force kept diaries: **Sgt W.T. 'Tam' Innes-Ker SSVF** again writing in the form of letters to his wife, details the horrific story of 'F' Force at Songukrai and Tambaya Hospital. He describes Allied air raids; the suicide in camp of a medical officer and the secret radio work of **James Mudie**, a Malayan Broadcasting Corporation broadcaster, SSVF Signals to the Royal Signals. **Tam Innes-Ker** also contributed entries in the diary of his friend Company QM **Sgt. Kenneth B.H. Stevens** who died in captivity in August 1943.

The above diaries are merely a selection, and I am aware of many others that I could have included mention of. Many of you will find on the Imperial War Museum and Australian War memorial online catalogues and others kept by relatives, some of whom have donated copies to the Malayan Volunteers Group Collection. If you decide to visit the IWM Research Room to read a few of these diaries you may find that things have changed a bit and not for the better: a long waiting list and documents (which need to be fetched for the reader from Duxford) and photos can only be viewed on particular days. So plan your visit carefully and well ahead.

In conclusion, this article comes with **an appeal**: if you have the diary or similar account by a relative in the Malayan Volunteers and have not already done so, please write about it with extracts and contribute it to a future issue of this newsletter. You are very lucky because many families have no diaries to tell their story.

LEN HYGATE – ACCOUNTANT, CRICKETER AND SOLDIER – Part 2
Talk given at the MVG Annual Lunch 16/10/2021 - by his son Colin Hygate

The Battle for Singapore

Of these events **Len** describes that:-

"During the battle on the island a Jap shell landed just a yard or so behind our gun pit and blew up all the hut – that was Feb 13 1942 a Friday. It almost buried us there it is. And two days later we were captured in what we stood in – boots, socks, shirts, shorts and a tin hat. Believe it or not I was wearing the patched and tattered shorts when the war ended. The Japs gave us nothing but two loin cloths, one in 1943 and one in Jan 1945."

It is not clear whether the shell fire on the 13th was during the Battle of Pasir Panjang or an isolated incident in the defensive positions east of Keppel Harbour. However the next time **Len** was on the Padang it was as a Prisoner of War not a spin bowler for Singapore Cricket Club! It may be a salutary fact but his reticence to discuss this period of his life was as a result of being a very small part of the single biggest defeat in British Military History. Much has been written about the circumstances, particularly in **Brig. Ivan Simpson's 'Singapore: Too Little Too Late,'** but the most telling comment I have read was from the victorious **General Yamashita:-**

"My attack on Singapore was a bluff – a bluff that worked. I had 30,000 men and was outnumbered more than three to one. I knew that if I had to fight for long for Singapore, I would be beaten. That is why the surrender had to be at once. I was very frightened all the time that the British would discover our numerical weakness and lack of supplies and force me into disastrous street fighting."

Prisoner of War, Singapore and Sarawak

Len was marched to Changi with the main group of captured allied forces where they were kept in exceedingly overcrowded and primitive conditions. They learned very quickly that the rumours regarding the treatment of Prisoners of War by the Japanese Military, who had not ratified the 1929 Geneva Convention, were as inhuman as suspected. Much has been written elsewhere about the conditions and events at Changi. On 4th April 1942, **Len** was moved to Bukit Timah (No.5) Working Party as one of 800 men. It is presumed that his reference to Bukit Timah Camp is almost certainly 'Sime Road Camp' and is described by **Jane Booker Nielsen** as such in her "Guide to Singapore in World War II." **Colonel Toosey** in his book "The Colonel of Tamarkan" also refers to Bukit Timah Camp. **Len** was one of the first contingent to be moved there and may well have been working on preparing the internment camp from what had originally been a rubber plantation before becoming the RAF Headquarters and which finally served as the Combined Military Headquarters from December 1941. It adjoins the Royal Singapore Golf Club and is described in detail in **Jane's** guide.

After three months working at Bukit Timah, **Len** has recorded that during July 1942 he was moved on to another camp at Pasir Panjang. This camp is also referred to as Ayer Rajah Camp and is located on Portsdown Road. This was the area where the final battle was fought before the surrender and was a heavily fortified location. It is probable that the work was associated with clearing the area for Japanese Military use. **Len** returned from Pasir Panjang to Changi in February 1943. We have no specific record of the activities these working parties undertook or treatment they received from the Japanese at either of these camps although there may be other records or recollections of which I am unaware.

On 28th March 1943, **Len** was included in a group of 500 British and 500 Australian POWs referenced as "E" Force under the command of **Lieutenant Colonel T.C. Whimster R.A.O.C.** that was transferred on the *SS De Klerk* to the Prisoner of War Camp at Batu Lintang in Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo, where they arrived on 1st April.

Their journey was not without incident as there was a cargo of cigarettes on board and, having bribed one of the Japanese officers with 100 cartons, the POWs smoked their way to Kuching indulging in over 30,000 cigarettes. On arrival in Kuching the Japanese realised that the cigarettes were missing but did not pursue the matter as the Japanese officer receiving the bribe quashed any investigation. Also during the three day voyage, **Major Fairlie**, the CO of the Australian "E" Force had smuggled a revolver and 20 rounds of ammunition on board with a plan to seize the *SS De Klerk* and sail to Australia. **Lt. Col. Whimster**, as senior officer, squashed the plan immediately.

"E" Force was a party of 470 British N.C.Os and men which included 108 Straits Settlements Volunteers, one Kelantan Volunteer and 28 of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. **Len** was only at Batu Lintang initially for a few days before being moved on 10th April to a camp he referred to as Poek, but is now known to be Poak. It is further documented that the actual camp was located in the old Coolie Compound of the Dahan Rubber Estate. This is located 18 miles south west of Kuching close to the villages (kampongs) of Puak and Seropak, along the southern bank of a tributary of the Sarawak River variously referred to as Sungai (river) Puak and Sungai Saat on current maps. The location currently remains physically unidentified on the ground despite Poak being shown on the local map and a number of most helpful indications from local residents. The location was referred to in the Australian Army report prepared at the end of the war by the POW Liaison Officer, Headquarters 9th Division, **Captain Darling**, and held by the Australian Military Archive with reference: AWM 10/10/9/11.

Poak, Dahan Camp location reference in the Australian Military Archive states:

2. All British and American PW have been accounted for. The graves of all deceased have been located at LINTANG BARRACKS, the PW themselves, having done this in a very able manner. Only one (British) seemed to have died outside KUCHING viz: 13692 Pte. WICKETT D.J. Malaya Volunteer Force, who died at DAHAN Rubber Estate on the 17 Aug 1943. The grave was not sighted as DAHAN is 20 miles from KUCHING and there was NO transport available. The grave is at POAK, which is 3 Kilometres beyond DAIAN, but comprises part of the DAHAN Rubber Estate and is situated in the Coolie compound area. It is marked and being looked after by an Indian called ALBERT.

However, Len was a member of a group thought to be around 200 mainly S.S.V.F. Other Ranks, who were sent to the camp on road building work. Len always spoke about "building a road from Kuching to Pontianak" although we now understand that this was actually a reopening of the access route to the Tegora Mine to obtain a supply of Mercury. A fellow survivor, Norman Marjoribanks FMSVF also spoke of the task being a road to Pontianak. As this would have been of significant strategic importance to the Japanese we have presumed they would wish to keep the actual purpose secret. There have been sightings of Japanese equipment at the mine.

The Tegora Mine is located south of the Dahan Estate in the Krokong mountain range. Images of the mine and the Quicksilver being transported on the Staal River were painted by Marianne North and Ludvig Verner Helms who discovered the deposits in 1867. The mine was set up and operated by the Borneo Company, now part of the international conglomerate Incheape. The mine's history is described by Martin Lavery in his paper, "Tegora, A Mercurial Anthology." The metal bridge *Jambatan Merah* (Red Bridge) was built by the company with the assistance of the Rajah James Brooke.

There are a number of contemporary accounts by fellow internees (J.L. Noakes and Rev. Peter Howes) of Len's arrival at Batu Lintang and the subsequent assignment to the camp at the Dahan Estate.

Also, in Roddy Martine's book, "Scorpion on the Ceiling" there is a description of his mother's and sister's escape from Kuching over Christmas 1941 via the Dahan Rubber Estate. His father, Charles Martine, was the Borneo Company representative in Sarawak but was captured at the Fall of Singapore and interned at Changi. However, it may have been the existence of a mineral assessment of Tegora mine, carried out in 1938, that gave the Japanese the incentive to reopen the mine as they would have had both local intelligence of the assessment and possibly captured documents from the Borneo Company's Kuching office. The document below, on Page 39 of the mineral assessment report, links the location of Poak, the Jambatan Merah and Tegora.

The Borneo Company Archive, Mineral Assessment

"In 1938 certain interests decided to reinvestigate the Company's old Mine workings in Tegora Peak abandoned in 1894. About a ¼ of an hour's walk from Poak they come across a suspension bridge crossing the river and about 220 ft. long by 6 ft. wide - this was entirely overgrown by jungle. On clearing it, the structure was found to be in remarkably good condition and after a search to ascertain who was responsible for its upkeep, it was found that there was no record of it with the Government or in the Company's correspondence files. It is believed to have been put up to facilitate contact with the more outlying Gambier Gardens of the original Poak Concession, but whether it belongs to Government or the Company has not been ascertained so far. From superficial examination it would still...."

An account of the "E" Force arrival and deployment to Poak is contained in Julitta Lim's book, "Pussy's in the Well." There is an account in the Sarawak Gazette dated 10th August 1950, presumably taken verbatim from J.L. Noakes' personal report of his experiences at Batu Lintang which is contained in Doc. 50 of Ooi Keat Gin's book, *Japanese Empire in the tropics.* The relevant section is:

"On the 1st April 1943, an additional British force of twenty officers (Lt. Col. T.C. Whimster, R.A.O.C. in charge) and 479 N.C.Os and men arrived from Singapore. Among them were 108 of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force, one of the Kelantan Volunteer Force and 28 of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. These Volunteers did not stay long at Batu Lintang but were taken to Dahan to build the road to Tegora, where the Japanese imagined they had immense resources of cinnabar. The men were brought back to Batu Lintang sometime later, many of them suffering with malaria and then they were sent to Labuan, where, so far as can be gathered, all of them died. Some of those who stayed behind, mainly the very sick, were lucky as some of them survived the war."

Len was one of those 'lucky' ones and in one of his letters after being released by the Australians he writes:

"The Nips kept us working in Singapore until March '43 and then I was shipped to Kuching in Sarawak. From there, after a few days, a party of us went up into the jungle on a road making job. The place was most unhealthy and living conditions exceedingly primitive. After ten months of it I was invalided back to Kuching with malaria and poisoned hands and feet - really I was quite helpless. That was in Jan. '44. I was put in the P.O.W. apology for a hospital and at the end of February I was in the dreaded 'little room' with 48 hours or so left to me of this life. However, and this is quite true, one of your letters arrived during that 48 hours and I decided that I'd carry on a bit longer and see whether this

family-business couldn't be carried on a little before I finally pushed off. So, the Medical Officer (Col. King) found himself with a miserable specimen weighing 7 stone but undoubtedly alive and, as he has told me since, he didn't know what to do with me. As luck would have it, the medical records clerk fell sick just then and they asked me if I felt strong enough to try the job. I had to go and kept it - and here I am."

That little is known of the existence or operation of the Poak, Dahan Camp is explained from the Labuan massacre in that there appear to be very few survivors and consequently very few people looking to find the exact location and nature of the work.

During the time Len was in the Poak, Dahan work camp, he recounts a tale which he entitled, "The Amorous Ape." [N.B. This story will be told in a future newsletter]. It recounts the time when one morning on leaving the camp across the rickety bridge, a canoe with three Dyaks came from upriver to request the help of the Japanese in ridding their women of an Orangutan that had taken to watching them whilst bathing in the river. Two of the Japanese guards took a party of six, including Len, a mile or so up river to the Kampong. When the Orangutan arrived, it was duly shot and although the Dyaks wanted the head, Len and his fellow prisoners took the body back to the camp as a very welcome supplement to their meagre rice ration. They were then escorted over the footbridge to their usual work on the road. Another tale entitled, "The Christmas Conspiracy" described the attempt by a Sapper, who was an organist and choirmaster from a church near Lewes, to organise a Christmas Concert. He managed to persuade the Medical Officer, **Capt. Campbell**, to get some paper from the guards. This he used to write out the music and words for the members of the choir. A week before Christmas, they gathered for a rehearsal when two guards, bayonets fixed, rifles cocked and blowing whistles, held them until the remaining guards arrived and took them to the guard house. The paper was taken from them and some slapping accompanied by a torrent of abuse followed until the camp commandant arrived. He studied the papers for some time attempting to discover some hidden meaning until he eventually accepted the explanation. The papers were all destroyed, everyone received another slapping and sent back to camp. It had not occurred to the Japanese guards why an escape plot would be discussed openly in the only lit area of the camp! However, "O Come All Ye Faithful" was sung on Christmas Day without the benefit of the music sheets.

Among his "Medical Miscellany" Len, whilst at Poak, recalls suffering from poisoned hands caused by tugging at the jungle creepers. The Medical Officer, **Captain Campbell**, had some sulphur powder and managed to obtain some pork fat with which he smothered Len's hands, subsequently wrapping his hands in the remnants of his khaki shirt to retain this 'ointment.' That night, he was woken by rats tugging at the bandages having been attracted by the pork fat! However, the cold water scrubbing in the river did remedy the poisoning after a week or so.

Len remained at Batu Lintang camp in the Other Ranks Compound from January 1944 until the arrival of the Australian 9th Division on 11th September 1945. Having survived the "dreaded room" (Hul 19), he was occupied providing clerical assistance to the Medical Officer, **Colonel King**. He observed the simplicity of rudimentary medical treatment, keeping men alive and surviving despite the refusal of the Japanese to issue medical supplies until 28th August 1945 when they released the supplies they held. The M.O's treatment included the use of sieved wood ash for stomach remedies, crushed egg shells for calcium deficiency, maggots to both clean the dead flesh from wounds as well as keeping tropical ulcers from gangrene in the absence of proper antiseptics.

