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THE CORONATION OF KING CHARLES III, 6TH May 2023

Christine Cavender

Wow what a lucky lady I was! As a staunch royalist I was saddened at the death of our dearly beloved Queen Elizabeth and along with millions mourned her loss, but I was also excited at the prospect of the coronation of King Charles III. In 1953 when Queen Elizabeth was crowned, along with many of you, I was living in Malaya, so I didn't experience the euphoria surrounding her coronation. Having said that, I do remember attending the celebrations held in the Lake Gardens in Taiping and I also remember celebrations held at our school and dancing the minuet with my sister Wendy and other pupils. I have the photograph of this event and when I visited the school in 2016 I took the photograph with me and am proud to say it was displayed in the glass cabinet in the foyer of the school hall.

I was really excited when Rosemary told me about the British Legion ballot for grandstand seats and that as a member of MVG I was able to apply for tickets. As a staunch royalist this was a no-brainer, so I immediately applied, requesting one wheelchair place and one carer to be part of this momentous and historic occasion and waited with bated breath to see if I was one of the lucky ones. In the meantime, along with thousands of others I also applied for tickets for the Coronation Concert on 7th May at Windsor Castle. Therefore, I had two chances to be part of the celebrations, but unfortunately after waiting a couple of weeks I was told I was unsuccessful with the British Legion ballot to witness this historic event. I was still waiting to hear about the concert ballot so pinned my hopes on for possible tickets for this occasion if not, I would join the rest of the world and watch on television.

Not one to take rejection I sent an email to the British Legion to inform them that unfortunately my husband was no longer able to make the journey so I wouldn't require a wheelchair space and would only require one ticket so if possible I would like to be considered at the last minute if there were any cancellations particularly as I could get to London within two hours if necessary, fingers crossed.

A week later I was checking my junk mail and saw I had been allocated a ticket for the Coronation Concert at Windsor Castle, but it had to be claimed within 24 hours. The time had expired so I was unable to claim my tickets. Sadly, both opportunities to be part of the coronation celebrations had now gone.

On the television a few days before the event I watched people of all ages and nations start camping in the Mall so I decided that as I only lived an hour away from London, I would go to London on May 6th to soak up the atmosphere and be part of history. I am very short and didn't hold out much hope of seeing the parade but would take potluck and see as much as I could to be part of history and tell my grandchildren I was there.

Late Thursday evening 4th May, I checked my emails at 11 p.m. and lo and behold I had an email from the British Legion to say I had been allocated two seats in the grandstand and more details would follow the next morning, but we had to be seated by 8:30 a.m. Was this a scam? Hopefully not. Needless to say, I didn't sleep well and early Friday morning I got straight on to my emails, and yes there were my two tickets and joining instructions to download. **I was going to the Coronation!** I was so excited and had to decide hastily who to take with me and who would want to catch a train at 5:45 a.m. to get there on time to be seated by 8:30 a.m.

I have a wonderful son, Stephen, who has attended various MVG functions with me who jumped at the chance. Excitement! What do I wear? Will it rain, what food should I take, do I need comfortable shoes, camera, proof of identity? The weather forecast was not good. I spent the next few hours telling friends and family I was going to the coronation the next day and how privileged and lucky I was.

My son picked me up at 5 a.m. and we made our way to the station, which was full of people all wearing red, white, and blue and excited about this historic occasion and discussing where they were

going to stand to get the best vantage point. I didn't like to boast that I didn't have to worry as I had grandstand seats.

As you can imagine when we arrived at Charing Cross the area was heaving with happy and excited families, parents clutching their children, so they didn't get lost in the crowd. There were security guards and police everywhere to try and answer questions and point you in the right direction. Fortunately, I know London quite well and Stephen and I proceeded down Pall Mall towards Buckingham Palace to find the crossing point to go over the Mall and get to St. James Park and to the grandstand. By this time, 7 a.m., the area was heaving, and people were staking their prime spots to get a good view of the parade. Being only 5ft tall my son who is 6ft kept hold of me, so we didn't lose each other in the crowd. Fortunately, we found the one and only crossing point and with a sigh of relief crossed over to the relatively calm area of St. James Park. We knew we were in the correct area as we saw lots of dignitaries and Gyles Brandreth, a royal correspondent and good friend of Camilla, passing us on their way to Westminster Abbey all in their finery.

Finally, after battling the good-humoured crowds and with a sigh of relief, we arrived at the Grandstand clutching our tickets which we duly presented to security. We spoke to people who had stayed in nearby hotels overnight but because of the crowds it still took them a long time to make their way to the Grandstand.

The most immediate task was to go to the facilities as we didn't know if we would be permitted to leave our seats and did not want to miss anything. We needn't have worried about food, as there were plenty of food stalls and liquid refreshment. There were queues everywhere, but we had arrived and were in the right area. We were then directed to our seats. Wow, what a privilege! We were second row from the front directly in front of the Victoria Memorial with a perfect view of Buckingham Palace and the balcony. I had to pinch myself and realise how privileged we were to be part of this momentous occasion which was being broadcast the world over to millions of people. There we were in such marvellous surroundings to witness all the pomp and pageantry which Great Britain excelled at.

There was obviously a lot of press around who were interviewing people and taking photographs for the news channels. We were being filmed and it wasn't until a friend phoned to tell us they had seen us on the ITV news that we realised it. Fame at last! A loudspeaker welcomed us in the grandstand which was apparently made up of various people from the British Legion, NHS workers, Royal Household, honoured guests, the Prince's Trust, and many charities.

We made ourselves comfortable as we would be in these seats until at least 3 p.m. Time went quickly as there was always something going on. I noticed someone hoovering the balcony ready for the king and queen to wave to the crowds and to watch the flypast. I remember the sound of the soldiers marching from the barracks and the clip-clop of the horses resonating before you could see anything. There were so many divisions of the armed forces that I was lucky to have someone sitting behind me who had been a serving officer and gave us a running commentary on the parade. The men and women of the Household Cavalry with their glistening helmets and breastplates looked so smart and proud to be part of the pomp and pageantry. The colour and brilliance of the uniforms was a spectacle to behold. You could tell the amount of work that had gone into making their uniforms so pristine, shiny, and sparkling and I am sure with their shoes you could probably see your face in, everything was as immaculate as you would expect.

Awesome! I wish I could name all the regiments and forces involved, but unfortunately I can't. The three regiments which will stay with me most were the Household Cavalry especially the mounted musicians who managed so admirably to play their instruments while controlling their horses. Next were the 400 troops from the Commonwealth countries with all their vibrant and colourful flags waving in the wind and third, the King's Hussars in their wonderful black and gold uniforms pulling the gun carriages ready for the gun salute. The bands, well what can I say – the fantastic music, gleaming instruments, and

precision marching. Then there were the magnificent horses who were so well behaved and so beautifully decked out in all their livery. It was a sight to behold and one I will never forget. Pomp and pageantry at its best.

It was now nearing 10 a.m. and we could hear the procession of carriages leaving the royal mews and arriving at Buckingham Palace to take the king and queen and various royals to Westminster Abbey. We saw them enter the gates and knew when we saw them next they would have King Charles and Queen Camilla in the carriages along with other members of the Royal Family. Well, what a cheer they received when they came out of the gates and travelled with their escort round the Victoria Memorial towards the Mall. The wave of cheering could be heard as they travelled along the Mall towards Westminster Abbey and around Trafalgar Square. What a memorable sight, one never to be forgotten.

It was time for us to settle down and listen to the loudspeakers relaying the Coronation service from Westminster Abbey to the waiting crowds lining the processional route. Thanks to technology many of us followed the service on our phones so we all felt involved. We could watch in the service and join in the responses while sitting in our seats.

Then we realised the organisers knew inclement weather was on its way as they handed out clear rain macs to us all. They were very useful and kept us dry from head to toe. We weren't permitted to put umbrellas up. I thought about the ladies I had seen when we first arrived wearing all their finery and beautiful hats who had made me feel slightly underdressed. Well once the rain came down and we donned our plastic macs we all looked alike, and we were all getting rained on. The priority was to keep as dry as possible. It was wonderful when over the loudspeaker we all stood and joined in for the first time in God Save the King and sang the national anthem. It was spine tingling and I felt very proud to be British and part of this momentous occasion. When the Coronation was taking place the magnificent 18th century gold coach went past us and the Victoria Memorial on its way to Westminster Abbey to greet the newly crowned king and queen and take them back along the processional route to Buckingham Palace.

We all settled down to watch the procession return from the Abbey and knew when it was nearing us as the cheering got louder and louder and we could hear the bands and horses approaching. Some of the regiments peeled off to go to Green Park and some lined up outside Buckingham Palace to welcome the king and queen on their return. What a sight and sound! It was a wonderful vision and experience to remember forever. We were lucky as all the carriages and parade came round our side of the memorial so we had a fantastic view and could see King Charles and Queen Camilla, the Prince and Princess of Wales with their children all waving to us, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh, and other royals in carriages and cars. They must have been so proud of the cheering, warm welcome and flag waving they received from the public.

We settled down to wait for the balcony appearance and the flypast but had been forewarned that due to inclement weather and safety reasons, the flypast had been scaled down. It was a shame but never mind I was so happy with the pageantry I had been able to witness.

For the next 40 minutes we watched as the police opened the Mall to allow the public to enter the cordoned-off area around the Victoria Memorial and go to the gates of Buckingham Palace to get the best vantage point to see the king and queen on the balcony and to see the flypast. The police do a fantastic job, and it is a very organised and safe way to bring the public down the Mall to Buckingham Palace without any chaos or incidents. This area now became a sea of happy people waving their flags and singing. I can imagine them all looking up at the Grandstand waving to us and wondering how we were so lucky to have these fantastic seats. The doors on the balcony opened and out came the newly crowned King Charles III and Queen Camilla to a tumultuous welcome from the public. Everyone stood and sang the national Anthem and God Save the King. After accepting the applause and welcome from the public, they were joined by other members of the Royal Family to yet more cheers and flag waving

to watch the flypast. It was a poignant moment for the king and queen and also for the Prince and Princess of Wales who are next in line to the throne. The flypast was a sight to behold and comprised a sea of helicopters and various aircraft and the famous Red Arrows. The king and queen appeared to really enjoy their appearance and seemed loathe to depart to the peace and quiet of the palace. Finally, the doors closed, and our wonderful coronation experience had come to an end. We didn't rush off but stayed to soak up the atmosphere and have a last look round to embrace what we had just been part of. We were so lucky.

Well, that was it...all over! And now the journey home. By this time the rain had stopped and the sun was trying to come out, but to no avail. The rain macs we had been given had kept us reasonably dry, but we were still wet and there were many puddles as we made our way back through St James's Park and on to a very crowded Charing Cross. On the way I was stopped by a French outside broadcaster and asked about my experience of this memorable day and how I had such wonderful seats to witness the event. I explained about my association with the MVG and British Legion and how lucky I was to have a ticket, but I have no idea what station or channel this was being broadcast on. There may well have been a MVG or British Legion member who heard it.

What a day and what an experience to see such a historical event, one my son Stephen and I will never forget. I could have written so much more but I hope you have enjoyed reading my day out in London with millions of people in the UK and throughout the world and being part of such an historical and momentous occasion. I was a very lucky lady, and I must give a huge thankyou to Rosemary Fell for telling me about the ballot and to the British Legion for giving me my tickets. It makes me proud to be British and part of the Commonwealth and an ardent Royalist. Thank you and God Save the King!



