

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

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**71st EDITION
JULY 2022**



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth celebrates her Platinum Jubilee

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**CONGRATULATIONS TO HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
ON CELEBRATING HER PLATINUM JUBILEE IN JUNE
SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM
A WONDERFUL DAY WAS ENJOYED AT THE
ROYAL GARDEN PARTY AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE
MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS REMEMBERED AT
THE FEPOW SERVICE IN WYMONDHAM**

**HAPPY AND GLORIOUS
LONG MAY SHE REIGN**

We hope Her Majesty The Queen enjoyed her Platinum Jubilee Celebrations as much as we did. The four days of Celebrations to mark **Her Majesty The Queen's** Platinum Jubilee were spectacular, glorious, wonderful and quirky. Where better to hold such an occasion than outside Buckingham Palace and along The Mall – a truly unique setting. We were awed by the precision of marching men and ranks of trotting horses at Trooping the Colour on Horse Guards Parade on Thursday; we rejoiced at the magnificence of the music and singing in the Thanksgiving Service in St. Paul's Cathedral on Friday; we were amazed and laughed at the antics of Paddington Bear, aided and abetted by **Her Majesty**, during the opening 'performance' of Saturday night's concert; and finally we were captivated by the spectacle of colour, the ingenuity of the performers and the wonderful floats which paraded along the Mall during Sunday afternoon's Pageant. The steadfast support given to **Her Majesty** during these 4 days by her own family, other members of her extended family, and by the public was superb. It was delightful to see the younger members of the Royal Family play their part in the celebrations as well. The Balcony appearance at Buckingham Palace of **Prince George, Princess Charlotte and Prince Louis** with her, obviously gave **The Queen** a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment. To see her explaining the wartime aircraft to her great grandson, **Prince Louis**, during the RAF Flypast after Trooping the Colour was delightful, despite his antics of covering his ears at the noise.

A truly fabulous and memorable celebration - a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Buckingham Palace Garden Party

After a gap of 3 years due to the Covid pandemic, the Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace have been resumed this year. On 18th May, **Imogen Holmes** and **Rosemary Fell** attended the second of the three Garden Parties arranged for this year. Hosted by the **Duchess of Cambridge** and the **Earl and Countess of Wessex**, it was held in perfect summer weather – the sun shone in a cloudless blue sky and there was just a hint of a breeze to prevent the afternoon becoming too hot. The invitation to attend was sent to **Rosemary** on account of her award of the British Empire Medal, which was presented to her by the Lord Lieutenant of Devon in Exeter in October 2019. All recipients of awards are invited to attend a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace accompanied by one guest. It was a wonderful experience. The tea was delicious and brilliantly organised so that everyone was served in a very short space of time. Afterwards, there was time to walk round the lovely gardens at Buckingham Palace, before the final playing of the National Anthem to mark the end of the afternoon.

Visit to the National Army Museum

On 27th April, **Jonathan Moffatt** and **Rosemary Fell** paid a successful visit to the National Army Museum in London's Chelsea to meet their archivist, **Natasha Swainston**. As mentioned in **Jonathan's** report on **Page 2**, the views of members about the plans to deposit MVG's collection of archival material and books at this Museum would be much appreciated. Access to the Army Museum's archives would appear to be encouraged by the department and the study rooms are light and airy. An added bonus is the café, which serves a variety of hot and cold dishes at lunch time – but does close early at 4.30p.m. The building itself is modern and well laid out, and within walking distance of Sloane Square tube station.

FEPOW Service at Wymondham

We are very grateful to **Olga Henderson** who represented the MVG at the annual Service at the FEPOW Church in Wymondham, on 15th May, and laid a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteer Forces, with great dignity. **Olga** travelled especially from her home in Eastbourne, spending 2 nights in Norwich, in order to attend this service. This is not an easy journey and we are indebted to **Olga** for undertaking to attend the FEPOW Service this year. It is poignant to remember, as we celebrate the 70th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth the Second's reign that 80 years ago during the Malayan Campaign of World War 2 the Malayan Volunteer Forces fought for "King and Country" when her father, King George VI, was on the throne. They fought not only for this country but also for their own much loved country of Malaya. **Lest We Forget.** A full report on the service is given by **Peter Wiseman**, Archivist at the FEPOW Church, Wymondham, on P.5.

Reports in Malaysian Newspapers

With thanks to **Liz Moggie** for keeping the MVG informed about wartime and other news from Malaysia and Singapore.

The Star reported on 22nd April this year that the new Japanese Prime Minister, **Fumio Kishida**, had sent a ritual offering to the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, causing South Korea to express "deep disappointment and regret." **Kishida** also sent an offering last October, but has refrained from visiting in person.

Both **The New Sunday Times** and **New Straits Times** carried reports in May on the poor condition of **Sir Henry Gurney's** grave, former High Commissioner to Malaya, which is in Kuala Lumpur's Cheras Christian Cemetery. Situated adjacent to the well-kept Commonwealth War Graves, it had become very neglected. The deplorable state of the grave was discovered by a group of 40 people including Hash House Harriers and the Happy Hikers. Former Royal Malaysian Air Force Brigadier-General (rtd) **Datuk Soon Lian Cheng** is a member of the hiking group which had organised the hike specifically to visit the grave following a previous hiking trip to The Gap at Fraser's Hill where **Sir Henry** was shot by Communist Terrorists when his car was ambushed.

Sir Henry Gurney is considered by many to be a war hero, and his action in getting out of his car, when it was hit, helped to draw fire away from his wife, **Lady Isabel**, and his private secretary, **D.J. Staples**, who both survived, but his chauffeur was killed. Malaysia's current British High Commissioner, **Charles Hay**, told the NST that work was about to start on restoration work, and this is expected to be completed in July. **Datuk Soon** has suggested that the grave should be cared for after restoration by the Commonwealth War Graves caretaker.

The NST also led a report in April about a group of local people who took on the 260km Sandakan-Ranau Death March over a period of 6 days. Towards the end of the Second World War, the Japanese forced the remaining 2,434 Australian and British POWs to march from Sadakan to Ranau in what may be one of the worst atrocities of WW2. Of these POWs only 6 Australians survived after they escaped the march with the help of local people. **Tham Yau Kong** who retraced the trail and is an expert guide on the trail has been awarded the OBE for his work.

Czechoslovak Volunteers.

After reading **Jan Beranek's** article about the Bata Shoe Company in April's newsletter, **Vilma Howe** recalled her childhood meeting with the Bata family in Singapore soon after her release from captivity in Sime Road Camp. She said: "When my grandfather **Thomas William Stubbs** was dying, my mother sent us children out to play. He lived at 15, Chancery Lane in Singapore which was next door to the **Bata** family of the Bata Shoe Company. **Mrs. Bata** heard us playing and invited us into her garden to play with her children. It's strange how playing next door while grandpa was ailing seems to have stuck in my memory. I do remember how nice and welcoming the **Bata** family was. Sadly my grandfather died on 13th April 1938."

Vilma also recalls winning a writing competition organised by the Cathay Cinema, again soon after her release, during what she terms "her restless spell!"

THE ROYAL WEDDING PRESENTS

By

Miss V.M. Stubbs... 30, Crescent Road, Singapore

The Cathay Cinema provided an enjoyable evening's entertainment last week in the screening of the J. Arthur Rank production, "It Always Rains on Sunday" and, as a preceding short film, a magnificent Technicolor record of the Royal Wedding Gifts.

Among the wedding gifts on display, were azzling jewels from their Majesties the King and Queen and H.M. Queen Mary sparkled in the camera's light; there were glittering diamonds, rubies, pearls, sapphires and brilliants made into necklaces, earrings, bracelets, brooches and tiaras of fabulous beauty and wealth.

A plastic picnic set, a silver casket-shaped inkstand and a set of twelve champagne glasses were Princess Margaret's gifts, and very lovely too.

From within the royal circle came articles of every origin, some dating centuries back. Replicas of two silver gilt anointing spoons forming part of the Greek Regalia were presents of Prince Christopher of Greece.

From others were gifts of every nature, brocaded silks, furniture, vast amounts of Irish linen, ornaments, etc. some presents recalling scenes at the Royal Wedding.

South African farmers sent two beautiful ostrich shoulder capes and a yarn lacework cloth spun by the donor himself was the late Mahatma Gandhi's gift. Singapore's gold jewel casket was seen among Malaya's display. There were items from countries and people near and far, tokens from those who extended their warm feelings and sincerest wishes towards the Royal Couple for their future happiness.

Anne Hinam was also reminded about a Czech family when she read **Jan's** article, and sent this information about **Sir Tom Stoppard**:

"When I read **Jan Beranek's** article in the April newsletter about Czechs in Singapore working for the **Bata Shoe Company**, I remembered an article by **Sir Tom Stoppard** in the Sunday Telegraph magazine of 10th October 1999. I had kept the article because of the wartime Singapore connection. I have obtained via **Sir Tom's** agent his permission to use the information and quotations from the article.

Sir Tom was born **Tomas Straussler** in 1937 in Zlin, Czechoslovakia. His father, **Dr. Eugen (or Eugene) Straussler** was a doctor at the Bata Shoe Company hospital. As the German army approached in 1939, he and his family were offered a transfer to the Bata factory in Singapore, arriving, as **Sir Tom** puts it, "in good time for the Japanese onslaught." He sums up

the result – “They killed my father and did their best to sink the ship that got the rest of us to India.” At first, however, the family enjoyed life in Singapore, **Tomas** and his elder brother **Peter** going to a kindergarten every morning in a rickshaw. Then came the Japanese invasion and evacuation for women and children. **Sir Tom’s** mother stayed as long as she could, hoping that the family could go together to Australia. In a memoir later she wrote: “It just did not work out and the last few days were chaotic, boats, days and times always being changed. The journey from Singapore was pretty dreadful. We were bombed just about everywhere, In the harbour, standing three days just off Singapore, and then on the way to Australia, then turned back to Singapore and finally to India. At the time we were so worried about the men left behind in Singapore we did not really notice or mind anything. Cabins were overcrowded and mattresses on deck preferable.” Later in Darjeeling, **Sir Tom’s** mother was informed that her husband was among those missing, presumed lost. She asked a woman friend to tell the boys that their father was dead, but they were given no details. Over fifty years later **Sir Tom** learned the full story from a family friend whom they had known in Singapore, **Leslie Smith**. Two days before the fall of Singapore he had arranged for **Dr. Straussler** and his friend **Mr. Heim** (presumably the **Bedrich Heim** of **Jan’s** article) to board an evacuation ship, almost certainly the **S.S. Redang**. “The ship was sunk by the Japanese in the Strait between Sumatra and the Island of Bangka, trying to make it to Australia.” **Sir Tom’s** mother was re-married after the war to former **Major Kenneth Stoppard**. The two boys took his surname and became English schoolboys.

KUALA SELANGOR WAR MEMORIAL MEETING (TUGU PERINGTAN PERANG KUALA SELANGOR)

Report by Liz Moggie

On 16th March 2022, a Wacana and Pengkisahan (a sharing dialogue session and reminiscences is the best translation) was held at the Shah Alam Convention Centre. The topic under discussion, the Kuala Selangor War Memorial, was to have been held on 21st March 2019 but had been cancelled owing to the pandemic. PADAT, the host and organizer, is the Selangor body set up to research the customs and heritage of the Malay community within the State. Among other activities it has an interest in promoting the historical significance of Kuala Selangor, partly to encourage visitors to this once important district centre. The War Memorial, unveiled in 1924, still stands on its original site, though without its WW1 and WW2 bronze plaques which bore the names of those men of the district who had lost their lives during the conflicts. It stands in the former town centre, close to even older historical sites.

Over 40 people attended, including the **Orang Besar Dato’ Mohamad Yaacob bin Dato’ Ismail** (hereditary chieftain for Kuala Selangor District and the Sultan’s personal representative there) three Penghulus from the area, representatives from Malaysian National Archives, the Military, the Police, History Societies and relevant government and other bodies. The other two speakers were **Lt. Col. Muhd Zuraiman Bin Abdul Ghani** who spoke on the Second World War in Selangor from the Military Archeology aspect and **Col. (ret) Zulkifli Bin Dato’ Haji Tahir** who spoke on the role of the Malay Regiment and Volunteers in WW2. I spoke as an MVG member. The Moderator was **Dr. Azharudin Bin Mohamed Dali** from the University Malaya History Department.

PADAT staff, **Razif, Rizal** and **Hisham**, were most helpful, as was **Intan Saliza**, an archaeologist with PADAT, who has always appreciated the historical significance of the War Memorial to the district. The support of these people is vital to the future of the Memorial. Because PADAT is focused on the role of the Malay community within the Selangor State the proceedings were centred on the 7 Malay names – almost one third of the 23 names – that were inscribed on the WW2 bronze plaque. **Colonel Zulkifli** set the stage with his lively exposition of the history of the Malay Regiment and the evolving roles it has played in the defence of the country. **Colonel Zuraiman** described the function of the military archaeology department. It was a revelation to hear that this section not only collaborates with other Defence Forces to identify air crash sites and facilitates the recovery of remains according to strict international protocols, but also conducts investigations into sites of former past military significance such as bunkers, caves, former ammunition manufacturing factories during the Japanese Occupation etc.

I began my presentation with reference to MVG member **Andrew Hwang’s** discovery that the stone War Memorial in Kuala Selangor still existed (see *Apa Khabar* of October 2009). Further research by MVG Archivist **Jonathan Moffatt** has produced comprehensive details about European names. I emphasized that I was very much an amateur researcher and that my interest was sparked off by my association with the children of 4 Europeans whose names were on the original WW2 bronze plaques, and who had queried what role the 7 Malays had played. While I had received some personal communications, most of my findings had come from the newspaper section of the Singapore National Library and, more importantly, from Malaysian National Archives in KL – primarily from the papers of the late **Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard**, himself a Volunteer. I first spoke about the 3 Malay Regiment men whose names and regiment numbers were known. I had found evidence of how and when **Corporal Napi bin Ahmad** had been killed. I provided circumstantial assumptions of how the other two had died but had found no supporting evidence. But, apart from two of the men leaving named widows and the other his named father, we know nothing else of their families.

My research had led me to believe that the other 4 Malays were Volunteers, some definitely of "D" Company, 2nd (Selangor) Battalion FMSVF. There were two corroborating accounts of the brave death of **Sgt. Idrus bin Mohd Yunus**. Two of the others were Volunteers and I believe the 4th man as well. Although the event was focused on the 23 men whose names were on the Kuala Selangor War Memorial, I emphasized that it was pertinent to keep in mind that there were Volunteer Battalions in practically all the Peninsula states as well as in Singapore which was then part of Malaya. I mentioned a very recent NST article of 14th March which had featured the Volunteer Company formed at the **Sultan Idris Training College** at Tanjung Malim. I stated that at the time of the Japanese invasion there were over 10,000 Volunteers – approximately 3,000 Europeans and over 7,000 Malays, Chinese, Indians and Eurasians. We know something of the Europeans, but little about the local-born.

Who were these men? Have their families kept alive their memory? Where are the medals they may have been awarded? The ensuing Q & A question was interesting. There was a lively discussion on regimental numbers. **Lt. Col. Muhammad Jilli** of the Armed Forces History Unit informed the audience that a complete renumbering of the Malay Regiment took place at Independence. (I hope to obtain more details of this).

The conclusion of the Wacana was that the role of the Volunteers needs much further study. **Cik Intan Salina** suggested that further smaller meetings be held to pool information as it is acquired. It was hoped that local enquiries would be made to elicit waris (descendants) and family recollections. **Colonel Zulkifli** went so far as to suggest that a History of the Malayan Volunteer Forces should be written.

