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76th EDITION
OCTOBER 2023



**A Long Time Coming:
Australian War Memorial unveils sculpture of remarkable WWII nurse
Vivian Bullwinkel**



(photo credit: 3AW Melbourne)

Lieutenant Colonel **Vivian Statham**, AO, MBE, ARRC, ED (née **Bullwinkel**; 18 December 1915 – 3rd July 2000) was an Australian Army nurse during the Second World War. She was the sole surviving nurse of the Bangka Island Massacre, when the Japanese killed 21 of her fellow nurses on Radji Beach, Bangka Island, in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia) on 16th February 1942.

You might be interested:

ABC documentary: Vivian Bullwinkel: An Australian Heroine (trailer)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9H6oJx5bD8>

Australian Prisoners of War (Department of Veterans Affairs)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ytoaj4r217o>

These short films detail the statistics of Australian POWs and civilian internees over the years and examine the prisoner experience from the Boer War to the Korean War.

Australian Women in War

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zg4zrReTw6s>

Filmed in 2008, the film *Australian Women in War* uses the galleries at the Australian War Memorial as a backdrop for study of the role of women from the Boer War to the Vietnam War.



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STORIES of Derring-do

IN SEARCH OF ALBERT VAN ARSDALE: FROM JOHORE VOLUNTEER ENGINEERS to OSS DETACHMENT 101, BURMA

Jonathan Moffatt

Some years ago, on a visit to the Imperial War Museum Research Room I came across a superb group photo entitled 'Malayan Contingent, Belgaum 1942'. Belgaum, 300 miles south of Bombay, was the location of an OCTU [Officer Cadet Training Unit] course. Thirteen cadets were in the captioned photo, all Malayan Volunteers who had escaped from Singapore in February 1942. Of the thirteen, eight were from the Johore Volunteer Engineers, three from the Kedah Volunteer Force and two from the FMSVF. I knew detailed information about twelve of the men, mostly well-established planters, nearly all ex-Dalco/Dalforce and nearly all subsequently with Force 136. On the left of the photo was one A. van Arsdale of the JVE, looking younger than the others and wearing wellington boots while the others wore army boots or shoes. Van Arsdale appears on both the JVE WW2 medal roll and the Changi Bureau of Records and Enquiry JVE roll; I knew that he was from the USA but what was he doing in Malaya? When did he arrive there and how did he escape from Singapore in February 1942?



Left: At sea off Alaska 1936. Right: at Belgaum OCTU 1942.

A web search revealed the following pre-Malaya details:

Albert Henry van Arsdale was born in 1910 in Seattle USA, the son of a real estate agent. Educated at Garfield High School in Seattle, he went to sea with the US Merchant Navy before serving with the US Army at Fort Mills, Corregidor, the Philippines, in 1934-1935. Fort Mills was the headquarters of the Philippine Department's Harbour Defences of Manila and Subic Bays where coastal artillery training was conducted.

After two years there Albert returned to Seattle and signed on as a deckhand and dresser aboard the schooner *Wawana*, fishing off Alaska in 1936-1938. He then travelled in China and to Hong Kong and Japan. Prior to the US entry to the war, he was trucking supplies for the Chinese Army from Rangoon along the Burma Road to China until, in his own words, 'It just got too dangerous'. I was already sensing he was an adventurer, a bit of a Jack of All Trades, with some

military experience and itchy feet. He was of a type I've seen before in SOE Oriental Mission files and not the sort that fitted easily into the Singapore/Malaya social scene.

Albert's own photo album in the University of Washington [State not DC] Archives West records in photos and captions his early adventures but there was a big gap, namely World War II service in 1941-1945. His name is not in the 1940 or 1941 Malayan Directories. He arrived in Singapore in late 1941. A later commanding officer wrote that he had simply showed up in Singapore and was 'engaged in some questionable adventure ashore'. I thought he might have been recruited either by W. Birtwhistle's developing Fisheries Department which was experimenting in more productive fishing methods or by J. B. David's General Mining Agency in Singapore which recruited a lot of ex-military as mining engineers, some of whom became SOE agents in the north of Malaya and across the Thai border. I thought Albert might have gone to the Kota Tinggi Tin Mine, Johore but there was just no evidence.

Whatever the truth, his Johore Volunteer Engineer service number is a late one: Sapper 1280, enlisted December 1941. As such, he was soon in the thick of it when the Japanese launched their assault on Singapore and the JVE on February 9th, 1942, were defending the perimeter wire of Tengah Airfield. By then the JVE, originally 250, men was down to 90 after many had received commissions in other units including the Mysore Infantry. The brief defence of Tengah Airfield is described in the memoirs of Lt. Guy Hutchinson JVE [see 'The Elephant of Johore' in Cambridge University Library digitised collection]. Hutchinson describes how, in the night, someone had opened the aviation fuel taps and one section of men received bad burns from the waist downwards, not from the fuel catching fire but from the chemicals it contained, a similar effect on the skin to mustard gas. The next morning Hutchinson sent six of the men, including Albert, with burnt feet, to the Singapore General Hospital. Some were discharged before the end of hostilities. The remnants of the JVE were entrenched around the Tanglin Club at the time of the capitulation.