GOD'S LITTLE ACRE CEREMONY, Batu Gajah, Perak, 17th June 2023

Richard Parry



Organised as usual by the Malaysian Palm Oil Association (MPOA) after a hiatus of three years due to the Covid pandemic, this church service and wreath-laying ceremony, which I attended with my wife Terry, was held on 17th June at Holy Trinity Church and the adjacent "God's Little Acre" Cemetery in Batu Gajah. As most will be aware, the Little Acre Cemetery contains the graves of the three planters (Messrs Walker, Allison, and Christian) whose murders near Sungei Siput in 1948 sparked the declaration of the Malayan Emergency. The graves of many others who died in the Emergency (military, police, and civilians) are also located here. There are several commemorative plaques in the church and the cemetery, the latter being maintained in pristine condition by local staff in conjunction with the CWG Commission.

The church service began at 7:30 a.m. and although it was well attended, did not appear to be quite as busy as we had seen in previous years, although there were many familiar faces. The congregation consisted of a varied mix of dignitaries both civil and (UK and New Zealand) military, and a mix of civilians of all Malaysia's ethnic groups. Although the service was led by the Anglican Vicar of St John's, Ipoh, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Penang, Bishop Sebastian also took part. The lesson was read by RN Captain Stockbridge, the Defence Advisor to the British High Commissioner. Bishop Sebastian gave an address as did Mr Francis Ng, Chairman of the MPOA for Perak and Kedah.

Following the church service, everyone adjourned to the cemetery for the wreath-laying ceremony which followed the arrival of the Guest of Honour, the Chief of Police of Perak, Datuk Moh'd Y H Basri, who took the salute and inspected the Guard of Honour. Addresses were given by Mr Joseph Tek, CEO of the MPOA, and Dato Carl Bek Nielsen, CEO of United Plantations Bhd., the latter being a major sponsor of the God's Little Acre Ceremony. He pointed out that the annual event in Batu Gajah is believed to be the only one held in Malaysia in remembrance of those who lost their lives during the Emergency. The Last Post was sounded by Perak Police buglers, followed by a two-minute silence. Twenty-six wreaths were placed around the Memorial Cross by representatives of organisations civil and military. I was honoured and pleased to lay a wreath on behalf of the MVG. The ceremony concluded at 9:15 a.m. when attendees returned to the church for refreshments, which, given the hot conditions prevailing in Malaysia for the last few weeks, were very welcome!



God's Little Acre is the final resting place of over 600 people. In a peaceful corner of Batu Gajah, a modest-sized town in Perak, lies an Anglican cemetery known as God's Little Acre. It dates back to 1891 and contains the remains of more than 600 people, many of whom were early pioneers in Perak.

The cemetery saw a sharp increase in occupants during the Malayan Emergency between 1948-1960.

The first shots in this struggle were fired in Perak with the murder of three European planters on their respective estates by 'bandits', later 'CTs' or Communist Terrorists.

Stationed in isolated areas, planters were soft targets for the terrorists. In all, 115 planters, miners, dependents, police and military personnel who lost their lives during the Emergency are buried here. Their names are inscribed on a Roll of Honour memorial near the entrance.

More information: <https://www.freemalysiatoday.com/category/top-lifestyle/2021/09/12/gods-little-acre-cemetery-for-batu-gajahs-pioneers/>



RADJI BEACH, SUMATRA

Arlene Bennett is giving a talk at the FEPOW Conference in Liverpool, and she will be mentioning the war crime now it has been verified that the Australian Army Nurses were raped before they were massacred by the Japs on Radji Beach. Georgina Banks (great niece of Dorothy Bud Elmes, one of the nurses) and historian/author Lynette Ramsay Silver have done extensive research into this war crime by the Japanese. The truth was suppressed post-war by the Australian government and General MacArthur in order to foster trade relationships with the Japanese.

A war crime has been censored: Truth revealed about a WWII massacre on Bangka Island

Historian Michael Pether comments:

All credit for this revelation to a small group of highly intelligent, lovingly motivated women researchers and authors, who persevered to know the truth of the final, horrendous experiences of their relatives and nursing forebears on Banka Island at the hands of the Japanese after the sinking of the civilian ship *SS Vyner Brooke* which occurred during the chaotic and high death toll evacuation of Singapore in February 1942. My view is that the suppression of the truth by the Australian government of the post-war years was motivated as much by political, trade, and economic ambitions with Japan as by any desire to protect the feelings of the relatives. The governments of many Allied countries increasingly conspired to minimise the truth and accountability of Japanese war crimes and atrocities and tried to sweep as much of the history under the carpet as possible. I believe that knowing the horror of the events of Radji Beach and the POW/Internment camps afterwards enables today's audience to empathise with these noble Australian Nursing Sisters.



To read of the no less than devastating experiences suffered by Vivian in the immediate months after the atrocity is heartbreaking. It is beyond belief that she retained her sanity with the memories of Radji Beach and her physical pain and debilitation. She had my great respect previously but now I believe she was a remarkable human being.

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-02/war-crime-censored-the-truth-about-a-wwii-massacre-revealed/102419796>

MALAYSIA DETAINS CHINESE SHIP SUSPECTED OF LOOTING BRITISH WW2 WRECKS

30th May 2023

The China-registered bulk carrier detained for anchoring illegally in Malaysia's waters.



The bulk carrier was seized on Sunday for anchoring illegally at the site in the South China Sea.

Ammunition believed to be from the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, which were sunk by Japanese forces more than 80 years ago, was then found on board.

The UK Ministry of Defence had earlier condemned the alleged raid as a "[desecration](#)" of maritime war graves. Old shipwrecks are targeted by scavengers for their rare low-

background steel, also known as "pre-war steel". The low radiation in the steel makes it a rare and valuable resource for use in medical and scientific equipment. The British vessels, on the bed of the ocean some 100km (60 miles) off the east coast of Malaysia, had been targeted for decades.

The Royal Navy battleships were dispatched to Singapore during the war to shore up the defence of Malaya. They were sunk by Japanese torpedoes on 10 December 1941. The strike, which occurred just three days after the attack on the US fleet in Pearl Harbour killed some 842 sailors and is considered one of the worst disasters in British naval history.



The HMS Repulse

Fishermen and divers first reported the presence of the foreign vessel to Malaysia authorities last month. Local maritime police detained the Chinese ship on Sunday. The ship, registered in Fuzhou, had 32 crew on board, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) said in a statement.

Cannon shells "suspected to be from World War Two" were uncovered during a search of the vessel. Malaysian agencies are also investigating the provenance of the ammunition. The MMEA added that it is linked to a cache of unexploded artillery, said to be from the two sunken vessels, that police seized from a private scrapyards in the southern state of Johor earlier this month.



In 2017, during a tour of Malaysia, a local diver showed the then-Prince Charles images that documented damage to the HMS Prince of Wales inflicted by scavengers. The Defence Secretary at the time responded by saying the UK would work with Malaysian and Indonesian governments to investigate claims that up to six British warships had been plundered in their waters. HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse were sunk in Asia in 1941

More on this story:

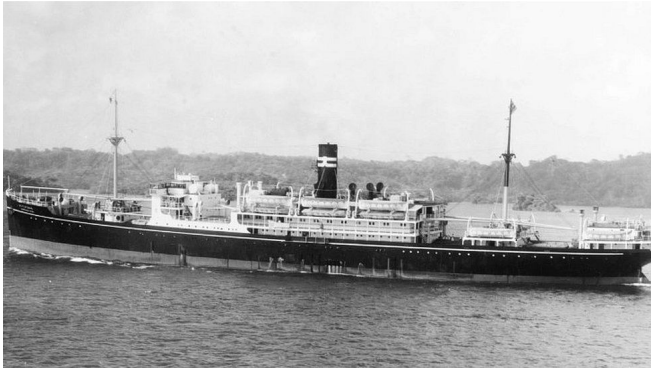
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-65750908>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-65724795>

Related: HMS Mara Hari

<https://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?180184>

AUSTRALIA FINDS WRECK OF JAPANESE WW2 DISASTER SHIP



MONTEVIDEO MARU

Deep-sea explorers have found the wreck of a Japanese transport ship which sank off the Philippines, killing nearly 1,000 Australian troops and civilians in World War Two.

It was Australia's worst maritime disaster: a US submarine torpedoed the ship unaware that it was packed with prisoners captured in Papua New Guinea. The Montevideo Maru sank in July 1942. An estimated 979 Australians died, along with 33 Norwegian sailors and 20 Japanese guards and crew. An Australian maritime archaeology group, Silentworld Foundation, organised the mission, helped by a Dutch deep-sea survey company called Fugro. The wreck was located by an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) at a depth of more than 4,000m (13,123ft) – deeper than the Titanic wreck. Captain Roger Turner, a technical specialist in the search team, told the BBC that "it's a war grave now, it's a tomb that must be treated with appropriate respect".

The closest the AUV got to the wreck was 45m, he said. "It was a moment of emotion to see the images of the ship, the closed hatch covers where prisoners were kept on the voyage." The wreck will not be disturbed – human remains or artefacts will not be removed, Silentworld reported.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, "At long last, the resting place of the lost souls of the Montevideo Maru has been found. We hope today's news brings a measure of comfort to loved ones who have kept a long vigil."

The ship was sunk by torpedoes from the USS Sturgeon and went down rapidly. Speaking by phone from the search vessel, Capt. Turner said that after being hit, the Montevideo Maru had assumed a steep angle within six minutes and disappeared below the waves in 11 minutes. Just three lifeboats were launched, and 102 Japanese crew and guards rowed to the Philippines.

Silentworld director John Mullen said families had "waited years for news of their missing loved ones. Today, by finding the vessel, we hope to bring closure to the many families devastated by this terrible disaster."

Silentworld says that in total the estimated 1,089 victims came from 14 nations and it has not been possible to trace all of their next of kin. But it says descendants of the victims can register with the Australian Defence Force to get updates on the investigation and future commemorations.

The search began on 6th April in the South China Sea, 110km (68 miles) north-west of Luzon in the Philippines, and the wreck was located after 12 days. It then took several days to verify the wreck using expert analysis from maritime archaeologists, conservators, and other specialists, including ex-naval officers. Scans of the wreck, including the hold, foremast and bow, matched features marked in drawings of the ship.

Capt. Turner told the BBC that the team were "euphoric. Many years were invested in this, and more than that, the descendants of the victims number in the thousands. Two who were on board spent much of their lives researching the events, tracking down as many victims as they were able."

Capt. Turner said residents of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea – a strategic hub captured by the Japanese in 1942 – still felt their connection to the Montevideo Maru disaster "very strongly today. They conveyed how important this was to the descendants".

The team's elation at finally locating the ship was tempered by sadness at the scale of the disaster. "We're looking at the gravesite of over 1,000 people," John Mullen told Australia's ABC News. "We lost

nearly twice as many [Australians] as in the whole of the Vietnam War, so it's extraordinarily significant for families and descendants. We had two people on board who had family members who were lost, so while on the one side there were cheers, on the other there were a few tears. It was very emotional."

Further details can be found at:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-65356496>

<https://maritime-executive.com/article/wwii-japanese-transport-lost-with-1-080-people-located-in-philippines>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/21/asia/montevideo-maru-found-south-china-sea-intl-hnk>

USA



BATAAN LEGACY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

81st anniversary commemoration

15th April 2023, Bataan Death March

San Francisco National Cemetery

We are so grateful for the overwhelming level of support given by our community partners, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters on the 81st anniversary commemoration of the Bataan Death March on April 15, 2023, at the San Francisco National Cemetery. It was a spectacular and heartfelt commemoration and homage to those who fought, suffered, and died in Bataan and the Philippines.

www.bataanlegacy.org

WILLIAM (“BILL”) STUBBS, CBE, MC

Timothy Stubbs

My father, William Stubbs, known by friends and family as Bill, was born on 26th October 1911 in the Yorkshire West Riding town of Bentham, the second of three children born to William James Stubbs and Mary Marsland (née Stelfox).