The Kuala Selangor War Memorial played a significant role in arousing interest in a hitherto forgotten aspect of the War. It is to be hoped that this will lead to enquiries being made about the role played by all Volunteers during the dark days of 80 years ago. Hopefully the Wacana and Pengkisahan of 16th March 2022 has set this in motion.

N.B. Liz Moggie goes on to say that she gave much more detail when she spoke and ad-libbed quite a bit according to the reactions of the audience. She started off with an introduction in Malay and ended with a conclusion in Malay, but the bulk of her presentation was in English. She says that the senior Military, Police and others would have understood but probably not the Penghulus and some of the other members of the audience. She didn't get to speak to everyone at lunch, so she was not sure how much the latter would have picked up. She also said that the two army officers presented in Malay but used a lot of English as well.

VISIT TO THE NATIONAL ARMY MUSEUM IN CHELSEA

Report by Jonathan Moffatt

On 27th April, **Rosemary Fell** and **Jonathan Moffatt** visited the National Army Museum in Chelsea to meet with the Museum's archivist, **Natasha Swainston**, who acknowledged their lack of pre-Emergency period in Malaya material. The purpose of the visit was to get a feel of the place; tell them about MVG and assess the interest of the Archivist in providing a future home in their archive for MVG's Malaya collection. **Jonathan** writes: "We were impressed with the marvellous collection of 18th to 20th Century uniforms; the display themes and the friendly, welcoming staff. I'd been there two years ago with others from the MVG and had sensed high staff turnover and a degree of chaos, but this time it felt very different. We had a meeting in the **Templer** study room with the Archivist and told her about our MVG collection of books, photos, documents and a few artifacts we hold. We also had a chance to look at the archive storage area. I didn't have a camera handy, but there is a splendid photo opportunity with a grand 1958 portrait of a robed **Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer** which looks down on archive visitors. The Museum has Templer's automatic pistol, service revolver, sleeping bag, BD top etc. and you can see these by searching the collection online on the Museum's website.

I will return later in the year to have a session in the study room and view some more of the Galleries. **Natasha** was mainly interested in the published books we hold, particularly personal accounts by Malayan Volunteers. Unpublished diary transcripts are a bit problematic as can be photos without a clear copyright route. Anyway, we went away feeling positive about the place and would welcome the views of MVG members as to this being a suitable home for our MVG material.

In the next six months, we will catalogue the books in our collection, maybe well over 500 – and see just how many the Archive doesn't have and is interested in.

We obviously want to keep as much of the collection as possible together in one accessible place. We left **Natasha** with a summary list of our holdings and information about the MVG.

Chelsea National Army Museum



ANNUAL FEPOW SERVICE IN WYMONDHAM – 15th May 2022

Report by Peter Wiseman – Wymondham Church Archivist

Wymondham's FEPOW Church was delighted to welcome FEPOW friends to the 2022 Memorial Service on the 15th May. Even better that it was free of pandemic restrictions. Whilst not the numbers of pre-Covid years, the Church was comfortably full. Amongst those present were several for whom it was their first visit to honour the Memory of FEPOW friends and relatives no longer with us. Many of our parishioners came to welcome the FEPOW family once more. This was an Ecumenical service hosted by our Parish Priests, **Canon Pat Cleary** and **Fr. Denis Gallagher** who were pleased to share the celebration with the FEPOW Chaplain, **Revd. Pauline Simpson**, who read the lesson beautifully. **Canon Pat's** welcoming words set the tone for the address which was given by **Meg Parkes M.Phil.**, Researcher at Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM). It was an interesting and insightful reflection on why we continue to remember Far East Captives. Her father was a FEPOW survivor, and as part of LSTM's Oral History Project, she had also interviewed many FEPOW.

Unfortunately, events and circumstances led to official Military and Embassy personnel not being represented this year, but there was a great sense of togetherness. Hymns enjoyed the fulsome support of the congregation, which was heartwarming; as was the singing of the psalm responses – a style which was less familiar to some of our visitors. Several years ago, the Church was pleased to accept custody of the ABCIFER banner (Association of British Civilian Internees Far East Region - a former internee organisation) when it closed. The wreath laying was started by formally draping their banner over the side-chapel Altar Rail, as the first commemorative act. This formed a backdrop against which the rest of the wreaths were laid. **Meg Parkes'** message of involving young people in the Act of Remembrance was taken to heart as two sisters from the parish did this with great dignity, as did another of their sisters who laid the Church's own wreath of Singapore Orchids.

Wreath laying took place in the FEPOW side-chapel, with each wreath being named as it was laid. The last wreath was shaped as an Anchor laid on a dark blue cloth 'sea'. It represented all Naval personnel and Scafarers. Poppy petals were sprinkled on the 'sea' to represent all those who perished in the 'Hell Ships' and those with no known grave. The FEPOW Prayer and Kohima Epitaph were delivered by **Peter Wiseman** and the Act of Commitment was complete with resonant playing of The Last Post and The Rouse by **Jeremy Lightowler**.

After the service, people were invited to name/place a 'Poppy Cross' into the mesh underneath the piece of Burma Rail donated to the Church by the Birmingham Association of FEPOW. On the opposite wall was another mesh between two bamboo 'rail tracks' signifying the two 'Death Railways'. The national flags of countries whose representatives have laid wreaths here over the last 30 years reminded us that many other nationalities were taken captive. This display remains in place until 2nd September when the Armistice was ratified. The local RBL Poppy Appeal organiser gratefully acknowledged that £43 was donated for these crosses.

To round off the occasion, the Ladies of the Catholic Women's League, past masters at providing delicious 'Afternoon Tea' fare to suit all palates, served Light Refreshments to at least 75 people in the adjacent Parish Hall. What a marvellous team! The wider FEPOW Family took great delight in informally socializing and catching up with folk not seen for some time. Somehow, a sort of normality has returned. We have great hope to repeat the occasion next year, which is planned for 14th May 2023. It is a special date for us being the 77th anniversary of the Relief of Rangoon, and the date we chose to hold our Memorial Service. So keep an eye on the website for updates of information. If you missed this poignant occasion, you can find it on the Church YouTube Channel at:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCmPstVjBimy3NOoC3Zmln8g/videos?live_view=502&view=2

or go to the FEPOW page: www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow

BOOKS

"Well. That's the Way it Was, Dear: Three Colonial Women, 1918-1956." By Jen Howe.

This is a self published book by former MVG member Jen Howe – daughter of the late Thyra Godber and niece of the late June Wingate, both former MVG members. The back cover describes the book thus:

"The concepts of home and of belonging – elusive notions for a colonial child – inform this story of my family's three-generation, forty-years sojourn in the Far East.

This is the story of my grandmother, my mother and me in pre-turn-of-the-century Malaya: our family's experiences during the Japanese occupation; our long sea voyages; our swift return to post-war Malaya; memories of boarding school in Australia, followed by awkward adolescence at school in boomtown Singapore; our family's eventual departure from the land of my mother's birth, and my own."

Also see the details about a Sumatra woman internee's story on:

<https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Women-Interned-in-World-War-Two-Sumatra-Hardback/p/21363>

LEN HYGATE – ACCOUNTANT, CRICKETER AND SOLDIER – Part 3

Talk given at the MVG Lunch 16/10/2021 - by his son Colin Hygate

On 17th September 1945, **Len** was transferred by Catalina to the Australian Recuperation Hospital on Labuan Island from which he was able to start writing to **Joan** on an almost daily basis. These letters recounted brief recollections of events and conditions he had endured. Relieved at the timeliness of the arrival of the Australians, he writes from Labuan explaining:

*"The Japs have recently discussed the arrangements made for killing us all in Kuching by 17th September, so we were lucky. They exterminated two other camps in Borneo earlier on so they would have had no hesitation. Still, I enjoyed seeing a photograph of the Jap Colonel in charge of us – who had arranged the killing party – after he had cut his throat. He was a wretched fat pig of a man named **Suga**. Apparently, after his interrogation he realized he was for it and decided to do it himself. There is still no trace of the 300 men he sent here – including 70 Volunteers – not even a grave but so far as they can make out from natives they were taken off in small numbers and killed. Some cables arrived for some of them yesterday, but they must have been dead before last Christmas. Apparently, the Japs were not very good at notifying deaths. The Red Cross had been told of 180 deaths in Kuching up to August. The actual total was then over 600."*

He recalled hearing on the 'underground radio' (aka **Mrs. Harris**) about the 'V' bombing raids over London and hoped that both families were safe. He asked for no more rice, explaining that after three and a half years on a diet of rice, it was enough for a lifetime! He also described the dietary supplements included: *"bats, snakes, snails, a cat and part of an Orangutan."* There are also descriptions of the delight of the beach-side hospital and the wonderful treatment he received from the Australian nursing staff. Despite the one message received from **Joan** he received no further correspondence whilst at Labuan until 9th October. With recovery came an increasing frustration at having no indication of repatriation. However, that changed shortly after a visit from **Lady Louis Mountbatten** on 1st October. On 2nd October **Len** writes:

*"So far we had had no message whatsoever from the British Army or Government. We had begun to think that they had forgotten us when, yesterday, **Lady Louis Mountbatten** arrived and came round to practically everyone and had a chat. She seemed surprised to find so many of us and said, 'I'll ask my husband what the hell he's doing leaving you here!' However, she was very pleasant and explained that her husband was a pretty busy man but that she would see that we were not forgotten altogether."*

It seemed to work as just over two weeks later, on 16th October, **Len** boarded the **HMT Ranchi** for his repatriation voyage to England.

Despite this ship being a P&O Liner, commandeered for wartime troopship duties, the journey would be somewhat different from his earlier outward journeys albeit he had survived to make the journey. He was leaving many dear friends buried in Borneo who had not been so fortunate. One in particular was **Colin McLean** who was one of the SSVF prisoners transferred in that fateful party from Kuching to Labuan in 1944. He reportedly died of malaria and beri-beri on 26th November 1944. He was such a close friend that he christened his son (the writer) in **Colin's** memory. The M.O. **Capt. Campbell** at Poak, who was instrumental in keeping **Len** alive and invaliding him back to Batu Lintang, also perished as a member of that Labuan party.

Docking at Singapore between 18th and 20th October, **Len** was able to make contact with the Senior Partner **F.H. Grummit**, at McAuliffe, Turquand, Youngs. He had returned to Singapore in September, serving in the Malacca Street Office of the Supply Distribution Unit of the British Military Administration. [BMA].

On departure from Singapore on the **HMT Ranchi**, **Len** expected to call at Colombo and then continue to Suez and Tilbury arriving on 20th November. Later the destination changed to Southampton. However, after Colombo the ship was directed to Bombay where the voyage was delayed by a week. Frustration at delays and treatment were building and in his letter to **Joan** of 28th October, **Len** wrote:

"We are taking on 900 more troops in Bombay so our troop decks will be really crowded. We wouldn't mind it at all because we know shipping is limited, but in the 1st and 2nd Class are dozens of Dutch, Swedes, French and Swiss. After all we are British and this is a British ship. Still we are on our way home and when I am with you all this will be forgotten. But it was a bad day when we left the Australians and fell into British hands.

We went ashore in Colombo. They told us on the ship that we could draw money ashore. A General met us and made a speech of welcome saying that we could draw £5 each. We went to the Pay Officer who said that the General was misinformed and that we could not draw anything! Luckily, I met some old friends who gave me a tiffin at the Galle Face otherwise I should have been thrown on the charity of the Barracks canteen. At the Galle Face there was a large notice saying that O.Rs were not admitted but we ignored that. In another office the Dutch Civilians were given money from the British Government. I can assure you, sweetheart, that it doesn't pay to be British or in the Army.

However, there are a few signs of a better order. Since leaving Colombo, we have had a daily ration of a pint of beer and yesterday, they gave us cigarettes – from the Australian Red Cross. Thank God for the Aussies!

Some old friends from Singapore have come aboard. They are civvies and in the 1st Class which is 'Out of Bounds.' However, I have a written permit from the Adjutant to go and visit them, which makes a change from the troop decks, but on the whole I prefer to be with the lads. We have been through a lot together."

Joan was able to get leave from her duties as a WREN at a shore station, *HMS Excellent*, Bordean House, Hampshire to meet the ship having booked accommodation for herself at the YMCA at Southampton. **Len** expected to be required to spend two days at the transit camp before being able to leave with **Joan** to make their wedding preparations. At 1.00 p.m. on 24th November 1945, the *HMT Ranchi* called at Dartmouth for mail before berthing in Southampton at 8.30 a.m.

The Mayor arrived to greet the returning prisoners and to deliver the welcome home letter from the King.

However, delight at arriving home quickly changed to further despair as they were transported to another barbed wire encampment albeit a brief transit camp.

There are stories of almost immediate escape the rough holes in the wire to enjoy the hospitality of the local pubs and nothing is known of how and when **Len** managed to meet up with **Joan**. During the afternoon, the men collected their repatriation supplies from the Quatermaster's Store and were issued with their travel warrants.

It would appear that their final imprisonment by the British Army was rather brief.

Family Life.

Len and **Joan** married at Kingswood Church, Surrey on 11th December 1945. They lived in Grafton Road, Ealing, close to his childhood home in Acton. The house being shared with his sister **Mona** and her husband **Fred Jackson** who had served with the RAF. On 23rd January 1946, **Len** received a letter from **Turquand, Youngs, McAuliffe** requesting that he initially return to work at the London office prior to returning to his position in Singapore but advising that this would not include wives at this stage. His Army service continued until 22nd April 1946.

He sailed for Singapore on 20th October 1946 with a commitment to establish a home for his married life to continue there and for **Joan**, now carrying their first child, to arrive soon afterwards.

He arrived back at the office on the 3rd floor of Hong Kong Bank Chambers joining, amongst others, his old friend and colleague **Johnny Phillips**, the Senior Partner.

However, his assessment of the situation in the aftermath of the Japanese occupation

with the scarcity and consequent high cost of suitable married accommodation, quickly convinced **Len** that the relatively low salary of an Accounting Assistant could not provide a suitable home for **Joan** and a baby. Despite some impassioned pleading by both **Phillips** and **Addington** in London, **Len** left Singapore on 23rd December 1946 aboard *HMT Orbita*, never to return.

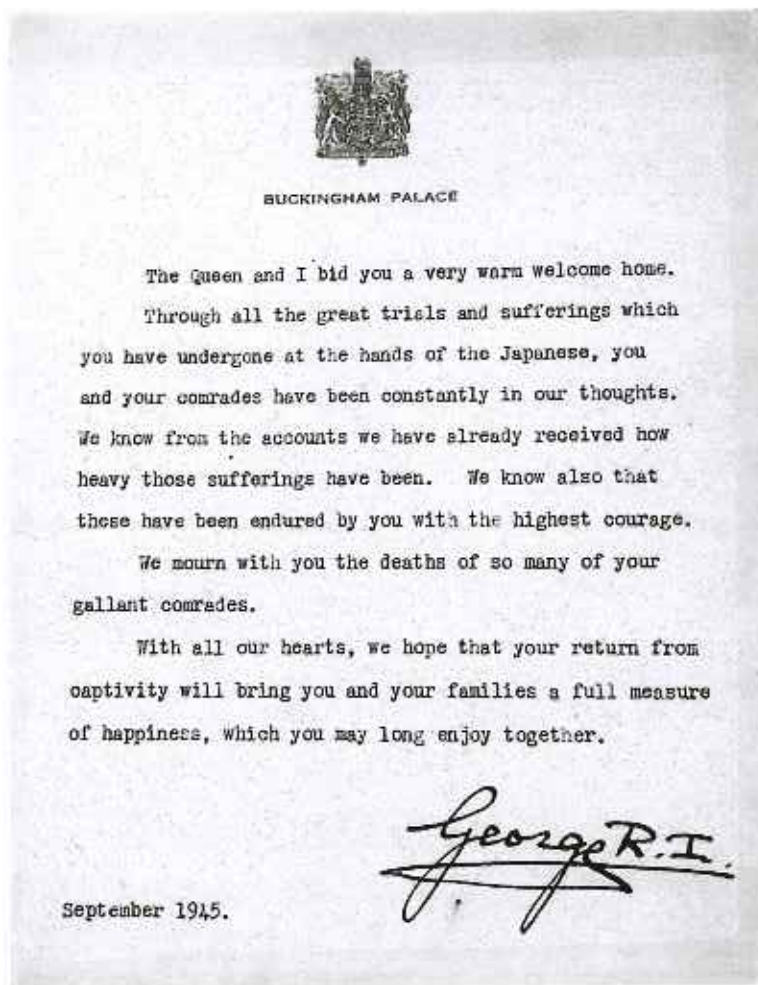
Len's Far East adventure was at an end although he continued to carry fond memories of the local people he met and of the country where he worked, played and was captive in. Having visited Singapore, Kuching and Sarawak we can now better understand his warmth of feeling for the area and the people, despite the difficult privations of his internment there.