Albert escaped from Singapore on the night of February 15th, 1942. He later claimed that he and a companion stole a Malay outrigger canoe. They made their way across the Straits to Sumatra, and he took a ship to Rangoon, arriving just before the Japanese. He then headed for India. Although this is just possible there are timescale issues, and it seems a bit of a tall story. Nothing unusual about that even among real men of action like Albert. It seems more likely that he was with other JVE, KVF and Dalforce escapers, including those later at Belgaum, aboard the Fisheries Department experimental and refrigeration vessel MV *Kembong* which left Singapore on the evening of February 15th carrying some 40 passengers, both military and civilian. They reached Bengkalis Island on the 17th and then the coast of Sumatra. They continued 90 miles upriver to Pekanbahru. Here they took a motor bus for 170 miles then a train, reaching Padang on February 20th. Two days later they left Padang aboard HMS *Danae* to Java, arriving at Tjilitjap on the 22nd. Five days later, among some 650 military personnel, they boarded the *Wu Chang* for a dangerous and unpleasant journey to Colombo, at one point surviving an attack by a surfaced Japanese submarine with a torpedo passing beneath the flat-bottomed *Wu Chang*.

Whatever the truth about Albert's escape, a month later he was attending OCTU Belgaum in his Wellington boots, probably on account of his still-blistered feet. We know from an FMSVF escaper and diarist, Gunner Mortimer Hay, that the course at Belgaum was less than inspiring and more appropriate to the 1920s than a preparation for jungle warfare in Burma or jungle drops into Malaya. Cadet Albert van Arsdale received a commission being gazetted as 2nd Lieutenant 253351 in the 1st Battalion, the South Staffordshire Regiment [77th Indian Infantry Brigade]. The battalion participated in Wingate's first, very costly and controversial Chindit Operation 'Longcloth'. Albert relinquished his British Army commission on September 25th, 1943, and re-enlisted the following day as a private in the US Army.

It was there that the trail on Albert's story went cold until something intriguing came up: an American contact, Jean Allan, found a passing reference to Albert van Arsdale in an Imperial War Museum recorded interview with one William Brough, an English conscientious objector from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who developed some expertise in rescuing wounded men from the battlefield. Brough had been recruited in China by the OSS [United States Office of Strategic Service]. Albert, promoted to sergeant in the US Army, had joined OSS Detachment 101 [Ledo Rd/Shan States, Burma]. Although his Chinese was limited, he raised a platoon of 100 Chinese, part of a Chinese Company led by Brough. The CO of Detachment 101 was a professional soldier, Roger Hilsman, later, in the 1960s, President JFK's Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs.



In his memoirs *'American Guerrilla'* Hilsman wrote of van Arsdale: 'Van was oblivious to anything beyond the immediate. He did not experience any fear beyond immediate danger. I have known men like him among regular army enlisted men between the wars. Van was a great favourite with the Chinese guerrillas. He wore a pair of camouflage pants with suspenders [braces] and no shirt, only a khaki towel around his neck to wipe away the sweat. He carried one of the fancy 9 mm submachine guns that the OSS had obtained from the Dutch, and a Chinese orderly trailed behind him with a high-powered sniper's rifle that had telescopic sights. Van used both weapons with such enthusiasm that Brough and I had to keep

special watch to see that he didn't start firing before the order was given'.

Through 1944 to June 1945 Detachment 101 saw intense, close-quarter, no-quarter fighting, ambush, and counter-ambush. In the quieter evenings Van played poker with the unit's radio operator from Brooklyn. They used as chips a bag of silver rupees intended to reward helpful villagers. In **photo 3** he is shown observing the Japanese-held town of Lawsawk. He probed the town with two of his platoons to find a whole Japanese regiment there.

In **photo 4** he is pictured in the centre with his favourite sniper rifle. Hilsman is on the left.

For Albert, the war ended on the Thai/Burma border. Demobilised in October 1945 he briefly returned home to Seattle then headed back to the Far East and acquired a surplus PT boat to smuggle arms to various independence movements before getting thrown into gaol by the colonial authorities.

When he returned to the US he spent some time flying illegal immigrants into the US from Mexico. He then acquired a well-digging rig and drilled water wells for suburbanites in the northwest. By the 1960s he drifted back into the merchant marine and as a sea captain he



purchased a surplus US Navy 110-foot submarine chaser and converted it in Seattle into a coastal freighter the *'Blue Bird'*. The little craft sailed from Puget Sound to Hong Kong then as ever, living close to the edge, he took a consignment of rubber to North Korea.

Albert retired to the small community of Union, Mason County on the Great Bend of the Hood Canal. Here he continued to work on boats. He died on 17/2/1986 in Union.

Photo 4. Albert is pictured in the centre with his favourite sniper rifle. Hilsman is on the left.