Having qualified as an electrical engineer, at the age of just 23 he was offered a post as a Telecoms engineer out in faraway Malaya (as it then was). He embarked on the S.S. *Corfu* in February 1935 from Liverpool docks for the ten-thousand-mile journey to what was to be his home for the next 26 years (aside from some of the war years and his “leaves” home to England every three years pre- and post-war). Over the course of those near-thirty years, almost exclusively based in Kuala Lumpur (KL), he rose to become the Director General of Posts & Telecoms, Malaya, and Singapore between 1957 and 1959. He stayed on after Malaya gained Independence to effect a safe and successful handover of the organisation to the Malaysian Government, finally returning to the UK in 1961.

On his return he first served on the Board of Cable & Wireless, but after a couple of years he joined the Commonwealth Telecommunications Board as Deputy Director General, based in Marlborough House in London. He died aged fifty-five on 3rd July 1967 having been diagnosed with terminal throat cancer early in 1966. During those 32 years between embarking for Malaya and his death in 1967, my father lived a full and fascinating life, with many remarkable experiences and some notable

achievements, with his wartime service being particularly special, although I have only become aware of most of the detail of that time since his death.

A few months before he died, my father, knowing I was smoking the odd cigarette, handed me a silver cigarette case, saying, “I won’t be needing this any longer, so you’d better have it”. On the inside, etched into the gold-plated lid is



inscribed, below the words "To Bill, a Memento", a list of place names (Tembiloham, Rengat, Ayer Molak, Sawah Loento, Padang, Colombo) book-ended by "Left Singapore 16th February 1942" and "Arr. Durban 28th March 1942". He briefly explained this was a gift he had received from four of his fellow escapers and the places named marked the escape route he and his party had followed in 1942. That was the first and last thing he ever said to me regarding his wartime experiences so what I do know has been gleaned from other sources since then.

Like so many others, Bill had been a committed member of the FMSVF for, I believe, at least two years before the Japanese invasion, heavily involved in regular training camps and exercises.

He won the Military Cross prior to the surrender of Singapore, commanding a small company of Malay soldiers down through the peninsula. The citation for his MC reads: "This officer was Officer Commanding 8 Company Federated Malay States Volunteer Force, Signal Battalion. His company consisted of Asiatics recently enlisted from the Post and Telegraph Department. During the fighting in SELANGOR and right down to SINGAPORE he and his unit carried out invaluable work in the maintenance of communications constantly under bombing and machinegun fire. They carried out a particularly difficult task in laying buried cables on KUALA LUMPUR AERODROME from 28th to 30th December 1941. Capt. STUBBS managed to hold a large proportion of his company together and brought them to SINGAPORE where again he was largely responsible for the maintenance and repair of the Oriental Telephone Company's lines both underground and overhead after most of the company's Asiatic staff had fled. That this maintenance work was possible at all was due to Capt. STUBBS's personality, initiative, and coolness under bombing and shell fire. His energy and cheerfulness in all circumstances set a very fine example." (Recommended by Lt-Gen. A.E. Percival, G.O.C. Malaya)

The final surrender "deal" was signed at 19:00 hours local time with the ceasefire coming into effect three hours later. Dad, after seeking permission from his Commanding Officer at around 20:30 hours to attempt an escape from the island (which was granted but accompanied by his CO's acerbic comment, "You won't make it Stubbs".), led a group of six others on a successful escape which ended nearly four weeks later in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). He and his group found what was, it seems, the one remaining vaguely seaworthy sampan in Boat Quay. It had no oars or other means of propulsion so before departure they fashioned some rudimentary oars out of wooden planks.

The whole escape story was documented in a basic 40-page record written in the 1990s by one of only two of the group still alive at that time, John Wagstaff. It makes fascinating reading and is mentioned in John's entry in Jonathan Moffatt's Register of Malayan Volunteers members. It starts by noting that before Dad went to speak to his CO in the Fullerton Building (then the grand Georgian-styled GPO building, and now one of the smartest hotels in Singapore) he spoke to the original group (which consisted of just five others, all of whom were fellow Signals officers in the FMSVF). He explained that, given the British Army had now surrendered, he was going to attempt to escape because "No [quite uncharacteristically of my dear Papa this was apparently followed by some extremely blue Anglo-Saxon adjectives to describe the Japanese] is going to imprison me".

They all bought in to the idea but then were approached by a stranger (an officer in the Anti-Tank regiment of the British Army) who begged them to allow him to join them. They were not best pleased, feeling they were already at maximum capacity for the dangerous venture ahead. They finally gave in to his pleas and he became the seventh member. The first challenge was to get out of Singapore harbour to the open sea to get as far away as possible under cover of darkness. The harbour itself (which was a very different area to what it is today) was brightly lit up due to all the refineries ablaze around them. Around four weeks later they finally made it to Ceylon.

Shortly thereafter Dad was posted to South Africa to await the next development of his wartime service. From his letters written to his sisters from Durban it is very clear that after a month or two twiddling his thumbs there he was getting extremely fed up and even comments that he is considering

joining the RAF in order to get back into service as quickly as possible, but then things moved on, with him being sent to Kenya where it seems he underwent some special training before returning to active service.

The six FMSVF members of the escape group, all pre-war ex-pat friends, continued to meet up each year in KL to celebrate their escape experience for many years. Following my father's death in 1967 my mother lost touch with some of the members of the group. Duncan Robb (the only other member of the group still living at the time John Wagstaff produced his memoir of their escape) and his wife were such a "lost" friendship. Extraordinarily, I "re-found" them in the mid-1990s.

When I moved to Haslemere, Surrey in the 1990s my wife-to-be, Margaret, introduced me to a chap I was with at Sherborne, Peter Innes Ker. Like me, Peter had spent some years of his early childhood out in Malaya, and our respective parents had in fact known of each other back then. Because of this connection, soon after re-meeting me, Peter introduced me to a good friend and near neighbour of his, explaining that this chap was also "another Malaya boy" – Chris Robb. Being me (always on the lookout for small world connections), I immediately asked Chris whether by any chance his dad might have been one Duncan Robb, a rubber planter out in Malaya, and of course the answer was "Yes. Still alive and living down the road near Petersfield"!

I was able to put his father in touch with that only other surviving member of the "Magnificent Seven", John Wagstaff, but not before providing Chris and his dad with a copy of that invaluable memoir of their escape that John had written a couple of years earlier. Their meeting was effected by my mother's assistance who was still very much in touch with John Wagstaff. It was in fact a close shave! The first attempt ended in failure since as my mother, who was driving Duncan to John's home near Reading, arrived in the drive as an ambulance, complete with John inside, whizzed out past her. The old boy had apparently collapsed shortly before. Round two a month or so later was a success and the two of them were of course delighted. Incidentally, Duncan met his wife in Colombo, Ceylon on the conclusion of the famous escape (her family were tea planters)! John and Duncan both died within a year or two of that meeting.

According to a cousin of mine, Dad was in the Special Operations Executive (SOE). This was something I never knew about until he told me in 2015, when handing me a batch of Dad's letters. My reading of some of those letters written from 1942 to 1945 (highly redacted) all suggest in hindsight that if he was indeed in the SOE then he was almost certainly engaged in the Far Eastern Theatre of War and possibly even involved with the Force 136 actions in the Malay jungles behind enemy lines. Most were written at a minimum of two- or three-month intervals, and all seem to be from somewhere in East Africa, apologising for his tardiness but adding excuses about having to go away! A little later, his military record shows him being based in Calcutta.

Sadly, since hearing this news from my cousin, it has proved impossible to verify and authenticate his possible SOE involvement. One possible source that I was put on to – responsible for aspects of a museum in East Anglia dedicated to "Special Forces" matters (SAS, SOE, etc.) – advised me that records of membership and their secondments are patchy and not helped by the fact that a fire (sometime soon after the war) destroyed a significant chunk of their records (a point rather confirmed by a reference in the book "Our Man in Malaya" by Margaret Shennan, in which on page 170 it states that to John Davies (the eponymous subject of the book), "Perhaps most galling, however, was the cavalier destruction of Force 136 records, including his own papers, at the winding up of the organisation".

I was amazed to hear so late in the day of Dad's possible membership and having always felt that everyone who served in the SOE exhibited extraordinary courage, I was very proud to think it may be so, but not altogether surprised. It makes perfect sense. He was after all an ideal candidate: He was already fluent in a number of the regional languages such as Malay and highly proficient in others of the Indian subcontinent; with the award of his MC, he had already proved his undoubted bravery and an ability to

act calmly under fire and duress. He was a fully qualified and very enthusiastic airman, flying Austers and Tiger Moths (in the 1950s he was president of the Royal Selangor (KL) Flying Club for several years); He was also an avid enthusiast of photography (a useful attribute). He already had a very good knowledge of the Malayan jungles, going on quite frequent expeditions with friends at weekends to track wildlife and capture snakes for their venom to produce snakebite antidotes. He was a highly qualified electrical engineer by the time of the war and was an active member of the Signals Corps in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) for around two years before the Japanese invasion. A couple of his letters home were written after the surrender by the Japanese when, although still redacted in parts, it was clearly already a little easier to relate what would have earlier been off-limits information.



The letters certainly bear out the important role he held (first European into the liberated civilian POW camp in Singapore – with grizzly record of the state of those prisoners; the first to travel by train back up through the Malayan peninsula). He was formally presented after the Japanese surrender with two exquisite, very old ceremonial samurai swords, which is another indicator he was involved in that theatre of war.

Changi Liberation 1945

Dad led the Malayan Contingent of around forty troops at the VJ Parade in London in 1946. He and his soldiers came over to England for three weeks, with training and preparations for the parade being made and the VJ Parade taking place right at the end. I have a photo in pride of place of Dad speaking with King (George VI) and Queen Elizabeth (later “The Queen Mother”) by his side as he inspected Dad’s troops. This and another photo of my father appear (to my pleasant surprise) in a fascinating book entitled “Malaysia – A Pictorial History 1400-2004” produced by Wendy Khadija Moore.

During his VJ trip Dad had a day off sometime around the halfway mark, and being a keen flyer asked around as to where he might be able to get a day’s flying in that day. Someone suggested he try the Fairoaks Flying Club near Woking in Surrey. It just so happened that my mother, aged 19 and already a keen flyer herself (she caught the end of the war as a pilot in the ATA), had got herself a job at Fairoaks to enable her to indulge her passion for flying. It was she who was assigned to look after this 34-year-old man from Malaya, and the rest, as they say, is history.

Their years together out in Malaya between 1947 and the early 1960s were, on occasion, quite eventful. They included the arrival of their children (me in January 1949, and my sister Karen in August 1955). In the years of the so-called “Emergency” when British troops were engaged in a guerrilla war with communist terrorists which ran from 1948 to 1963 (over 500 British, 1,300 Malay police, 3,000 civilians were killed), Dad flew countless drops to provide supplies to the planters and others living in remote parts of the country, landing and taking off in jungle clearings. Dad’s rise to the top of the large civil service organisation of Posts and Telecoms and the responsibilities he had, made him a busy man.