On his return he moved with his family to Gloucestershire where he joined a rapidly growing company, Erinoid Ltd., as their Chief Accountant.

His cricketing exploits continued with the company cricket team and he was very proud of arranging county cricket to be played on the company pitch for a week each summer between 1956 and 1963.

He continued his soldiering with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars and the Royal British Legion

His accounting activities flourished with the company that he ultimately managed, becoming a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1960.



MALAYAN TALES OF A GRANDFATHER – 1934-1942. By C.H. Lee – Part 3

By kind permission of his son Graham Lee

Chapter 2 – WAR – 1939-1942

Since Munich most of us must have had little hope that war could be avoided. **Neville Chamberlain's** famous "Peace in our Time" declaration on his return from Munich cut no ice.

I recall that one man returning from leave just before the war said that we were arming fast. Such was the difference between appearance and reality, and we had the same illusion later in Malaya. What looked like preparation fell far short of what was required.

It was a Friday and on a Hash House run out at Setapak outside Kuala Lumpur that "**Torch**" **Bennett** brought news that Poland had been invaded by **Hitler**. It was not until Sunday that we learned from **Neville Chamberlain's** broadcast that war had been declared with Germany. **Ronnie Todd** and I and "**Boosy**" **Ormston** to whom he was engaged were sitting in her father's bungalow nearby the Mess – he was Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank.

I think we thought that those of military age would now be released to return home to fight, and as I had been out for 5 years I looked forward to this. But there was no war – only a phoney period. All leave home was stopped to conserve European man power. There was an air of anti-climax. Men returned from leave and new men were recruited.

The Volunteers had a day's trial mobilization and **Colonel James** told me that if the Japanese attacked, our place would be on the frontier.

We were, of course, quite unfit for such a role. Later in France, territorial battalions that had been embodied and training for six months were considered by **General Allanbrooke** quite unfit to put up against the Germans.

The Governor, **Sir Shenton Thomas**, was told that Malaya's first priority was to export as much rubber and tin as possible. **General Bond** pressed for the mobilization of the Volunteers but this was resisted by Government for the very good reason I have referred to above, and most would be needed for the first priority laid down by Whitehall.

Major General Kirby, the official historian of the War against Japan, wrote a franker and more revealing account of the run-up to and the operations in Malaya, in his book, *Singapore – Chain of Disaster.* Many of us find it unbearable reading. Whatever was or was not done by the civil and military authorities the fact is inescapable that with our other commitments we never had the forces to defend Malaya. As the eminent Naval Historian, **S.W. Roskill** points out in his *Naval Policy between the Wars,* the maintenance of our Far Eastern Empire in World War 1 was assured by Japanese support. Now they were enemies. Assurances given to Australia and New Zealand were dubious, perhaps mendacious. We might have rendered it less of a debacle but the final outcome, sooner or later, was inevitable, and when war broke out we were hard put to hold on to New Guinea and Guadalcanal a year after the fall of Singapore.

But this is to anticipate. It so happened that several senior citizens, largely the Ex-Service Association, a powerful body in its influence, soon began to agitate for more vigour and action in Malaya's defence. One of the leaders in this was the director of my firm, **Lt-Col. Fletcher OBE., MC.,** a fine character, who had commanded a battalion as a young officer in World War 1 – the Royal Scots. He had been an amateur boxing champion, and in his rather wild youth after the war, in Penang, he was a legend. He had settled down and married, and I am proud to say I enjoyed his and his wife's friendship until he died recently, aged over 80, in America, and I still keep in touch with his wife. He was a blunt Scot of simple and uncompromising loyalties. He did not think much of **Winston's** "V" sign; he had "F" for Fight on his car!

As a result of these representations, Whitehall appointed **Air-Chief Marshall Sir Robert Brooke-Popham**, Commander-in-Chief, Far East, in October 1940. He was, however, only a co-ordinator and each Service Chief dealt directly with his respective Ministry at home. He was 62, had retired in 1937 and become Governor of Kenya.

As **Roskill** has pointed out there was a tendency then for **Winston Churchill** to appoint retired dug-outs from World War 1 – **Admiral Lord Cork**, **Admiral Evans** and **Roger Keyes**. **Brooke-Popham** was too old for the job, and some of his judgments in an admittedly very difficult and complex situation were disastrous, as it turned out, but at the time everyone was reassured. Something was being done.

I must go back, however, to the time in May/June 1940 we had the rude shock of France's collapse. The local cinemas were rather out of date and continued for some time to regale us with the tune, "Hanging out the Washing on the Siegfried Line." The immediate result was a month's embodiment of the Volunteers at the Police barracks. It was all rather a useless gesture. One officer told me we were learning the barrack room organization of the British Army, which he clearly thought was most helpful. I had one piece of good fortune, however, in that my good friend, **Gispert**, picked me as one of four from the Selangor Battalion to go on a week's jungle training exercise, some 16 of us in all, with the Game Warden, **O.S.**

Shebbeare and his assistant **Harvey**, trekking from Dusan Tua in Selangor over the hills to Kuala Klawang in Negeri Sembilan, and then canoeing down the River Kenaboi and up the Triang River, as I had done the previous year with **John Kennedy**. We had Malay carriers, and our needs were amply provided for. Climbing a steep bank, I saw in front of me a Javanese with

an "Umbong" containing a full case of White Label Whisky! We built camp at night and ate rice and stew, and the midges, which were frightful the first night, were finally dealt with by covering ourselves with citronella oil. Round the camp fire we discussed our exercise, and **Shebbeare** was a delightful raconteur. I made a good friend there in **Philip Wickens MCS**. I dare say if this exercise had been followed up it would have been useful. But it was not. I tried to get the Battalion to invite **Shebbeare** and **Harvey** to lecture us and instruct us, but nothing came of it. A Forest Officer had the idea of our finding our way through the jungle laboriously like surveyors, but we spent one sweaty Saturday afternoon in the Sungei Besi reserve, taking bearings and putting down 'Panchangs' (Stakes). **Shebbeare** thought this very odd when I told him. We did not go through the jungle in formation, but in a straggly single file, stretching a long way, and the trail was blazed by parang cuts on the trees, so no-one got lost!

As I said, I had not been home for 5 years, and eventually I told the firm I would resign if I was not allowed home, for **Doy** and I by letter had agreed we would marry. We had to sign a letter to Government promising we would return, but I intended to enlist at home. Such were my illusions, perhaps ideal, then.

Sister Bibbins came on a visit from Hong Kong and had a very good time. She introduced me to a naval officer friend. It was interesting that discussing affairs with him I gathered that the Navy had rather a poor opinion of the profession keenness of the Army Officer. He said there was much of the "Carry on, Sergeant." There is, in fact, in the Submarine School at Portsmouth a cartoon depicting an Army Officer pointing with his swagger stick to a diagram of a submarine and saying, "I suppose you have some Sergeant chappy who knows all about this thing." My cousin, a naval officer, confirms this view. There were, of course, many dedicated officers a la **Montgomery**, hence the leaders we produced in the war, but there was no doubt, garrison life in the tropics was not good for the Army. They tended to get soft, and very dedicated officers were needed. One such was found in **Lt-Col. Stewart** of the Argylls, who trained his men strenuously. Furthermore, ambitious officers were anxious to get home where the real war was then. I sailed in the **Viceroy of India** in September 1940, and it contained many officers going home. I often wondered what happened to them – army, navy and air force.

We sailed via Colombo, Bombay, Kilindini, Durban, Cape Town, and Freetown not in convoy. In Freetown we saw the French planes over with were received with anti-aircraft fire. It was just after the Dakar affair and **HMS Resolution**, badly holed, lay in port.

It was a long and interesting voyage, and although wartime conditions prevailed with blackouts, I savoured a last glimpse of the old order, never to return. The ship after our voyage home was destined as a troop carrier and it was lost in November 1942 on the "Torch" landings in North Africa.

We were unescorted, and in the Atlantic which was rough and cold, narrowly escaped, I gathered, the convoy which was attacked by German pocket battleships, where **Captain Fogarty Fegen** was killed and won a VC.

It was early November when I got home to Gourock, and stopping en route to London to see my grandmother (aged 93) we heard the night time bombing of Coventry. When I got to my parents' flat in Streatham, I found them brave but battered.

Doy was serving in the FANYS at Dovercourt near Harwich, and found me a pub to stay. We were married in January 1941 in Weare Green village church near Bideford, in Devon and had a brief honeymoon in Sidmouth.

In February, 1941, we were fixed to return to Malaya by **M.V. Port Townsville** from Cardiff via Panama to Sydney and then by steamer to Singapore. I had sought to join up at home, but I would have had to join as a private on private's pay and the firm did not encourage it. So, I thought, if I have to join the war, let me do it with my friends and in a warm climate. I think I was sure war would come from Japan. When it did come I wondered as time went on why I was so keen to enter the fray! We joined the ship at Newport, Wales. There were about 14 passengers. It was March 3rd and as we approached the Channel two Dorniers came over and Action Stations were called. Bombs landed on each side of the ship and then an almighty crash as one landed in the hold, and blew out the side of the ship large enough to get a bus in. After escorting **Doy** to the boats, for they were already preparing to evacuate, I collected another fellow named **H**, and we went down into the store and recovered 2 passengers although an elderly Jew and his wife were dead. The Captain told us he was abandoning ship, and with all the boats launched, I had no time to collect any belongings, so I shinned down a rope into the boat where **Doy** was helping to look after the two wounded and shocked ladies.

It was a pleasant spring day, and calm, and the two full lifeboats pulled away. The planes had gone and soon after some British fighter planes came over – too late. Soon a freighter came along, picked us up and transferred us to a Free French sloop, **S.S. "La Moquese"**. It had a mixed French and English crew. The French Officer lent us his cabin and produced whisky and sardines which we ate. I offered the gallant Free French Navy my gold cufflinks as a present which was all I had, but later two officers came in and returned them to me as a present from the Free French Navy! My heart went out to these young Frenchmen, who helped with the two wounded ladies on stretchers and the wounded 2nd officer, as they were fighting alongside Britain far from their homeland which had been overrun and vanquished. "**La Moquese**" survived the war and took part in the landings in the South of France in 1944.

When we got back, I received red carpet treatment from the Firm. After a short period at home to get more kit – we had lost everything – we sailed from Liverpool on *S.S. Sarpedon* on about 16th March. Next evening found us off the north west coast of Scotland in sight of a large convoy shepherded by a few, very few in those days, corvettes. One came up to us and hailed us, “Are you coming with us?” The Captain replied, “No, sailing independently.” Our speed was 12 knots and ships of that speed and over had to sail independently such was the shortage of escorts. We sailed on our own into the Atlantic – all men passengers taking turns as submarine spotters on the bridge. About four weeks later we arrived safely, at last, at Cape Town – what a relief to see the lights of the City after our experience of the black-out at home. We had a tour round Cape Town and it is certainly a wondrous place to see.

Our next port of call was Durban where the *HMS Illustrious*, showing the scars of her recent battering in the Mediterranean, was en route to America for a refit. Our final stretch was across to Perth in West Australia. There was still a risk of raiders but not submarines, and I think we had to retain black-out. In Perth we had a week’s stay before joining the local steamer through the Dutch archipelago, as it was then, to Singapore. The Manager of our firm and his wife were most hospitable and filled **Doy’s** cabin with flowers before we left.

The local steamer called at Geraldton, where we had a conducted tour with a local taxi driver, before sailing on to Banjoewangi, Sourabaya and Batavia (now Djakarta). [Ed: spellings as in the diary.] We were out of the war zone now and in Batavia one noticed many photos of Winston Churchill and Spitfire Fund Appeals. Poor Dutch, their faith in us must have soon been put to the test. This was May 1941 and within a year all would be over for the Dutch and their great colony. So we saw the last moments of the Dutch Empire. They were no doubt efficient agriculturists, more so than us in many ways, but their administration bore hardly on the natives and when the Japanese finally gave in, they threw off the Dutch yoke with enthusiasm and many suffered at the hands of the Indonesian patriots.

So it was after nearly a two months journey that we arrived finally in Singapore, and then by train to Kuala Lumpur, where we were deposited in the Railway Hotel, there being then no firm’s accommodation. Not really an auspicious entry for **Doy** into a strange country. But good friends, **Mr. and Mrs. Borneman** offered shelter in their comfortable house by the racecourse.

Having contracted an unknown “worm” during my jungle trekking days in the Sungei Besi Reserve in May/June 1940, it now turned vicious and was at last discovered and treated, giving me more energy. This gave me a great urge to impart my experience on leave, in particular of the “Blitz.” I had seen how in London men and women, young and old, had co-operated and evolved great efficiency in such matters as dealing with incendiary bombs. Morale was good, except perhaps in parts of the hard hit East End. I wrote a letter to the local Malay Mail in which I drew a contrast between the concentration on total war at home and the pace out East. My ideas were rather jejune. **Lt.-Col. James**, O.C. of the Selangor Battalion of Volunteers had left his job and was whole time with the Army, and he told me I was a voice crying in the wilderness. This was, however, not quite fair. There was a good deal of activity, well-meant, if unco-ordinated, and in some cases, eccentric. **Lt.-Col. Fletcher** had formed the Selangor Battalion of Local Defence Volunteers for all those over military age and veterans of WW1. They practiced charges with bayonets fixed and, as one told me, finished so exhausted that a touch of the bayonet would have toppled some of them! The Malayan Auxiliary Service had been formed to deal with air raid casualties, and **Doy** became Secretary under a charming MCS officer named **McEvatt**, who sadly died later as a POW. I was enlisted to be an umpire at an exercise of ARP personnel and LDV.

Thus it will be seen that the general complacency reported after the war in some publications was not true. There was, however, general ignorance of the true situation with our defences, and the likely menace they were designed to meet. I have written an account of the Malayan Campaign that will never see the light of day, though in future years it might be a curiosity, and interest my grandchildren. A copy will be lodged with the Imperial War Museum. I have culled all the extant records which are reliable, not just journalese.

Meantime we were busy with our work and in our spare time with Volunteer training. I became an instructor on the Vickers Machine Gun. In fact, it was so strenuous a life, it was almost a relief when war came!

Doy and I had a pleasant trip just before the war to my favourite State, Pahang, and to the Karak, Mentakab and Telemong Estates, a stay at Fraser’s Hill, where I met Dunlop’s leading scientist, **Professor Haines**, who assured me the Japanese were coming.

In September 1941, we heard that **Duff Cooper** was coming out as a Cabinet Minister of State in the Far East. This was encouraging news, for he was a prominent colleague of **Winston Churchill**, the man who had resigned at Munich. We did not know, however, how limited was his brief – nothing to do with the military side. We know him as a highly intelligent politician, with a gift of speech, but he was not a dynamic figure (such as **General Templer** in the Emergency later after the war) which the circumstances required.