LABUAN AND REPATRIATION

Colin Hygate

Having achieved our first objective of identifying the location of the Dahan/Poak work camp (Apa Khabar July) we continued our quest to retrace as closely as possible my father's recuperation and repatriation journey from Batu Lintang camp in Kuching. He wrote that he was transferred by Catalina to Labuan and so we prepared to follow that route as closely as possible. Having suffered some tummy upset over the weekend we set off from the wonderful comfort of the Ranee Hotel deciding not to eat anything until after arrival in Labuan. Perhaps recapturing too closely the difficulties my father and many of his comrades suffered!

We had a number of objectives in making the visit in addition to following Dad's route home. In June 1944 a party of some 200 prisoners including many of the Volunteers who had been in Dahan were transferred from Kuching to Labuan. This party included my namesake, Colin McLean and was led by Capt. Campbell RAMC, the MO at Dahan who had sent my father back to Batu Lintang which had effectively saved his life as none of the Labuan party survived. This party was sent with the objective of building a runway and so one of our objectives was to establish if this was the runway that we were to land on. We also wanted to visit the location of the recuperation Hospital that the Australians had established and of which my father spoke so effusively. We naturally wanted to visit the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery where all those who died in Borneo were reinterred. In particular Colin McLean and Capt. Campbell as well as that of Pte. Wickett, whose original grave we believe we had seen close to the Dahan/Poak camp.

The journey was generally uneventful changing at Miri and arriving on time in Labuan. A local cab took us to the Tiara Labuan hotel where we were able to check in early to a most delightful room. We were both feeling much recovered and consumed the inflight cake with some coffee in the room where we relaxed and continued to feel much improved. There must be a strong recuperative influence on the island!

We were staying at the Labuan Tiara which we chose because not only was it close to the CWGC Cemetery, but it also appeared close to the airport and the hospital. All this suggested that this could have been the location for the PoW Camp as well as the airstrip work in 1944 and the recuperation hospital in late 1945. We were to discover later that the hotel was directly adjoining the site of the original PoW camp on the Golf course behind the hotel. It was also located close to an idyllic beach along which we strolled soaking up the sunshine and the wonderfully relaxing atmosphere. It was truly a place to recuperate.

It is only a short walk from the hotel to the **Commonwealth Graves Cemetery**, but we ensured we took a parasol/umbrella, provided by the hotel, as it was again a blazing tropical day. The extensive Cemetery has amongst it the bodies of both Colin McLean and Capt. Campbell although we knew these were not marked other than 'Known Only To God'. However, we found two such graves adjoining their comrade Pte Wickett's marked grave and so dedicated those two to McLean and Campbell. We chatted to an Australian couple who, after one of the CWGC staff provided the complete listing of all those in the Cemetery they explained their relative was in a marked grave.





We found a number of other marked graves for Malayan Volunteers but randomly located around the Cemetery. Amongst those we did find one dedicated to Sergeant G. W. Moffatt of the North Borneo Volunteer Force who had died in Jesselton in June 1942 clearly wondering if he was related to our Jonathan Moffatt. (Jonathan later identified that he was a Government Accountant related to a post-war Unilever Director).

I resolved that not only would we collate all the names of Volunteers in Labuan but also that a suitable memorial will be placed there once agreement can be reached with CWGC. This will provide future generations with a focal point for all those Volunteers who died on Borneo.

We then visited the **Labuan Museum** where we not only enjoyed a most instructive exhibition of the islands cultural and political history but also met one of the conservators who had helped to confirm the location of the recuperation hospital. He provided a copy of the relevant section of the Historical Study (Kajian Sejarah) of Labuan 1800-1984. From this we were able to establish that the Japanese had built the original airstrip, where the airport now operates, starting in 1942 with local labour as well as a reported 3,000 Javanese. As there were no PoWs at that time on the island. In early 1944 as construction slowed due to the deaths of many of the Javanese and locals a party of 131 members and sympathisers of the Kinabalu Guerrillas were transferred from Jesselton. In June these were further supplemented with a party of 99 PoWs transferred from Sandakan and in August by the Kuching party of 200 led by Capt. Campbell. Their camp was in a compound on the Golf Club near the harbour in Victoria and immediately behind the hotel where



we were staying. The airstrip was some 1.5km long and with a large hard standing area reportedly to service up to 200 bombers and 200 fighter aircraft. This was the airstrip that was maintained after the war by the British administration and remains as Labuan's Airport.