My father had become a close friend of Tunku Abdul Rahman (the first prime minister of Malaysia until 1970), having first met in the 1930s. In 1958, following Malaya’s Independence (Merdeka) in 1957, Dad’s old friend established the first Malay Honours system. One of the first non-Malaysians to receive the highest of these new decorations, the JMN (Johan Mangku Negara, “Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of the Defender of the Realm”) was my father. This was presented to him by the Sultan of Selangor, and I have a photo of the event. This decoration is without doubt the most colourful

(and largest) of Dad’s important honours medals, the others being his MC and his CBE. My father was invested with the Commander of the Order of The British Empire on 1st January 1960 at Buckingham Palace, and I was given a day off from Prep school to attend! As you can tell, I am a very proud son of a long dead, courageous, and wonderful man, as I have no doubt all you fellow MVG members are of your own wonderful forebears!

Finally, I am most grateful to a friend and fellow MVG member, Guy Scoular, for making me aware of the existence of the group, as a result of which not only I but three other friends have become recent members (Peter and Rob Ines Ker and Chris Robb).

POSTSCRIPT TO APRIL ARTICLE ABOUT PERKY (R.B. PERKINS)

Gareth T. Owen



R.B. Perkins

At Chungkai, April 1944

Delighted to see that you included that cutting about Perky in the latest edition. He was a close friend of our family. We stayed at his house Bukit Tersenyum (Smiling Hill) just outside Port Dickson (PD) in 1959 and enjoyed his wonderful private beach (inaccessible, more accurately).

What the article didn’t mention was his authorship of “Estate Surveying”, first published in 1939 and then again and again until at least the 1970s. It made his fortune and when he visited us in Cardiff on leave he would always drive up in either a Bentley or a Rolls. He is also mentioned in Charles Allen’s book “Tales from the South China Seas” (1983) describing a typical day in his life in Malaya as was. I gather his house was demolished a few years ago and replaced by a nondescript modern building. Sad.

R.B. Perkins was an estate manager in PD. He was a Rotarian and president of the Royal Port Dickson Yacht Club. He had two German Shepherd dogs called Gin and Tonic. He was a beloved member of the PD community. (Jagdave Singh Saren)



Situated along the west coast approximately 7 km from the Port Dickson town centre. Built as a social and family club as early as 1927, the Royal PD Yacht Club has a long history. Before the 1950s, it was a simple place for friends and family members to gather for an evening of fun. However, as sailing grew in popularity in the fifties, it was inevitable for the club to add a yachting section. Then, in 1987, the club was renamed the Port Dickson Yacht Club and gained its “Royal” status in 1991. Background:

<https://lite.syok.my/trending/trending/royal-port-dickson-yacht-club>

DISCOVERY OF THE DAHAN / POAK JAPANESE PRISONER OF WAR CAMP

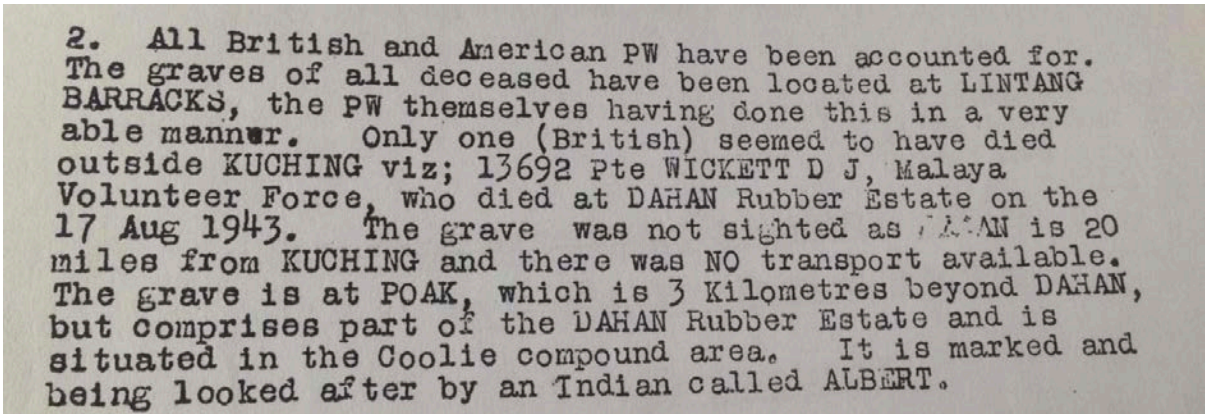
Colin Hygate, 3rd March 2023

At the 2021 Annual Reunion and Lunch Colin presented the story of his father's pre-war time in Singapore, capture and survival from Changi, Kuching and Dahan, Poak. This was subsequently serialized in AK 69, 70 & 71. The unresolved matter of the precise location of the Dahan, Poak camp resulted in his return to Kuching in February and March of this year. The following is the story of that journey. Colin is preparing the story of the second part of his visit this year to Labuan where all those who died in Borneo are buried in the CWGC and where many of the survivors recuperated before repatriation.

On our visit in February 2019, we gathered some good information and visited a number of locations relevant to the Prisoner of War workcamp that Len Hygate and his fellow Malayan Volunteers had been sent to in early April 1943. Our second visit was originally planned on the 75th Anniversary of the Camp's liberation; however, the global pandemic of the coronavirus prevented that, delaying our visit to February 2023. In advance of that visit there had been some additional information regarding the Malayan Volunteers' captivity in general but no more that helped to identify the location of the camp. It was clear that only a site visit and the help of local Dayak memories would confirm the precise location. The key factor in that process was an invitation from the Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS) to speak at one of their public presentations (see Appendix A). The invitation was prompted by one of their long-standing members, Elizabeth Moggie, a member of the Malayan Volunteer Group (MVG), of which I am also a member.

The key pieces of information we had at that time were as follows:

The report by Australian 9th Division Prisoner of War Liaison Officer, Captain Darling (see the relevant excerpt below) was brought to our attention by Prof. Peggy Day of the University of Winnipeg, Canada, who has been researching the camp at Batu Lintang, the main camp for POWs and civilian internees in Kuching.



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

The work of the POWs at the Dahan camp was related to the restoration of a road to access the Tegora cinnabar (mercury-bearing ore) mine. Further clues to the camp's location were my story of "The Amorous Ape" in which I described the proximity and direction of flow of the river in relation to the camp. This sloping area down to the river could be the scene of the death of the ape. I used the name "Poek" for the camp, which is the name of the river shown on the early 20th century mining map (see Appendix B).



The media coverage ahead of my talk on 1st March stimulated contacts with Dr. Peggy, who has developed a wide range of contacts during her time in Kuching. Elizabeth and Leo Moggie further stimulated interest through their long-established status in Kuching.

Edward Mansel and Joanna Jawek introduced Jein Akanone, the chief of Kampong Seropak, who told them he knew the location of the "Coolie Compound". They had learned of graves of "white-skinned people" on the Dahan Estate. We had arranged to visit the area on the day before my presentation so I could incorporate what we discovered, but the rainy weather had flooded roads close to Kampong Seropak so the visit was postponed until Friday 3rd March, when Elizabeth and Leo had arranged transport for us.

Vincent Foo, who has an interest in local mining and whose mother originally lived in the mining kampong at Tegora, introduced Jinang Resos, a retired teacher (Cikgu) from Kampong Puak. He said he knew the location of the Coolie Compound. When we met he confirmed photographs of locations we had visited in 2019 and recognised his uncle as being the Dayak whom Diweng Bakir introduced during that visit. I met them both before the SHS meeting as neither of them was able to attend. It became clear they relied on direct family knowledge of the work in 1943/4. Vincent's mother recalled her time living at the miners' village at Tegora and noted there was some activity to reopen it, although by that time they were living at 7th mile and his father was one of the local forced labourers working on the Batu Tujoh airfield. He particularly recalls his father "crawling up the stairs" in absolute exhaustion at the end of the day.

Jinang Resos confirmed his father remembered Len's story about the Japanese shooting the "monkey" at the time when the camp was operational. He also confirmed that the photograph, taken in 2019, of the washing site might be at Puak and may well have been the washing site because of easy access to the river. He explained the location of the "Coolie Compound" was not as close to the Jambatan Merah as we had thought and agreed to meet us on Friday to show us the location.

In the conversations after my SHS presentation it became clear there was real interest in the heritage significance of both the work the POWs were conducting to re-establish access to Tegora and the history concerning how and why the Japanese required the work to be done. The process of extracting mercury by heating the cinnabar ore was relatively straightforward and consequently opening the mine would provide the Japanese with a valuable supply of mercury. I knew, from my research in the Borneo Company Archives in London, that a 1938 mineral assessment made for The Borneo Company suggested the mine would contain adequate reserves of cinnabar to justify reopening the mine. With the Japanese intelligence network well established in Borneo and with the report available in the Borneo Company offices in Kuching as the Japanese arrived, it is likely they planned for this resource to be exploited. Furthermore, it is likely they chose prisoners who were acclimatised to the jungle and local conditions. It is also likely they identified that the Malayan Volunteers were considered to meet these criteria. We know from J.L. Noakes' personal report the contingent of Malayan Volunteers were separated from the main body of "E" Force and sent almost immediately to Dahan after their arrival at Batu Lintang on 1st

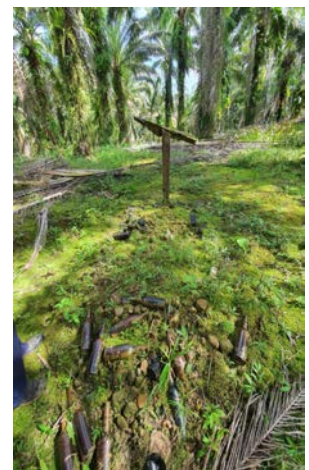
April 1923. We arranged to meet Jinang, Edward, and Joanna at the entrance to Kampong Puak at 11:00 a.m.

Friday dawned wet but warm and as our 9 a.m. departure approached the rain ceased. Lloyd Salang met us in a comfortable Toyota equipped with five passenger seats in addition to his. With the Moggies and Hygates aboard we collected Peggy Day and set off for Puak. We stopped along the route at Siniawan for a stroll through the iconic shophouse street with some very fresh-looking fish and a huge snail making its way across the central path.

We arrived at Puak and were met there by Jinang, Edward, and Joanna. We collected Jinang's uncle on the way and first stopped at the track leading to the Jembatan Merah (red bridge) and Tegora. Here Jinang gave us a general description of what we would see and the relationship between the POW camp in the compound, the road to Tegora and graves, and a Japanese water tank that had been moved to provide a head wall for a bridge over the Puak River. We then set off to a site that had generally been cleared to the south between the road and the River Puak just beyond a road bridge over a small stream. The compelling features of the site were concrete slabs that could only have been placed there as floors for attap or similar buildings typical of the period. The coarse mix of aggregate in the concrete was similar to that we would see later at the Jembatan Merah. The closeness of the river Puak and the current road, although now a few metres further to the north of the site, and the original old stone road/track was apparent. We then heard about the "Coolies" who, the village information confirmed, were Javanese. Furthermore, the other side of the current road was described as a Javanese Cemetery. Several features indicated this was the site. These were not disputed by the local residents from both

Puak and Seropak. (what3words locational address being ///binding.skyboxes.foldable). Feeling elated and nostalgic that Dad and his friends had been there, worked and suffered there, I offered up a silent prayer to all those who, having survived this place, were not to survive Labuan. I also offered a prayer of thanksgiving to Capt. Campbell, the Volunteers' Medical Officer, who invalidated Dad back to Batu Lintang but then lost his own life at Labuan.