We also heard just before the war was declared that *HMS “Prince of Wales”* had arrived in Singapore, but as far as I can recall, *HMS “Repulse”* was not mentioned.

All this betokened a gathering crisis, and at the beginning of December 1941, the Volunteers were mobilised. My M.G. platoon of "A" Company was allotted to Kuala Lumpur aerodrome defence, not one of the most urgent of tasks. I and some others were then called back as urgently required by our firms.

During that week, I remember seeing a bunch of young officers in the Selangor Club, and I gathered they were being sent up to the front line in Jitra, Kedah. I suppose most of these lads were killed.

Here I might mention in contradiction of what has sometimes been said, that we had several requisitions of our rubber estates for military purposes, and in no case was there any lack of co-operation.

It so happened that we had one estate at Jitra, Tanjong Pau, which was on the front line, and defence works were being constructed. Our planting adviser, **R.O. Jenkins** was asked to let us know confidentially how these were affecting the estate working. He was an old soldier who had had long experience on the Western Front, and knew all about defence. He was surprised to see how inadequate they were on Tanjong Pau, and his confidential note said, "if these are the main defences of Malaya, thank God we have a Navy."

So, Sunday, 7th December, came, and all was tense, and the following morning we awoke to find the Japanese had landed at Kota Bahru, and war was on. I was rather exhilarated, and indeed thoughtless of poor **Doy**, new to the country, to whom it must have been a shock. But she was stout-hearted and departed for her duties with the MAS whilst I went off to the Aerodrome.

So I joined the machine gun platoon of "A" Company, Selangor Battalion FMSVF as a lance-corporal. I had been offered the post of Quarter-Master Sergeant, but refused it as I felt I should not take a soft option. I had much earlier been asked if I would take a commission but had refused it. Then, as I have said, I did not take my volunteering seriously; only when war came in Europe.

The officer in command was a senior colleague in my firm, a man dedicated, conscientious and courageous, but without a sense of proportion or a sense of humour. He became rather a legend. He looked like **Captain Osborne** in "Journey's End" and conducted us as if the Japanese were across the road, instead of 300 miles away. I suppose this was right, but the food we had was worse than later as POWs.

The wives would come up in the evenings with supplements to our rations and some whiskey in thermos flasks. A very good chap, an Australian, **Jimmy Giles**, chief engineer to a large Mining Group, was most amusing about our officer (nicknamed Knocker). He used to tell how he brought a message from the wife of a colleague who was sleeping in the barrack room on the aerodrome after a night at his post. The officer presided at a desk at the end. As **Giles** whispered the message to his friend under his mosquito net, Knocker saw him and bawled out, "Who is that waking my men?" Whereupon everyone woke up!

Whilst on the aerodrome, I overheard an exchange which typified the sardonic sense of humour of the Malayan Civil Servant and perhaps the prevailing mood. Two fairly senior Civil Servants were nonetheless Privates in our little detachment, and one got leave to see his wife off to Singapore at Kuala Lumpur Railway Station. By now evacuees were coming down from Ipoh and I heard him describe how at one end of the platform was the British Resident telling them to go back to Ipoh, at the other end was the Federal Secretary telling them to stay where they were, and ... "in between **Bobby Boyd** bugging about talking of the advantages of co-operation." **Boyd** was Director of Co-operation.

About Christmas Day, the Japanese Air Force came over. So far, we had little or no news except the depressing loss of **Prince of Wales** and **Repulse**. We could see ambulance trains travelling along the railway line at the end of the runway. And some anti-aircraft gunners arrived, and Bofors guns, evacuated from Penang. Some were near our machine gun post and they were stout fellows no doubt, but their sentiments were that as far as they were concerned the Japanese could have Malaya.

Some Buffalo aircraft fighters had arrived and when we had the signal that enemy aircraft were on the way, we looked forward to a good scrap and victory. The Buffaloes were quite inadequate against the Japanese Zeros. One Zero zoomed across the 'drome machine gunning, and I thought I had it in my sights, but it had gone in a flash. Our guns were for ground defence.

Soon after this some of us were taken away and sent to Port Swettenham to form a new Armoured Car Company with old Lanchester Cars (vintage 1919) under the command of a gallant but eccentric officer, veteran of World War 1 named **R.T. Mills**, who had started the A/Cars Coy, but his eccentricities had caused the authorities to displace him whilst on leave, and this was his solatium. We were an odd lot, quite new to our assignment, and had no sort of organization. When I asked **R.T.** what about food, he said, "There is a war on." So I busied myself seeing food was provided, and was accordingly made Sergeant!

We were joined by Volunteers evacuated from Perak, so I assume this was our only news of the Japanese progress. As far as I can tell the military communiqués are singularly uninformative, and somewhat mendacious, such as the original one saying that we were mopping up in Kota Bahru – the truth was we were being mopped up. [To be continued in October].

FREDERICK RICHARD (DICK) YARDLEY
(Lieutenant, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force attached to Royal Signals)
By his son Michael Yardley

After my father's death in 2011, I discovered several boxes of books, media articles, correspondence with former FEPOWs and items of personal memorabilia from his time in captivity. The story which he told in his book, *"The Amonohasidate"* will be similar to so many other stories familiar to MVG members, so I have not retold his account in detail but included quotes from his book and hope the photographs of some of the items he saved will be of interest.

On the fall of Singapore, he marched with thousands of others to the British Army base at Changi before being transported in metal goods trucks to the transit camp of Kanchanburi, followed by a march to Chungkai and Wun Lun. During the twelve months he spent in Thailand, he walked all the way to the Burma frontier through virgin jungle, some 160 miles, building embankments, cuttings, bridges and laying sleepers ahead of the railway.

He wrote:

"Men soon began falling sick and dying from the most terrible sores and diseases – malaria, scabies and jungle ulcers which quickly spread across the body until limbs had to be cut off. Diarrhoea and dysentery were endemic and poor food gave rise to beriberi. Then there was cholera from which a man was lucky to survive more than 24 hours causing pandemonium amongst the Japanese and Koreans and many fled the camps. Tamil slave labourers died in their thousands, possibly as many as 100,000 men, women and children. Isolation areas were established and only doctors and orderlies who had drawn the 'short straw' were allowed in – it was common for up to 20 bodies in our camp to be awaiting cremation each day and The Last Post was abolished at the simple funeral services as it distressed the sick and dying. Strict hygiene discipline was established, overseen by officers, but nobody failed to observe the rules fearing the most agonizing and terrible death."

Throughout this period, he carried a radio hidden within an Australian Army water bottle, given to him as an officer with wireless experience, whilst in Changi. During a snap inspection of the prisoners' sleeping quarters my father was ordered to accompany the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) as they searched his hut. To his dismay, he realised that his hidden radio was hanging from a bamboo pole which formed part of his sleeping platform and to distract their attention he showed them pictures of the wives and children of other prisoners, which fortunately satisfied their curiosity.

On reaching Three Pagodas Pass on the Thailand/Burma border in October 1943, there was great rejoicing by the Japanese, and all prisoners were given a day's holiday, extra food and even some cigarettes. The Japanese organised a Remembrance Service alongside the graves of the dead followed by a hypocritical speech as follows: *"You prisoners started to build this railway in Chungkai. You then went on to Wam Po where you blasted your way through rocks and made a great bridge. For one month it was difficult to get vegetable rations owing to the bad road and the ration was reduced. Some of you were sick and some of you died. But you must acknowledge that you have always been treated fairly and justly by The Imperial Japanese Army. It is now your stern duty to improve your health in order to be able to carry out further tasks which may be allocated to you."*

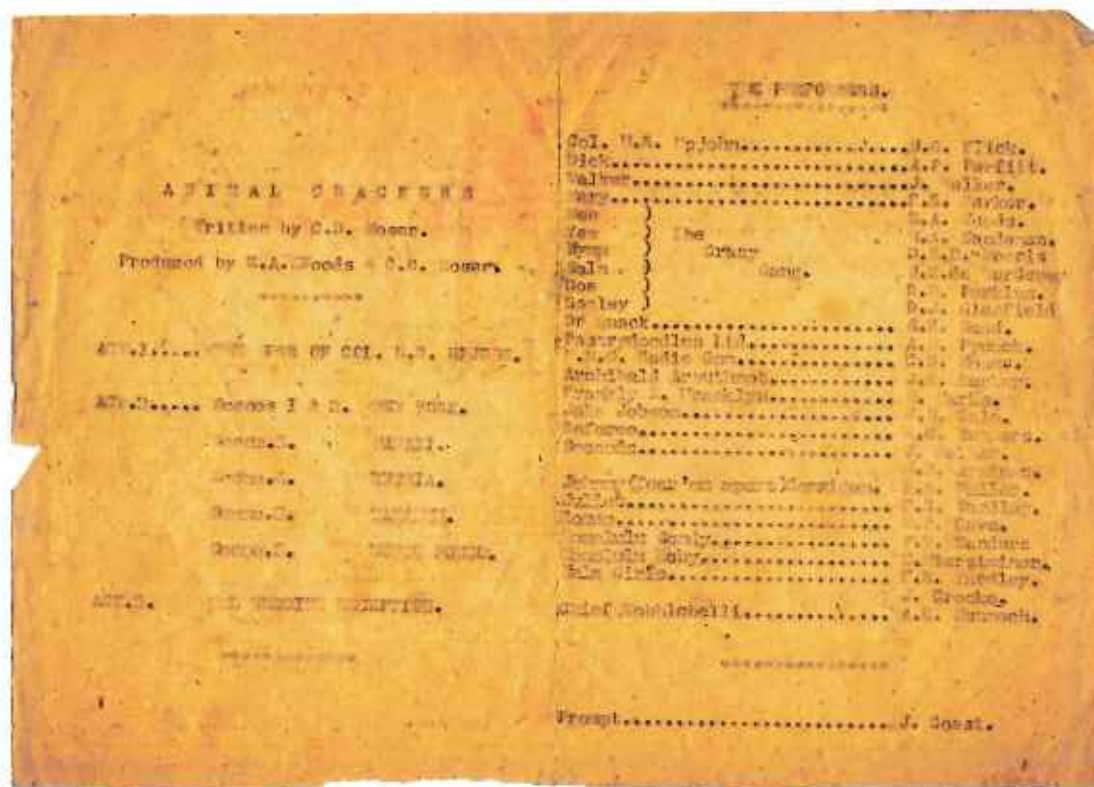
"The Babes in Thailand' Grand Xmas Pantomime (1943)

Christmas 1943 was celebrated with a concert party on the banks of the river in which my father participated as a member of the chorus of 'Robbers and Soldiers'.

Amongst notes that I found, he wrote:

"It was very basic, very few props, music and words taken from memory, programme produced in the Camp Commandant's office without his prior knowledge. The show proved to be a great morale booster, written and produced by Gus Harffey and directed by Leo Britt, a London Impresario, with a makeshift homemade orchestra (The Beach Pavilion Orchestra) under the direction of 'Gibby' Inglefield (a Captain in the Sherwood Foresters who later became Lord Mayor of London)."

The members of the cast were Basil Peacock, 'Blondie' Clarke, 'Cadder' Parfit, Sam Flick, Everhard Woods, Hugh Sandeman, 'Sandy Munnoch, 'Ginger' De Wardener (a doctor who later became a Professor of Medicine), Bertie Perkins, Barry Smeenk, and 'Duggie' Morris. The Chorus consisted of Victor Mopey, Alan Forrester-Walter, Richard Yardley, 'Vicky' Birch, Hugh McCutcheon, John Beckett and John Croke.



Shortly afterwards he became severely sick and weakened, barely able to stand, and was transferred by barge down river to a hospital camp at Takaton (sic) after suffering a terrible existence at camps at Konquita and Nihke. Before leaving he was ordered to bury his radio at a place known only to him and his Commanding Officer – “I was glad to get rid of it!!”

Rations to sick prisoners were reduced which did not aid recovery, but he did recover and was transported further south to Nong Pladuk Relocation Camp where the fittest POWs were split into groups of 150 with one officer in charge for return to Singapore and onwards by sea to Japan. Enduring a five days journey in cattle trucks from Thailand he boarded a Japanese freighter at anchor off Singapore in mid-June and by 4th July 1944 they had been on the freighter for sixteen days awaiting the formation of a convoy. Little more than a wreck, she was called the *Asaka Maru* and her cargo was bauxite – she had no markings to indicate she was carrying POWs and had grossly inadequate accommodation. Before boarding the prisoners were paraded before Japanese Army Officers and addressed by Col. Nakamura, Chief of the POW Camp, Thailand. British officers were given a typed copy of his speech which they were required to read out to the men under their command – a hypocritical tirade made by a man responsible for the manslaughter of thousands of prisoners and civilians forced to work on the Railroad of Death.

The speech reads:

“You are to be transferred from the jurisdiction of POW Camp Thailand to that in Japan, where you are to assume labour duty.

Since the opening of this Thai Camp, you were diligently carrying out imposed labour duty for more than 20 months. Especially you were employed on Railway Construction in which your discharge of duty attained aimed objectives as scheduled for which we appreciate warmly. On completion of above mentioned you are to be transferred to Holy Land of Rising Sun where scenery is simply superb. The Empire of Great Japan, proper appellation being O-Yasima Dai Nippon Teikokeo, is populaced with national of righteousness, acts on morality, brave yet courteous, humanous but strictly severe on vices. The proverb most common in use thereof. “Even hunter himself will not slay a strayed bird seek refuge on his lap”, will properly explain the attitude and habitude of Japanese sentiments.

The land is of four distinct seasons, Spring with abundance of various blossoms when birds chirp peacefully everywhere, evergreen Summer with cool breeze, easing the universe, transparent Autumn sky with clearest moon and with Winter in which snow-white washes the whole country, purifying the inhabitants. These are nothing but the image and reflection of His August Imperial Majesty's greatest virtues, to which whole nationals are lead to follow, in loyalty towards parents, creation of benevolency, etc., etc., to eternal effects.

Therefore I tell you Officers and men, go to Japan with ease of mind, and do your imposed duty to perfection. There I surely tell you that our billion nationals will be welcoming you to share the Imperial favour with you. On the other hand should any of you still retain conscience of eneminal nationals and project or perceive things up against to the interest of Japan, consequential results must be born on his own shoulders, however severe or regrettable to all concerned. I reiterate, believe in Japan chivalry and go forward in right way, not astraying, on proper and mature consideration.

In conclusion, I should like to call your attention to take good care of your health, for the sudden change in climatical condition and wish you the happy future. With my blessing for your "Bon Voyage,"

Colonel Nakamura

(Chief of POW Camp, Thailand)

Officers and men were forced below deck into holds with shelves just four feet high allowing space of two square feet per man, sitting in a hunched or crouched position and by the time the *Asaka Maru* sailed 50% of the men were ill, suffering from extreme heat, atrocious food and non-existent hygiene. Those who died were wrapped in rice sacks and gently slipped overboard after the ship was underway.

At anchor for two days off Borneo for refuelling, the ship eventually reached Manila harbour, all the time expecting Allied action as the Americans were very active in the area. The dead and dying were disembarked and the journey continued towards Formosa where it ran into a typhoon lasting for almost five days. At the peak of the storm the *Asaka Maru* was swept onto rocks on 14th August, two anchor chains broke and bilge pumps failed. Prisoners formed a human chain to help reduce water levels in the engine room but daylight revealed that the *Asaka Maru* would never sail again. There was no food but for the rats which were eaten without scruples as 'manna from heaven.'