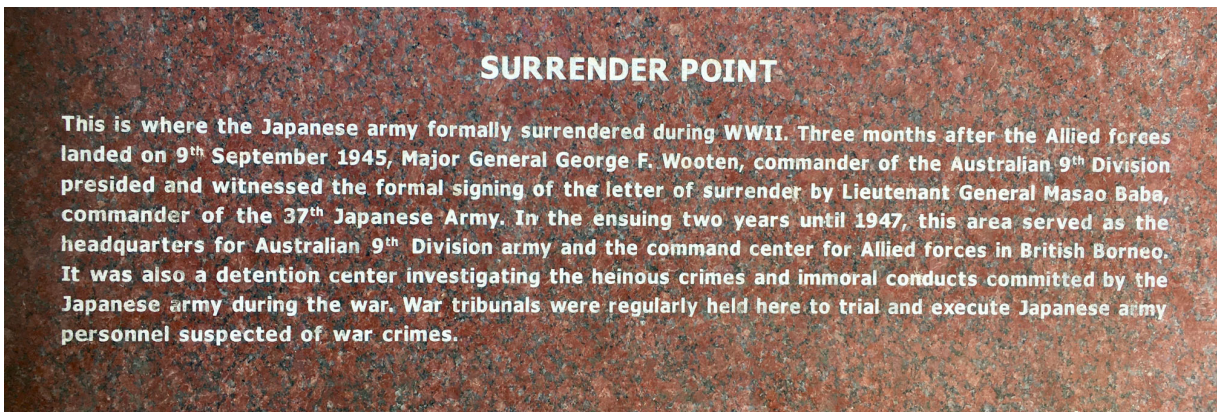
A second airstrip was constructed on the opposite side of the island at the village of Layang-layangang called Timbali. This was a shorter airstrip and may not have been fully completed once the Japanese fleet had lost the use of Brunei Bay. This was almost certainly the final work for Dad's

comrades. This airstrip no longer exists. None of this party survived as they either died, killed or were on the party subsequently taken to Riam Road, including Captain Campbell, and were killed there. The Japanese had constructed a temporary harbour in Layangang Bay to enable their ships direct access to the South China Sea. After bombing by the allies started in October 1944 the PoW Compound was moved to 3 mile close to the foot of a small hill.

The Australian 9th Division, as part of Operation Oboe, had been given the task of capturing Labuan Island. Their assault started on 10th June and by the 21st of June 1945 they had captured the final pockets of Japanese resistance on the island. The 9th Division Headquarters were built at Layan-layangang, as Victoria and its harbour had been severely damaged by allied bombing. The Japanese surrender took place there and is now memorialised as Surrender Point.

The Surrender Point monument was being refurbished although I managed to get in to take some photographs of the work in progress. However, the main purpose of our visit was to experience the location that my father was taken to recuperate. We knew the Hospital was constructed close

to the beach as he had described the delight of the 'beach-side hospital' and the 'wonderful treatment he received from the Australian nursing staff'. the location of the Peace Park,



constructed with post-war Japanese funding. The Park was certainly a peaceful and calming place. We enjoyed the most enthralling experience walking south from Surrender Point along the beach where the recuperation hospital had been built. The location that he had described as overlooking the sea was a very moving experience and we both felt we had never been anywhere more recuperative than that beach.

I reminisced, with what was probably an unchanging view of the coastline, of times when letters were received from home, the anticipation of repatriation and the sorrow of so many friends being left behind.

We chuckled at the thought of Lady Mountbatten's visit which he described in a letter dated 2nd October 1945.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL 120909

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

It seemed to work as just over two weeks later on the 14th of October the Order of The Day was: *‘The following ex-POW’s will prepare themselves for embarkation the S.S. Ranchi for repatriation to the U.K. The sailing time will be 2 p.m. on October 16th, 1945.’* Len's name was on the List.



Unlike my father we could not take a ship back to Singapore although we were to join one there to complete the replication, as close as possible, to his repatriation voyage. Back in Singapore we visited the **Changi Chapel and Museum** which had reopened since the refurbishment which, like so many



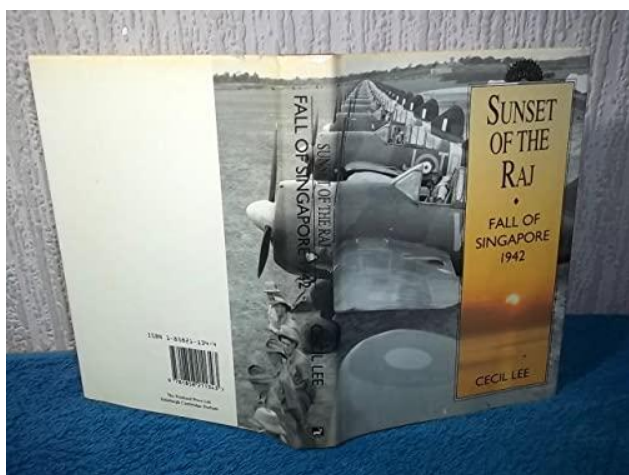
others, was both instructive and emotive. The new interactive displays allow visitors to research down to a particular story relating to a specific prisoner or internee for whom they have records. There are now eight specific displays covering the history of the fortress, its fall, the internees, their life, with a walk-in replica of a cell, their resilience and creativity in adversity, their final liberation, and their legacy where you can look up names and stories and view some of the artefacts. There is even a "Chatbot" which, by scanning the QR code, you can use your phone to listen to an audio tour listening to a soldier's story as he guides you through the exhibits. The shop has an extensive range of books and other memorabilia but the most engaging was the interest and obvious delight in meeting staff when they realised I was a descendant of a POW as well as the new Secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group. They quickly guided me to our highly polished Sime Road Plaque on the outside wall facing the new Bark Cafe.

Roger Willbourn very kindly facilitated our visit to the **Singapore Cricket Club** where in 2019 we had also been invited by Neil and Morag Aitken who had kindly given us a guided tour. My father had played regularly before the war and to spend time in the club made a further special reminiscence.