We took photographs and moved on to the actual road to Tegora where we saw a bridge over the Puak River supported by



the Japanese water tank. We crossed the road to what had been three graves but were now only two. Marked by a **weathered wooden cross**, we

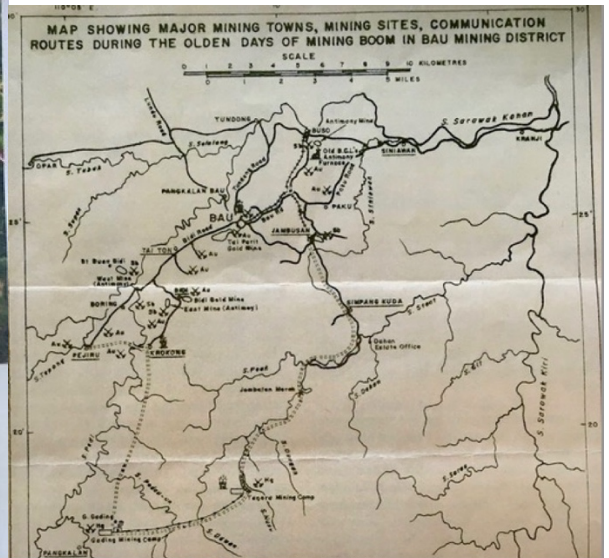
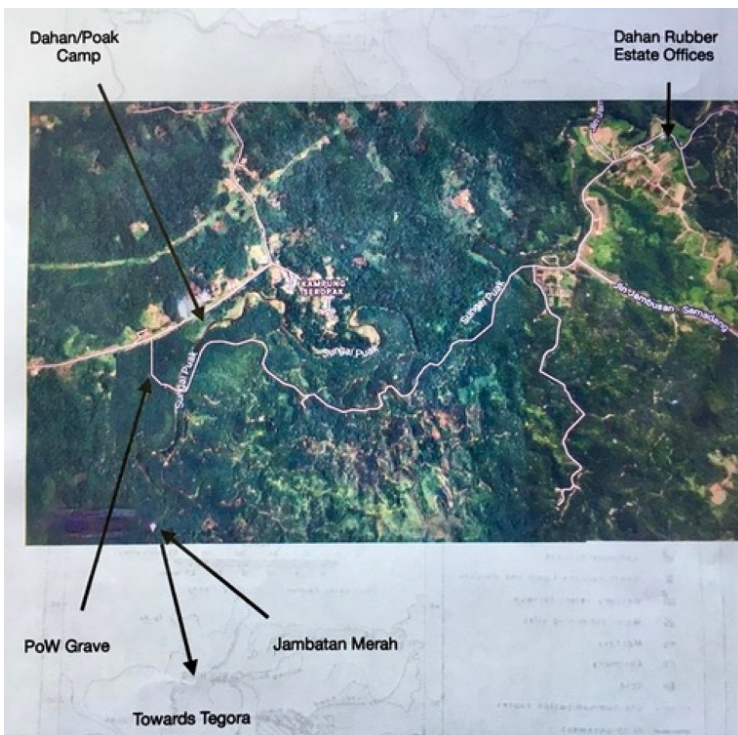
debated about the two remaining. We wanted to believe that the one exhumation was that of Volunteer 13692 Private Wickett D.J., who was transferred with all the other POW bodies to Labuan. Attempts are currently being made to discover if, as some of our informants suggest, the other two are Australians. However, if so, it would be unlikely they would not have been reinterred at Labuan, so these may be graves of others who died later. This too seems unlikely as they would have been repatriated so the graves remain a mystery. We continued along the metalled road originally laid by the Borneo Company, repaired by Malayan Volunteers and since aged by jungle roots and the Bornean climate, to the Jembatan Merah. Here we crossed the



Puak River, despite the sway of the almost 150-year-old wire suspension bridge. Sadly, the last section of the bridge access ramp has disintegrated so the locals can no longer take their motorbikes across but a walkway to the side still gives them access to food-growing land beyond.

We returned to the cars and made our way to Krokong where we enjoyed beer and curry in a newly opened restaurant Mee Con Jun, next to a sports field and stone memorial to those who fell during the Confrontation. To our satisfaction, we were celebrating on the site where the defeated Japanese were compounded prior to screening before transport either to War Crime trials or repatriation to their home country.

Among those who had taken part in our expedition were three groups of equal significance: our group, who were basking in the knowledge that another element of Dad’s story had been defined; a second group, discussing the tour-guiding opportunities this discovery could provide; and a final group, who were discussing the broader opportunities for the local kampongs and their development plans. All in all, it was a very positive day for all the searchers.



Map showing major mining towns, mining sites, communication routes during the golden days of mining boom in Bau Mining District.

SAVE THE SCARF VC CAMPAIGN

Reports by Rosemary Fell and Sallie Hammond

After a nervous weekend over the 29th/30th April 2023, waiting to hear whether the £660,000 required to buy back **Sqn. Ldr. Arthur Scarf's** wartime VC from an anonymous overseas buyer had been reached, the MVG was delighted to read that the medal had indeed been saved for the nation, and in due course will be put on view at the RAF Museum in Hendon.

Arthur Scarf's wartime medals, including the VC, had been sold in April 2022, on behalf of his family, by the London Auction House of **Spink & Son** to an anonymous overseas buyer for a record sum. Luckily, the government stepped in to refuse an exit permit for the medals to be taken out of the country, and the buyer decided in February this year to allow the medals to be bought back by the country, provided the original sum of money paid to purchase them was matched.

Monday 1st May 2023

Headlines from Michelle Worthington – Communications Manager at the RAF Museum
“RAF Museum Saves Scarf VC for the Nation”

Other headlines in the online edition of the Daily Mail on Monday 1st May read:
Incredibly rare Victoria Cross medal given to an RAF WWII pilot who served in the Far East will remain in Britain after Mail readers helped raise at least £660,000 to prevent its sale to a private overseas buyer (David Wilkes).

The MVG's initial involvement in spreading the word about how this sum could be raised by 30th April 2023 is due to **Jonathan Moffatt**, who sent me an email on Sunday, 5th February 2023 with a website address. We thank him very much for bringing this to our attention as the campaign had not been well advertised in the mainstream media at that point. The website read: **Fight to keep RAF medal in the country as it's sold to overseas buyer | UK | News | Express.co.uk**



Royal Air Force Museum

<https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/midlands/whats-going-on/news/save-the-arthur-scarf-victoria-cross-medal/>

After contacting the RAF Museum about the campaign, I spoke to **Ella Ponton-Hewitt**, Individual Giving Manager at The RAF Museum, who explained how they hoped the money would be raised. The Museum itself would make a substantial contribution from its reserve funds and The National Heritage Memorial Fund would donate the rest of the money provided that £250,000 was raised by public

donation via the **#SaveTheScarf VC Go-Fund-Me Campaign**, or by cheques sent to the Museum and marked as donations to the Fund.

A letter was emailed to all MVG members on 9th February explaining the situation and how to make donations, if wished, towards saving **Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf's** important set of medals, including his VC, for the nation. At the time it seemed a daunting prospect to raise such a huge sum of money in three months. With very little publicity in the mainstream media, it seemed essential to spread the word through other channels such as social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter), other Far East organisations, Far East RAF Associations, and the RAF Club, all of which we contacted.

Crucially, we also contacted **Piers Storie-Pugh** of The Not the Forgotten Association, among his many other Far East interests. We are extraordinarily grateful to him for taking an active interest in the campaign and for putting us in touch with **David Wilkes**, editor of the Daily Mail. As the result of our contact with **David Wilkes**, two very important articles promoting the campaign and giving it valuable publicity were written by him online.

Sallie Hammond



We were also very fortunate to have been able to put him in touch with **Sallie Hammond**, our secretary in Canada and the USA, who is the goddaughter of (and named after) the late **Sallie Lunn (Scarf)**, widow of **Sqn. Ldr. Arthur Scarf**. As well as being interviewed by **David Wilkes**, she also spoke on the telephone to **Ewan Burnet**, a member of the RAF Museum campaign team, about her family's personal links with the Scarf family. Her parents, **Harley** and **Patricia Boxall** were friends of

the Scarf family while they were living and working in Alor Star. **Harley** was **Flight Commander & Acting Squadron Commander** of 62 Squadron and **Patricia** a nursing sister with the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service at Alor Star hospital. **Sqn. Ldr. 'Pongo' Scarf** was one of the 12 pilots in 62 Squadron and his wife **Sallie** a fellow Queen Alexandra's Nursing Sister.

David Wilkes' articles were based on **Sallie Hammond's** first-hand information about her family connections. He also mentioned the MVG as helping to promote the campaign.

In consultation with **Colin Hygate** and **Roger Willbourn**, it was decided that the MVG should donate, and a cheque for £2,500 was sent to the RAF Museum together with several other cheques sent to me by members for the Fund. Thank you very much to everyone who contributed, either by cheque or through the GoFundMe Page. To have raised this huge sum of money is an enormous achievement and I feel we can be justly proud of the small but significant part played by the MVG in helping to promote the campaign and to see it through to fruition on 30th April 2023.

From Sallie Hammond, Secretary MVG CANADA/USA

Sallie Hammond's account of her contacts with the RAF Museum and Daily Mail Editor.

Re: "Save the Arthur Scarf Victoria Cross Campaign at RAF HENDON MUSEUM April 30th 2023"

It was a great privilege and an honour for me to be interviewed on Zoom by **Ewan Burnet**, curator of the RAF Hendon Museum, London, UK in March 2023. **Ewan** asked me about my association with **Sallie Scarf/Gunn** (Arthur Scarf's late widow). I shared details with **Ewan** regarding my parents and especially **Sallie Scarf's** close friendship with my mother, **Pat Boxall**.

In addition, the editor of the Daily Mail UK (**David Wilkes**) contacted me regarding the credibility of the story and **Arthur Scarf's** heroism in Malaya 1941. I was able to provide old letters from **Sallie Scarf** (to my mum) describing the tragic day on December 9th, 1941, when her husband (**Pongo Scarf**) was admitted to the Emergency Department at the Alor Star General Hospital because of fatal wounds sustained in air combat with the Japanese over Singora, Thailand.

On December 9th, 1941, my mother assisted **Sallie Scarf** with the blood transfusion to save her husband's life. My mother later shared the news that **Pongo Scarf** died during the administration of the anaesthetic. Sallie was totally shattered by this news as she thought her husband would survive.

The Editor of the Daily Mail UK published two long feature articles on **Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf VC** in April 2023 in an effort to generate donations for the Save the Scarf VC Campaign. Many other organizations contributed to the 660.000 GBP as well. What an incredible day April 30th, 2023, was and what a miraculous achievement it was to reach the goal in time. It was a major effort altogether!!

The Arthur Scarf Victoria Cross now remains in the UK at the RAF HENDON MUSEUM in London, UK.

RAF Museum London,
Grahame Park Way,
London, NW9 5LL
10.00am - 5.00pm
Tel: 020 8205 2266
london@rafmuseum.org



OCTU MALAYA 1940-1941

Officer Cadet Training Unit, Malaya, based at Changi Garrison, Singapore
Jonathan Moffatt



Cadet Derek Tyer; 2nd Lt. Douglas Rennie; Captain Wilson 2A&SH & Major Denne GH
Commanding officer: Major Victor Denne, Gordon Highlanders. Adjutant: Captain I.A. McLagan, then Captain David Wilson 2A&SH

- Course No.1 28.9.1940 – 12.1941 British Regular Army Infantry and Artillery
- Course No.2 10.1.1941 – 3.1941 including Malayan Volunteers
- Course No.3 4.1941 – 8.1941 Australians and British; two Malayan Volunteers
- Course No.4 9.1941 – 12.1941 Australians and British

OCTU Malaya was set up by Malaya Command in September 1940 to supply the demand brought on by the War for more officers. By this time more troops were arriving in Singapore from the UK and Australia with great young, fit junior leadership potential. Businesses in Malaya were also a little more willing to release some of their young staff already serving in Volunteers for three months of fulltime officer training. Malaya needed its own OCTU. Indian Army potential officers continued to be trained by officers sent direct from India so did not attend OCTU Malaya. The course was taken directly from that used in the OCTUs in the UK but with special emphasis on the requirements of fighting in Malaya.