Life in Batu Lintang camp has been well documented elsewhere, but the most chilling episode came as the Japanese realised that, with the Australian forces landing in the north of Borneo, any pretence of their ultimate victory had gone. It is well documented that the order to "Kill all the Prisoners" had been issued and the Camp Commandant **Lieutenant Colonel Suga** had started to reopen the camp at Dahan to which all the POWs, capable of walking there, were to be transferred. It was anticipated that he would announce the implementation of the orders on the 18th August, but 15th August arrived too soon for the work to be completed.

Before the arrival of Australian troops on 11th September, there were regular air drops and almost continuous air surveillance to ensure that the transfer of prisoners for execution did not happen.

Whilst it was well known from the secret radio that the Japanese had surrendered, it was not until 28th August that **Col. Suga** officially announced the surrender to the full parade of the camp. On 11th September the camp learned that at 3p.m. the Australian 9th Division under the command of **Brigadier Thomas C. Eastick** would arrive at the camp to take the surrender of Suga and his guards. [To be continued in July].



Brig. T.C. Eastick takes Suga prisoner

BRITISH BORNEO AND NATOGNA ISLANDS

INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER

In accordance with GENERAL ORDER No 1 - MILITARY AND NAVAL issued by Imperial General Headquarters, by direction of the Emperor and pursuant to surrender by the Emperor to the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, of all Japanese Forces, I,

Major General Kiryoe Yamamura, Commanding General, Japanese Forces Kuching.
hereby

- A. Proclaim the Unconditional Surrender to the Commander KUCHING FORCE the officer designated to receive such surrender of all Japanese Armed Forces and all Armed Forces under Japanese control in SARAWAK SOUTH of the line of RAJANG RIVER to junction with RIRANG RIVER thence RIRANG RIVER to SARAWAK boundary.
- B. Command all Commanders and members of the Japanese Armed Forces and Controlled Forces within the aforesaid area to cease hostilities immediately, lay down their arms, remain in their present localities and do all such acts and things as may be required of them by the Commander KUCHING FORCE.
- C. Command all Civil, Military and Navy officials and all members of the Japanese Armed Forces to obey and enforce all Proclamations, Orders and Directions issued by the Commander KUCHING FORCE.

Signed *Pending* on the *Eleventh* day of *September* 1945

H. Yamamura
Commander

Accepted *Pending* on the *Eleventh* day of *September* 1945

J. C. Eastick
Brigadier
Commanding KUCHING FORCE

DR. ESYN MARCAR MARJORIBANKS (24/10/1888 – 11/11/1959)

With thanks to Liz Moggie

This is an attempt to unravel the conflicting details of **Dr. Marjoribanks'** life in relation to the period of the Japanese occupation of Sarawak. He is mentioned in several books, but the accounts are somewhat confusing. I began by noting just the bare bones of the story, but decided to include any mention of him I came across as it may be of interest to his descendants.

Dr. Marjoribanks, of Scottish descent, was born on 24th October 1888 in Madras, India. His own father was an appraiser with the Madras Government. He studied medicine at Edinburgh (he had a sister living there) at the College of Surgeons, qualifying as L.P.C.P. and S.E. in 1912. His son **Leslie** has his qualifying certificates. Possibly during his time in Edinburgh he married his first wife and a son of that marriage, **Norman Alexander**, was born in Edinburgh in 1913. His first job was in a medical practice in Northumberland.

When the First World War broke out he saw service in all likelihood with the Indian Army. He served as a Lieutenant with the Royal Army Medical Corps on Gallipoli, where he was mentioned in dispatches. He was promoted to Captain in 1915 and was attached to the Bedfordshire Regiment at Gallipoli from May to November, 1915. From February to August 1916, he was with the Cavalry Brigade in Mesopotamia. In 1917 he returned to India to the depot of the Ninth Gurkhas at Dehra Dun where he was second surgeon to I.T. War Hospital. In 1918, he transferred to become Officer in Charge, Cavalry Combined Hospital, Meerut. He became Senior Medical Officer in Charge of the Combined Indian Field Force at Agra until 1919.

His son, **Leslie**, has a copy of a contract dated 1919 for his father's medical services with a Tea Estate (Tugu Estate?) registered in Calcutta. It would appear that he took up this position before going on to Sarawak where he arrived in July 1922. Later he was appointed Divisional Medical Officer, Third Division, at Sibiu on 29th August 1922.

Among his appointments in Sarawak are:

- 1st January 1923 – Principal Medical Officer etc.
- 18th March 1925 – in addition Acting Chief Health Officer
- 15th February ? – in addition, Chief Health Officer
- 1st December 1937 – appointed Officer 1st Class
- 1st July 1938 – he retired from Government service.

Before going to Sarawak (or perhaps on one of his periods of leave) he parted from his first wife and his son, **Norman**. On retirement from the Sarawak Government Medical Service in July 1938 he opened his own private medical clinic in Kuching.

At some stage, he had married **Janet Goh** and they had three children, **Leslie**, and two daughters, **Paula** and **Susan**. I was fortunate to speak to **Leslie** on 6th October, 2020, and again on 16th February, 2021. **Leslie** kindly gave me background information about his father whom he remembers as being a jovial man who could speak a North Indian dialect very well. He remembers his father telling him stories of his time with the Army in Palestine and elsewhere during WW1. The following is what I have been able to put together from my conversations with **Leslie** and with reference to a number of books.

By the time the Japanese attacked Kuching in December 1941, **Dr. Marjoribanks**, as a member of the Passive Defence Force, was stationed as a Medical Auxiliary at the Central Police Station. (This building, on the corner of Barrack Road and Khoo Hun Yeang Street, is still a police station). His clinic was very close by in Khoo Hun Yeang Street. On the corner, opposite the Central Police Station, was the former KMC Building; next to that was The Sarawak Steamship Building; Chin and Sons; Tropical Studio and then **Dr. Marjoribanks'** clinic. (Unfortunately, the name of the clinic is not known). He was living in Tabuan Road in a house he had bought that was built at the turn of the 20th century by an Indian merchant. (It was later in 2011 turned into a boutique hotel and named **Basaga** – a shortened form of **Buah Saga**, a local tree which bears red seeds). **Dr. Marjoribanks** owned this house but that did not prevent it from being requisitioned by the Japanese and the family being forced to go and live in the clinic.

As far as I can ascertain, when the Japanese occupied Kuching, **Dr. Marjoribanks** was presumably permitted to carry on his medical services, possibly helping out at the General Hospital. None of the sources available mentions his name in the early stages of the Occupation. By July 1942, the Batu Lintang barracks had been repurposed as a POW and Internee Camp and those internees who were first imprisoned in the Zaida Building (Jan 1942) and then in the Padungan RC Mission buildings (approx. Feb to June/July 1942) moved to Batu Lintang. (**Howes** wrote that **Dr. Marjoribanks** was with him in the Zaida Building, but I believe that he is mistakenly writing of the time **Dr. Marjoribanks** was in Batu Lintang).

When the Japanese discovered that in North Borneo a doctor had been involved with an illegal radio in an internment camp there, their reaction was to immediately suspect all medical personnel of working against them. This was the reason behind the rounding up, on 6th September 1943, of all British and Eurasian medical staff working at the Kuching General Hospital. These people were interned in Batu Lintang Camp. The Japanese assumed that **Dr. Marjoribanks** was British, but his wife,



Dr. Esyn Marjoribanks

Janet, managed to convince them that her husband was an Indian national. She went often to the Camp with gifts of food for the guards, beseeching them to release her husband. After about two months, he was released.

Dr. Marjoribanks' achievement in passing himself off as an Armenian as well as an Indian national may have been because of his knowledge that there was a large Armenian community in Madras and he was confident that his story would be believed by the Japanese. This may have been the origin of the "Armenian Fantasy" (**Howes & Reece**). **Stephen Yong** goes as far as to say **Dr. Marjoribanks** had a Swiss passport.

Early in 1945, when it was thought the Japanese were definitely losing the war, **Yong** persuaded **Dr. Marjoribanks** to certify him as having chronic bronchitis necessitating "indefinite leave to recover." **Yong** had been forced into employment at the Koksai, the Japanese river transport company, and he wanted an excuse to leave. Perhaps **Dr. Marjoribanks** helped others in the same way.

Leslie told me that a condition of his father's release from Batu Lintang Camp was that he had to carry out medical services for the Japanese when needed. In this capacity, he accompanied Japanese soldiers and travelled throughout the Kuching district and to Bau. What becomes obvious, is that he used these opportunities in order to acquire knowledge of the Japanese positions and the strength of their forces in the area. He built up a network of informers and in the closing days of the war, was able to pass this information on to the Special Operations "Z" Force. In early July 1945, the information reached SEMUT Headquarters, by then at Kanowit. **Courtney**, in his book about "Z" Force Special Operations notes, "**Dr. Marjoribanks** had his intelligence system working full blast, and a continuous stream of information was being received at Kanowit."

Recent research by **Christine Helliwell** tells of a plan named "**Operation Hippo**," the object of which was for Special Operations Forces to take control of Kuching as well as liberate the prisoner being held in Batu Lintang Camp. On page 404 of SEMUT, she writes, "**Dr. Marjoribanks** would arrange for the death of a Chinese elder to be faked in the town. As a result, a large Chinese funerary ceremony would be organised, providing cover for the group." In the end, fortunately, this risky plan did not take place owing to the dropping of the Atomic bombs and the surrender of the Japanese.

Dr. Marjoribanks was responsible for founding a branch of the British Medical Association in Sarawak, and from 1950-1952 he was President of the Borneo Branch. He did not enjoy good health in his later years. In June 1958, the funeral of the Chief Secretary, **Mr. J.C.H. Barcroft** was held and the burial took place on the old cemetery behind **St. Thomas's School**. The Sarawak Tribune noted that, "*An old friend, Dr. E.M. Marjoribanks sat in his car near the entrance to the cemetery to pay his last respects.*"

Dr. Marjoribanks died in Kuching on 11th November 1959, aged 71.

NORMAN ALEXANDER MARJORIBANKS – 1913 – 1987

Norman, Dr. Marjoribanks' eldest son, was born in Edinburgh in 1913. I came to know him in Kuala Lumpur in the early 1980s, and asked him if he was related to the Kuching family of the same name. He was even then bitter about his father's 'desertion' of his mother and himself. I am not sure at what stage he (and possibly his mother?) came to live in Kuala Lumpur before the Second World War. However, **Norman** had qualified as a Lawyer and was working with the KL firm of **Lovelace and Hastings**. He was a private in the Selangor Battalion of the FMSVF and his regimental number was Pte. 13297. He was captured at the Fall of Singapore and became a POW in Changi. On 23rd April 1943, he was sent to Kuching as part of "E" Force and was a POW in Batu Lintang Camp. He told me that with POW companions he worked on 'building a road to Pontianak' and would have been in a camp set up in the former Dahan Rubber Estate. It seems other POWs were told the same story but we now know that the Japanese purpose for the road was to reopen the mercury mine at Tegora. The mineral was used in aeroplane manufacture and, presumably, the POWs might have objected if they felt they were contributing to the Japanese war effort.

Norman related how, on completion of a bridge, the POWs were told that a very senior Japanese officer would come to inspect and drive over it. The men, who knew what a shoddy job it was, were terrified that the bridge would collapse. However, no disaster occurred and the officer in charge was very pleased. As a celebration he promised 'all men eat chicken tonight' and two chickens were given to be shared amongst 80 (I think it was) POWs!

It is ironic that both father and son might have been in Batu Lintang at the same time, but POWs and Internees were kept well apart in different sections of the Camp so they would not have had any opportunity to meet.

I have no details of **Norman's** eventual release at the Japanese capitulation but I presume that he was repatriated to the UK (most POWs of British origin were) and I believe it was there, possibly in London, that he married his wife **Peggy**. They both returned to KL and remained there until **Norman** fell ill with cancer and in the mid 1980s they relocated to Worthing, England, where **Norman** (and later **Peggy**) died.

In **Julitta Jim's "Pussy's in the Well"** there is a 'stray list of surviving soldiers in the Batu Lintang POW Camp' supplied by **J.B. Mackie** himself an "E" Force Volunteer from Selangor who survived Batu Lintang. On the list is a - Pte. **Majoribanks J.A. 13247** – contact address: Metali P.O. Jalpaiguri Dist., India.

This is presumably the same man (in spite of the one digit difference in reg. number & different initial) and it is interesting to note that an Indian address was given. [N.B. A list of 12 books/Journals was supplied. Please ask the Editor if required].

MALAYAN TALES OF A GRANDFATHER – 1934-1942. By C.H. Lee – Part 2

By kind permission of his son Graham Lee

My jungle exercises were for pleasure.

I remember being asked before I went to the East, "Will you be able to stand the heat?" There were more misconceptions in those comparatively untravelled days. The tropical heat is monotonous, and after a few years, leave in a mild climate is needed by the European. Lassitude does set in, and the stimulant of a "sa'tengah" (half whisky and soda) I succumbed to like most, but only after sundown. In his "My Early Life" **Winston Churchill** describes the impact of the East on him, and refers to whisky as the main basic refreshment of the white man in the East. Physical exercise was a necessity for me and for most. Badminton was the game for the evening party, and, of course, tennis, but the former was more popular as more could participate, and many a pleasant evening I have had with kind friends. We worked hard, attending office on Saturday mornings, and, if need be, on Sundays, but the work was invigorating and interesting. We worked hard and played hard. It was, however, always a pleasant relief to motor up to the hill station at Fraser's Hill; I have halcyon memories of cool, dewy mornings, looking out over great stretches of primeval jungle, silent except for the cacophony of the wa-wa monkeys. Rubber Estates in themselves are not very beautiful, nor the tree itself. I cannot say I did not sometimes pine for my English countryside. **H.G. Wells** in the "History of Mr. Polly" has well described it: "there is no countryside like the English countryside for those who have learned to love it; its firm yet gentle lines of hill and dale; its ordered confusion of features; its deer parks and downland; its castles and stately homes; its hamlets and its old churches; its farms and ricks and great barns and ancient trees; its pools and ponds and shining threads of rivers; its flower-starred hedgerows; its orchards and woodland patches; its village greens and kindly inns. Other countrysides have their pleasant aspects, but none such variety, none that shine so steadfastly throughout the year."