Completing our 'Repatriation' journey we boarded a P&O ship in Singapore and followed a very similar route home that the SS Ranchi had taken in 1945. This gave us the opportunity of visiting Penang which was where my father first set foot in the far east in 1935. It was also an opportunity to meet up with Richard Parry and share our thoughts on MVG in that part of the world.

Our scheduled stop in Colombo was cancelled and so we were unable to replicate Dad's 'tiffin at the Galle Face Hotel' that he wrote about. Travelling back through the Suez Canal was an amazing experience and evocative of the thoughts of those on the Ranchi as they entered the last leg of their journey home, eventually arriving in Southampton.

After our return Jonathan has managed to piece together what we believe is the definitive list of all 92 Volunteers that are interred in Labuan CWGC Cemetery. I propose we use this as the basis for a permanent MVG Memorial there. This will provide a plaque identifying where all the known grave locations are but also recording the fact that others with no named grave are memorialised. I intend to start on that process with the CWGC this autumn.



MALAYAN TALES OF A GRANDFATHER

by C.H. Lee – pre-war, contd., by kind permission of his son Graham Lee

The abdication of King Edward VIII came and went – a shock and surprise, for not a word leaked out in the newspapers. How different it would be now with the "Private Eye", etc. A friend at home mentioned rumours of the king's lady friend, but it had not registered. I sat with his friend, **Eric Galvin** and **Bovell**, a policeman, and we listened to his sad broadcast.

Most of our seniors were critical of him though sorry, but the censure of the eloquent **Cosmo Lang**, Archbishop of Canterbury, was general – hitting a man when he is down. A bitter squib was circulated:

*“Oh! My Lord Archbishop what a scold you are,
Of Christian charity how scant you are,
Oh! My Lang Swyne,
How full of cant you are.”*

Winston Churchill's warnings about our unpreparedness and the Nazi menace were coming through, and I became so vocal in my support that my colleagues in the firm's mess in Maxwell Road, to which I had now returned, pasted his picture on my chair.

Munich came, and most thought we had ratted pretty badly, but none of us knew the facts we know now. I cannot pretend to have been very prescient.

There were divisions on the subject of Munich, and one old lawyer on the steps of the Club Chambers said to me, **“Neville Chamberlain is the greatest disaster the Empire has ever suffered”**.

One friend I recall, **John Kennedy**, of Malayan Fertilisers, the airman, was quite left wing in his views, and we had many a discussion. He later joined the air force at home, and I remember in late 1940 in London in a Piccadilly restaurant we met with his wife and found some of his views were such that if known, might have got him into trouble with the authorities. His wife was much troubled by his candour. Russia had not come in, and he stated then “What hope was there unless they did come in”? I wonder what his views are now. I would like to see him again, but he went off to Tasmania, though we did meet after the war. I still have a letter I sent home when war was declared, in which I informed my parents, before war was actually declared by us, that my friends (that probably meant **John**) and I thought **Chamberlain** would still do a Munich on us. The record shows that this was the truth, and only his colleagues in the Cabinet forced his hand. **Kennedy** was the friend with whom I went on the same canoe trip to which I referred, and we also did jungle trips – what happy memories.

It is said “old men forget” and it is difficult to recall one's thoughts and feelings so many years ago now. I have tried to convey truthfully the atmosphere of those times, so utterly different in so many ways, from the present, that it sometimes seems to be a fantasy world. Such changes have taken place in my lifetime that surely are beyond compare with previous eras.

During my years out East, I didn't see any member of my family but in 1938, my sister **Bibbins**, who had trained as a nurse at King's, obtained a post as sister in the Peak War Memorial Nursing Home in Hong Kong, and came out in the new P&O ship “*S.S. Canton*.” I went down to Penang to meet her en route and found that, as expected, she had made many friends on board and had had a great time. I sailed in the **Canton** to Singapore with her, and on board was **C.A. Parkinson**, who later became and remained one of my closest friends. He was then joining **Harrisons & Crosfield** Insurance Department.

The Governor, **Sir Shenton Thomas**, was also on board, and in Singapore all the *tuans besar* came on board to greet his return. The governor was a modest man, and I was standing near him when I heard him tell the purser he wanted no fuss or special arrangements for disembarking.

In our brief time in Singapore, we had dinner at the Raffles which I recall particularly. It was all too brief, and it was a sad occasion when I waved goodbye again as she sailed for Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong **Bibbins** made many friends such as my former colleague, **Walkden**. Like my mother, she had a great capacity for friendship. Another Purley friend she met was **Richard Course**, an earnest, neat, quietly ambitious chap who had joined I.C.I. in Calcutta and enlisting in the Indian Army was, sadly killed in the Rajput Regiment when the Japanese landed in Hong Kong

just before Xmas, 1941. It was a hopeless business, a forlorn hope, and a sad end to this very decent fellow, who must have been thrilled at the idea of serving in the old Indian Army.

Just before I left to go home on leave in September, **Bibbins** came again on a visit, and was put up by a couple in the Chartered Bank, **Macdougalls**, the wife having been before her marriage at the Peak with **Bibbins**.