Course No.1 with a staff of five officers and 26 other ranks, was for 36 cadets, all regular Army other ranks from the Artillery and Infantry, men with between four and 18 years of service experience, one from Hong Kong. All but three 'passed out' at a special parade with the salute taken by Lt General Bond, GOC Malaya. The course was intensive. Each day ran from 6:15 a.m. to 12:00 midday: two hours training in the afternoon and four hours in the evening. A one-week exercise was held at Mersing and a mock invasion of Singapore including an attack in assault boats staged. There were recreational activities including hockey and water polo at Changi, competing against the Gordons and other regiments as well as with civilian teams from the Singapore Cricket Club and the Swimming Club.

The stage was now set for **No.2 Course**: 71 cadets including some 40 Malayan Volunteers from all units and six cadets from Shanghai. At the passing out parade they paraded in three platoons – Regular Army; SSVF¹; FMSVF² and other Volunteer units. Lt. Colonel James of 2FMSVF attended the parade at which Lt. General Bond emphasised that there was no promise of regular Army Commissions for Malayan Volunteer cadets passing the course, and so it was to be for although a number received Governor's Commissions in the Volunteers few received regular commissions before January 1942.

Ronnie Pantling, a planter in the Negri Sembilan battalion FMSVF, and Alec Bulford of 3SSVF [Penang Volunteers] were on this course. Although both subsequently received Volunteer Force promotion to 2nd Lt. and Pantling then to Captain, neither received regular Army commissions. In January 1942 Pantling was attached to 9th Gurkha Rifles and Bulford as a very young adjutant at 20 years old, to 3SSVF. Their success on the OCTU course and experience gained were no doubt factors in their promotion within the Volunteers.

Course No.3 saw the arrival of Captain David Wilson of the Argylls as adjutant and essentially training officer. He brought with him Colonel Ian Stewart's ideas of jungle training, mobility and physical fitness already tested on the 2nd Argylls. An unpretentious and humorous officer, Wilson had a good rapport with the Australians on OCTU, not least with fellow course leaders and rugby players on Course No.4, Harry Illig and Jim Quinlan. Sadly, Quinlan was killed serving in 2/19th AIF at Parit Sulong in January 1942.

Wilson oversaw what was fast being seen as the hardest worked unit in Malaya. A full course of physical training, drill, anti-gas training, engineering, organisation & admin., military law, map reading, mechanical transport, weapon training had been developed. The Mersing week of the course was enlivened when two tigers wandered through the tented camp at night.

At the end of the 15-week course, in August 1941, 30 Australians from the AIF and nine British cadets marched past the new G.O.C. Lt. General Percival as the band of the Gordon Highlanders played "Waltzing Matilda". Two thirds of the Australians returned to the AIF while a third were seconded to the

¹ Supportive Services for Veteran Families

² Federated Malay States Volunteer Force

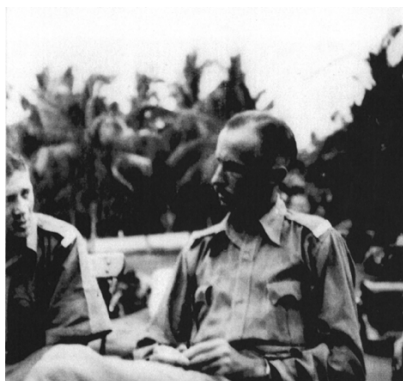
British and Indian Armies. Two British Malaysians, both employed by Borneo Motors, D.D. Rennie, and T.P.D. Jones, were commissioned into the Malay Regiment. Douglas Rennie was already a 2nd Lt. in 3FMSVF [Negri Sembilan battalion]. 'Pat' Jones died in an escape attempt as a POW in Thailand.

There were 56 cadets on Course No.4 including 34 Australians of the AIF and six Malayan Volunteers plus Kelantan-based Derek Tyer, already serving in the ranks of 2A&SH. The six Volunteers were: Alexander Louis Denholm, Tjetse van der Gaast, Ronald Bertie Perkins [from the Johore Volunteer Engineers. See article about him in last month's newsletter and the follow-up in this newsletter], Hugh Anthony 'Jock' Sandeman, Alexander Reginald Cumming-Scott and Sydney James Law. All six were General List commissions dated 11.12.41 [London Gazette 30.12.1941. Five Leicesters and some others from the OCTU on the same page] and all six went to the Malay Regiment 12.12.41. Law was killed-in-action in February 1942. Derek Walter Tyer returned to the Argylls as a 2nd Lt. Tyer, Winchester College-educated, was Sime Darby's rep. in Kelantan. A fluent Malay speaker he was snapped up by Colonel Stewart of the Argylls who arranged his officer training with the OCTU. Tyer was returned to the Argylls as a platoon commander and was among the last to cross the Causeway to Singapore. He was later a POW in Singapore then Thailand, returning to Sime Darby post war.

The final days of Course No.4, and what were to be the final days of OCTU Malaya, coincided with the Japanese invasion of Malaya. In his memoirs David Wilson recalled: 'We took over a section of the beach and came under the command of the Australian Brigade [Brigadier Taylor's 22nd Brigade AIF]. He gave us a beach sector that we were to man, if and when required. In the meantime, we were to get on with our training in the area between Mersing and Endau. On Saturday, December 6th we took on 22nd Brigade in a rugby match on the Mersing padang. We won but there were few celebrations as we were ordered to second degree of readiness. We went back to camp, started packing up, and prepared to man our beach defences. These were just slit trenches, with no wire, no mines, no guns in our very small sector. We left sentries at section posts and ordered the rest to sleep. About 1:00 a.m. there was the ominous sound of a motorcycle coming down our drive. The message the dispatch rider bore was simple and quite short: "Japanese Landings Kota Bahru – man your positions". Into our trenches we went'.

Orders were received two days later for the OCTU to move back to Changi where the cadets would be immediately commissioned then dispersed to their units. So ended Course No.4 and with over 200 junior officers trained, the story of OCTU Malaya.

SOURCES: Full group photos of No.2 and No.4 Course cadets courtesy of MVG member Dr Malcolm Read and historian Ken Hewitt; the No.4 Course photo with all the names on the back. The Memoirs of Brigadier David Wilson *The Sum of Things* and his obituary to Derek Tyer. The Straits Times 1940-1941 and the London Gazette – both online. The Imperial War Museum has recorded interviews with Brigadier Wilson and the papers of [L/Cpl 1st Leicesters to 2nd Lt., East Surreys] John. E. Whitaker, an OCTU Cadet.



Ronnie H. Pantling





Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmTzgJFdUpo>
Storm of Steel Military History

"MAKING AND MARKING MEMORY"

Report on the Researching FEPOW History Group's 7th International Conference
in association with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine
9th - 11th June 2023; Colin Hygate



Many familiar MVG members and a welcome number of new ones were part of a large audience who met over the weekend in the LSTM building to discuss the importance and benefits to both future generations and researchers of preserving histories from Far East Prisoners of War. The organisers, led by Mike and Meg Parkes, had assembled a galaxy of speakers that covered a range of topics from individual stories through collective histories to organisational developments in Singapore and IWM to the medical effects, both physical and mental, on FEPOWs and their families. The wide range of speakers from academics and authors as well as delegates were international with speakers from Canada and the USA on video links.

We had the pleasure of meeting a number of prospective members, particularly from the younger generation researching grandparent histories. Both Rosemary Fell and Liz Moggie greatly assisted Colin Hygate by introducing him to delegates and speakers, as this was his first conference in his new MVG secretary role.

The activities started on Friday evening at the Liner Hotel where delegates met informally to register, chat with friends old and new, and enjoy a glass of fizz. The conference started promptly under the chairmanship of **Martin Percival**, who, like many of us, had researched his father's history from his capture at the Fall of Singapore through the TBR to an aerodrome construction in Burma. We received a very warm welcome from **Prof. Hilary Ranson** on behalf of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, celebrating its 125th Anniversary. In association with them we have learned so much about the medical conditions suffered by FEPOWs.

The first session on Singapore was led by a long-established friend of MVG, **Jeya Ayadurai**, who not only explained the developing attitudes in Singapore society to World War II heritage but also the new

forward-looking attitude. Recognising history as a focus for tourism development now has a more significant impact than a memorial echoing the development of Singapore as a nation. It was reassuring to know that he was making good progress with the plans for a new museum at Kranji and that, as an interim stage, the Haw Par Villa (www.hawparvilla.sg) would hold a temporary exhibition of the MVG Plaque among other WWII heritage items.

Emily Sharp explained why different nations remember Changi differently, a most interesting talk based on her PhD research at Leeds University. She also assisted in the operation of the conference. She made an interesting point about the new director of the War Graves Commission focusing more on education which, as with Jeya, was a recurring theme through the conference.

Completing the first session **Jon Cooper**, a recent graduate from the Centre for War Studies and Conflict Archaeology at the University of Glasgow, gave a well-informed description of the role of Scottish soldiers in Malaya and Singapore although he omitted to mention the Scottish contingent in the Volunteers!

After the break, the theme of the next session was on journeys and escapes by **Ken Hewitt**, whose recent book "Tigers in Captivity" reflected the history of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment in Malaya. He recounted the fluctuating fortunes of Pte. Edwin Trapp who ultimately perished on the hell ship *Brazil Maru* between Taiwan and Japan.

Mary Monro then described her father's escape from Hong Kong through China. Major John Monro made his way through partly occupied China to Chongqing from where, as Asst. Military Attaché, he planned with the British Army Aid Group to liberate the Hong Kong prisoners. "If you want to know who you are then learn who your forebears were". Both sessions ended with some lively Q&As.

After lunch, the theme switched to Borneo, Indonesia, and Thailand and started with our member, **John Tulloch**, who will give his talk at our Annual Lunch next year, describing the history of the camps and death marches in Borneo. **Michael Schwartzberg**, a Dutch amateur historian working for the Archives Dept. in the Hague gave a well-illustrated and informative talk on the RAF campaign against the Burma Siam Railway.

The session was completed by **Arlene Bennett** who many of us know as the wonderful supporter of the organisations that recognise the Australian Nurses in both World Wars and in particular those of the Bangka Island massacre. Again, some lively Q&A followed.

Tribute was paid to **Dr Clare Makepeace** from Dr. Bernice Archer and Dr. Kamaluddin Khan by Prof. Geoff Gill, marking their significant contribution to POW history and medical care.

An appeal was launched for the refurbishment of the Liverpool Repatriation Memorial to which MVG will be contributing. The expectation is that it will not be completed in time for the 80th VJ Day anniversary in 2025.

The Rod Suddaby Memorial Lecture was given by **Prof Edgar Jones** who provided a most interesting explanation of the Psychological Resilience and Coping of FEPOWs during and after capture. This provoked a lively discussion illustrated by many personal memories from both the delegates and presenters. Most of the post-war suffering was of course before PTSD became better understood.

The evening buffet meal allowed many to catch up and socialise as well as discussing the topics raised during the day with more in-depth discussion with the presenters. The meal was followed by two presentations, the first by **Jan Slimming** whose book "Captured at Singapore" was written with her sister based on the diaries of their father, Stanley Moore, RASC who survived Changi.