When the storm finally subsided a Japanese destroyer loomed through the mist but was unable to get a line across to the stricken ship but she returned the following day with a second destroyer and eventually ferried the prisoners in lifeboats to the two warships. The destroyers set sail for north Formosa where the prisoners were transferred to a larger ship called the *Hakasan Maru*. A few days into the journey the convoy came under attack by Allied forces and all prisoners were battened down in the holds terrified by the sound of battle, explosions of depth charges and the ship's submarine alarm. Seventeen men died during the eight days it took to reach the Japanese Archipelago. It had been two months since leaving Singapore and the party of 750 men had become severely depleted in numbers and in health. The Captain of the *Asaka Maru* stood trial in 1946 before a War Crimes Tribunal in Changi jail at which my father was called upon to give evidence for the prosecution. He felt that the Captain had been a victim of circumstance and his strong objection to boarding so many prisoners onto a vessel carrying bauxite had been over-ruled by senior Japanese officers on the quayside. Although he was found guilty, he received a comparatively short prison sentence.

Disembarking on the Japanese island of Kyushu on 29th August 1944, the POWs were amazed to be marched to the public bath area where there were six baths manned by Japanese women. They passed through each bath in turn - one for disinfecting, the next for soaking, then soaping, and finally two rinses in hot and cold water which was poured over each man in turn. They were then transported to the principal Japanese island of Honshu and on by train to Osaka. Each man was given a box of cooked rice, fish and vegetables, and a small bread roll - a real feast and the best food they had eaten since the fall of Singapore.

On arrival in Osaka, my father was sent to a camp called Amagasaki which already contained British prisoners captured in Hong Kong or survivors from British and Australian warships. In due course, the men were sent to work in an iron foundry whilst the four officers were made to remain in the camp. Food was scarce, medication negligible, heating practically non-existent in the bitterly cold winter months, sanitation consisted of buckets and discipline was harsh, but the death rate amongst prisoners was very much lower than in Thailand, as was disease except for diarrhoea which was continuous for all men. Allied air raids were common place and as the camp was not marked as containing POWs, fear was rife, but one bomb brought good fortune in the shape of a horse which was killed and the guards allowed the men to drag it into camp for food.

[To be continued in October].

RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY GROUP NOTICE

Preview of posts on *Rice and Shine*:

Return to Normal – goes live on fepowhistory.com on Wednesday 1st June and looks at the entertainment after the return to regular quarters following the Selarang Square Incident.

Transit Camp goes live on fepowhistory.com on Wednesday 8th June, and looks at the transformation of Changi into a 'transit camp.'

Two Master Musicians on 8th June and focuses on **Denis East** and **Reginald Renison**.

The New A.I.F. Indoor Theatre goes live on fepowhistory.com on 15th June.

Lights Up! goes live on fepowhistory.com on 22nd June. By 10th October, the AIF concert party was ready to open their new garage theatre with a long Variety Show. When they first moved into the theatre, electricity had not yet been restored, so the resourceful Australians found alternative methods of lighting their stage.

First Massive Troop Departures goes live on fepowhistory.com on 29th June. This covers the last week of October 1942 in Changi as well as the Playbill for November 1942.

Miscellaneous News Items on 29th June looks at the organization and consolidation in the camp along with the death of **Major-General Beckwith-Smith**.

MEDALS FOR MVG MILITARY VETERANS – by Chris Rundle

In reply to this article by **Chris Rundle** in the April edition of *Apa Khabar*, **Dave Sartin** sent the following information:

"Just to say that the article which appeared in the last newsletter regarding being able to apply for a relative's WW 2 medals proved very interesting. So much so that I discovered that my late father was entitled to the 1939-1945 Defence Medal. I duly followed the instructions in the article and applied earlier this month (April 2022), and after initial acknowledgement of my application, I was informed that enquiries could take several weeks. However, the medal arrived in the post today, (28th April) 2 weeks after I applied. I think it helped that I was able to provide copies of my father's service book, death certificate etc. which helped speed up the process. I found it helped to include copies of my father's pay book, discharge papers, details of service etc. I am sure it helped to speed up the process by giving them as much info as possible. Other than that, I just followed the information in the article. So, once again, many thanks to MVG and **Chris** who wrote the article, without which I would have been none the wiser.

I have sent the medal to be mounted with the other medals.

ESCAPE FROM PENANG – DECEMBER 1941 – Part 3. By Tony Cave-Penney

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 fate. 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 I have been able to find out. The invasion of Malaya is now known by those who were there as the 'Forgotten War.'

Singapore evacuee list:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
121 Catto	Edward Jack	Sub-Lt RNVR, lost at sea 18.2.42							
122 Cattell	Mrs K.	evacuated to London							
123 Caulfield	Mrs Bertha	evacuated 10.2.42 to Durban SA.	children Rosemary and Richard						
124 Cave-Penney	CR	evacuated to Fremantle from Christmas Island as Island with 47 others							
125 Cave-Penney	Frank Lindley	evacuated from Singapore 11.2.42 arrived Fremantle WA on Atangola from Batavia 2.3.42.							
126 Cave-Penney	Mrs Yolanda	evacuated	son Anthony						
127 Cavill	Colin Olive	escaped 15.2.42 reached Sumatra then Colombo.							
128 Cestford	Mrs Nancy A.	evacuated							
129 Chadwick	Herrold Jack	Chromo to Fremantle 18/2/42	Wife & children to Batavia then on Santolator to Sydney, 2nd Lt. 155VF.						
130 Chadwick	Mrs Jean	evacuated, aged 26, on the Empress of Japan to Capetown SA then to Liverpool arriving 10.2.42.							
131 Chalmers	Frank Lindley	Singapore/Batavia/Fremantle on Atangola.							
132 Chalmers	Mrs Sybil Lenore	evacuated on Atangola, entering Fremantle WA 23.2.42 then to Scotland							
133 Chalmers	Alexander	lost at sea 18.2.42 on the Giang Bee							
134 Chalmers	Mrs Rosemary	evacuated in South Africa then Perth WA							
135 Chalmers	Mrs Catherine	evacuated on the Empress of Japan.							
136 Chalmers	Mrs E.M.	evacuated to Selek, Scotland	3 children						
137 Chalmers	Mrs Joan	evacuated on the SS Durban of Bedford. Arrived Liverpool 6.1.42. To Aberdeen.							
138 Chambers	Mrs Winifred Bessie	evacuated aged 29, on the SS Durban of Bedford, arriving Liverpool 3.1.42.							
139 Chambers	Mrs S.	evacuated on Orion, arrived Fremantle WA 6.1.42.							
140 Chamber	Mrs Sylvia	evacuated to Perth WA	daughter Ann						
141 Chamber	Mrs Mary Handa Isabel	evacuated on the SS Durban of Bedford, arrived on Michael aged 1							
142 Champ	George Charles	left Singapore 11.2.42. To Perth WA then Durban SA							
143 Champ	Edna A.	evacuated with son & daughter F. on Chasen to Fremantle WA 20.1.42. To Perth – he followed 11.2.42. Then to Durban SA.							
144 Chandler	Mrs J.	evacuated on Orion, arriving Fremantle WA 6. daughter S.							
145 Champ	Clifton		Mrs Chang						
146 Chapman	Mrs C.	evacuated to Cuthmann, Victoria							
147 Chapman	F.M.	escaped to Sydney							
148 Chapman	Hubert Adrian	lost at sea 15.2.42 on the Giang Bee.							
149 Chapman	Mrs Kate	lost at sea 11.2.42 (78) on the Kuala.							
150 Chapman	Mrs P.	evacuated to India							
151 Chappell	Mrs Stella	evacuated with children T. & T. to Perth WA on the SS Orion 31.12.41, arriving Fremantle WA 6.							
152 Charles	R.	evacuated to Kyofo then on the Durban to the UK, arriving Liverpool 20.5.42.							
				Major Gillian					
				wife of E.M. Civilian interned.					
				wife of L.H.T. 155VF POW					
				Cpl 11216 155VF					
				Mt 155VF					
				Tin Miner, Anglo-Crested Kl. Plie F15VF. Emergency Commission: British					
				Wife of G.A. Civilian interned					
				Wife of B.D. Chalmers, Civilian interned					
				Plie "S" Co. 155VF. Died 11/2/42.					
				Plante, Rango HS					
				Wife of J.M. Chalmers, Civilian interned					
				Wife of J.M. Chalmers, Civilian interned					
				Wife of Bernard 2nd Lt. Malay Regiment					
				POW. Returned to Malaya 1946.					
				Returned to Malaya 1946					
				wife of G.H. Charlton 155VF					
				Bank of China, Calcutta					
				Husband A.S. a civilian interned. Died in captivity					
				Malayan Collieries Ltd, Batu Arang. Returned to Malaya 1946.					
				Missing Engineer, Telucoga Valley Tin District					
				Widow, Kemendore Estate, Johr, Malacca					

1942 After Australia

The next part of our journey has been based on letters sent by father to Ronnie (the younger of father's two sisters and farmed Rouges Roost, Poundsgate, Devon all her life.). There are no actual dates so they can only be approximate.

10th May was my fifth birthday

The letter was dated 20 August 1942 Father's 39th birthday was on 12 August

Shell told father that he was to be sent to Cairo – this was the very last place he expected to be sent especially as Egypt was still very much in the fighting zone over North Africa. But he said he did not mind where he went provided he could have mother and me with him. He found out later that he was one of the few Far East Shell staff to be retained the others were recommended to enlist in the services.

May 28 We left Melbourne in a cargo ship - *ss TROJA* - with eight other passengers as part of a convoy to Aden. We were given the owner's suite with a bedroom, sitting room and own bathroom which was ideal for me.

The Captain decided the convoy was too slow and dangerous for his ship so sailed on alone. Our food supplies ran very low, except for carrots, *which if my memory is correct, appeared to be served for every meal. For many years afterwards carrots were off my personal menu.*

It took 33 days to sail to Aden with some days being extremely rough – none of us were very sick – the journey was very uneventful except for one scare when a plane flew over us but we discovered that it was one of ours.



On the *ssTroja* somewhere in the India Ocean

RFHG

Researching FEPOW History Group

SAVE THE DATE!

10-11 June 2023

For the long awaited Researching FEPOW History Conference (postponed from 2020)

And hosted by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM)

This is an 'in-person' event and places will be limited

Priority Booking will be given to former delegates

Registration opens 1st September (1st October for the public) & Closes 30th November 2022

Further details to follow in August – see <https://fepowhistory.com> for updates

To assist planning, please e-mail mike.parkes@talktalk.net now if you plan to register (non-binding)

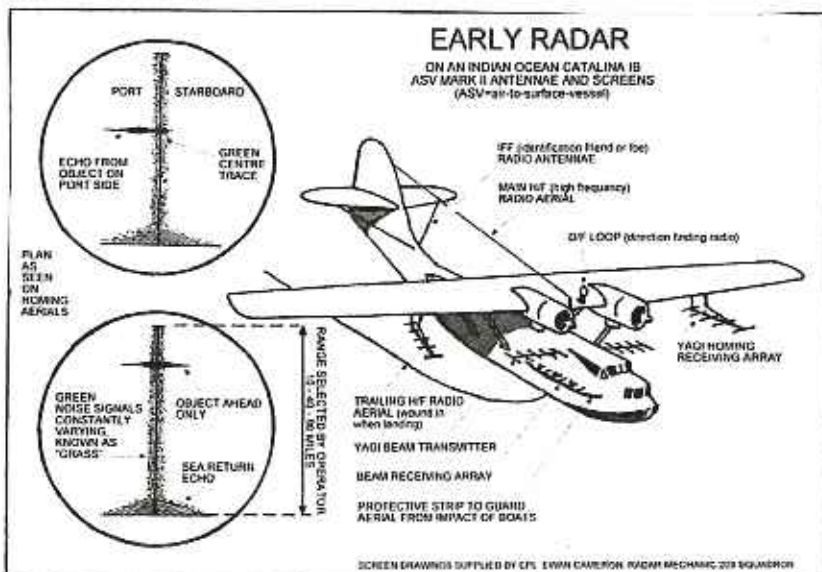
Please help to spread the word

KO-RO-N-BO – Part 2

With thanks to Dave Croft MA

Rescue by the Japanese. The Japanese ceased strafing the downed airmen and went to 'rescue' the survivors to find if a wireless message had been sent and if it had been received by Allied radio 'listeners.' The first to be brought into the ship's (**IJN Isokaze**) rescue boat was **Sgt. Catlin**. Straight away he was asked for the wireless frequency to which he answered he was the engineer. The other survivors were dragged into the boat. **P/O Kenny** removed the clothing from the three sergeants and dropped them overboard, apparently so the wireless operator (**Sgt. Phillips**) couldn't be identified as being the wireless operator. *[This does seem a bit of a strange move as the wireless operator wore an air gunner's brevet as was normal at that period of the war.]* **S/Ldr. Birchall** is recorded as saying to the Japanese that **Sgt. Phillips** was an air gunner and nothing else, and added, "If you hadn't shot at us while we were in the water you'd have had the wireless operators," something the Japanese denied doing! On board the **Isokaze**, the treatment of the now POWs, with three of them being badly wounded, was harsh. **S/Ldr. Birchall** identified himself as the senior officer and received a beating in return. He reported, "The big problem seemed to be the fear that we had got away a message. I denied we had ever opened up our wireless. The same question was asked several times between beatings and we stuck to our story. Just as we started to get them convinced Columbo came on air and asked for a repeat of our message. It was game over, beatings all round and they then put us in the paint locker up in the bow. In the paint locker we had room for the three badly wounded to lie down, two to sit and the sixth to stand. There were some straw mats and blankets to lie on, practically no ventilation, water and rice three times a day. No medicine or medical treatment and the lavatory facilities on demand or whenever they wished to grant them. The wounded had to be carried back and forth." Also one of the wounded developed diarrhoea! All were imprisoned in the paint locker for three days before being transferred to the task force flagship, the aircraft carrier **Akagi** where the three wounded were given medical treatmentequivalent to that for any Japanese casualty. All were kept together in the ship with **S/Ldr. Birchill**, **P/O Kenny** and **W/O Onyette** being taken out repeatedly for interrogation and beatings. They all remained on the **Akagi** until the ship reached Yokosuka (Japan) on 22nd April 1942 where all went into mainland captivity – all six survived the war!

5 April 1942. 205 Squadron Catalina FV-R, the only squadron aircraft to escape from Singapore to Ceylon was the next reconnaissance aircraft to take-off at 17.45 on the 4th April in the attempt to find the 'new' position of the Japanese fleet. At 22.37 hrs, Columbo received a sighting of an enemy destroyer and on the 5th at 00.45 hrs, of six enemy destroyers. The sightings during the hours of darkness would suggest that FV-R, along with other RAF Indian Ocean Catalinas, was fitted with an Air to Surface Vessel (ASV) radar. This piece of equipment is probably best described from "**Wings of the Dawning**" as: "One radio operator would be behind the radar curtain in the tiny shoulder-width compartment for a one hour shift on the old-fashioned ASV Mark 11 (this was in 1943). The display was a vertical band fed by the spidery aerials under both wings and on the hull."



The 'spidery aerials' mentioned are the Yagi antennae, or more correctly the Yagi-Uda antennae, researched in the 1920s by 2 senior engineers, **Hidetsuga Yagi** and **Hintaro Uda** of Tohoku Imperial University. The 'invention' was patented in 1926 by **Yagi** without **Uda** being named. Later the rights to the invention were sold to **Marconi's** Wireless Telegraph Co. in Britain...perhaps to be seen as an unexpected 'gift' to the British radar research prior to WW2?

The Japanese Zero fighters launched to intercept FV-R, despite not carrying radar, located and attacked the aircraft at approximately 02.15 hrs. There were no survivors from the Catalina. Meanwhile, the Japanese Air Striking Force continued towards Ceylon, now being shadowed by 240 Squadron Catalina BN-L, which did return to base unscathed.