I missed, too, the change of seasons, and especially the Spring and spring flowers like my favourite daffodil.

So, most of us looked forward to returning home for good some day. As one amusing planter put it, "Would you prefer daisies or lallang," when discussing where we might wish to die!

Our clubs were segregated but sport was mostly mixed. Soccer and hockey and cricket were popular with the locals, and **Sir Julian Cahn** brought out a cricket team of international reputation in my time. Rugby was mainly European and the State matches were great events.

The Malays were a delightful people, colourful, gentle and with a great sense of humour and of the ridiculous. During a volunteer embodiment, the Malay platoon put on a sketch at the concert which was a genial send-up of the European officers and the N.C. Os. It was notable how keen an eye they had for their mannerisms and idiosyncracies.

I was one of a detachment of Volunteers who took part in the funeral procession at the Sultan of Selangor's funeral at Klang in 1937, and falling out for drinks at a booth near the burial ground I asked the Sussex Sgt. Major who provided the refreshment, and he said, "Sultan punya kira (or 'it's on the Sultan'). This caused a great burst of laughter from the surrounding Malays attending this solemn ceremony.

I know that I had arrived in Malaya at the climax of the colonial era, and that I was very privileged, though I did not then realise this.

In our firm's mess there were four of us, and we employed a Chinese cook, two Chinese "boys", a Malay kebun (gardener) and two Malay syces (chauffeurs), the latter employed by the two seniors among us. I started on £30 per month, of which I sent £3/4 to my mother at home.

The chief who directed our estate operations from London was a remarkable man by any count, **Sir Eric Macfadyen**, a pioneer planter. He was a delight to serve under, and my few close contacts were highlights in my little life. He had been President of the Union at Oxford and thence volunteered for the Boer War as a gunner. He came to Malaya after the war as a member of the legal branch of the Malayan Civil Service, but seeing opportunities he left the service, entered into partnership with a Chinese, a shrewd move, and commenced contracting for roads, and taking up land starting the planting of rubber. By 1914, he was a leading figure, planting adviser and member of the Federated Malay States Legislative Council as an unofficial member. He served as a gunner in World War 1, and afterwards joined Harrisons & Crossfield in London. He was for some 2 years Liberal M.P. for Devizes. Not all his contemporaries were as liberal minded and progressive as he. One company we represented came under my care, and when the Chairman complained to me of high health costs, I told him the medical officer had said his estate had the highest birth rate and lowest death rate. He replied, "I don't want that." He believed in having casual labour, and when there was a slump, well, he was not sure what happened to them, but they went!

Macfadyen worked closely with our planting adviser, **R.O. Jenkins**, a Welshman, who after distinguished service in World War 1, came out planting and was soon promoted to Manager of their leading estate where scientific work on breeding was started, and then chief planting adviser and visitor.

In 1937 on joining Estates Department, I contrived to accompany him on his visit to an estate in Perak. It was a great experience. You were awakened before dawn by the sounds of the Estate tom tom rousing the tappers, and started a tour of the estate as day dawned. It is a memory I shall always retain to my dying day. The coolness of daybreak, and its beauty, and the mist amongst the jungle hills. We returned about 10 a.m. for breakfast, and what breakfasts I recall of such planting visits. I dreamt of them as a POW later! **Trollope's** description of Archdeacon Grantley's breakfast at Plumstead Episcopi Parsonage has nothing on these repasts of great heaps of bacon and eggs and sausages and kidneys and fried bread, and like as not fish was served beforehand. Staggering from these meals I accompanied them on the next bout of inspection, but **Jenkins** was careful of his diet and drink. He could sustain a long day's walking and inspection, then go through the figures in the office, and on to the next estate and the same strenuous routine. It was an eye opener to me, an exhibition of physical and mental vigour that I could not emulate. I am glad he honoured me with his friendship till his death at the age of over 80 – a great leader. It was purely fortuitous that I fell upon a career and colleagues that seemed to suit me so much and gave me such pleasure. I did not plan it so; it just happened, but perhaps with a little push on my part here and there, when I saw glimpses of the light.

Such was my daily occupation in those years, some of the happiest of my life, before war descended upon us, first in Europe, and then in Malaya.

When war came to Europe we all expected something to happen, but it soon became business as usual. Men on leave returned, fresh recruitment took place, and meanwhile the phoney war period carried on. There was an atmosphere of unreality. Even talk of manning the frontier in the event of trouble from Japan, for which we Volunteers were quite unfit. Some time in 1935, **John Brown** joined the Mess after his first leave. He was a dour Scot, shy and unsociable, and he used to take jungle walks on his own. It thus became my practice to accompany him every Sunday on a walk – the same one. He had a car and a syce, and drove to the Ampang mining area where the car disgorged us, and we walked over the flats and into the jungle over the range to Ulu Langat, quite a good stretch of mixed jungle, paddy, swamp and small-holders rubber. The syce took the car round the circuitous route to Ulu Langat village, and when we arrived there, we had a drink in the village kedai (shop). We met there a jovial Malay, a sort of elder, and on him I tried out my immature Malay sentences. We then returned by car to the Selangor Club and had a brandy cocktail, and so back to a large nasi goreng at which the Chinese cook excelled. After a lie off and a bath, by the cool of the evening we were dressed ready for either the cinema or listening to the music of the Selangor Club Band. It was an unexciting but satisfying day. I could not afford the Golf Club, and anyway did not wish to spend my Sundays and Saturday afternoons playing golf as some did. It had its advantages for there one met, and in playing eased the flow of social and business contacts, but though I played a little, I never got round to doing it with any efficiency, which in some ways I regret for it is a pleasant game, especially in the cool of the evening out East. These jungle trips were repeated each Sunday for some time, but when **Doy** came out I took her with **Roy** and **Helen Broom** and others on the same route. I remember meeting the British Resident and his wife, **Major** and **Mrs. Kidd** out catching butterflies. Beyond Langat there were some lovely falls, and little places where one could bathe. There were also the Kanching Falls – now part of a public jungle park, but in those days visited almost exclusively by Europeans. I am afraid that after the war when all and sundry had transport and came out to the Falls they became, as in Great Britain, a resting place for litter, and the idyllic aspect had gone.

Some of the Selangor planters who had estates on rivers flowing from the main range used to have rafting picnics, and I went to one on the Bernam River. We walked upstream and there Malays had constructed rafts from bamboo and lashed with rattans, and we sped down stream to Tanjong Malim where in the planters' club a cold buffet was ready for us. I wish I had done more. I stayed the night with the headmaster of the Sultan Idris School, a sort of Malay public school, and the headmaster who had had a heavy night on whisky patted the little Malays benignly, though suffering from a fierce hang-over.

The youngster who went East was generally enjoined to "keep your mouth shut and your bowels open." I found that physical exercise was essential to ensure the latter, and indeed most followed that routine. It amazed me when reading of my **Macaulay** in India that though he boasted of his good health out there in hot and dry seasons, it seems he took no exercise and talking and writing and eating were his normal occupations. He talks of vast dinner parties where the talk was the "utmost drivel" and his fate always seemed to be placed next to one of the senior ladies: "the conversation is the most deplorable twaddle, and as I always sit next to the lady of the highest rank, or, in other words, to the oldest, ugliest and proudest woman in the company, I am worse off than my neighbours."

Macaulay's standards were however, very high, and the bright luminary of Holland House was hard put to find equivalent company in Calcutta.

This diversion takes me rather off the point of my description of the methods by which we kept fit and amused.

During my time in Malaya I played rigger fairly frequently, and soccer and cricket on occasions when I was required to fill a gap. I played all indifferently; I achieved no distinction in sport or business, but enjoyed both immensely.

I had played rugger at my preparatory school, and later with Warringham Rugger Club soon after it started. I had liked cricket, and my school friends, **Jack** and **Harry Champness**, had nets in their large garden in Silver Lane, Purley. Their father brought down eminent Surrey cricketers to teach them, and I recall **Sandham**, **Geary** and **Andy Ducat**, but I could not afford the Purley Cricket Club, or Tennis Club, and my early practice was not developed. Nor had I my father's skill at all ball games. In rugger I was too light to be a good forward and not swift enough to be a good outside. I never made the State side, but nevertheless I enjoyed those Wednesday and Saturday games in the cool of the evening. I even played baseball on K.L. Padang with an American-Japanese referee.

I did go on two trips with cricket teams, one to Malacca, and another to Pahang. **Bob White** invited me to join a team which went to Raub and Kuala Lipis, and we drove over the pass past Walsh's Corner with its famous view of the Pahang/Raub valley, to the quaint town of Raub and played on the matting wicket which we brought with us. We were most hospitably entertained by the local Europeans, and I spent the night at the house of the doctor (who was away) and enjoyed one of those great breakfasts to which, then, I could do justice. Later at Kuala Lipis, we played near the old Club which displayed a photo in his cadet days in the eighties of **Hugh Clifford**, one of the Malayan legends, whose books such as "The Further Side of Silence" I found fascinating. He returned as Governor and as **Sir Hugh Clifford**.

In Raub, the District Officer was **Bill Goode**, after the war, **Sir William Goode, G.C.M.G.**, last Governor of Singapore and of North Borneo. I must speak of him for he was a man of great charm and ability, with the common touch and a great sense of humour and fun. I first came across him when I was dealing with one of our Estates at Raub, rather run down which had an old manager, not very successful, who had had an accident, and **Bill** telephoned me at the office to ask if he could do anything to help. It was typical; when I mentioned the incident later when we were both POWs, he said words to the effect that these were fellows he liked to help, not so much the "high paid 'uns" who could well look after themselves. He was in 1941/2 a senior official in Civil Defence in Singapore, and when his job ended he rejoined the Volunteers as a lance-corporal, and was taken prisoner where we met. He had a great influence, and we looked up to him, not that he was other than very human. I recall an occasion towards the end at Pratchai Camp in Thailand where it was then not much more than a padi swamp, and after work we were together in the pouring rain getting our evening meal of rice and weak stew. There were several food points scattered over the padi fields, and being hungry and keen for "lagis" (more) we slogged bare-footed through the sodden padi fields to one or two food points without success until we espied one lonely figure who seemed more promising; we arrived to find the fellow with rain streaming down his face, moaning "I have seven more bastards to come" but after a despairing interval, he exclaimed "F---- it, you can 'ave their soddin' ration" and we were replete. There were some real old characters in these out-station clubs. In Raub, the large firm was Raub Gold, and the manager was an outsize Australian named **Coldham** (I give his name because it is an essential part of the story). He was able but arrogant, and no doubt thought he was one above the District Officer. He treated his staff, both European and Asian, despotically and a case arose of physical ill treatment of a Chinese servant. **Bill Goode** had to deal with the matter as District Officer. He had to make it plain that **Coldham** could not get away with such conduct, though he was very belligerent on the matter, no doubt thinking that district officers were his wash-pot. **Bill Goode**, in his submission to the Resident of Pahang on the case, said that whatever **Coldham** said he would have to pay the penalty for his misdeed. He quoted felicitously that Latin tag which goes "Fiat justitia ruat caelum" but substituting neatly "**Coldham**" for "**Caelum**" – "Let justice be done though the heavens (**Coldham**) fall." This was irresistible to the Resident, but **Coldham** took it in good part, for I recall he was not without a sense of humour.

Those were happy interludes, and I wish only I had been more skilful at games, for much enjoyment can be obtained thereby, especially in the circumstances of those days. Perhaps, however, in place of those I saw more of the country in jungle-walks and river trips such as I describe.

It is a comfort in the evening of our days that a few of us which include **Bill Goode**, **Parkie Parkinson**, **Tony Loch**, **Jim Rae** and myself, who spent a large part of our POW days in Singapore and Siam together, foregather every few months at our respective Clubs in town, and recently **Bill Goode** reminded me of that epic race for more rice on the padi fields of Pratchai. We have in common the memories of those days, and to me, and I think others, our meetings are precious. Sometimes if we can inveigle him from his Yorkshire fastness, my dear old friend, **Donald Chadwick**, joins us. It was as a POW that I met him.

In his "Four Eminent Victorians," **Lytton Strachey** describes in his essay on **Dr. Arnold**, the famous headmaster of Rugby, how **Dr. Arnold** in his holidays in Westmoreland with his family enjoyed, as he would often say "an almost awful happiness." I visit **Donald** and **Joan** every year and we walk in the Yorkshire Dales, and this describes my feelings too as the years go on. I feel the same with such few holidays as I am able to have with my children and grandchildren.

I have said that Pahang was my favourite state, and one of my finest trips with the **Jeffries** was over the Ginting Simpah Pass to Bentong, a village that had an old rest house and some mines. The other pass, the Gap or Semangko, where a hill road branched off to Fraser's Hill, was the more unusual and **Torch Bennett** (**Susan's** Godfather) and I did more than one trip – in

particular over to Kuantan, then a quiet little port. We were invited then by a planter to go elephant shooting but though we got up early and with "Horse" Thompson who had not slept at all, we went in search, none was found, only large dollops of elephant dung. We had a rubber estate, Kuantan Estate, but it was purchased for an aerodrome, part of the defences of Malaya, though it was in fact evacuated when the time came. There in 1935, we had breakfast with the Manager, cooled by the old fashioned punkah, with a Malay punkah-wallah.