One of our newest members, **Gautam Hazarika**, gave the second presentation on the Changi Newspapers. He is a history enthusiast and is researching the lesser-known aspects of World War II in the Far East. This project started when he acquired a manuscript *We Published in Prison* typed in Changi Prison in 1942.

The Sunday morning session was based on recent publications and the experiences of the author's research work. **Ken Hewitt** described his research for "Tigers in Captivity", particularly the use of the late lamented Roger Mansell website resource. **Eric Cordingly's** grandson James Reynolds gave an amusing and insightful talk about the family background to his mother's (see later) most engaging book "Eric and Scrunchball" which is a children's version of his grandfather's experiences and his dog. As a foreign correspondent working for the BBC, he had a most engaging style as he covered both past and sadly current wartime experiences.

Jackie Sutherland then described her parent's experiences of marrying immediately before the Fall of Singapore with bullets flying before the service. Her book "Doctors Behind Wire" describes their experience in the hands of the Japanese, drawn from their diaries.

After a short break, **Prof Carl Murray** described the background to his book "The Belfast Doctor", based on the diaries of his father, Major Frank Murray RAMC, in both Changi and Hokkaido in Japan. He has created a website (www.thebelfastdoctor.info) as a resource for fellow FEPOW researchers. BBC iPlayer still carries the programme "Litir Ghra" about his father.

John Willis talked about his father's experiences in Nagasaki, as he had curated the voices of FEPOWs and the background to his book "Nagasaki: The Forgotten Prisoners". As a TV executive his presentation was both authoritative and astonishing in the description of being within a mile of the second atomic bomb!

Meg Parkes rounded off the morning session with a wonderfully illustrated presentation of the "Secret Art of Survival" (www.captivememories.org.uk) with the help of Natasha and Tom, two PhD students who had produced a Tropical Medicine Time Machine.

Following lunch, the early afternoon session was "Marking Memory: Art and Museums". It was opened by **Stephen Walton**, a senior curator at The Imperial War Museum, providing an update on the focus of the museum changing to public engagement and education. Their finances were severely tested by the pandemic and although a government grant had helped them they were now concentrating on income generation and have great plans for digitising the WWII collection.

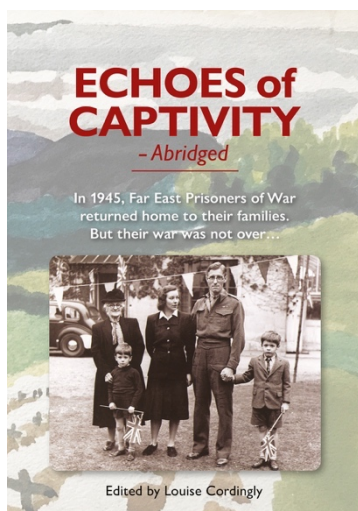
Dr Toby Norways provided a wonderful presentation about his father, Bill Norways's prison camp artwork in Singapore and Thailand.

We were then joined by video link with **Gen-Ling Chang** from Canada and **Prof Sears Eldridge** from the USA. The former described the establishment of the Asia Pacific Peace Museum to be formally opened in 2024 and the latter, suffering some technology glitches, briefly explained the entertainment "The Last Hurrah" as part of his "Changi by the Sea: Rice and Shine" series. His presentation should be available on the RFHG website.

After a short break, the final session on Transgenerational Legacies was started by **Dr Terry Smythe** explaining the social background behind the effects of FEPOW experience on their children, using his personal experience as a theme. Naturally, there was considerable discussion later on this topic as so many such children were delegates. **Eric Cordingly's** daughter, **Louise Reynolds**, gave a most interesting talk on the case studies she had undertaken in order to write her fourth book "Echoes of Captivity", which illustrates and exposes the trans-generational trauma experienced by many FEPOW families.

Prof Geoff Gill completed the session describing his work at the LSTM on the physical illnesses suffered by FEPOWs. He has been involved in their medical care as well as extensive clinical research into their continuing health problems. This led into the final Open Mic and Plenary Session with **Prof Edgar Jones** and the delegates discussed with him and fellow delegates their particular experiences until the conference drew to a close. It was generally agreed that the return of the conference was most welcome after such a long break, reflecting that the excellent array of speakers and the many delegate discussions were very worthwhile.

BOOKS



A new version of **'Echoes of Captivity,'** by Louise Reynolds, has now been reprinted and issued in an abridged version.

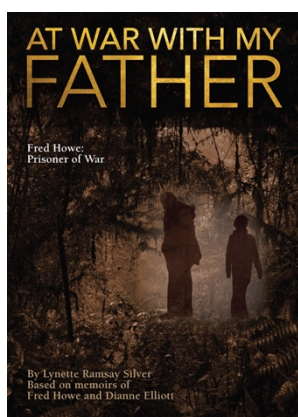
The book is full of interviews with families of FEPOWs who have been affected by their fathers' traumatic experiences whilst held prisoner of war in the Far-East and contains 15 interviews with sons and daughters who reflect on how they themselves have been affected, whether through breakdowns, depression or even flashbacks. Two interviews with professionals, who look at the trauma and how it was passed down, are also included.

Louise's father, Padre Cordingly, was imprisoned in Changi and up in Thailand, and, as she is a trained psychotherapist, she felt it was appropriate for her to investigate closely the subject of trans-generational trauma in the FEPOW community. Louise commented on the re-issue:

"The abridged book now costs £10 which makes it more accessible and, as I've dedicated it to FEPOW families everywhere, I'd love to give the COFEPOW charity's members an early opportunity to read it. I think the interviews will resonate with their own experiences, which was really my aim". Copies are available for £10 (£12 to include p&p). Contact louisereynolds99@aol.com. Also available on Amazon.

AT WAR WITH MY FATHER: Fred Howe, Prisoner of War

Lynette Ramsay Silver



It is June 2008 and I'm on a hillside overlooking the country town of Boorowa, NSW. It's a long time since I felt any need to visit the cemetery but today I have come to talk to my father. My research on the notorious Burma-Thai railway, where he was a POW, has brought me to this moment. For the past 13 years I have been following my father's wartime footsteps as a way of understanding him as a person and in turn, understanding myself.

It is a war story in three voices: me as narrator, Fred Howe as a POW, and his daughter Di Elliott who was affected by her father's trauma. It starts in Malaya in February 1941 and cover the story of Fred and 2/19 Battalion with his first-hand accounts of the bitter fighting at Parit Sulong, the attack on Singapore Island and the ill-fated X Battalion – the only first-hand account I have ever come across as they were all but wiped out. The POW section covers Selarang Camp, then moves in May 1942 to Burma, then Thailand, where Fred remained until war's end. It is an epic story of survival.

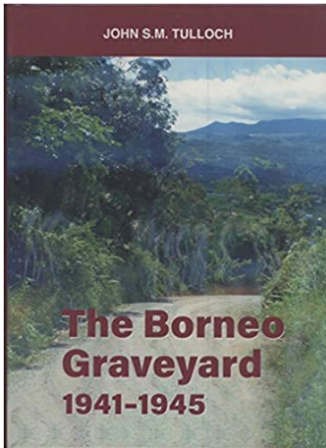
I inherited the task of writing this amazing story when Di, who had fortunately recorded most of her thoughts, was diagnosed with brain cancer. I promised her I would finish "Dad's story".

Amazon.co.uk: *currently out of stock*

Gazelle Book Services:

https://gazellebookservices.co.uk/products/9781863515016?_pos=1&_sid=3a8cba11f&_ss=r

<https://www.searchpress.com.au/search?author=silver&title=at+war+with+my+father&exactPhrase=y>



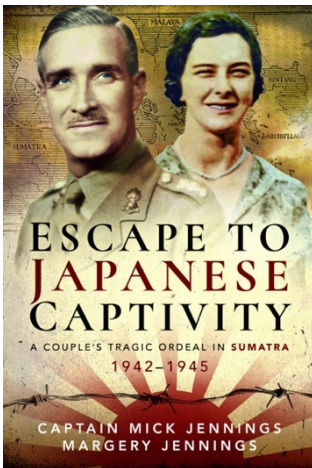
THE BORNEO GRAVEYARD 1941-1945

John Tulloch

Launched at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Sabah on 27th February 2023

Borneo, the land of the head-hunters, was a World War II graveyard for POWs, internees, locals, Javanese and Japanese. The narrative follows the raising of five Royal Artillery air defence regiments in 1939, their deployment in late 1942 to Southeast Asia, their short campaign in the Netherlands East Indies and eventual captivity as POWs in Java and North Borneo.

Amazon.com: <https://www.amazon.com/Borneo-Graveyard-1941-1945-Tulloch-John/dp/9833987656>
(2020 Hardcover \$99.99 + postage)



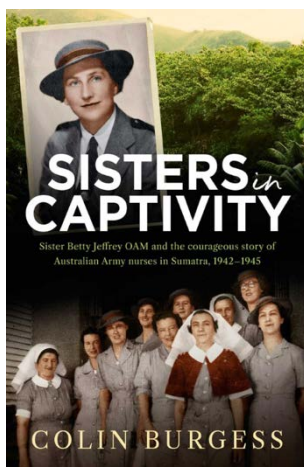
ESCAPE TO JAPANESE CAPTIVITY

From the Fall of Singapore, to escape and POW camp in Sumatra.

By Capt. Mick Jennings and Margery Jennings

<https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/Escape-to-Japanese-Captivity-Hardback/p/18441>

Captain C. O (Mick) Jennings, R.E., was born in Yorkshire in 1899. He served with the Royal Engineers in Mesopotamia from 1917 to 1920. He spent the next two years at Sheffield University, and then his building and surveying work took him from Yorkshire to the Gold Coast, back to Kent and finally to Malaya, where he became Municipal Architect at Kuala Lumpur in 1935. He was again serving with the R.E.s when Singapore fell and this amazing bid for freedom began.



A NEW BOOK TELLS THE STORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY NURSES IN SUMATRA 1942 - 1945

Sisters in Captivity; Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the courageous story of Australian Army nurses in Sumatra 1942-1945 by Colin Burgess is the account of Sister Betty Jeffrey OAM and the Australian Army nurses who survived the bombing of SS *Vyner Brooke* in February 1942, and subsequently spent three years in Japanese prison camps in Sumatra.

During those perilous years surviving in squalid conditions, Sister Jeffrey kept a secret diary of day-to-day events which, after the war, was turned into a hugely successful book and radio serial: *White Coolies*. She would often write of the powerful sisterhood that evolved as the prisoners of war took

strength from each other, even forming a vocal orchestra which Betty was a member of. *White Coolies* was a major inspiration for the 1997 film *Paradise Road*.

Sisters in Captivity builds on those diaries to not only re-live the years the nurses spent as POWs but also recounts the early life and influences that encouraged Betty Jeffrey into the field of nursing. A tireless advocate for returned nurses, she co-founded the Australian Nurses Memorial Centre, a 'living memorial' to the Australian nurses who did not return. Betty was the Centre's first administrator and then its patron from 1986 until her death in 2000. She was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1987 for her services to ex-servicemen and women. The Australian Nurses Memorial Centre still exists in Melbourne, Australia today and a portion of proceeds from sales of the book will go to the Centre.

Featuring photos and including personal mementos of Betty Jeffrey, courtesy of her family, and some of her drawings from the prison camps, this is a powerful account of women's resilience amid the devastating brutality of war.