My friends, male and female, rallied around and she had a good time. I took her to see my planter friends, the **Fraser**s, at Batang Kali. **Doug Fraser** was a grand fellow, who had won the M.C. in the Gunners in World War I, and I met him just before the Fall of Singapore in Raffles Square in charge of an anti-looting squad of Chinese, as cheerful as ever despite his dismal duties. Poor chap, he died in internment – one of the best, and an unsung hero in his way; brave, hospitable, full of fun, and a competent planter.

Like so many of his generation out there, internment conditions under the Japanese with insufficient food and drugs proved fatal, and diphtheria took him off. **Doug Fraser** was not atypical as a planter – easy-going, good with labour, conscientious, not brilliant, nor claiming any high moral purpose, but with a sense of duty and courage.

It is no doubt, however, the civil servant, the colonial civil servant, that the Spanish philosopher, **Santayana**, had in mind in his *Soliloquies on England* in 1922 when he wrote:

*“Never since the heroic days of Greece has the world
had such sweet, just, boyish master. It will be a black
day for the human race when scientific blackguards,
conspirators, churls, and fanatics manage to supplant him.”*

These sentiments may seem unfashionable coming from your grandfather in A.D. 1980, but surveying what is happening in the world today, perhaps too close still to the experience of the British Raj, yet I dare to think those words may not seem appropriate when in 15- or 20-years' time you come to manhood and maturity.

These sentiments may seem too cosy and complacent, but we must leave it to the impartial historians of the future to judge our imperial and colonial past, comparatively brief in the great span of history.

The fate of the **Fraser** family was typical of those sad times. **Mrs. Fraser**, who much enjoyed life, returned rather forlorn to Malaya after the war, hoping for a job, but succumbed to cancer and died. The **Fraser**s had two daughters who came out as teenagers in 1939, but their taste of family life together was all too brief – never the joy of grandchildren in retirement and tranquillity.

In those days before the era of air travel, parents seldom saw their children after the age of seven when they had perforce to go home to school and foster parents. Leave was every three or four years, and some companies did not pay wives' or children's passages! **Sir Frank Swettenham**, Chairman of **Doug Fraser's** Company, was reputed to have said that the women of the country were good enough in his time!

Our Scots engineer, an impressive and taciturn loner, had a son aged 18 who was killed at Keren in Eritrea fighting the Italians in late 1940, serving as a young second lieutenant in the Cameron Highlanders. He came to manhood as war broke out, so his parents hardly saw him in his brief life. I remember so well how his stricken father, never given to any demonstration of feeling, came to my desk, a thing he had never done before, sat down, and said, *“You know my son has been killed.”* There was no comfort I could offer the poor chap, but his grey, leaden grief-stricken look haunts me now.

Likewise, the son of my good chief, **Johnny Johnson**, an Irishman who had lost an eye in World War I, had about the same time a son killed in the air force; he didn't survive internment under the Japanese.

These mournful reminiscences help to remind one forcibly how true and necessary it is for those not so fortunate to "*count your blessings*," as my dear old mother used to say.

All these men, my seniors, behaved, with few exceptions, with courage and dignity when the crunch came and late in life faced internment under the Japanese with equanimity.

I have mentioned that all my sisters, and your mother, showed great fortitude in the face of danger in the War. **Bibbins** had the distinction of being the only one of our immediate family to win an award for courage. She received a Card of Commendation from **Admiral, Lord Mountbatten**, for her conduct in opening up an emergency hospital in the Tai Koo area where the Japanese first landed on the island of Hong Kong. She was sent down with some others by the matron at the Peak, and advised to get under the beds if they were bombed. On the way down in the car, the male driver suggested they stop, as mortaring of the road was getting heavy, and they lay down on the road. **Bibbins** tells me they got a fit of the giggles as she said, "*We ought to be under a bed.*" How brave these girls were. They opened this hospital in a shambles, and soon the dreaded frontline Japanese troops were around, but officers kept them in check, and the girls were not molested. They had only whisky for sustenance, and put it into chamber pots, as we had already been warned about letting the Japanese have any alcohol. In Singapore I hate to recall how much whisky I personally destroyed!

Bibbins was, of course, interned at Stanley, and I have no doubt her good spirits were good for general morale. I like to record these matters for my children and grandchildren who are very fond of her. **Bibbins** survived internment and is still hale and hearty, and long may this be so.

My other sister, **Kiwi**, came home from South America during the War and spent a large part of her time in Streatham, London, and, like **Billy** and Father, took the "blitz" and buzz bombs in her stride.

Two elite services in Malaya were the Customs & Excise and the Police. Both had a high standard of recruitment. Through my friendship with **Ian Jeffries**, I had the experience of accompanying him and some of his Chinese officers on a raid in the mining belt on the outskirts of Setapak, on suspected distillers of the illicit samsu (distilled from rice). They were armed but after surrounding the house, they entered with no resistance. The Shanghai jars of the precious liquid were broken up, and all this seemed fairly passively accepted by the Chinese market gardeners. The same applied to a raid on an opium den at Kuala Kubu one evening. In this case an escaping Chinese was brought down with a rigger tackle, and a few completely puggled [sic] opium smokers looked on resignedly to the sudden intrusion of the law.