I have always been fascinated by water and rivers and I had a canoe journey with Arthur Westrop and another along the upper reaches of the Klang River. Westrop, Manager of Malayan Fertilisers, was a great naturalist, and was searching for the nests of a certain river bird whose name I forget. He was an unusual fellow, whom I met later, just before his death, on his tea estate at Cholo Malawi. He had cine pictures of one of our trips at Dusan Tua which had somehow survived his internment. He had been a Gunner, M.C. in World War 1, was a tee-total, a polo player and was finally Chief Scout of Malawi - a grand chap amongst many I knew. He was a devout Christian, whose death was a great sadness to me. Towards the end of 1935, I had an opportunity I was glad not to miss. I was sent down to Singapore for a month to work on Tengah aerodrome, the initial work on which my firm had, unhappily as it turned out, contacted to complete. This venture was the brainchild of "F", in charge of Import Department, a man of energy and ideas, but not equally of judgment. F was hospitable, and recalling his early, unhappy years, as he told me, invited me to curry tiffin soon after he returned from leave in 1935. He had married an attractive, bosomy girl who looked somewhat like Gracie Fields. They were a fast, hard drinking set, and I recall that we did not sit down to curry tiffin till about 4 o'clock after some enjoyable high jinks. She could, it seemed, drink any man under the table, but still then had preserved her pristine beauty.

F's idea was that we financed a firm of European contractors to construct the landing ground, and sell the equipment. Since, as I saw later, most of the work seemed to be done by hand there did not seem a lot in this, and in any case the firm was unreliable to say the least, one partner a rank charlatan, and in the end we had to take over the work, and F went down to complete the job, which was costing us a lot of money. I was to check up on the contractors, for the job consisted mainly of removing the hills and putting them into the valleys, tricky to estimate, and a lot of earth removal was by hand and lorry. I seem to recall one Ruston Bucyrus Excavator, then I suppose rather rare. There were hundreds of sweating Indian and Chinese laborers. I engaged Indian kranis (clerks) and placing one at dispatch and one at delivery to keep a check on the number of loads for which the contractor or lorries claimed. F said I was so successful they stopped work! I was given no brief, but just told to get on with it - good for me. I was all day in the blazing sun with my newly purchased solar topee, and my chest was soon scarified by the sun. I lived with the Fs in a small wood and attap bungalow on a hill nearby the Malfa Farm where a Dutchman, large and genial, ran a farm for pedigree cows which produced milk for the Cold Storage. He lived in a similar bungalow and gave great parties, at one of which I met the then famous "Scots Consul" - Jock Carmichael. Most evenings we went into Singapore, and visiting various night spots, arriving back rather pickled. I don't remember how I did it or afforded it, though F was very generous, too generous. He was, however, a great one for exercise, and after the curry tiffin aforementioned he took me on a jungle walk to dissipate the indulgence, and it was he who had introduced us to the famous jungle walk from Ampang to Ulu Langat. I fancy he was rather a loner.

I saw Singapore as it was in the old days before high rise buildings and giant sky scrapers had completely altered it, so it is now unrecognisable compared to the place I knew. We bathed from an old attap bungalow at Katong, now all disappeared, and all that part around Tengah and Jurong is now developed, but it was the countryside, "Bright and glittering in the smokeless air." It was to me exciting in the extreme - a fairyland.

Poor F got the sack over this affair, though our chief offered to take the rap for he was ultimately responsible, and had backed him, whose panache had appealed to him. By a typical stroke he managed to get the Air Ministry to refund most of our losses on the aerodrome, and salvaged his reputation with the Board at home. I think I was the sole beneficiary, for there was much heart-burning amongst the senior staff who saw their commission disappearing with this loss.

I little thought that six years later this idyllic spot would be my war station..... [Ed: the rest of the pre-war years is omitted]

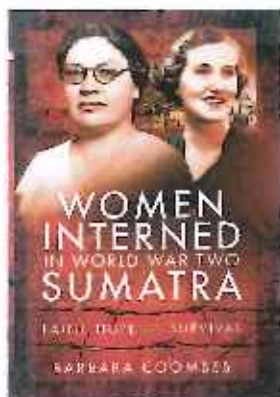
Readers of my narrative will appreciate that the five years to 1939 were the highlights of my life so far, and after the war it could never be the same. This was not on account of the demise of the Raj. I had had five years of interesting and absorbing work with enough responsibility to give spice to life, and I had most agreeable friends and colleagues. Many of these had not survived the war.

There was the euphoria of return and being welcomed despite our failures, and there were excellent new recruits, promotion of local men to senior posts, and many new developments in the planning industry, but soon the Chinese Communist outbreak came upon us. I lost good friends, the first planter to be murdered was one Doy and I had visited in Pahang in November 1942, and a lot of the old magic attached to my work seemed to evaporate for various reasons. I even missed the capacious, old fashioned, high ceilinged, open offices with their revolving fans and chummy atmosphere, now replaced by large modern air-conditioned blocks. No! I am afraid to say that for me, it was "never glad confident morning again." [To be continued in July].

BOOKS – “Women Interned in World War Two Sumatra – Faith, Hope and Survival.” By Barbara Coombes.

This forthcoming publication is by MVG member **Barbara Coombes**.

It is hoped that the launch of the book will be as close to 5th July 2022 as possible, the 80th anniversary of the first time “The Captives’ Hymn” was sung in 1942. It is planned to have the VO Choir present to sing about 5 pieces of the VO music, with tea provided. **Barbara** notes that during the BBC’s “Songs of Praise” broadcast on Sunday 6th March from Sunderland, the birthplace of **Margaret Dryburgh**, they did not sing all verses of “The Captives’ Hymn,” nor did they mention the glass pyramid memorial to her in St. George’s Church in Sunderland.



Forthcoming Publication – Pen & Sword Books Ltd

Women Interned in World War Two Sumatra – Faith, Hope and Survival. On the 5 July this year it will be the 80th anniversary of the very first time the ‘Captives Hymn’ was sung by the composer, Margaret Dryburgh, and two fellow internees, Shelagh Brown and Dorothy MacLeod, during the early days of internment in 1942. This double biography, of Margaret Dryburgh and Shelagh Brown, adopts a different approach to the story of internment by following both lives from childhood, through to their meeting on Banka Island, as well as subsequent internment. How did their earlier lives impact on the way

they coped with internment? What part did their faith play? What happened after the war? These are all questions reviewed in a fresh consideration of these incredible women and their lives. The intention is to publish the book as close as possible to the date of 5 July and the plan, at the moment, is for 30 June, although this cannot be confirmed yet as I am writing in early March, although I am hopeful! It will be available from Pen & Sword at <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk> and in main book retailers at £19.99. My sincere gratitude to many members of the MVG who have assisted me over the years. **Barbara Coombes**

ESCAPE FROM PENANG – DECEMBER 1941 – Part 2. 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.’

Father’s experiences.

This part covers the time after mother and I had embarked on the boat at George Town pier. Father’s notes said that after his wife and son had gone out of sight, he watched our boat slowly disappear into the darkness.

“I wandered around the deserted town. Many houses were still burning and rotting corpses of those killed some days ago were still scattered about the streets with no fire brigade or people to bury them. I was utterly despondent at what had happened and overwhelmed with despair what the future held for us in Malaya. It was like a living nightmare.”

I have no knowledge of how or what he was feeling – I guess some relief but very anxious for our future, when would he see us next and where, but above all, if he would ever see us again. He never discussed the war years in Malaya and I was so young at the time it did not really affect me that much so, sadly, I never broached the subject with him.

This next section is based on the report he had written up for Shell in London (over 40 pages long) together with some other notes in my possession.

Dec 1941

13/17th The speed the Japanese forces came down the peninsular was alarming and information of the position of the front line was very poor. He continued working from Penang ensuring the army and RAF at Butterworth had sufficient fuel. Supplies to garage pumps were difficult and soon ran out. Bombing continued but fewer and fewer people were about in George Town. Little food was to be had, power supplies were intermittent and the telephone unreliable.

On the 14th he spent the day with others burning all bank and other securities at our local branch.

He was ordered to move as much tinned fuel as possible and to destroy the remaining stocks in his area. Storage tank valves were opened to allow the fuel to run to waste. They were advised not to set fire them to as it was thought it would attract the enemy. This was also carried out on the mainland with the help of other APC staff. All the office confidential information was destroyed. As much of this work as possible was completed by Dec 16. It was decided that all Europeans and some others should evacuate Penang Island. Father and others pooled all the money they had between them and paid off everyone with one month's wages and gave out car keys to help them escape. Father and the other APC European staff were given the choice of either sailing to Singapore or going over to the mainland and driving to Singapore but were to give any assistance on the way down.

- 16th All the evacuees met at the E&O Hotel before embarking on one of the ferries at Swettenham Pier but progress was hampered by the heaviest tropical rain storm imaginable. Each person had only one suitcase and enough food to last for 48 hours with the aim to sail down to Singapore. Before leaving the hotel they drove some staff home as they feared being robbed or worse if on their own. They sailed at 8pm but soon had engine problems but luckily were able to transfer to the *Pangkor* which was nearby. There were about 600 evacuees on the boat and it was very crowded and uncomfortable. The senior colonel ordered everyone on board that there must be no talk to anyone about the problems at Penang or its evacuation - anyone found talking would be punished.

In fact the Japanese forces had already by-passed Penang on the mainland which left the island trapped on its own behind enemy lines.

- 18th They arrived in Singapore at 9.30 in the morning after a very uneventful passage and were met by Wollerton from APC head office. Father stayed with him till 27th Dec

His report says that he felt utterly ashamed for leaving Penang in such a secret manner and leaving behind not only the loyal members of staff who helped so bravely, but the house servants all whom remained with us till the end. He felt very strongly that this event would not go down well in history

Father was very sad about having to leave his hardworking Eurasian staff behind, more so as he thought he and British were running away. He was especially sad about his faithful servants Aquí, our Chinese 'boy' who had been with father from when he first arrived in Malaya in the 1925, and Amah,(Chinese) who had come to England with us when I was baptized at Leusdon Church on Dartmoor in 1938. I am positive that he would have helped them to the best of his ability before he left.

He was aware of only four Europeans left in Penang. Dr.Evans Chief Medical Officer, Scott the assistant padre, Thompson a partner in Ryatt.Co and Balfour Rose a local lawyer.

His first job on arrival at Singapore was to find out where his wife and son had gone and was informed they had been put on a ship to Java.

- 19th He had a cable from mother to say they were in Batavia and please could he arrange to let them have some money The cable went on to say she had been advised by the British Council to go to one of the hill stations behind Batavia and wait till we could get back to Singapore.

His cable in return said money had been organised but it was essential she left Java as soon as possible and get to Australia as the Japanese were advancing very fast in the whole region

Whilst in Singapore father helped lay down supplies for the RAF. The Japs bombed Singapore regularly between 2am and 11am every day. The staff moral dropped markedly as the hour approached so he organised any work outside the raids. (Between Jan 15 and Feb 9 there were 117 air raids. No public air raid shelters were ever built because the Governor Sir Shenton Thomas felt it would lower public moral).

January 1942

During the following weeks, alone at times or with other ASP staff, he travelled all over the south of the Malay Peninsula, at times only a few miles in front of the Japanese advancing army. He was coordinating work with the British, Australian and Indian army senior staff, RAF, local authorities, civilians, local people and his own ACP staff. He stayed in Rest Houses, army barracks or staff homes when he could not get back to Singapore.

His job was to ensure sufficient fuel and lubricant supplies were available at the right places and on time. As things became more critical moving fuel he used loyal but nervous drivers in bowlers or lorries with drums. The roads were congested with evacuees and frequently strafed by Japanese planes. As things got more critical he moved as much stock as possible straight down to Singapore. Then he was ordered to start a denial process so destroyed whatever he could and opened the fuel storage tank valves to waste the contents. He also paid his staff at every opportunity to ensure they had sufficient money for now and the future. (His personal notes said burning large storage tanks was very difficult. The only guaranteed way was to start a fire where you thought the fuel would flow - then turn the main tap on from the tank - sprint to a colleague who was already in the car with the engine running - jump into the passenger seat and drive like hell!)

Jan 12th He received our cable saying that we had both arrived in Sydney. He felt tremendous relief. Now he could continue his work with the knowledge we were safe.

Jan 31st The causeway linking the mainland at Johore Bahru and Singapore Island was blown so he and others could no longer travel up country.

February

1st Japanese land on the north of Singapore island in the mangrove swamps which the British officials thought impregnable!

9/16th Father tried to ship oil drilling equipment. The remainder was destroyed by cutting up and dumping it at sea.

During this time he lived in a house in Chancery Lane then on Feb 9th moved to Cluny Road with John Palmer. He noted that the streets were full of drunken troops.

11th He went to see the Governor to get permission to use two Shell vessels to evacuate staff - and this was agreed.

As these two vessels were already full he went with other Shell staff to the Chinese saw mills and there persuaded them they should allow them to use one of their smaller boats to escape in. This was agreed. They came back with their own bags to find that their boat was crowded with soldiers. Just then Japanese planes came over and strafed the area - the soldiers jumped overboard. Father quickly went on board and cast off. They sailed off to join the two Shell vessels as they intended to follow them because they had no experienced navigator on board their own boat. As the raid continued the captain of one Shell vessel told them to go out to sea to be safe.

They sailed out of the harbour and headed for Port Karimoen which was an island some 40 miles away and arrived there at 7pm. The Dutch Controller gave them food and beds for the night. He found a pilot for them and some charts he also help persuade their native crew, who had tried to desert, to continue the voyage.

12th The huge tank farms on Bukom and Samboc islands were destroyed that night, lighting up the whole horizon and laying down volumes of heavy clouds of black smoke as thousands and thousands of fuel burnt.

Father always had to wear glasses and could not see very well without them. He only had one pair so was always concerned that they were not lost or broken. His own notes said that he had to learn to sleep holding them in his hand. It worked.