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE STUDIES

2-2-1, Nakameguro, Meguro-ku, Tokyo 163
JAPAN

14 February 1992

Air Commodore L.J. Birchall, RCAF(Ret.)
128 Welborne Ave.,
Kingston, Ontario K7M 4E9
CANADA

Dear Commodore Birchall,

This replies to your letter of 4 February, in which you requested informations concerning IJN destroyer Isokaze, especiaaly if she had picked you up on 4 April, 1942 in the Indian Ocean.

It was her that did pick you up on that date. Some details in the documents in our Archive are as follows, and I enclose copies of their relevant portions;

- a. "IJN Offensive Operations in the Dutch East Indies and Bay of Bengal", an Official War History,
- b. "War Diary of the Third Squadron (Fast Battleships) in April, 1942",
- c. "Isokaze, in the Record of IJN Ship Movements,
- d. a picture of Isokaze in a publication.

I just do not have time to translate all of them for you, however, the marked part of the copy-a (p.643) will read by my poor English;

(On 4 April) at 1855(18-9), as Hiei(FBB) detected an enemy amphibious plane northward, immediately commenced A/A fire against him with an alert purpose(to the entire force) as well. By this, all(four) of our aircraft-carriers launched the ready Zero fighters(3 each except 6 from Hiryu, total 18) and they made the enemy ditched on the water. In the meantime, (the Task Fleet) intercepted his radio transmmision in plain, "3 BBs and 1 CV are sighted, course 305 degrees ****". As he ditched in flame at 1922, Isokaze, one of the Early Warning Unit ships, closed to the spot, picked up the aircrews and had them POWed. While the enemy plane shadowed us for 27 minutes, reported our formation which was received by Radio Stations Colombo, Bombay and Aden who at once relayed(broadcast) it. At 1945 all of Zeroes were recovered by CVs. The enemy patrol plane had been destroyed, however, it was so apparent for the enemy to acknowledge our situation that the considerable enemy counterattacks were inevitable. But the decision was made for the air-raids against Colombo (next morning) as previously planned.

As you mentioned, Isokaze was one of the three DDs escorted CV Shina-no. She was finally sunken with that giant BB Yamato at south of Kyushu by the U.S.carrier-aircraft attacks on 7 April, 1945. I also enclose a copy of page 383, in our official war history, "IJN Operations in Okinawa Area". (e),

I hope I have thus answered to you except those English translation of the documents enclosed, for which I beg your pardon.

Sincerely yours,

Taro Nagae

Taro Nagae
LtCol, JGSDF(Ret.)
Special Military Archivist
Military History Department



9a. W/O Grenville Onyette

7. Sgt. Fred Phillips

9. Sgt. William Cook

10a. Sqdn/Ldr & Mrs. Birchall
9/10/1945

13. A. M. Maurice Barker
RIAF



Air Commodore Birchall RCAF says: 'This photo was taken on 6.9.45 outside Yokohama station where we first met up with US troops after beating our way out of Camp Suwa.' (Courtesy of Len Birchall OBE, DFC, CD.)



Leonard Birchall at the War Memorial in Koggala in 1992



6 April Japanese Navy Malaya Force of Admiral Ozawa: area of operation being S.E. India.

A smaller strike force, the Malay, or Malaya Force of **Vice-Admiral Ozawa** conducted attacks against Allied shipping with aircraft from the single support carrier **Ryujo**, which for this operation had on board twelve Mitsubishi A5M4 fighters (Allied Codename 'Claude') and fifteen Nakajima B5N torpedo bombers (Allied Codename 'Kate')

Sixth Indian Coastal Defence Flight. The Indian Coastal Defence Flights – Indian Air Force Volunteer Reserve were established to provide coastal surveillance using a mixture of obsolescent and non-combat aircraft. The sixth flight, consisting of two Westland Wapiti biplanes formed in March 1942, arrived at a remote field some eight miles from Vizakhapatnam (previously Vizagapatam) on 5 April – there were no facilities there such as a hangar, telephone or airmen, but there were the pilots that had flown the aircraft in: ex-pat 79143 **Flt. Lt. David Lawrence Small RAFVR** and Anglo-Indian 1691 (P) **P/O Maurice Barker IAFVR**, later Air Marshal IAF.

"Wings of the Dawning" states: "A CDF pilot, **David Small**, acting as navigator and gunner in the open rear cockpit (of aircraft 39754) took with him a young Indian pilot named **Barker**, who hailed from Agra. The two set out early on 6 April for the same sort of dangerous patrol as the Catalinas further south, but with only a single engine to get them home. They were not more than thirty miles off the port of Vizagapatam when they saw flashes to the north-east. A closer look showed the unbelievable sight of an aircraft carrier, several cruisers and destroyers belching fire at a merchant vessel. Drawing even closer they realized this was the Japanese fleet." Climbing to 8,000 feet and with a maximum speed of 100 miles per hour, "they narrowly missed being seen by three fast, yellow, radial-engine Japanese aircraft which passed below and which would have made mincemeat of them." From this description it would appear the aircraft were Nakajima B5N 'Kates' in the colour (yellow) specific to **Nagumo's** Air Striking Force carrier **Soryu**. It would be most likely that **Ryujo** was carrying aircraft that had been transferred from this main force carrier. Having sketched the fleet, they turned for base and on landing took an eight mile taxi ride to Vizagapatam in order to pass on the sighting to the authorities.

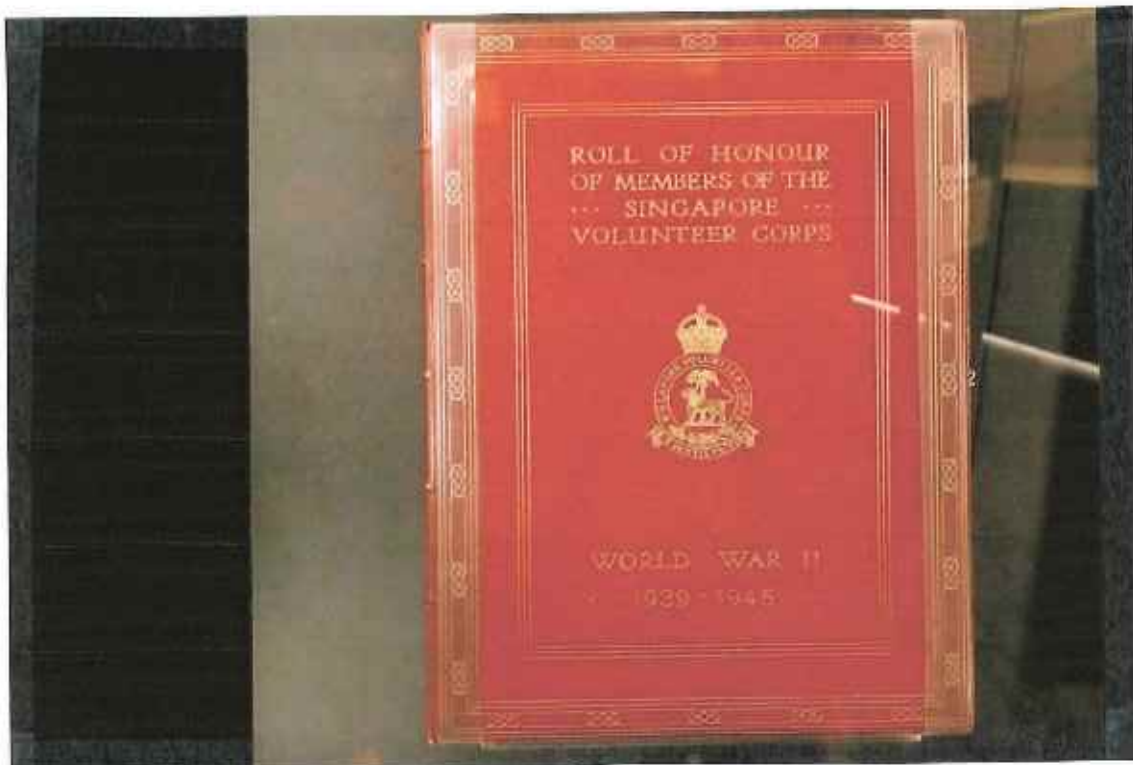
Later, **Sqn/Ldr. David Small** and his crew of four, flying Lockheed Hudson FH291 of 3532 Maritime Reconnaissance Squadron crashed while on patrol over the Bay of Bengal on 28 April 1943. There were no survivors.

9 April. 413 Squadron Catalina QL-Y, piloted by **Flt. Lt. Rae Thomas DFC** took off early evening on 8 April to search for **Nagumo's** fleet and reported the position, course and speed of a large Japanese convoy heading towards Trincomalee before the message was cut short. QL-Y and crew wasn't seen again.

Following the Japanese Navy venture into the Indian Ocean and attack on Ceylon, the fleet left the region and from that time on, the Japanese began to experience a turning point in the fortunes of the IJN. Post-war **Air Commodore Leonard Birchall** stated that: "Those first serious losses of highly trained Japanese aircrew (in the Easter Sunday attack) led to further heavy losses at the Coral Sea. The culmination of this was that the carrier forces which the Japanese employed at Midway were greatly reduced in number and heavily diluted with inexperienced or unskilled aircrew. The ripple which started at Ceylon ended in a disastrous tidal wave at Midway which was, without doubt, the decisive battle of the Pacific, sounding the death knell of Japanese Naval Power."

Note: The names of the Crews of Catalina AJ155; Catalina FV-R and Catalina QL-Y are recorded in Kranji CWGC in Singapore. **Lest We Forget.**

SVC ROLL OF HONOUR – IN SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL MUSEUM – thanks to Michael Pether



OBITUARIES

ANNE HARE

We send our very sincere sympathies to **Anne's** daughter **Jenny** and family on hearing about the death of their mother on 10th May 2022. **Anne** had recently spent time in Epsom Hospital but was making a good recovery in Red House nursing home in Ashted. She was reportedly chatty and smiling and enjoying a G & T in the evenings. Her helper had recently had coffee with her. **Anne** was one of the founder members of the MVG. Her late husband, **Donald Hare**, was a contemporary and friend of **Lincoln Page**, father of member **Sandy Lincoln**. **Donald Hare L/Cpl 80473 1/SSVF** was Assistant at Fraser & Neave. Captured in Singapore, he was sent to Thailand with 'D' Battalion, and returned to Malaya post-war and his job with Fraser & Neave, before moving to NZ Insurance Company and becoming their General Manager. He died in 1994.

We are also sad to announce the deaths of former servicemen with Far East WW2 and post-war connections. Their bravery awards are given as follows:

Captain John Riggs – 1/3/1920 to 8/12/2021

Captain Riggs took part in Operation Thursday, the second Chindit Expedition in Burma in 1944. This began in March 1944 and he commanded the Recce Platoon of 16 Column, including Karens from the hill tribes, rifle sections, signallers and mule leaders. His orders were to reach Indaw, a major road and rail hub, undetected, but they ran into Jap patrols which they had to drive off. His father was imprisoned by the Japanese in Shanghai.

Sub-Lt John Beams – 8/9/1925 to 31/12/2021

Sub-Lt John Beams served in midget submarines known as X-Craft. He trained on Loch Striven in December 1943, and as part of the 14th Submarine Flotilla sailed for the Far East on the *Bonaventure* in February 1945 via Panama. Their mission was to cut the submarine communication cables used by the Jap forces. He supported 3 successful operations cutting cables from Singapore to Saigon and Hong Kong to Japan as well as disabling the heavy cruiser *Takao* in Singapore harbour.

Major Stuart Perry – 21/2/1926 to 11/2/2021

Major Perry commanded an armoured car squadron in East Africa in Ethiopia and Somaliland in 1945, and in August 1953 served with 22nd SAS in the Malayan Emergency. He commanded 17 Troop, D Squadron engaged in deep-jungle warfare to clear communist terrorists northwards out of Malaya.

Captain Raymond Savage – 2/12/1919 to 5/1/2022

He joined the 1st Leicesters in India, later sent to Penang, & was attached to HQ 15th Infantry Brigade as Liaison Officer. The heavy losses at Jitra and Gurun resulted in the combination of the Leicesters and 2nd East Surreys to form the British Battalion. After withdrawal to Singapore he served as staff captain at Brigade HQ. Captured in Singapore he was sent to the Burma Railway but survived.

Lt. Frank Ott – 5/1/1922 to 30/1/2022

Awarded the DSC for his part in the sinking of the Japanese cruiser *Haguro* in May 1945 by the British East Indies Fleet, **Ott** was the senior observer in 851 Naval Air Squadron flying Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers.

Captain Maurice Ramsay – 18/4/1920 to 13/3/2022

Awarded the MC while serving with the Gold Coast Regiment (GCR) in the Burma Campaign. In March 1945 he was in command of a West African Auxiliary Group Platoon serving in the coastal province of Arakan. They were responsible for carrying reserves of food ammunition and equipment to support the infantry divisions.

Lt. Col. Peter Blaker – 10/11/1936 to 2/2/2022

He was a Green Jacket combat helicopter pilot during the *Komfrontasi* in Borneo – and completed 5 tours in Borneo.

Major Roger Woodiwiss – 22/3/1929 to 12/3/2022

Operations Officer for 22nd SAS Regiment from 1973 to 1979, he was responsible for the military and political direction of SAS squadrons in operations across the world. In 1955 he was with the SAS in Malaya conducting operations against communist terrorists. Later he was recalled to 22 SAS during the Confrontation with Indonesia.

Colonel Richard Sidwell – 8/9/1928 to 15/4/2022

As the last surviving Royal Marines' specialised gunnery officer, he was mentioned in dispatches during the *Konfrontasi* in Borneo, where he joined 40 Commando, first as adjutant and then as a rifle company commander. Having visited the resident Marines in the Falkland Islands he wrote a secret report warning of the invasion by Argentine. This was ignored, then lost by the MOD and his warning went unheeded. Sadly his warning came to fruition with devastating consequences.

General Sir Geoffrey Howlett MC – 5/2/1930 to 21/4/2022

Veteran of 40 years with the Paras and C-in-C of Allied Forces, Northern Europe, **Gen Howlett** won an MC in the jungles of Malaya in February 1952 in Selangor during the Malayan Emergency. It was his first overseas posting after being commissioned into the Queen's Own Royal West Kents. He was in command of an ambush party which killed one communist terrorist and wounded another. The following day he led his platoon to attack a reported CT encampment which turned out to be deserted, but on withdrawal they encountered a group of heavily armed CTs. During the ensuing fight all the CTs were killed and **Howlett** was awarded an immediate MC due to his aggressive and skilful leadership.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2022/05/793389/service-nation> - article by Alan Teh Lem Seng on the Volunteers.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2022/03/19/kuala-selangor-set-to-become-tourism-hub> - See War Memorial article ps.3/4

This documentary video from St. Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore is entitled, "Unity of Faith – The Story of St. Andrew's Cathedral during World War 11" – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5J8q1zD48GY&feature=emb_title – launched in March 2022, it contains archival material about **Bishop Wilson**. Thanks to **Martin** and **James Wilson** for sending the info.

Fred and Jane Landon's escape from Singapore in February 1942 by Michael Landon



Sgt Fred & Jane Landon at Kluang, Johore, Malaya (late 1941?)

Background notes This is the story of the escape from Malaya and Singapore of my parents, Fred and Jane Landon, at the beginning of 1942, told in their own words from various letters and notes which I have found. Fred and Jane were married in Kuala Lumpur (KL), on 15th August 1940. Fred was at the time a Forestry Officer at Kepong, near the capital Kuala Lumpur. The war in Europe had started in 1939, but British men in Malaya were encouraged to join the local Volunteers instead of returning home. The Japanese invaded the northern part of the Malayan peninsula on 8th December 1941, about the same time as they attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor. As can be seen from the map on the next page, they advanced rapidly southwards and occupied Kuala Lumpur on 11th January 1942. By 31st January, the Allied forces had retreated to Singapore and blown a big hole in the Causeway linking to the mainland to slow down the enemy advance. The Japanese landed in Singapore on 7th February and the Allied forces surrendered on 15th February.