The head of Customs and his wife, **Mr & Mrs H.W. Phear**, were very kind to me, and I cherish their memory and hospitality. They had badminton parties and dinner parties, and I met some quite senior and very agreeable members of the civil service. **Mr Phear** had won a DCM at Gallipoli and told me he was one of the last men to evacuate. He came to Malaya as a policeman, but his obvious talents were transferred to the Customs. His wife refused to leave Singapore in 1942 (they had no children) and she was interned. They were a fine couple and unlike any popular conception of the white man and woman in the East as you could find, living modest, useful, and kindly lives.

The expression "Heaven Born" to which I have alluded could, perhaps, be applied to one or two of the Police, but they were a very fine lot, and one I knew in particular, **Tim Denison-Smith**, was a delightful fellow, of wit and humour, a good amateur actor and stylish editor of their police magazine. Sadly, his health suffered in internment, and he died not long after the War.

When I was secretary of the Volunteer Mess in 1936, I had to help organise our Annual Dance at the “Dog” – quite an affair. I sent rather a curt and stupid note to the Police Mess, inviting them to buy tickets. This caused consternation, and much confabulation between old **Major Soper**, our Mess President, and theirs. It seemed to be a major scandal, my act of *lèse majesté*, and the shocking solecism caused much shaking of heads. In fact, the Volunteer Officers had invited the Police Mess to their annual dinner and were rather narked not to be invited back.

The annual intake of four young police cadets to Kuala Lumpur always caused great fluttering in the hearts of the young ladies then in circulation, and the usual crop of marriages took place – smart affairs with the Police forming an archway of swords as the couple left the Church near the Club.

One affair with the wife of a fellow in a local firm had tragic consequences. The errant officer was banished to the Perak coast, and there the unfortunate lovesick officer committed suicide in his bungalow.

I now approach the final chapter of this serene period of peace – a sort of Elysian Fields in retrospect. How can I sum up these placid, peaceful five years pre-war in Malaya? From the time when I stepped off the steamer in Penang, and inhaled for the first time that pungent, spicy odour, so distinctive to the Far East, took a siesta in the great, gaunt high-ceilinged Penang Club, resting on a long chair with great swinging arms for one’s legs, and a slot for one’s “sa’tengah”, watching the Chinese “boys” padding silently through the carpeted rooms, silent except for the occasional call of “boy”, or the sound of the fruit machine and raucous laughter. My morning ablutions on the local steamer introduced me to the Shanghai Jar and the dipper, a good way of washing standing up, the breakfast of papaya, and the journey to the office in a rickshaw clad in new white drills. From the office window I caught sight of a Malay fisherman casting his net in the silty yellow waters at the confluence of the Rivers Gombak and Klang around the mosque – hence the name Kuala Lumpur (Muddy Mouths). In the old-fashioned office in Market Square each floor was open, except for a senior’s office with swing doors and wooden partitions, over which he might call you in. I opened the mail, entered the cheques, checked the estate accounts, paid the monthly wages, checked the import department stocks annually, and in my spare time did such share registration business as we had for our few local rubber companies with names like **Eng Kee** and **Kundong**.

It was a full and useful day. Although our Head Clerk, **Mr R.H. Beins**, had provided long and honourable service, a European had to supervise the opening of all mail. This did not survive the war, but illustrated the accepted axiom that only Europeans were quite reliable.

My boss, a tall, handsome, and perhaps vain man with the distinguished names of **Hallam Brookfield Egmont Hake**, was a member of the Federated Legislative Council as one of the Commercial Unofficial members and bore the prefix “The Honourable.” He had joined the Borneo Service before World War I as a cadet, then taken up a commercial appointment with us in 1916. His talents took him to the top. I found him agreeable.

He dispensed elegant hospitality in his great house on the hill in Maxwell Road. Dinner parties were often followed by visits to the cinema, and on my first occasion he sorted out the guests and cars and then elected to go in my little Austin Seven I had just acquired for \$50. I was a new and unsure driver, but I saw my precious cargo safely to the pictures, re-assured by his apparent confidence!

He epitomised the old order in style. He was a liberal-minded and generous man, a wise cynic who often gave me sound advice, especially when I wanted to leave the office and go planting, which I do not think would have suited me – a difficult manager might have made life hell. It would have been lonely, and I was sociable and gregarious.

Egmont Hake had a fastidious eye for feminine beauty, and I was invited to the 21st birthday party of his second wife. He was indolent but in a crisis could exert himself and be formidable in print and in speech. He had an able partner who did the donkey work, and they were a good combination. He was not a leader of the calibre of **Fletcher** or **Jenkins**, but he had style and panache. I cannot sum up, but these random reflections may give some ideas of the impact of pre-war Malaya on my green youth.