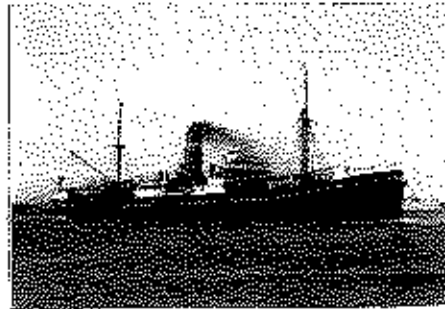
- 13th They set sail at 3am, before dawn, to the mouth of the Indragiri River in Sumatra. On the way they sighted a cruiser and two destroyers which they thought might be Japanese but they did not interfere with them as they all hid down below leaving the Chinese/Malays on deck as if they were simply a fishing boat. Convoys nearby were being bombed. They reached the mouth of the river at 10.30pm and sought the harbour master to get permission to proceed. He refused as it was after office hours and told them come back in the morning when he would allow them up river to get to Tembilakan. They had a very restless night – over crowded – no bedding – lots of mosquitoes.
- 14th They sailed at 7am to reach Rengat that evening where they were met by Dutch Officials who arranged for them all to sleep in the local Guest house.
- 15th They paid off the crew of their boat with about \$800, changing the money they had with them, and the local agent let them have a bus to reach Talock where they spent the night. The local controller rang at midnight to say Jap paratroopers had landed near Palembang and they should leave early to get to Oesthaven.
- 16th Up at 5am to drive fast as possible down very poor roads south – stopping in main towns for more news. By 4.30pm they were 50 miles from the railhead and were told they could go no further. They decided to drive to Padang on the North West coast so turned around and joined the now more crowded roads.
The petrol tank on the bus developed a leak from flying stones – they managed to stem it with soap which had to be done frequently. But it got so bad that they had to abandon the bus. They continued the journey in a post office van as far as Sunei Dari. They then had to spend the night on the post office floor.
- 17th The bus was repaired and caught up with them in the morning and they arrived at Tscocjoenjong at noon. They drove into Padang at about 5pm where they were found accommodation in a number of houses in the town.
- 18th They met up with the other Shell escapees from Singapore who were already there. They met to discuss how they were to be rescued from Padang and how they were going to decide who was going to leave first. They divided in groups - army, air force and civilians - and drew lots. There were about 170 personal all told. At midday they were told to meet at the pier.
- 20th *HMS Encounter* arrived and was able to take all of them on board. The destroyer sailed down the west coast of Sumatra to Batavia then on to Java, arriving at 9am. They spent that night in town.



HMS Encounter E Class Destroyer Sunk in the Second Battle of the Java Sea, 1 March 1942

- 21st Some of the evacuees were lucky to get a passage on *ss Mongola*. There were 30 passengers on board including 10 women and 10 APC staff. As they cleared the wharf some 30 Australian soldiers appeared from one of the holds where they had been hiding.

The *Mongola* had been rammed astern by a tanker on its way to Batavia – the rudder pillar was badly bent and there was a large hole above the waterline. They had some very good food on the journey to Fremantle as the ship was carrying food supplies to Singapore but had been turned around before it had been discharged.



ss *Mongola*

March

2nd Arrived at Fremantle but waited for 24 hours to be allowed onto the wharf as it was so busy. The night was disturbed by an air raid warning as the Australians were a bit jumpy fearing an invasion by the Japanese.

3rd Shell found them rooms in a hotel which turned out to be lowest class possible, full of drunken people and also it was a house of assignation. They quickly found a more suitable hotel in town.

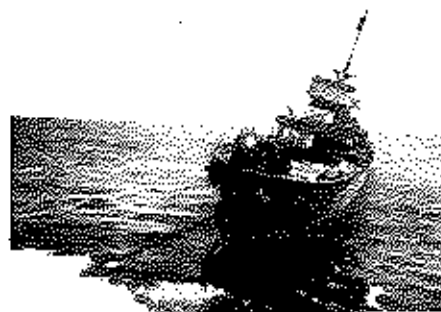
He and a few other Shell personnel spent every morning endeavouring to find a way to the Eastern States of Australia – it was impossible to get out of Perth by any normal means. Eventually through friends in the Navy office, they got on board *HMS Ping Wo* which was sailing for Melbourne towing *HMAS Vendetta* (she had been towed from Keppel Harbour in Singapore without either engine or rudder). The *Ping Wo* was originally a Yangtse River boat which only drew six feet of water which proved to be incapable of towing the *Vendetta* when they faced heavy seas on rounding Cape Letwin. After six of the most uncomfortable days imaginable they pulled into Albany Harbour. On arrival they were told that they were nearly shelled as the garrison thought they were invaders.



HMAS Ping Wo



Leaving to start the tow *HMAS Vendetta*



Under tow

11? Father rang Shell Perth and was told to return to Perth by train as there was a special train leaving for Melbourne on the 21st.

The four of them off the **Ping Wo** returned by train next day only to find that it had been cancelled. They began the endless task of trying to find a way to the East.

24th Father boarded a plane for Adelaide. Mother and I were at the airport to greet him – I saw him ages before mother bit for some reason, did not tell her. It was the biggest reunion you can imagine – 70 days after we had last seen him and many of those days we had no idea where he was. We were some of the very lucky people. Father was surprised by the very strong Australian accent I had developed.
[To be continued in July].

RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY GROUP **ANNOUNCEMENT** **Deferred 2020 Liverpool Conference**

It is with regret that due to the comparatively high infection rates and the resulting uncertainties, we have reached the decision that we are unable to stage the conference, originally planned for 2020, in 2022.

We have explored the potential for running an online conference, but have concluded that whilst technically this may be possible, we would lose many of the benefits of hosting the conference. We know from the feedback that we have had from our delegates over the past 15 years that we have been organising conferences, that the strength in what we do is to bring like-minded people together to meet others with similar (or not) research interests. Delegates are used to open access to the range of experts who agree to share their knowledge at the conferences, all within a convivial social setting. We simply cannot replicate this aspect of the conference virtually for our community.

The good news is that the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) has agreed to us deferring the conference until June 2023. This means that it would fall within the school's 125th anniversary year. This would inevitably help us to reach a wider audience than previously. We will let you know in due course how to register your interest for this event.

We may need to make some alterations to the original proposed conference programme to reflect any changes to speakers and any travel restrictions that we may need to consider. We also hope to be able to accept contributions from remote speakers via online platforms. We would like to hear from anyone who has any ideas for potential topics, either new or revisited, for the programme. We have also previously had some interest in the possibility of us holding a smaller online event during the coming year. If there is sufficient interest, we would like to hear from those of you who would like to join an event like this remotely in 2022. Thank you for your continued interest and also your patience during these challenging times.

Martin Percival, Chairman of the RFHG (researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com)

Changi by the Sea: Rice and Shine returns to fepowhistory.com

The Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) is delighted to Welcome **Professor Emeritus Sears A. Eldredge** back to the blog with another instalment of his ever popular series *Rice and Shine*. "Changi by the Sea" follows on from last year's blog, working through 1942, 1943 and 1944 to take an in depth look at the entertainment provided by concert party groups in Changi POW Camp. As **Sears** states, "This will be the most comprehensive history of the POW entertainment in Changi POW Camp and Changi Gaol ever attempted." It will share previously unpublished treasures from his archives.

The first post goes live on Wednesday 9th February 2022 at 10a.m. on fepowhistory.com, with at least one post released every Wednesday thereafter.

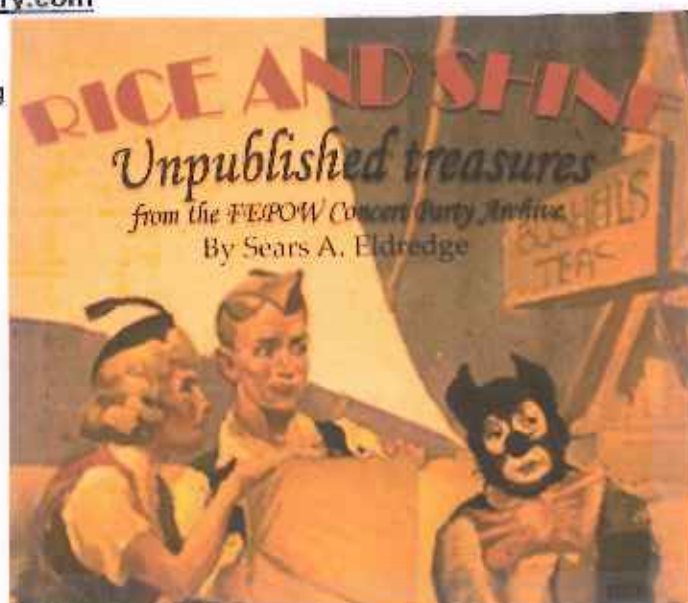
You can catch up with the series so far at

<https://fepowhistory.com/2021/06/09/rice-and-shine/>

and to get a monthly preview of what's coming up in "Rice and Shine" you can subscribe to the RFHG mailing list:

<https://fepowhistory.us13.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=bea45e234fb234a3babda4a0f&id=4f6528eb9b>

Emily Sharp, RFHG member and researcher



MEDALS FOR MVG MILITARY VETERANS

Report by Chris Rundle

In early December, I received an e-mail from Tony Parrini regarding the issue of the Reserve Service Efficiency Medal with the Malaya Bar to his uncle, John Brookfield Gould, who had served in the Johore Volunteer Engineers at the same time as my wife's uncle, George Devereaux Templer. Tony had mistaken me for another member whom he had met in August at the Arboretum whilst discussing medal entitlement.

Having exchanged e-mails with Tony I realised that none of my wife, Carol's, family had ever mentioned George's medals on any of our discussions. I asked Tony how he claimed his Uncle's medals so we could process an application for George's. His reply was extremely helpful and Carol then applied for the following:

1939-45 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939/45

Reserve Service Efficiency Medal with the Malaya Bar

A letter was received from the Ministry of Defence Medal Office in early January confirming that the first four medals would be sent to her in due course, but the Reserve Service Efficiency Medal with the Malaya Bar would have been dealt with by the authorities in Malaya and that 12 years qualifying service was required. Tony had already discovered this through alternative means.

Following this letter and having discussed this with Tony, we concluded that there must be members of the MVG who have either no knowledge that their family was entitled to claim their relative's medals or how to go about the process of claiming them. This is the process that we have used successfully.

- The first task in claiming the medals is to be able to prove the claimant is the legitimate Next of Kin.
- If possible, ascertain whether anyone else in the family (Mother, Father, Brothers or Sisters) might have previously claimed the medals. If so, you need go no further.
- Ascertain whether their relative undertook military service that qualified for the issue of medals. (Unit, Service number, date of enlistment etc.)
- Complete the application form which can be obtained from:
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/applying-for-medals> Attach any supporting documentation. A letter mentioning any uncertainty about the issue of medals might be appropriate.
- Send the application and copies of any other documents to the MOD Medal Office at Innsworth (address is on the form)
- Wait for a reply!

The following is a copy of the covering letter which Carol sent to the Medal Office. There were no queries as to her eligibility to claim George's medals. This may be helpful in allowing applicants to compile suitable information.

Sapper 920 George Devereaux Templer JVE

Dear Sir,

I am the closest living relative to my late uncle George Devereaux Templer, who as a member of the Johore Volunteer Engineers died whilst a POW at Camp Kami Songkrai, Thailand, on the Burma Railway on 21st August 1943. His remains are interned in the CWGC at Thanbyuzayat, Myanmar.

My mother, Venetia Ann Fenn (née Templar born in 1920) was George's younger sister. She was born in Malaya where her family were Rubber Planters.

I am a member of the Malayan Volunteers Group and whilst researching George's service, I believe he may be entitled to the issue of the following medals which had never been mentioned in the family whilst his mother, Beatrice, and my mother were alive.

I am applying for the issue of the following medals to which research through the MVG shows that George may be entitled to. They are:

1939-1945 Star

Pacific Star

Defence Medal

War Medal 1939/45

Reserve Service Efficiency Medal with the Malaya Bar

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require me to clarify any information.

Yours sincerely,

Hopefully this process will allow you to claim the Service Medals that your family member was entitled to.
Chris Rundle and Tony Parrini.

KO-RO-N-BO

With thanks to Dave Croft MA

*On occasions Japanese wireless operators would spell out the name of a target in kana phonetics, a representation of spoken Japanese for foreign 'geographical names, personal names and words written in isolation.' For example, **KO-RO-N-BO** spells out as COLOMBO, and **CHI-YA-A-CHI-RU** as Churchill.*

Following the co-ordinated Japanese attacks against Malaya, Hong Kong, Pearl Harbour and the Philippines on 8th December 1941 (Ref: Pearl Harbour 7th December re: the international dateline!), it was decided that the Royal Navy code breakers of the Far East Combined Bureau (FECB) should be evacuated to Colombo and the Army to Burma and India. Staying behind, to monitor Japanese air activity were Army and RAF wireless operators, and **Arthur Cooper**, a Foreign Office code-breaker. Also staying behind (for the time being) were **Lt. Cdr. E.H.M. Colegrave**, a RN interpreter, **Lt. N. Webb** (Army) and four Royal Army Service Corps admin staff. They were all evacuated from Singapore on 11th February 1942 by ship destined for Java. Later, following the evacuation from Java of the British Naval Code breakers to Colombo (the RAF element went to India), they were joined by **Lt. Col. Brouwer RNN**, a Japanese linguist with expertise of the Dutch East Indies. **Lt. Col. Brouwer** escaped from Batavia, along with the Dutch Navy C-in-C and other key personnel by air, landing in India without any reserve of fuel. Eventually, he arrived in Colombo.

3 March 1942. The navy code breakers at Colombo decoded a message that the Japanese Navy intended to base five submarines at Penang, where they were to operate in the Indian Ocean. Later in the month, the Japanese wireless traffic made repeated references to a carrier force in the Indian Ocean. On 28th March, following information again relating to the Japanese carrier force and an air raid planned for 2nd April, a Japanese operator 'spelled out the name of the target in kana phonetics: **KO-RO-N-BO**' meaning Colombo was to be the main target! With the code breakers being certain that Colombo was to be the target **Admiral Sir James Somerville** withdrew the Royal Navy's Eastern Fleet to **Port T**, a secret location at Addu Atoll in the Maldives while the merchant shipping in Colombo Harbour was moved to Cochin in south west India. Surprisingly, the Japanese did not attack on 2nd April, or on the 3rd April, leading **Admiral Somerville** to make some changes to his original plan. It later became known **Admiral Chuichi Naguma**, commanding the Japanese fleet, had decided to delay attacking Colombo until Easter Sunday (5th April 1942) when he thought the Royal Navy would be less alert! With the Japanese fleet now on the way somewhere in the Indian Ocean it was anyone's guess as to where it exactly might be?