Friday 26th December 1941 Letter from 7220 A/Sgt. F.H. Landon, A Coy, 2nd Bn. F.M.S.V.F. Malaya [postmarked Kuala Lumpur], addressed to Mrs F.H. Landon, Forest Office, Kluang, Johore.

'I thought of you so much last night [Christmas evening], especially when we drank the toast of 'absent friends'. It was the first time since I have been abroad that Mother was not first in my thoughts for that toast. The mince pie was much appreciated and we had nuts and biscuits and toffee as well. It was a lovely moonlight night and my watch was almost a pleasure. I do hope you got away in good time before the trouble this morning. We were all perfectly alright, and I hope you will get sufficient petrol. I shall long to hear from you of your arrival at Kluang, but I shall be more pleased to get a cable from where you meet your mother. Mind you take the first chance you get of a passage by air or sea. I should think the ships will be convoyed alright nowadays. I haven't thought of anything special that we left undecided. When you go you can hand over the car to Government or leave it where you are for me to pick up or anywhere else that you think fit. You can also arrange to have £50 a month sent down to you, out of which I hope you will be able to save your passage

back. You mustn't mind my letters being so short, because there is practically no time to write and nothing to say.'

Sunday 28th December 1941 Letter from 7220 A/Sgt. F.H. Landon, A Coy, 2nd Bn. F.M.S.V.F., Malaya, addressed to Mrs F.H. Landon, Forest Office, Kluang, Johore.

'I still haven't received any letter or telegram from you but I hope you arrived safely yesterday and will find somewhere comfortable to stay. I am sending you the key of my wooden box and also that of the Revelation suitcase which I forgot to change when we swapped cases the other day. The key of the blue suitcase is with you. It is just over an inch long and is black with age. Don't send it just yet however as I may perhaps be sending you the suitcase with half my things. I am leaving my present station shortly, but have not been told where I shall be going. It is possible that I shall not be able to write to you for long periods at a time, so don't worry if my letters are few and far between. I shall take care of myself. Tell me all about your journey and the house and servants, and keep in touch with the agents about your passage. Have you written to any Singapore people about a possible place to stay there? Forward Mom's letters to me won't you, and I will of course send you Mother's when I get a chance. We have had 2 very quiet days except for hard work. We were due for something of a rest very shortly, but I'm afraid I may not get one myself. Our small party have quite enjoyed our stay together. We only come down once a day (if that) for a bath and don't get very frequent visits. We lived a communistic existence sharing out all the extra foodstuffs we acquired and pooling the cost of drinks.'

On 13th January 1942 the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser reported the appointment of Mr F.H. Landon, of the Forest Department Johore, to Chief of the Observer Corps, Johore. Jane Landon's diary, kept in a notebook, includes the following limerick, written in Fred's handwriting:

A charming young wife called Jane Landon

Her husband was forced to abandon

But the thought of the home

They'll make some day to come

Will leave them with both legs to stand on.

Jane wrote in her diary:

Friday 30th January 1942 About 5.15 p.m. Well, we're off at last after waiting around since about 9.30 a.m. Felt very shaken when the bombs dropped all around us this morning & Fred was on top deck. The warehouses near burned for ages and we were afraid it would get "cop" as it did some other areas. Everyone on board is very kind & friendly & you do what you please. I feel I'm doing right now in getting out of S'pore but it does hurt. Must remember to tell Bobbie when I write that some of our Agriculture "friends" are on board. The sea is pale green with white horses & the clouds near shore dark & heavy while further out to sea they're fluffy white. I feel like howling but I've done more than my share lately. 6.45 p.m. Planes overhead. Stopped the [harbour] pilot from getting off on a small [.....]. They must have been Hurricanes because no bombs were dropped.

Saturday 31st January 1942 What sounded like a shot across our bows woke me about 11 last night. I grabbed my lifesaver & purse & then found myself telling people not to go on deck but to put on their lifesavers and if we were wanted on board we'd be told by someone on top. Later on I found it was a Dutch boat checking up on us. I went up on deck & talked or listened to one of the crew tell me about photography. Earlier on before I turned in I had quite an interesting talk with the Batavian

Consul. 5.30 p.m. Lazy & rather boring day. Didn't feel too well in the morning. Spent it thinking & talking to people. We were told which lifeboats we were to use today. I'm in No. 3. I noticed the Am. War Corresp. taking snaps of some of us. He's in this boat. I think his name is Walters. I tried to sleep below deck this afternoon but it was too hot so I came on deck & told some women about my adventures at Kluang. I shall be an awful bore if I don't look out. We've been passing lots of little islands today. There's a rumour that we'll get into port tomorrow as our ship is doing 12 knots but it sounds too good to be true. At lunchtime I had my first good meal since I've been on board & felt much better so maybe I was only hungry. It's been awfully hot. I'm getting used to carting my lifebelt round with me. I think I'll sleep on deck tonight as our berth is an inferno. We have a couple of brides on board, one of six weeks & another just a few days. Poor kids. I hope I have letters waiting for me when I get to Java or at least a cable. It's going to be awful not knowing what's happening in S'pore. 6.50 I had supper with Mrs Patton & the Batavian Consul & wife. We had wine & sardines then Bartlett pears. We mixed pear juice with the wine & it was super. Afterwards the latter two & I went forward where I'm now writing. The breeze is cool & the clouds faintly tinged with pastel shades. The moon is rising. It will be grand to love a moon again for the sake of its beauty & not dislike for the light it sheds.

Sunday 1st February 1942 Talked to the other woman whose husband came to see her off. She felt very weepy especially after hearing the London news. I wonder how long S'pore can hold out. I moved my bed last night to a cooler spot & was awakened by people coming in from the deck when it started to rain. It sounded as if the ship stopped a couple of times but I can't be sure. We're now trying to get the news but we can't seem to find S'pore stations. I was given an apple for breakfast as well as some sweet spread, so I did quite well. 1.30 p.m. Spent a pleasant morning reading "The American Magazine". One doesn't feel so on edge as one did yesterday. Mrs Patten & the Batavian Consul & wife were supposed to have lunch with me but they had theirs early so I shared it with an [Asian/American?] woman on board who has a baby and is married to a Dutchman. It's one meal she'll have today anyway. There is a cool breeze blowing now & it certainly makes all the difference as it's so hot otherwise. 6.00 p.m. Read some more this afternoon. The sun is very hot & I've caught it on my arms & face. Talked to the two brides & Mrs Brittain. The pilot's aboard now & we'll get in before dark probably. Hope I can get a telegram off right away. Gave S\$10.00 for the crew. They certainly have been grand to us.

Monday 2nd February 1942 Well here we are in the waters[?] where we stopped last night. I've had my bath and am sitting enjoying the breeze & keeping one of the two babies aboard company. It's been grand not to have air raids for two whole days. We sang songs last night & tried to get the news. There is no real news, not the kind most of us on board want to hear anyway. I've heard it may take two weeks for a cable to get to S'pore & felt awfully depressed. I suppose there won't be anything waiting for me.

4.30 p.m. Still out here. It's been raining most of the day, so it's kept cool. I don't mind so much as I did this morning. Told the Captain & another officer about my adventures in Kluang and he says I ought to write it down before I forget them. 7.00 p.m. Had a lovely time arguing with Bill Barr, one of the crew, about Capitalism, British & American ideas & ideology. He invited me to supper & I thoroughly enjoyed myself. I do wish Bobby could have helped me argue as I put in a very poor show not having facts at my fingertips.

Tuesday 3rd February 1942 8.10 a.m. Spent the evening talking to people. Had tea with the coloured boy on board & another man, then talked some more. Bill Barr showed us some lovely Javanese carving. Didn't get to bed until late. Of course, as I'd put away my blanket it was cold. Woke up to find the B. consul in the next bed, quite a few people came in off deck about four this morning. He

said what a pity we haven't even held hands! Had breakfast with the crew again & been teased by 'Smoky' & Jimmy the two kids on board. Later on talked to the Captain on top deck. 1.45 p.m. Seen the immigration people & they've been most kind. I've not heard of a ship yet, but I'm to enquire tomorrow. If they can't get a launch we may have to spend another night on board. Fred will start worrying if I don't cable soon. 3.45 p.m. Decided to stay on board for the night as there's no immediate hurry for me to go ashore.

Wednesday 4th February 1942 4.10 p.m. We were all ordered ashore late yesterday afternoon & it was dreadful trying to get on the launch because of the roll. It rained hard & I got soaked. We had to find our baggage & I couldn't find my two trunks so they must have been left on board. After I'd found my stuff & got it on a lorry I got the driver to drive me to the hotel. Practically the first person I saw was Impey who bought me a drink & dinner & gave me his bed for the night while he slept on my camp bed.

Thursday 5th February 1942 Hooper left yesterday so I took over his bed. My rep.9 is completely gone I'm afraid. Thank God Fred has horse sense. It's the only thing that helped me from worrying about it.

I shall be so glad to get down to Australia finally. If I can't have my husband I might have my mother for a short while anyway. Why must there be wars & why must one be separated from the only person you care about at all? I do wish I'd get a cable.

Sunday 8th February 1942 My birthday. I've still had no cable from Fred so I sent him one yesterday. The bank rang me today to say the money I called for has arrived. An M.C.S. man who knew Fred ages ago & did walking tours with him in Austria called on me today & asked if there was anything he could do for me. His name is Nightingale. Mrs Lovel who got here a day or so ago asked me if I'd share a flat with her and her two kids. Of course Impey doesn't want me to. He's been most kind and I feel rather a cad in a way but I'm sure that's what Fred would want me to do. **Tuesday 10th February 1942** Have a hell of a cold. Still not heard from Fred. Today's the day I was supposed to leave, wish they'd get us out soon.

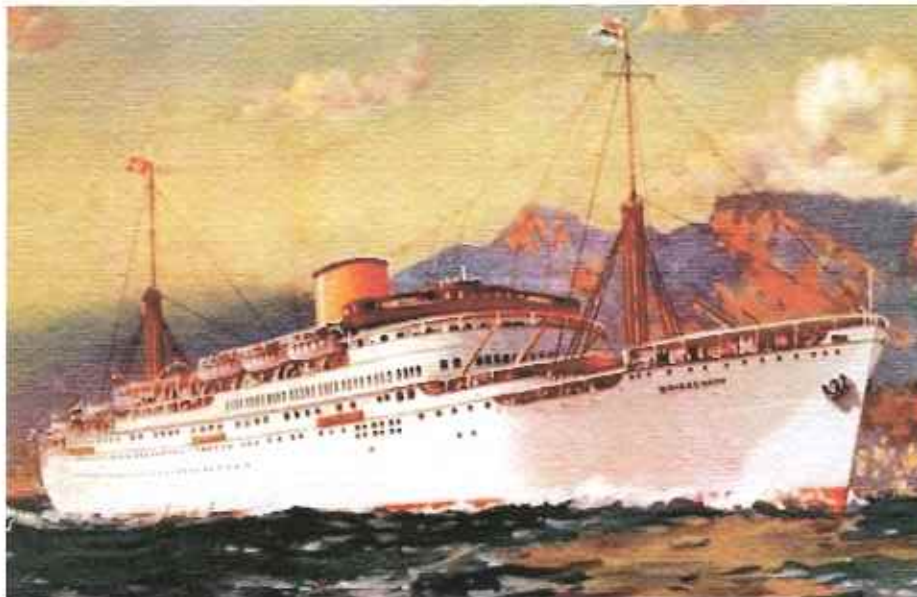
Wednesday 11th February 1942 Received a cable at last, last night from Fred! I was so thrilled I cried. We, Impey & I, have been going to the pictures every night for the past three evenings. I do wish I were down in Australia.

Sunday 15th February 1942 R.A.F. and some other troops are pouring in every day. I've taken to sitting on the verandah watching people come in hoping for news of Fred! Bobbie, apparently, has joined the [.....] Regiment as a 2nd Lt. & was quite cheerful when last people saw him. The Observer Corps. has been disbanded & the men made liaison officers so God knows what Fred's doing. The Dutch are very much in the minority here nowadays. News of S'pore is very mixed. The last news I heard was the docks are bombed to bits. So how anyone gets away if S'pore falls God alone knows. One officer said they weren't going to evacuate & that they were counter-attacking. There's an amazing rumour that the Americans are in Penang & K.L., if only it were true!! Yesterday I felt sure I'd see Fred but today I'd feel happy if I just got news of him. **Monday 16th February 1942** Today S'pore fell I heard it at breakfast & felt I couldn't go on with it but made myself return to my eggs. I've been sitting as usual watching faces but there's been no new news. All anyone seems to know is that S'pore fell last night at 10 p.m. The only thing that keeps me sane is "Laughing Diplomat" by Daniele Varè. Everyone is trying to get away now as no one thinks they could hold Java for long. Our boat has been delayed again. If it doesn't go soon we just won't go, which I'm glad Fred knows nothing about as he'd worry like hell. I do hope Fred, Ribbs & Colin are all right. I saw Ginger King

yesterday looking very tired but otherwise all right. He said as far as he knows Harry Hoyes[?] is still in S'pore. Saw Pollack a man who was with Fred in the Observer Corps & he said Fred was doing a special job for the military but what it was he didn't know. I worked it out & he must have seen Fred on the 9th Feb 1942 11 Thursday 19th February 1942 5.45 p.m. We left Batavia yesterday at long last. I'm sharing a cabin with two women, a Mrs Robertson & a Dutch lady. The latter spent last night up on deck which was pleasant for us as we have to take turns on a camp bed. I slept very well. The Dutch lady said we were very brave to sleep below. We've just been told the destroyer that is accompanying us is leaving & will be firing off its guns but we're not to worry. All the "boys" on board are new & very inefficient as the Chinese ones the ship had wouldn't go to sea! There are quite a number of Sarawak people on board amongst them a Mrs Cargill plus Rosemary aged 9 months. She seems quite nice so I told her I'd stay with her while she had her dinner. Apparently she & another woman plus their children walked through the jungle to safety when Kuching was attacked with troops! I've been reading all day.

Jane (Mrs MJ Landon) arrived at Fremantle, Western Australia, on 23rd February 1942 on the SS Boissevain.

MS Boissevain (1937-1968)



<http://nyctimetraveler.blogspot.com/2020/09/ships-ms-boissevain-1937-1968.html>

To be continued...

NEWS IN BRIEF [P.28]

SALE OF SQUADRON LEADER A.S.K. SCARF'S VICTORIA CROSS

As reported in the Daily Telegraph on 29th April, the family of his late widow, **Sallie**, has sold **Sqn. Ldr. "Pongo" Scarf's** VC for a world record sum of £550,000. Only 26 VCs have been awarded to RAF personnel, half of which were following the death of the recipient – as with Arthur Scarf. Their reason for selling the family's medal was reported to be to raise awareness of his heroic service.

On the eve of the Japanese invasion, 62 Squadron was based at Alor Star under the command of **Wing Commander John Duncan**, with **Sqn. Ldr. Harley Boxall** (Canada and USA Secretary **Sallie Hammond's** father) as Flight Commander and Acting Squadron Commander. Amongst the 12 pilots was **Sqn. Ldr A.S.K. Scarf**. By 9th December 1941, the airfield at Alor Star was abandoned due to its destruction by Japanese bombing and local sabotage. The remaining serviceable aircraft were ordered to move to Butterworth, and as soon as they arrived they were ordered to attack the Japanese occupied airfield of Singora in Thailand. Just as the aircraft were getting ready to take off, the Japanese bombed Butterworth and '**Pongo**' **Scarf's** Blenheim was the only aircraft which managed to avoid being hit and get into the air. He decided to continue with his mission and dropped his bombs on Singora. On his return, his aircraft was attacked by Japanese fighters and he was badly wounded in the back and arm. Unable to make it back to Butterworth, he decided, with the help of his crew, to make a forced landing at Alor Star and came down in a paddy field. His crew, who were not wounded, lifted him out of the aircraft and he was rushed to Alor Star hospital, where his wife **Sallie** was working as a nurse. He was tended to by **Dr. Nowell Peach**, who later became a well know medic on the Burma Siam Railway. **[See Article in A.K. No:64 Ps.6-8]**. **Sallie** and **Pat Boxall** (**Harley Boxall's** wife and **Sallie Hammond's** mother) were with him and he was given 2 pints of blood. **Pat Boxall** was with him in the operating theatre where he died under anaesthetic.