The book is available for purchase in bookstores Australia wide. For those in other countries, information about ordering a copy or an audio book can be found here:

<https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/books/Sisters-in-Captivity/Colin-Burgess/9781761109089>

OBITUARIES

SUSAN MARY RUTHERFORD 10/10/1939 – 24/04/2023



Susan Rutherford died peacefully on 24th April at Cabrini Hospital, Malvern, after a prolonged illness. Dearly loved wife of David for 53 years. Loving and loved mother and mother-in-law of Louise and Ferdinand, Simon and Priscilla, sister and sister-in-law of Gordon and Penny and aunt to their family, sister-in-law to Ian and Margaret, Suzanne (dec) and John (dec) and aunt to their families. Lovely Grandma to Lucas, Charles, Thomas, Harry, and Sam. A special thank you to all the wonderful members of the palliative care team involved



in Susan's care, both at home and at Cabrini Malvern.

From L to R: John Pollock, Alison Keating, Susan and David

Rutherford; Rosemary Fell. The photo was taken outside the YWCA - Fort Canning Road, Singapore.

LEON COMBER 20/09/1921 – 11/05/2023

Leon Comber, who has died aged 101 in Melbourne, served as a Special Branch officer in the British Colonial Malayan Police during the Emergency of 1948-60, rising to head its Chinese section, and drew on his experiences to write *Malaya's Secret Police 1945-60: The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (2008).

The book described how Comber and his colleagues outsmarted and won over some of the mostly Chinese communist insurgents. He also published books about the history of the Chinese in the Malay

Peninsula and works of translation. After the formation of Malaysia in 1963, he was one of the few non-Muslim Europeans allowed to acquire Malaysian citizenship in recognition of his contribution to the battle against militant communism.



An only child, Leonard Francis Comber was born in Southwark, south London, on September 20th 1921 to Leonard Comber, a master bookbinder and typesetter, and Elizabeth, née Boyle.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he was reading law at King’s College, London, and in February 1942 he was commissioned into the Royal Indian Army Service Corps. A proficient linguist, he acquired Hindi and served with the 23rd Indian Infantry Division in Assam and Burma, rising to the rank of major.

Background:

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ogbl#inbox/FMfcgzGsmrDLzTZVbsKZrIFWkvcRqjPC>

Books:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=leon+comber+books>



We have been asked to write a few lines to introduce ourselves to the MVG's wider membership around the world.

Colin Hygate – new MVG Secretary



My father, Len Hygate, worked in Singapore from 1935 as an accountant and served with the 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. He was captured in Singapore and after Changi and two workcamps on the island he was sent with "E" Force to Kuching. He was fortunate to survive and on repatriation married my mother Joan. Having returned briefly to Singapore he concluded it was not a place for a pregnant wife and returned to England.

I was christened Colin in memory of his S.S.V.F. comrade and good friend, Colin McLean, who lost his life in Labuan in 1944. As children we were vaguely aware of his Far East life often sharing holidays with a fellow Volunteer, Joseph Baker and marvelling at a Samurai sword that hung above the sideboard. He encouraged me to follow a career in business. Having retired and starting to research the family history I looked in detail at the notes and letters he left. It was at this point that a mystery emerged – he recorded a workcamp in Sarawak he called "Poek". This was the moment I first came into contact with MVG. Neither Jonathan nor Andrew had any knowledge of "Poek". However, with the wonderful assistance of the MVG membership research capability and now two visits to Sarawak, that mystery has been solved. Some of this story has already been published in *Apa Khabar* and the last visit is being written up at the moment.

During this research Rosemary indicated she was finding her secretarial duties increasingly difficult to conduct and asked if I would be interested in taking them on. Having been responsible for managing a number of companies I was well aware of the responsibilities and equally astonished that she had been dealing with everything herself since being widowed. I suggested that providing we could divide her duties into Secretarial, Membership, and Editorship of *Apa Khabar*, these separate roles could provide a more resilient team to support our membership. I was delighted that Roger Willbourn stepped forward on membership and Sally Jennings would take on the Editorial responsibilities. I do hope that in time this team will be able to provide support and encouragement to existing members as well as develop the membership for future generations to understand the dedication to duty of the Volunteers.



Roger Willbourn – new Subscriptions Member for MVG

My links to Malaya and S.E. Asia originate with my paternal grandparents. My grandfather went to work in the Federated Malay States as a government geologist in early 1914, becoming the director-general of the FMS Geological Survey between the wars. Apart from a couple of years WWI service in the Royal Signals, he lived and worked in Malaya until the Japanese invasion and the Fall of Singapore. Initially he was a member of the Malay States Volunteer Rifles, then the FMSVF and, after the age of about 50, in the LDC. He survived Changi and then three years in the camps on the Burma Railway in Thailand.

My grandmother lived all her married life in Malaya (Batu Gajah) and was killed when the *Giang Bee* was bombed, shelled, and sunk in the Bangka Straits on 13th February 1942. Their story was told in articles in *AK* editions 53/54/55.

My father was born in Batu Gajah in 1920 but, as was so common in those days, from the age of four he spent all his childhood in the UK, being brought up by his maiden aunts and seeing his own parents only every two or three years. He didn't return to Malaya until he had retired, when he visited me while I was working in Singapore and Malaysia in the 1980s. I worked in Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand for various

periods from 1980 until 2013, when I retired to the UK. I was introduced to the MVG by the renowned historian of the Pacific War & S.E. Asia POWs (and MVG member) Sibylla Jane Flower, about eight years ago and have been enthralled ever since by the extensive information about the Malaya campaign and all associated matters which MVG membership brings. I have thoroughly enjoyed contacting so many people with similar family histories in that part of the world. I am very pleased now to be able to assist Colin Hygate in his work as our new secretary, by handling certain financial, subscription and membership matters and thus relieve him of some of these tasks. How Rosemary managed to do such an extraordinary amount of MVG work on her own over the last two decades, I shall never understand!



Sally Jennings – new Editor for MVG

I left England on a troop ship in 1947, arriving in Malaya when I was four months old, accompanied by my mother, Ruth. My father, Mick, had returned early to Kuala Lumpur at the request of the Colonial Service. The people needed to be rehoused after the war and as he was municipal architect for KL, he was happy to oblige; he built Kampong Satu, opened by Lady Gent. He hated to be away from Malaya anyway. He had first arrived in 1935 with his first wife, Margery, both from Yorkshire, after a stint in the Sudan and Gold Coast. Mick had re-joined the Royal Engineers (he'd been in Mesopotamia in World War I). As a consequence, they were both caught up in the Fall of Singapore. Margery sailed in the *Mata Hari* to be bombed and experience three years in camp in Sumatra. Leaving his beloved MG behind, Mick made a valiant attempt to escape Singapore then crossed Sumatra to reach Padang and take a 17-ft dinghy hoping to reach Australia. He failed and went into camp in Sumatra. (*An Ocean Without Shores* by C.O. Jennings). Margery died three months before the end of the war, but Mick survived, meeting my mother on the SS *Antenor* going home. She was in the Red Cross. In the compiling of his books with my sister Deb, we were greatly helped by Jonathan Moffatt.

My life in KL was extremely happy, attending the Alice Smith School and swimming in the pool at the Royal Selangor Golf Course in the afternoon. In 1951 we went down to Perth, WA to escape the Emergency as my sister Deb was on the way. The family then toured Australia and New Zealand with a view to retirement. England was too damp and grey after years in the tropics. They decided on NZ, and I was the first in the family to establish a toehold in 1957, flying from Singapore to Auckland in a Constellation by myself to be met by friends. I went to boarding school in Wanganui and was extremely unhappy, but the family came down to relieve me and we established a home in Auckland. There I went to Rangitoto College and the University of Auckland where I got a degree in languages. I later got a master's degree in town planning at the University of Calgary.

I couldn't wait to get back to Malaya and left in 1975 to teach English as a Second Language in Singapore for three years. There I edited a variety of books for Heinemann's and have continued editing ever since, full time since 1999. I met my husband in Singapore and after three years we went to Maidenhead, UK. England was indeed grey and rainy! A couple of years later we emigrated to Calgary, Canada; now I'm in Victoria on the West Coast. Perfect. I have a son in Victoria, BC and a daughter in Derbyshire.

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DATES for your DIARY

Tuesday 15th August 2023, NMA Alrewas – V-J Day Service in the Chapel and MVG's Plot at 12 noon.

Please try to attend this service and mark the most important date in our calendar, not only to remember those who did not survive but also to celebrate the lives of those fortunate enough to survive. Please let **Colin Hygate (secretary@mvg.org.uk)** know if you are attending so that we can order the appropriate number of service sheets. Following the service, the wreath will be taken to the MVG's Memorial Garden to be placed on the Memorial Stone before going to Heroes' Square where there are plenty of tables for those bringing picnics or making use of the various NMA food outlets.

Saturday 14th October 2023, Annual Reunion and Luncheon, RAF Club, Piccadilly, London. 12 Noon to 5 p.m. Our speaker this year will be **Michael Yardley** whose father Richard Yardley, 2nd Lt. FMSVF was attached to the Royal Corps of Signals due to his experience in wireless and telecommunications as Asst. Controller Post and Telecommunications KL. As a FEPOW he endured working on the Burma-Thailand Railway before suffering the appalling agony of shipment to Japan on the hell ship Osaka Maru. He wrote the book "The Amonohasidate" (The Gate of Heaven, in Miyazu Bay in northern Kyoto Prefecture) describing his extraordinary life as a prisoner of war under the Japanese. Michael's talk is entitled "The Amonohasidate" and describes his father's personal experiences.

The lunch will take place in The Sovereign's Room. Please let **Colin Hygate (secretary@mvg.org.uk)** know before **30th September** if you wish to attend 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 Year Favourites". Starter: Melon. Main: Steak, mushroom and ale pie served with roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables. Dessert: Sherry trifle followed by coffee or tea and petit fours. The cost is **£48** per person and **payment is due by 30th September** – (BACS Payment to Account Name: "Malayan Volunteers" Sort Code: 40-22-09 Account No. 42728532 referencing your payment "Lunch" or cheque by post to either Roger Willbourn or Colin Hygate).

Thursday 9th November 2023, Cross Planting Ceremony, Westminster Abbey's Field of Remembrance

By kind permission of Revd. Pauline Simpson, FEPOW Padre, who coordinates 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. The location of the plot is shown on a notice at the entrance. For any members wishing to attend the ceremony and plant a personal Cross of Remembrance **please let Colin Hygate know** so that tickets can be secured. They will be able to obtain a cross from the RBL stall near the entrance.

Sunday 12th November 2023, Remembrance Day Cenotaph Parade. The Royal British Legion has offered MVG 12 tickets for this year's parade. A number of members have already confirmed they wish to march and ask that any other members who want to join them **please let Colin Hygate know urgently and BEFORE 24th August** so that tickets can be confirmed. He will provide detailed instructions for the day once confirmed by RBL.

Remembrance Day Commemorations in Canada and Malaysia – details to follow.

Sunday 10th December 2023, NMA Alweras Service to commemorate the sinking of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales. We thank Bob Hall for representing MVG at this annual service. Members may wish to join Bob to not only recognise this dreadful loss but also to mark our reaction to the recent desecration of these war graves.

2024 DATES

Friday 16th February – Radji Beach Commemoration Service, Bangka Island, Indonesia

Sunday 12th May – Relief of Rangoon Service in the FEPOW Church Wymondham

June date to be confirmed – God's Little Acre, Batu Gajah, Malaysia

15th August – V-J Day Service in the Chapel and MVG's Plot at 12 noon NMA Alrewas

Saturday 19th October – Annual Reunion and Luncheon, RAF Club, Piccadilly, London

Sunday 10th November – Remembrance Day Cenotaph Parade.