Eyes in the Sky. Following the devastation of Allied aircraft in both the Malayan and Indonesian campaigns, maritime reconnaissance aircraft were in short supply. However, Catalina aircraft from 240 Squadron (three aircraft) based at Redhills Lake in India, with one each from 202 and 205 Squadrons and one from 321 Squadron Royal Netherlands Navy based at Koggala in Ceylon, were available. Also on the way (from 4th March onwards) were four Catalinas from 413 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force, originally based at Sullom Voe in the Shetlands. The first to arrive at Koggala on 28th March, after a journey via Gibraltar, then Cairo, across the Persian Gulf to Karachi and down the Indian coastline to Ceylon, was South African, **Flt. Lt. Rae Thomas DFC**, and his crew. Following them, arriving on 2nd April, was Catalina AJ155 piloted by **Sqn. Ldr. Leonard Birchall**, a Canadian in the RCAF. By 4th April all four had arrived at Koggala.

1 Port T was the name given to the island of Gan during WW2 by the Royal Navy. Gan remained with the Navy until 1957, when it was transferred to the RAF. Gan then remained with the RAF until 1976 when it was returned to the Maldivian Government.

Mainly, this is the story of the crew of Catalina AJ155 as described in "Wings of the Dawning" by **Dr. Arthur Banks** (RAF Meteorological Observer on Catalina Squadrons in East Africa during the war). His account is based on the narrative of the Flight Engineer of AJ155, **Sgt. Brian Catlin**, and the diaries of **Sqn Ldr. Birchall**, both survivors of the Japanese POW camps and also remaining in their respective air forces post-war. The crew of AJ155 on 4th April 1942 were:

1. Pilot - C775 **Sqn. Ldr. Leonard Birchall**, RCAF. Remained in the RCAF post war.
2. 2nd Pilot - 64787 **P/Off Peter Nugent Kenny**, RAF. Born Ootacamund in British India. Stayed in RAF post-war.
3. Navigator - R69853 **W/O Grenville C. Onyette**, RCAF.
4. Flight Engineer - 570179 **Sgt. Brian Catlin**, RAF.. ex-RAF apprentice, post-war Squadron Leader.
5. Flight Rigger - 641447 **Sgt. John Henzell**, RAFVR. (KIA).
6. Flight Mechanic - 1127620 **Sgt. William Cook**, RAF.
7. Wireless Operator - 627748 **Sgt. Fred C. Phillips**, RAF*. Pre-war a Local Government Officer.
8. Wireless Officer/Air Gunner - 812318 **W/O Lucien Colarossi****, RAuxAF. (KIA). Pre-war dance band leader.
9. Wireless Operator/Air Gunner - 972081 **Sgt. Iain Nicholson Davidson**, RAFVR. (KIA).

* **Sgt. F.C. Phillips.** Seen in a photo taken c.1942, all wireless operators were required to undergo a formal gunnery course before being awarded the 'AG' brevet. Later in the war, wireless operators (air) wore the letter 'S' (denoting signals) within the laurel wreath of the brevet.

** References are divided as to the rank of **Lucien Colarossi**: some say he was a sergeant, others including the CWGC, have him down as a Warrant Officer (WO). For this article, the rank of Warrant Officer has been used.

3 April 1942. The crew of Catalina AJ155 unloaded ground equipment carried from Pembroke Dock (where the aircraft was prepared for the long flight to Ceylon and tropical operations) and accommodation was sorted for the officers (hotel in Galle) and for the crew at the commandeered Richmond Hill Mission Girls' School. The 321 Squadron Royal Netherlands Navy Catalina detailed for a reconnaissance patrol was declared unserviceable later in the day and Catalina AJ155 was detailed instead for the task, leaving at first light the following morning.

4 April. Without breakfast and no rations provided for the 24 hour flight ahead of them, it was just as well there was some food and water on board from the Karachi stop over. Take off was at dawn, in perfect weather and a clear blue sky later into the patrol. Around midday, the order came through for the aircraft to change to a new patrol area which continued until it was time to start back to base. But the navigator asked for another patrol leg in order to get an accurate fix on their position. At the end of the leg, some 'specks' were spotted on the horizon, which turned out to be warships (The Japanese Navy Strike Force of **Vice-Admiral Nagumo**) on closer inspection. Approaching even nearer in order to identify them they ran into Japanese Navy fighter aircraft (Mitsubishi A6M Zeros) that had taken off from the aircraft carriers, later confirmed as being 18 aircraft². **Sgt. Catlin**, in the engineer's 'cubby hole' situated inside the wing root over the fuselage added: *"I looked out of the window and saw this great fleet beside us. I told (Sgt) Cook to get up there. Then I got out the big RAF camera. I had heard nothing over the intercom but I assumed it was the Japanese fleet. After I'd done the fleet, aircraft started coming closer to us and I began to take photos of them so that people back home would know what aircraft the Japanese were using. I'd never seen a Zero fighter or even a picture of one and I thought this would be the stuff for the Daily Mirror, but the peculiar thing was there was no shooting! I was taking photographs of each aircraft coming past and there were pilots with their hoods back smiling at me while I snapped them. Then the next one would come past, actually waving to us- I thought this is madness, something's going to happen soon."* It did!

Why did the Japanese pilots wave to the Catalina crew before making the attack on their aircraft? According to **Sgt. Catlin** at a later date in POW camp, he was told by **P/O Kenny** that the crew of the Japanese 'rescue' vessel had told him they were expecting a captured Catalina from Java to escort the Japanese force towards their goal and at first thought that *"we were the one that had come from Java."* If this is the case then it might explain the Japanese fighter pilots flying past and waving to the Catalina crew....flying above the Catalina, and in fading light, the RAF Type B upper wing roundel of a filled in red circle surrounded by a dark blue circle, at first glance might have been mistaken for the Japanese Hinomaru (circle of the sun), a mistake that would soon be rectified when flying alongside the Catalina where the RAF roundel of red, white, blue and yellow on the side of the fuselage would be clearly seen. If this was the case, then the next part of the story by **Sgt Catlin** follows: *"Anyway, I put the camera away and suddenly the bulkhead door disappeared. This was due to the first burst of cannon fire which the lined-up Zeros now began to deliver."* On reaching the aircraft gun blisters, **Sgt. Catlin** found **W/O Colarossi** lying there with a shattered knee. He took over the twin machine guns in the starboard blister while **Sgt. Davidson** manned the port blister. At the same time cannon shells were slamming through the aircraft and the wireless was the next casualty. **Sgt. Phillips** later recalled, *"I had been on the radio (wireless) watch doing my four hours when the action began. When the first canon shells blasted in, they knocked out my receivers but left the transmitters. Luckily, I'd got two transmitters but had to use the generator of one to support the other. And I'd got a smashed Morse key, so I had to bang the parts together. People say I got two messages out and had stopped during the third. How many went out I don't know. I just kept on. There was no time for encoding but I used the priority code known as O-Break-O which implied an enemy air attack. I was also sending the ordinary observation reports like 4BS meaning four battleships or 2AC for two aircraft carriers and so on."* His signals were heard by the Royal Navy direction-finding station in Ceylon, part of the British DF Stations network installed across the region, including the secret RN base HMS Haitan at Addu Atoll (Maldives). In his letter to **Air Commodore Birchall*** dated February 1992, **Lt. Col. Taro Nagae** states that radio stations at Aden, Bombay and Colombo received the signals. These stations would most likely have acquired a bearing on the signals using an array of radio receiver masts set in a circular formation. From signals received from the Catalina by two or more stations, the bearings would have been plotted to give a fairly accurate location of the aircraft and therefore of the enemy formation.

**205 Squadron Catalinas
at Koggala**

Under sustained attack, cannon shells 'smashed' into the wing fuel tanks above the cubby hole causing burning fuel to run into the engineers' compartment, but this was extinguished by **Sgts. Phillips and Cook**. The front gunner, **Sgt. Henzell**, 'collected a burst and slumped down out of action' reported **S/Ldr. Birchall** in one of his POW diaries.

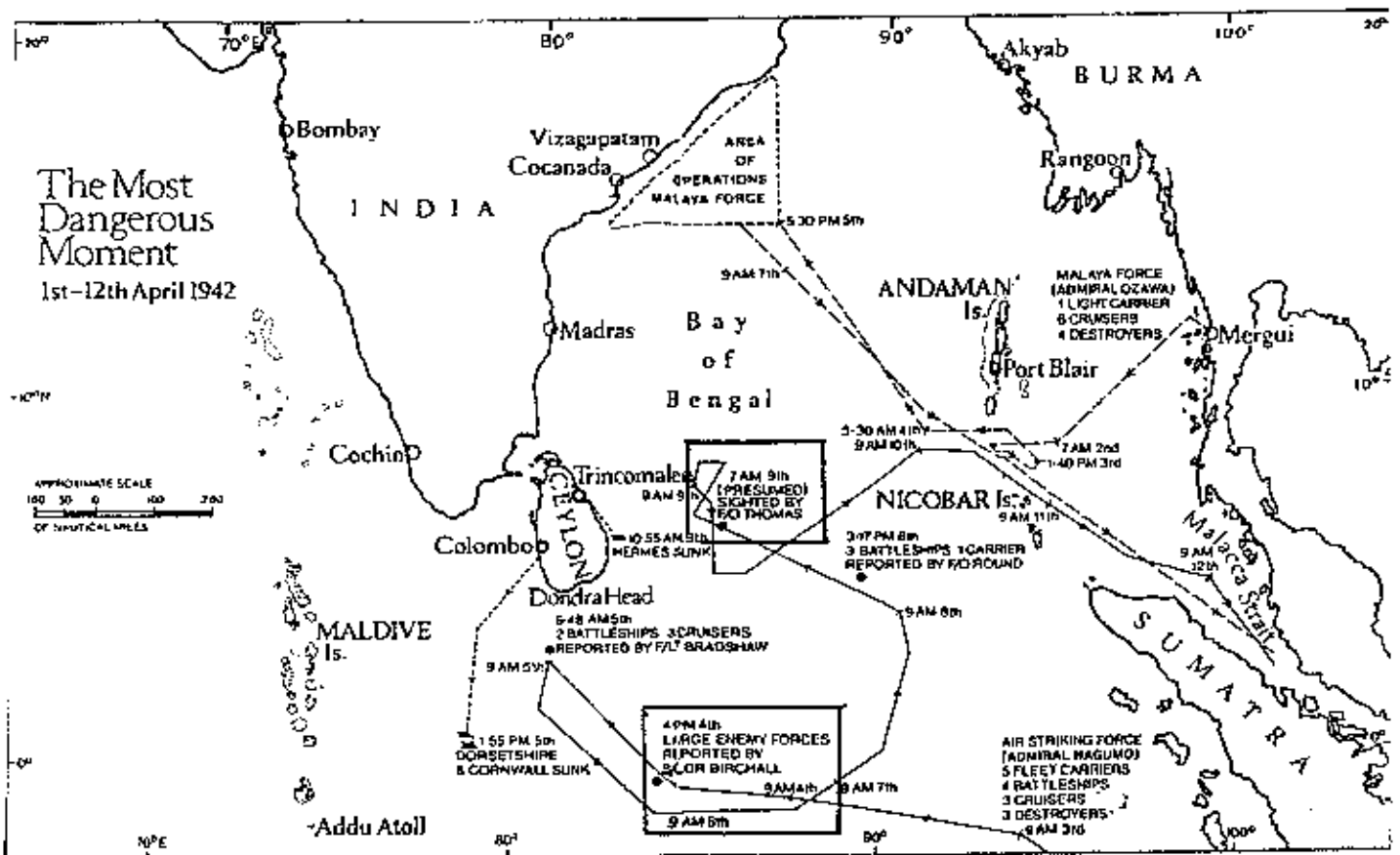
Next the fuel tanks caught fire and the aircraft 'began to resemble a huge fiery cross in the dusk flaming towards the sea.' The time had come for the aircraft to be 'landed' before it fell apart or exploded.

Sgt. Cook managed to get into the engineer's seat and successfully wind down the wingtip floats, despite him being covered in leaking fuel. On landing, somewhat a bit roughly, the crew abandoned the aircraft whilst 'the Nips kept strafing us as we abandoned it with some difficulty.' In the water, after getting **Sgt. Henzell** out (possibly at

this stage he was already dead from the previous sustained attack on the aircraft), another burst of fire from the Japanese aircraft struck **Sgts. Henzell and Cook** - this burst broke **Sgt. Cook's** left leg in several places leading to amputation after the war. The aircraft sank quickly taking **W/O Colarossi** with it, but before sinking **Sgt. Davidson** was pushed out of the aircraft and died when another burst of gunfire hit him in the water. **Sgt. Catlin** added, "I saw nothing of the others at this time. **Colarossi** had died in the aircraft and **Henzell and Davidson** in the water leaving six of us." **Sgts. Phillips and Catlin** also sustained wounds during the attack, with **Sgt. Phillips'** wound caused by shrapnel: "...one at the base of the right lung, a lot of shrapnel. There was a round hole in my chest, bullet sized, and I think the bullet's still there, actually. When I eventually got back to England, they said it was too near my heart - so (to) leave it there." **Sgt. Catlin** was later found to have 74 separate wounds as well as burns. [To be continued in July].

JAPANESE FORCES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN- 1ST APRIL 1942

1. APRIL 1942 Indian Ocean.jpg



NEWS IN BRIEF

The **New Straits Times** reported on 24th February 2022, the granting of Honorary Awards to retired dentist, **Dr. Vinod Kumar Joshi**, and adventure guide, **Tham Yau Kong**, in the Honorary Awards List announced in London on 22nd February 2022. **Dr. Joshi** will receive the OBE for his exceptional services to fighting cancer, while **Tham** will receive the MBE for outstanding services in environmental, historical and cultural conservation.