Sqn.Ldr. A.S.K. Scarf VC is buried in Taiping Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. His is the only VC to have been awarded to an RAF officer in the Far East theatre of war.

From the Newsletter of the Burma Star Memorial Fund

In July 2020 the remarkable story of **John Bradburne** was told in Apa Khabar Edition 63 by **Sallie Hammond** and **Dave Croft**. His story was retold in the latest Burma Star Memorial Fund newsletter by **General Sir Nick Parker KCB CBE** who wrote the introduction to the newsletter. It is worth re-telling his remarkable story in the words of **General Parker** who said: *"My grandfather always used to tell me that he encouraged **Bill Slim** to stay in the Army after they had served together in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment during WW1. I do have a rather more direct connection with the Burma Campaign through my cousin **John Bradburne OFS**, whose extraordinary life led him to be a candidate for canonization in the Catholic Church. In December 1940, **John** was commissioned into the 9th Gurkha Rifles and posted to Malaya. After the fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942, he spent a month evading capture in the jungle. With another Gurkha Officer he tried to sail a sampan to Sumatra but they were shipwrecked. A second attempt was successful and they were rescued by a Royal Navy destroyer, and he subsequently served with **Orde Wingate's** Chindits in Burma. After the war ill health caused him to leave the army and he converted to Roman Catholicism but his request to become a Benedictine monk was refused.*

For the next 16 years he wandered throughout Europe living where he could. In 1962 he asked a Jesuit friend for a 'cave in Africa where I can pray.' He was invited to become a missionary helper and in 1969 founded the Mutemwa Leprosy Settlement near Mtoko in Rhodesia. It was an isolated community of leprosy sufferers who had been abandoned by their fellow citizens. As Warden, he was responsible for their well being, but having fallen out with the Leprosy Association, he was expelled from the settlement and lived in a tin hut just outside the perimeter fence while he continued to look after the lepers. As the guerrilla war continued to advance, he was advised to leave the Settlement, but was abducted by ZANLA guerrillas on 2nd September 1979 and shot dead three days later. During his life he wrote some 6,000 poems and earned a place in the Guinness World Records as the most prolific poet in the English language."

Major Cyril Wild

The biography of **Major Wild** was written by **James Bradley** (a fellow POW on the Railway) and entitled, *"Cyril Wild: The Tall Man Who Never Slept."* This was the title given to him by the Japanese (*Nemuranai se no takai otoko*) on account of his tireless efforts to help those FEPOWs being interrogated by their Japanese captors.

A British Army Officer, **Cyril Wild** was fluent in Japanese, and this led to him becoming a significant figure in the history of Singapore during WW2. On 15th February 1942, **Major Wild** walked beside **Lt. Gen. Percival**, carrying the white flag when Singapore surrendered to the Japanese and was the official British interpreter when the Crown Colony was officially handed over to **General Yamashita**. **Wild** was again present nearly 4 years later in 1945 when Japanese **General Itagaki** unconditionally surrendered to **Lord Louis Mountbatten**. During the intervening years, he had been a POW on the Burma-Siam Railway, along with thousands of other British servicemen, and subjected to brutal mistreatment by the Japanese. Whilst in captivity, **Wild** used his Japanese language skills to great effect, often interceding on behalf of his fellow POWs resulting in the Japanese referring to him as *"The Tall Man Who Never Slept."* The horrors he witnessed made him determined to bring his former captives to justice and his ability to speak Japanese enabled him to interrogate a number of high ranking Japanese officers prior to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, at which he was a key witness. He was actively engaged in this work when he was killed in an air crash (which many believed was no accident) and much of his valuable documents about War Crimes were lost.

AN EXTRAORDINARY AND PUZZLING APOLOGY

Since the MVG's inception in October 2003, we have worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the Malayan Volunteer Forces, of all races and creeds, their active involvement in the Malayan Campaign and their important role in captivity due to prior knowledge of the country and its people.

As we all know, many of the European Volunteers who were living and working in Malaya, had homes and families to look after in addition to their military duties.

When Singapore fell, those European Volunteers captured in uniform, and most of the Eurasian Volunteers, marched to Changi as prisoners of war alongside men of **British and other Allied forces. ALL BECAME FEPOWs.**

How sad, therefore, that The Trustees and Officers of COFEPOW thought it necessary to apologize to their members who were at the NMA on Remembrance Sunday, because they *"were understandably upset that the COFEPOW wreath was laid at the wrong Memorial during the event."*

How can the MVG's Memorial Stone be the wrong one? Wreaths had already been laid in the FEPOW Grove, and therefore **Anthony Morris** laid his wreath in MVG's Memorial Garden – NOT *"in error"* because he had always laid his wreath there in previous years, but as a token of respect and remembrance to his aunt – former civilian child internee, **Olga Henderson**, who spent 3½ years in Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp.

In future, perhaps the Trustees and officers of COFEPOW should be more aware that all prisoners of the Japanese, both military and civilian, deserve recognition and remembrance regardless of race, creed or unit with which they served.

Apology to November Remembrance Day visitors at the FEPOW Memorial

The trustees and officers of COFEPOW would like to offer their sincere apologies to members who attended the November Remembrance Day Service at the NMA, who were understandably upset that the COFEPOW wreath was laid at the wrong Memorial during the event.

Unfortunately, the new National Event Co-ordinator, who was officiating for the first time, inadvertently laid the COFEPOW wreath at the Malayan Volunteers Group (MVG) Memorial instead of the FEPOW Grove. This was an honest error, as this was where he had always laid a wreath previously.

All COFEPOW duties are carried out by volunteers. Occasionally, those new to a significant role may not have yet obtained an entirely comprehensive knowledge of the traditions of the charity and the gravitas with which it performs its obligations. Accidental misplacements under these circumstances can regrettably occur. As a consequence, the National Event Co-ordinator has resigned his post. The Trustees would like to extend their thanks to him for all the hard work he put into organising the York reunion.

Once again, please accept the trustees' apologies.

BOOK PROMOTION UPDATE

**"Women Interned in World War Two Sumatra, Faith Hope and Survival
The Lives of Shelagh Brown and Margaret Dryburgh."**

By Barbara Coombes

A free promotional event for this book, which is shortly to be published, will be held on **Sunday 10th July at St. Paul's Church, Chichester, PO19 6FT, at 2.30 p.m.** As advertised in the April edition of A.K. (No:70) the book is a double biography of **Margaret Dryburgh** and **Shelagh Brown**, civilian Internees in Garage 9, Palembang, Sumatra. Their lives prior to internment are a fascinating insight to the people seen during internment.

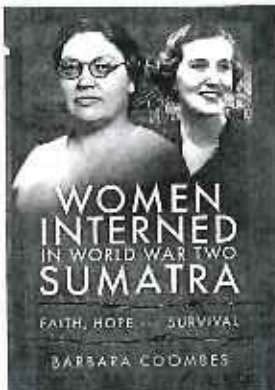
During the afternoon, there will be a performance by the 'Vocal Orchestra' Choir under the leadership of **Chris Larley**, Director of Music at St. Paul's, which first gave a concert in October 2013. The Choir will sing a selection from that event.

The Captives' Hymn, which was first sung 80 years ago on 5th July 1942 in Palembang will conclude the performance. The concert will be followed by afternoon tea and there will be a retiring collection for Sanctuary, who currently support refugees in Chichester. **Please let Margie Caldicott know if planning to attend (margiecaldicott@yahoo.co.uk)**

Due to unforeseen publishing difficulties, there may only be a limited number of books available at the event. However, copies can now be pre-ordered from Pen & Sword, or later from St. Olav Trust Bookshop in Chichester.

Pre-ordered hardbacked copies cost £20 but the publishers have set the RRP at £25 – an increase on their original price.

Also see: <https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk>



A PERILOUS JOURNEY TO SAFETY – SINGAPORE EVACUEES ON THE RMS LACONIA

With thanks to Dave Croft MA

In 1942, *RMS Laconia* was involved in movements of personnel and equipment within the North African region. In August, the ship departed for the UK from Port Taufiq (Suez Canal) travelling down the East Africa coast to South Africa with Italian prisoners of war captured from the North African front destined for internment in England. They were accompanied by Polish soldiers in the role of POW guards. Also on the ship were service personnel returning to the UK and a few civilians returning home from Malta, with a fair number of family evacuees from Singapore. The Singapore evacuees had eventually reached South Africa where they boarded the *Laconia* at Durban for the voyage to England. They would eventually reach the safety of England but not before experiencing the sinking of the ship in the Atlantic through enemy action, and rescue by the enemy, followed by imprisonment in French held territory in Africa before gaining their freedom yet again.

The plight of the 'Singapore' group in general is described by **Josephine Frame (now Pratchett)** a survivor of the *Laconia* sinking. She was a British schoolgirl, aged 14, returning to England from Singapore, who embarked the *Laconia* at Durban with her parents and younger brother **Alex**, aged 10. After leaving South Africa, the *Laconia* was travelling alone and sailing northwards through the Atlantic when detected and followed by U-Boat U156. On September 12th, two torpedoes were fired at the *Laconia* when the ship was well into the Atlantic on its voyage towards England. The following is an account by **Josephine** of what happened after the torpedoes struck the ship north east of Ascension Island:

"When the first of the torpedoes struck the family were in their cabin. We were struck dumb, the ship lurched violently. The noise was horrendous and then the second torpedo struck. After a struggle, the family managed to board a lifeboat and get away from the ship before it sank. We somehow got through then night. All the time you could hear the cries from the people in the water, but they gradually died away. When dawn broke we'd got two people hanging on to the side of the boat, pleading to get in, but there just wasn't room. It was awful."

The family was on the lifeboat for several days – the lifeboat was designed to carry a maximum of 30 passengers, it carried twice that number. The daily rations consisted of "one sip of water in the morning and another at night, two Horlicks tablets, part of a ship's biscuit and a portion of dried meat." Following the attack on the ship the U-Boat commander, realizing there were Italian POWs and women and children in the water, returned to the scene to rescue survivors. He radioed for assistance with the rescue and two U-Boats and an Italian submarine arrived on 15th September. Three Vichy French navy vessels based in French West Africa also responded, arriving on the scene on 17th September. In the meantime, as many of the survivors as possible were taken on board U-156, with many of the non-injured men being placed in the lifeboats and rafts which were lashed together and fastened to the U-Boat. When the Vichy French navy ships arrived, the survivors were taken on board and transported to West Africa. The **Frame** family was initially interned at Dakar, then after a few days taken north with the other Allied survivors by a Vichy French warship to Casablanca and then transported to a desert internment camp, possibly Mediouna, a camp specifically used for 'British subjects rescued at sea and detained by the Vichy Government.'

After two months of internment the internees were liberated by the Allies following 'Operation Torch.' In the case of the Singapore survivors, they were taken with other survivors to St. Bernard's Hospital in Gibraltar for a medical checkup before going on to England. They had survived escaping from Singapore, survived escaping internment by the Japanese, survived the journey to South Africa, survived being torpedoed by a U-Boat and spending several days on the open sea with its attendant horrors, before being rescued and interned by the Vichy French ... and rescued once again by Allied troops. All this in just one year – 1942!

Note: The above account is 'patchy' and if any MVG member can provide further details about the **Frame** family and their journey from Singapore to South Africa, it would be appreciated. Also, any further information regarding the Singapore evacuees on reaching Dakar and their movements from their last internment camp to Gibraltar and finally to England would help. The *Laconia* crew/passenger list is incomplete as the 'Singapore' passenger names are missing.**

e.g. **Sqn/Ldr. I.J. Peters** who was returning from service in Egypt. His account of the *Laconia* sinking is to be found in the private papers section of the Imperial War Museum together with that of **Josephine Pratchett**.

This article does not include the attack on U-156 by a USAAF B24 bomber based on Ascension Island. This is covered in depth in other accounts about the U-Boat attack on the *Laconia*.

** see: <https://uboat.net/allies/merchants/crews/ship2157.html>



British survivors of the *Laconia* in Gibraltar

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

CHICHESTER – Sunday 10th July 2022. Book Promotion. St Paul' Church, Chichester at 2.30p.m.

The long awaited publication of **Barbara Coombes'** book is due in July. This promotional event is teamed up with a performance of the 'Vocal Orchestra' under **Chris Larley**, followed by afternoon tea. Please let **Margie Caldicott** (margiecaldicott@yahoo.co.uk) know if you plan to attend. See P 29. for further details of the book.

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. Please try to attend this important date in our calendar. 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 this event which resulted in such devastating consequences for our families and the lives of everyone who lived in the Far East. We are pleased that wreaths were laid in Kranji CWG cemetery in Singapore on 15th February during two services, organised by the Singapore Commemoration Committee, headed by **Jeya** of the Singapore History Consultants, and by MVG member **Michael Pether**.

After the Service, the wreath will be taken to the MVG's Memorial Garden and placed on the Memorial Stone. We usually meet after the service in Heroes Square for lunch, where there are plenty of tables for those bringing picnics, or using the NMA's various food outlets. Please let **Rosemary** know if you are coming so that sufficient service sheets can be ordered.

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."

The Lunch this year will take place in the usual venue of the Sovereigns' Room. Please let **Rosemary** know by 30th

September if you wish to attend, together with the names of any guests you would like to bring, and any dietary needs. The menu this year is one of the RAF Club's "All Round Favourites" – Starter: Baked Goats' cheese encased in pistachio nuts and served with quince and pear chutney. Main course: Roast breast of chicken, mushroom, asparagus and tarragon veloute sauce, served with seasonal vegetables and sautéed potatoes. Dessert: Vanilla and raspberry crème brulee, served with lemon sable. Followed by coffee or tea and petit fours. The cost is **£45 per person, and payment is due by 30th**

September. Please remember to bring a draw prize with you. The money raised from the draw will be put towards paying for the electricity in the Muntok Peace Museum, which the MVG sponsors.

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

We hope that this year the Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey's Field of Remembrance will go ahead as usual. By kind permission of **Revd. Pauline Simpson**, FEPOW Padre who co-ordinates the FEPOW Plot, the MVG's 8" Poppy Cross with our logo and the Cross bearing the SSVF badge will be planted in this plot. Visitors to the Field of Remembrance can find the plot from the number listed on the board at the entrance. Small poppy crosses are available from the RBL stall near the entrance into the Abbey, for those who wish to plant a cross in the plot for their relative.

We do not know how many tickets will be available, but if anyone wishes to attend the ceremony on Thursday 10th November, please let **Rosemary** know.

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, several members decided that they would like to march this year, and 12 tickets for the Parade were ordered from the RBL in June. We are waiting to hear whether our application has been accepted and how many tickets have been allocated to the MVG. Confirmation of ticket allocation is due on 4th July. Those members who have said they wish to march will be informed when we hear from the RBL.

MALAYSIA and CANADA – Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day Services.

Details to be announced later.

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.

2023 DATES

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 14th May 2023. 77th Anniversary of the Relief of Rangoon in the FEPOW Church at 12.30p.m.

LONDON - Saturday 14th October 2023. Annual Reunion & Luncheon – RAF Club 12-5. Speaker – Michael Yardley

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

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