Dr. Joshi founded the Mouth Cancer Foundation in the UK and was a National Health Service consultant in restorative dentistry. **Tham**, a Sabah-based adventure guide, was instrumental in rediscovering and conserving the route of the Sandakan-Ranau Death March. He passed on his knowledge to student groups and the UK armed forces as well as connecting with the descendants of prisoners of war who had died as a result of this forced march. **Tham** said, "I had the greatest feeling and utmost gratitude when I heard about the award. The Death March route was lost for 60 years and tracing it in 2005 was an accomplishment in itself."

The two men will receive their awards later in the year.

Important message from **Shaharom Ahmad** – President of the **Malaya Historical Group Society** and **MVG** member.

In an e-mail dated 7th March, **Shaharom** reports:

"Just received a letter from the owner who owned the property of the Green Ridge Battlefield [Ed: at **Kampar**]. They instructed us to remove the signboard and not to give statement regarding the land as a heritage or planned to gazette it as heritage land. This is what we are facing now. Any ideas?

The signboard was placed in reserve under JKR and already approved by them in 2020.

The letter states:

4. Therefore, please **take notice** that the **Malayan** (sic) **Historical Group (MHG)**, its members, agents, representatives and/or nominees are to:
 - a. Immediately cease and desist making and/or causing to be published statements regarding the **Kampar Green Ridge Lands** and/or the need for the lands to be designated as a heritage site and/or acquired any other statements leading the public, potential purchasers and/or developers to believe the lands will be designated as a heritage site and/or acquired; and
 - b. Remove the 2nd Signboard erected (on) the **Kampar Green Ridge Lands** within fourteen (14) days of the date of the letter.
5. In the meantime, all our rights are reserved.

In response, we have urged the **MHG** to take advice from Lawyers or other senior figures in the Malaysian Military, but obviously we cannot take any action from the UK, other than give support for the **MHG's** actions and achievements.

Shaharom's reply:

Thank you all for your concern. We already did our best to keep the signboard and already checked with the local councils and related agencies about the signboard location. It was under JKR reserve plots and not under the private owner (developer) who sent the letter. Nevertheless, they were afraid that the content of the signboard would harm them and the future plan of the land if they wanted to develop it into housing estates.

We are waiting for their response after we already sent them our reply which definitely objected to their order to remove the signboard in 14 days.

BATAAN DEATH MARCH – COMMEMORATING THE 80th ANNIVERSARY on Sunday - 10th April 2022.

Notice from the Bataan Legacy Historical Society

The Memorial Ceremony on 10th April is taking place at the **USS Hornet Sea, Air and Space Museum**, in **Alameda, California**. Please join us to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the **Bataan Death March**.

In addition to this, the ceremony is honouring the casualties of the Hell ships **Oryoku Maru**, **Brazil Maru** and **Enoura Maru**, plus **Air Group 11 [CVG-11]** and the **USS Hornet**.



WYMONDHAM FEPOW SERVICE – 15th MAY 2022

The following message about this service has been received from **Peter Wiseman**.

Greetings from Wymondham.

Now that we are allowed to congregate once more, we are pleased to confirm that the 2022 FEPOW Memorial Service will go ahead. Mrs. Meg Parkes M.Phil. Honorary Research Fellow at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine has kindly agreed to give the address. The Service will be on Sunday 15th May 2022 @ 12:30pm. We are also delighted to provide light refreshments afterwards again in our adjacent Hall. All are welcome to attend, but please tell us you are coming so we can cater adequately. Please let Peter Wiseman know at this email

address fepow@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk or tel. 01953604144. We invite FEPOW Organisations to get in touch if they wish to lay a wreath. Unfortunately, we do not have space for individual wreaths. It would also be helpful to know if in advance if any assistance might required. eg. Mobility issues.

Please note that 'Invitations are no longer sent out, but hope that you will fill the church this year. So we really need you to tell us if you are coming. For those unable to attend, the service is Live Streamed and is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmPstVjBimy3N0oC3Zmln8g/videos?view=57>

Our website address www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow has additional information, and Peter Wiseman is still available for other queries about the Memorial Books, visits at other times and FEPOW information we hold:

Email: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com .

OBITUARIES

SHEILA BRUHN (nee Allan) Born 1925 – died 2022 aged 97

MVG member **Sheila Bruhn** was born near Taiping to an Australian mining engineer, **John Allan**, and his Chinese-Malayan wife. As her father was working in Thailand, **Sheila** saw very little of him until the age of 9 when her mother left home and her father returned, later marrying a Thai woman. **Sheila** was educated at a Catholic boarding school in Taiping and Ipoh and excelled in swimming and long distance running. She left school in 1941, aged 17, hoping to attend university in Melbourne, Australia, her father's home town. However, her plans were halted by the invasion of the Japanese on 8th December 1941. For the next two months the family was under constant aerial bombardment and they fled south believing Singapore to be safe. However, it was also being heavily bombed and **Sheila** narrowly missed being killed by a bomb which landed near their lodging and sending a large piece of shrapnel on to the bed next to her. Her father booked places for **Sheila** and his wife on the **Vyner Brooke**, but their refusal to leave him probably saved their lives because the ship was attacked off Banka Island and sank with a huge loss of life and the subsequent massacre of survivors on Radji beach.

After Singapore surrendered on 15th February 1942, **Sheila** had to register at City Hall where she witnessed the killing of a child by a Japanese soldier – a sight which haunted her throughout her life. Then she joined the long walk to Changi Gaol, a forbidding fortress built with high walls, watchtowers and cells with tiny barred windows and narrow concrete slabs for beds. But there were flushing squat toilets. **Sheila** found the lack of privacy difficult, as she had to share the cell with 2 others, sleeping on the floor with her suitcase as a pillow. The men and women were segregated in Changi Gaol, but could sometimes see their men folk in the courtyard through iron grills or on walkways. At first, monthly visits were allowed between the civilian men and women internees, but after the 'Double Tenth' incident (10/10/43) this was stopped.

Sheila felt safe in Changi. The guards left the women alone apart from the daily 'tenko' when they had to bow to their captors or risk being slapped if not considered low enough.

Food was cooked in a communal kitchen – 2 rice-based meals a day with a bun and mug of tea at breakfast. Later this was reduced to 1 meal a day. The women made 3 quilts from squares of material cut out of flour bags and embroidered with threads pulled from clothing. The quilts were for British and Australian POWs and the third was for the Japanese – to make sure the men got theirs. **Sheila** embroidered her square with a map of Australia (minus Tasmania!) and a kangaroo. **Sheila** also kept herself busy reading, writing poems and short stories and she kept a diary.

In May 1944, they moved to the Sime Road Camp where the guards were quite brutal. Rations were meagre but they were able to grow their own vegetables. She even cooked and ate earthworms.

In June 1945 her father, **John Allan**, died, but **Sheila** and his wife were not permitted to see him. 5 days after **Sheila's** 21st birthday, on 15th August 1945, the war ended. She watched the Japanese surrender from the City Hall balcony

As an orphan, **Sheila** went to live with her aunt in Melbourne, where she trained as a nurse. In 1958 she married **Frank Bruhn** and moved to Sydney. They had a son and daughter. In 1994 her book, "Diary of a Girl in Changi" was published and she travelled extensively in Australia and overseas speaking about her POW experiences. She was a keen gardener, walker and ballroom dancer. She died in January 2022 aged 97 and is survived by her 2 children and 2 grandchildren.

We are also sad to report the death of **Patricia Giudice (nee Edwards)** in Australia. She escaped from Singapore with her family on a private launch to Sumatra, and from there sailed to Java and finally Fremantle. Her father joined the RAAF with the rank of Flying Officer.

Also remembered is MVG's Australian member **Neale Consigliere** who has also died. His father, **Paolo Lawrence Consigliere** was a Corporal in the 2nd Battalion SSVF and died in captivity.

ROGER BARRETT

As a long standing member of the MVG, we send our sincere condolences to **Roger's** family on learning of his death last year. There will be a service of Celebration of **Roger's** Life on Thursday 16th June in Winchfield.

The beautiful service of hymns, poems, readings, music and prayers also included a short story recounted in his own words by **Roger** and read by his son, about his boyhood in Malaya. Those of you who were children in pre-war Malaya will know what he means by 'a Jamban.'

TALES FROM THE JAMBAN

By Roger Barrett

Read by Rupert Barrett

One afternoon, when I was about 3 years old, my brother and I were sitting side-by-side in the bathroom on our twin jambans. This was a post prandial ritual laid down by my Mother, who considered regularity in the tropics essential for a healthy constitution. My brother, aged 6, was smoking contemplatively; I was simply straining to do my Mother's bidding.

Suddenly, we heard footsteps approaching; the door opened and my Father appeared. Whatever he had come to say was instantly thrust from his mind by the sight of smoke curling from a cigarette which, inexplicably, had appeared between my fingers. Without stopping to find out how it came to be there, he grabbed me and thrashed my conveniently bare backside.

Meanwhile, my brother looked on, innocently, failing to mention the cigarette had been his before, by some sleight of hand, he managed to transfer it, unobserved, to me.

Little did I realise at the time, it was to be the beginning of a long and generally pleasurable association with the "weed", that was to last most of my life.



PHILIP ROLLITT – Born 29/12/1938 and died 11/10/2021

We send our heartfelt condolences to **Ruth** on the death of her beloved husband **Philip**.

Philip was born and educated in Lincoln where he excelled at school. During his National Service he studied Russian, and later applied to join the Foreign Office. As a junior Diplomat, he was posted to Embassies all over South America before being sent to the British Embassy in Copenhagen. It was here he met **Ruth** who was working there as a receptionist. They were married on 30th August 1969 in Copenhagen where they lived until 1972 when **Philip** was posted back to England.

In 1976, he was sent to Singapore where they lived for 4 years before returning to London. **Philip's** next posting was to Islamabad, Pakistan, as Head of Immigration. Returning to the Foreign Office in the UK, **Philip** became Head of the Nationality and Treaty Department, then Management Councillor in Bonn for 4 years.

In May 1994 he was sent to Tokyo as Consul General before retiring in 1998. He and **Ruth** travelled extensively all over the world during his work, and on retirement enjoyed visiting their grandchildren in Australia.

He was much loved by all who worked for him.

REGINALD MASON NELSON (21 November 1923 – 26 November 2021) – in memoriam

Born Reginald Mason Nelson in Napier, New Zealand, he was known as "Mason" all his life.

Mason's father, David Nelson, was a land surveyor and engineer. In 1928, with his wife, Alice, and two small children, Mason aged four and Beth aged two, he left NZ for a job in Singapore with Singapore Improvement Trust, a government housing body. David was taken prisoner when Singapore fell in 1941 and thus spent the war in Changi, where he served in the Bureau of Records and Enquiry (BRE) – this office kept meticulous records of prisoners of war captured by the Imperial Japanese Army. His diary of these years he later turned into a book, "The Story of Changi."

Mason's mother escaped from Singapore on the "Empire Star" and eventually made it back to NZ via Colombo, Bombay and Australia.

Mason and Beth started their education at the Tanglin School, based at the Tanglin Club, run by the redoubtable Miss Griffith-Jones. In 1931, Mason was sent to board at King's School and later King's College (St. John's House) in Auckland, where he began a lifelong love of the game of cricket, leading to captaining the 1st eleven.

Mason left school at the end of 1941 and was immediately conscripted into the Army – 20th Field Regiment, based in Waimate North. In mid 1943, he was placed, with many other new recruits, on indefinite leave without pay. He then joined the Trust Department of the New Zealand Insurance Company (NZI) in Auckland.

In early 1944, Mason joined the Royal NZ Naval Volunteer Reserve as an officer trainee. He was posted to HMS Drake then to HMS Raleigh at Torpoint, United Kingdom. The focus was mainly on seamanship. He passed out top of the class in late June 1945, and was posted for service aboard the training cruiser HMS Dauntless. The standard course took Dauntless anti-clockwise around Britain, during which time both the Germans and the Japanese surrendered.

In January 1946, he arrived home to Napier and returned to NZI. In 1947, he was posted to NZI's general insurance office in

Singapore. Later he spent two years in Penang. There he made quite an impact. He developed life-long friendships with Penang families and maverick planters. He expanded NZI's business in north Malaya, particularly rice mills in Kedah. He was well known on the cricket pitch and in the Penang City Lights Cabaret, to a point where his house at Batu Ferringhi became known as the Country Lights!

On promotion, Mason was transferred to Bombay as NZI's Manager for India. He then returned to Singapore where, through Andy Clinton, he joined the sharebroking company, Sassoons. At this time, insurance legislation was introduced in both Singapore and Malaya requiring investment of policy-holder funds locally. With his knowledge of the industry, Mason was able to capture and assist companies in investing locally to great advantage.

Mason was a member of the Singapore Cricket Club and later the famous Non-Benders team. He also had many sailing adventures with John Willoughby. He had many friends in the mix of cultures in Malaysia and Singapore, and was interested all his life in Asian archeological sites and antiquities. He amassed a great collection of books and prints on Malaysian and Singaporean subjects.

After 25 years in Singapore, Mason retired from Sassoons and moved to London where he assisted both Sassoons and NZI with their operations in the UK. As chairman of NZI's UK company, he was much involved in the reorganization following the merger of NZI and South British Insurance.

In 2001, Mason returned to New Zealand and spent the last years of his life creating a wonderful arboretum on a hill near Taupo with partner Jane.

Mason leaves behind three children – Annalisa, Alice and David and six grandchildren.

We salute the passing of a remarkable man. *Lelaki Luar Biasa*. We feel honoured to have known him.

With thanks to Jim Cooke (ex-NZI) and Jane Battersby.

Czechoslovak volunteers from the Bata Shoe Co - Part I.

By Jan Beranek

I have had the honor to be a member of the MVG since 2017. That's when I got in contact with Jonathan and Rosemary, at an early stage of my research of the history of Czechoslovaks in Singapore before and during WW2. The key driver of my interest was the unknown fate of my great-uncle Silvestr NEMEC, who was a SSVF volunteer (Pte 13779) and had gone missing in February 1942.

In the autumn 2020, I have published a book on the matter in the Czech language, and last year started to work on an English version which, if things go well, might be out by the end of this year. In the meantime, I would like to make a contribution to the MVG Newsletter and share with you all some of the fascinating, forgotten stories of Czechoslovak volunteers and the Bata Shoe Company in British Malaya and Singapore.

An article published in November 1940 in The Straits Times says "*No fewer than 31 out of the 50 odd Czechs in Singapore have applied to join the Local Defence Corps, and the Straits Times understands that the entire male members of the Czech colony here may eventually join up. The 31 applications already received are from the staff of the Bata Shoe Company in Singapore.*"

Let's begin with what many are probably wondering about: What does Bata Shoe Co. have to do with the "Czech colony", as the article suggests?

This is something that continues to surprise pretty much everyone who I talk to about my research: everybody thinks that the famous shoe company must be a local brand, Malayan, Singaporean or Indian. In fact, the global enterprise that triggers so many childhood memories (do you recall the slogan "First to Bata, then to school"?) originates in Czechoslovakia.

The Bata Shoe Co. was founded in 1894 by three siblings - Antonin, Tomas and Anna - in the Czech city of Zlin. What was in its early days just one of many tiny shoemaking family workshops in a poor little town, transformed by 1930's into the most successful, largest global producer of shoes (and many other articles and products, including tyres, airplanes, films and chemicals - although shoes remained to be its core business). This happened thanks to ingenious Tomas Bata, considered to be the sole founder of the brand, as his brother and sister left the business in early years.

In 1932, Tomas Bata was producing 36 millions pairs of shoes, which were exported to 40 countries across four

continents. It was also the year in which he took a business trip to India and Singapore, and subsequently decided to take his expansion yet to another level: instead of exporting shoes made in the Zlin factories, he launched an ambitious plan to build factories and relocate production directly to the heart of his biggest markets.

As a result of this effort, the first Bata shoe factory in the Far East opened in 1934 in Batanagar, British India. British Malaya followed in 1937 with a large factory producing cheap rubber-canvas shoes (so called 'plimsolls') in Klang near Kuala Lumpur, and finally a production of leather shoes was launched in Singapore (on Prince Edward Road) in 1939. Just to give you a sense of scale: by the time war started in the Pacific in 1941, the Klang factory was producing 2.4 million pairs of shoes annually.

The presence of the Bata brand in Singapore however dates earlier. The company's flagship store opened in February 1931 at the Capitol Theater, North Bridge Road. Its clientele grew quickly, and from what we know from the memoirs and contemporary publications, even sultan Ibrahim of Johore became a regular customer. By the end of the decade, Bata was running 150 stores, distribution centers and service points across British Malaya and Singapore. His assets included a company's own rubber plantation (with about 120,000 trees) at Bukit Tiga, Johore, purchased in 1935. Finally, Bata Shoe Co. built and in June 1940 opened its own office building on the North Bridge Road in the near vicinity of Capitol Theater.

Such operation, although largely based on local workforce, was not possible without a number of experienced managers, technical experts, business representatives as well as sellers and pedicurists (chiropractors) coming directly from Zlin, Czechoslovakia.

From various archival documents, I have established that in 1941, the number of Czechoslovak men working for Bata in Singapore and Malaya was 45. Most of them - including my great-uncle Silvestr - arrived only in 1938 and 1939, both as the Bata local production commenced, but also because of the German invasion to the "Sudeten" after September 1938 (as a result of the infamous Munich Treaty) and in March 1939 to the whole Czech half of the Czechoslovak Republic. With the impending threat of German occupation, it was Bata's strategy to send overseas teams of his best talents along with full production lines dismantled from the Zlin factories, rescuing what was possible out of the reach of the Nazis. Some of these Czechoslovak workers arrived in the Far East with their families: 19 wives and 17 children were living with them in George Town, Klang, and Singapore.

Additional 43 Czechoslovaks (19 men, 13 women and 11 children), not related to Bata Shoe Co., lived in Singapore in 1941. Most of them were tradesmen and business representatives (several of them working for Skoda company), but also some students, artists and adventurers.

So, in total, the Czechoslovak "diaspora" had over 120 souls, half of them being men. This is the pool of "50 odd Czechs" that The Straits Times article talks about.

With their motherland occupied by the German Nazis partly after September 1938 and entirely since March 1939, most of these Czechoslovaks stayed loyal to the exiled Czechoslovak government and the Allies (several of them, being of German origin, however requested the German Reich passports and turned sides - only to be later interned by the British authorities on the St. John's Island).

At least two Czech men who used to work for Bata in Singapore actually decided to return to Europe to fight Hitler there, and in 1940 joined the Czechoslovak foreign legions in France (and after it's fall, in England): Frantisek REHOR who became a R.A.F. pilot at Czechoslovak 310 squadron and went missing during a flight mission at the end of August 1944, probably was shot down above the Channel; and Josef ZUNA who joined the British army, earning the rank of sergeant-major.

Many other loyal Czechoslovak men from the Bata Shoe Co. decided to join the Volunteers Corps in Malaya and Singapore. There is evidence that several of them joined SSVF before 1940: Alois CLPKA (Pte. 12973), Frantisek KOBLIZIK (Pte. 12948), Jan MRAZ (Pte. 12949, joined SSVF in March 1938), Josef STASEK (Pte. 12947) and Vilem ZAMARA (Pte. 13019).

The others, however, signed up and enrolled into SSVF between November 1940 and January 1941: Pavel AMBROZ, Matej BOHMAN, Rudolf JANECEK (Pte. 13778), Stanislav JEDOVNICKY, Rudolf KOZUSNICEK (Pte. 13774), Emil MATUS (Pte. 13781), Alfred MIZIA, Silvestr NEMEC (Pte. 13779), Karel VITEK (Pte. 13777), Josef VYHNALEK (Pte. 13797). Additional person who probably should be mentioned in this group is Wieslaw „Benny“ SIENKIEWICZ (Pte. 13734, sometimes misspelled as SYNCOVITCH), a Czechoslovak of Polish origin who worked part time for Bata in Singapore.

A number of additional “Batamen”, as they were referencng themselves, joined the Local Defense Corps (LDC). These were either the older or married men, who were not fit or suitable for service with the SSVF. There is less documentation about those who joined LDC, and while we can presume that more were involved, we know positively about seven of them: Jan BODA (number 180), Bedrich HELM (number 311), Frantisek HLOBIL (number 181), Viktor KOS, Frantisek MYSAK (number 179), Klement PLHON (number 344), and Frantisek WAKERMAN.

Of the 16 Czechoslovaks from Bata Shoe Co. who enlisted in the SSVF volunteers, 14 were mobilized and in active service during the defense of Singapore in February 1942. They were all part of the “B company” of the 1st SSVF battalion, which was dedicated to non-British Europeans - and as such, was nicknamed as a “Foreign Legion”.

Several memoirs and letters bring evidence that most of them saw battle in the Pasir Panjang ridge, where they were supporting the Malayans. One of them was killed (NEMEC), four others captured as POWs (JANECEK, SIENKIEWICZ, VITEK and VYHNALEK - only the last one survived). The rest were lucky enough to evade capture and were later interned as civilians in Changi and later on the Sims Road - all survived.

Let me stop here for today. I will write more about the involvement of the Bata Czechoslovaks, and in particular my great-uncle Silvestr NEMEC, in war efforts next time.

Bata Shoe Shop - Singapore



SINGAPORE VOLUNTEERS OF S.S.V.F.
Seated left to right: Zamara, Mutol, Jugas, Kolutnišak.
Standing: Bohman, Mráz, Cepka, Jedovnický, Ambros.



WEBSITES TO VISIT

WW2 historical site in Kampar gets new signboard. Now required to be removed. See P. 18.

With thanks to Richard Parry for sending this link.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/01/29/ww2-historical-ste-in-kampar-gets-new-signboard>

Lynette Silver sent this link about a new book by Stuart Lloyd about the Alexandra Hospital massacre. Lynette was interviewed by an ABC reporter and supplied the historical photos.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-14/valentines-day-massacre-during-the-fall-of-singapore-80th/100825650>

Jonathan Moffatt sent this link to another book about the Alexandra Hospital massacre, which is available on Amazon.

https://www.amazon.co.uk/BLEEDING-SLAUGHTERHOUSE-Outrageous-Alexandra-Massacres/dp/0645328049/ref=sr_1_1?crd=1DJN35DSYSMA&keywords=a%20bleeding%20slaughterhouse%20lloyd&qid=1642949997&sprefix=A%20bleeding%20caps%2C286&sr=8-1&fbclid=IwAR3B6d3nnBbTdwAzTwWlxtKvwPaWTmAhxdVh8bz_if3pqBK5NsiDHfI3q2E

Richard Brown sent this link to the Alexandra Hospital massacre book.

https://www.catmatdog.com/a-bleeding-slaughterhouse-blogs-extracts?fbclid=IwAR2hgPGaZn_orKNOtL4EIJXx9k4QcekSTC0GK-JBugltxoXbeblory-blcY

Lynette Silver also sent this link to **Paul Elliott's** pilgrimage to Singapore for the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. **Paul's** wife **Di**, who died in October 2020, had always wanted to honour her father, who was a FEPOW, on the 80th anniversary. **Paul's** story was printed in the Sydney Morning Herald.

<https://www.smh.com.au/world/asia/i-m-here-for-her-and-her-father-one-man-s-journey-to-mark-the-fall-of-singapore-20220215-p59win.html>

Judy Barradell-Smith sent this link about her grandfather **Harold Page** who survived the sinking of HMS Kuala and Tien Kwang off Pom Pong Island on 14th February 1942, 80 years ago. He was captured by the Japanese and interned as a civilian in Sumatra.

<http://www.battlelines-redrawn.co.uk/harold.html>

An article in the New Straits Times on 1st February entitled "A Look at the Past to secure a Tiger's Future" by **Alan Teh Leam Seng** mentioned the pet tiger cub named **Nepti**, which had been adopted by **Merilyn** and **Jane Booker (now Nielsen)** when they were small children growing up in Malaya after the war. **Liz Moggie** sent the information which can be read online as follows:

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/02/767806/look-past-help-secure-tigers-future>

An earlier article written in 2017 by **Teh Leam Seng** in the New Straits Times also mentions **Nepti** as a lead into a piece on Zoo Negara.

<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/sunday-vibes/2017/07/262257/beauty-and-terror-jungle>

Jane Nielsen has sent the following websites for anyone who is interested in the story of **Nepti**. Her story is also told by **Captain Bob Smith** in his book, "**Khaki Shorts.**" There is a **Nepti** soft toy which is kept in the Gurkha Museum in Winchester.

<https://regimentalstories.blogspot.com/2008/06/silent-one.html>

<https://www.britishpathe.com/video/MLVA9CXFYQ7UK5F7PYDL2JXX3HVCD-ENGLAND-OLD-PALS-MEET-AT-LONDON-ZOO/>

Nepti the Tiger – The Gurkha Museum- Winchester.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

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

See details on Page 29.

NMA – Monday 15th August 2022. V-J Day Service in the Chapel at the NMA at 12 noon.

The Chapel has been booked for our annual V-J Day Service. Although this year is the 77th anniversary of V-J Day, it is also the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore and our service will reflect on this event which resulted in such devastating consequences for our families and the lives of everyone who lived in the Far East.

LONDON – Saturday 15th October 2022. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 noon -5 p.m.

We are delighted that **James Wilson** has agreed to give a talk about his father, entitled, "**Bishop Leonard Wilson. A son's reflections on a famous father.**"

James says: "**Bishop Leonard Wilson's** biographer commented that his religion and his humanity went hand in hand, each deriving strength and depth from each other. His experiences of torture in Changi Prison by the Japanese had a profound effect on his Christian faith and the power of reconciliation. As his youngest son, I want to reflect on how his faith and his humanity inter-connected both as a Bishop and a Father."

Details about the menu and price will be announced in July. We have booked the Sovereigns' Room, provided our numbers are more than 40 this year. As usual, we will ask for bookings by 30th September with the names of any guests and dietary needs. Please remember to bring a draw prize with you.

LONDON – Thursday 10th and Sunday 13th November 2022. Cross Planting Ceremony and Cenotaph Parade.

It was decided last year that the MVG would no longer march as a Group on Remembrance Sunday. Instead we would attend a Service at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, the FEPOW Church in Trafalgar Square, and lay a wreath there.

However, if there is someone who would like to organize an MVG group to march in the Cenotaph Parade, on Remembrance Sunday, please ask **Rosemary Fell** for the contact details. The Parade is arranged by the Royal British Legion and the application form for the number of tickets required is usually sent out by e-mail to the organiser in June. The Legion then allocates the number of tickets available before individual named tickets can be applied for online. Details of rank, full name (as on ID carried), DOB, place of birth, full address & postcode plus military rank (if applicable) are then required for each person, and tickets are sent out by e-mail.

If no-one comes forward, I will cancel MVG's application form.

It may also be possible to ask another group to hand in a wreath for the MVG at the Cenotaph during the Parade, or for MVG members to join another group.

MALAYSIA and CANADA – Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day Services.

Details to be announced.

NMA – 10th December 2022 – Service to commemorate the sinking of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales.

We thank **Bob Hall** for representing the MVG at this annual service.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Annual subscriptions of **£20** per family are due in April. Methods of payment are given in the enclosed subscription letter. We are very grateful to members who have already paid their subscription for this year. Please ignore the letter if you have already paid.

As stated in the January newsletter, this year we are placing the onus of payment on to you. Reminders will not be sent out, and after July, membership will be suspended until payment is received. As a privately funded group, we cannot set up Direct Debits but payment by Standing Order may be set up with your own bank. Please note name of account for BAC payments. Payment by cheque requires the full name in which the account is held:

Mrs. R.A. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

This year we will continue to send funds to the Muntok Peace Museum for their electricity and support the TBRC if needed.

BENCH IN ABBEY FIELDS PARK, KENILWORTH, NEAR THE WAR MEMORIAL



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