Before I lead on to sterner stuff I must mention an institution which survives – the Chinese dinner, those gargantuan and often ghastly affairs when too much is eaten and too much drunk. The food is generally delicious – shark’s fin soup, bird’s nest soup, the roasted suckling pig, lychees, etc., and normally the Chinese towkay (merchant) who is host has a sort of major-domo who attends to his and everyone’s wants. On one occasion he made his master’s speech when the old towkay had succumbed to the pleasure of the table and slipped somnolently thereunder, but sufficiently compos mentis to relay in his recumbent posture beneath us, and apparently intelligibly, the essence of his valedictory remarks to his assembled guests. At curry tiffin in Sitiawan after the War with my old friend and planter, **Bill Harvey** and **Parkie**, the famous local Indian doctor, **Dr Parampalam (Pram)** waxed eloquent under the influence of his libations, while next to me a silent Chinese towkay, who spoke only Chinese, beamed, and belched benevolently during the jollifications, emitting a sort of contemplative regurgitation which indicated that at least he had enjoyed the meal. Readers of my narrative will appreciate that the five years to 1939 had been the highlights of my life so far, and after the war it could never be the same. This was not on account of the demise of the Raj. I had had five years of interesting and absorbing work with enough responsibility to give spice to life, and I had most agreeable friends and colleagues, many of whom had not survived the war.

There was the euphoria of return and being welcomed despite our failures, and there were excellent new recruits, promotion of local men to senior posts, and many new developments in the planting industry, but soon the Chinese Communist outbreak came upon us. I lost good friends. The first planter to be murdered was one **Doy** whom I had visited in Pahang in November 1941, and a lot of the old magic attached to my work seemed to evaporate for various reasons. I even missed the capacious, old-fashioned, high-ceilinged, open offices with their revolving fans and chummy atmosphere, now replaced by large, modern, air-conditioned blocks.

No! I am afraid to have to say that for me it was “never glad confident morning again.” (*Lost Leader*, Robert Browning)

Background:

<https://www.britishempire.co.uk/maproom/malaya.htm>

[“Sunset of the Raj - Fall of Singapore 1942”](#)

by Cecil Lee

<https://www.britishempire.co.uk/library/sunsetoftheraj.htm>

TALL STORIES

SHOOTING A LINE, JAPANESE STYLE!

By David Croft, M.A. (RAFBPA)



Shooting a line...a common phrase used in the wartime RAF when a pilot wanted to exaggerate his “heroic” performance in the air to others when safely in the mess or pub.

Apparently something similar was common if the feats of Japanese airmen are to be believed as appears in “Behind Bamboo”, first published in 1945 by Rohan Rivett. Rivett was an Australian journalist who was news editor and then war correspondent for the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation from late 1941 after he arrived there at the outbreak of the Pacific War. He subsequently became a POW and wrote “Behind Bamboo: Hell on the Burma Railway,” the story of his experiences at the hands of the Japanese.

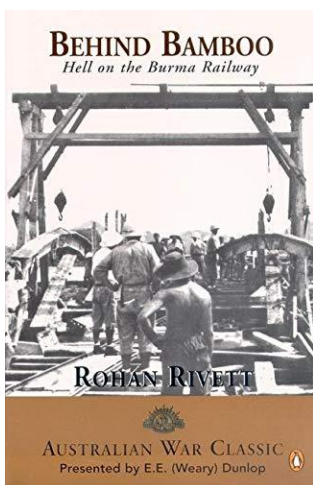
“All Japanese newspapers were an unending source of amusement and delight to prisoners at a time when we had very little of either. Their stories went from the wildly improbable to the utterly impossible without the journalists concerned batting an eyelid. We discovered that the best way to deal with the Japanese communiqués was to divide the Allied losses they claimed by anything from five to ten and take the Japanese losses as the figures quoted for the Allies. By the time of what the Japanese called the “Third Battle of the Gilbert Islands”, they had destroyed three times as many battleships and twice as many aircraft carriers as the United States had ever built.

“But it was the stories that provided the real joy. I only hope that some of the copies of *Greater Asia** and other Japanese newspapers of 1943-4 can be found and preserved for exhibition in museums! One reporter gave us a glowing account of the enthusiasm with which the elephants of Burma hailed their delivery from the cruel British who abandoned them, and their appreciation of the Imperial Japanese Army. He said the elephants were now experiencing better treatment than they had ever known before, and that he had just seen a parade of elephants ‘raise their trunks and let forth a resounding trumpet of salutation in honour of their deliverers, the heroic Imperial Army, whom they loved’. The prisoners in Burma were naturally tremendously impressed with this story, for they saw nearly all the working elephants along the railway line** ill-treated or starved to death by the Japs within a few months.”

**Libraries with copies are listed online under Newspaper Greater Asia (Rangoon) 1943-45, published in English.*

***Captured Burmese elephants were used by the Imperial Japanese Army for the making of bridges and railways in the march towards India. The book, “Elephant Bill” written by the wartime*

reservist, Colonel James Howard Williams (the famed Elephant Bill) of the British Army, covers the story of the care and role of elephants during the Burma Campaign. Elephant Bill was advisor to the Elephant Company of the Royal Indian Engineers throughout the Burma Campaign. He was employed in this role through his pre-war experience with working Burmese elephants.



To continue with the Japanese Line-Shooting story from “Behind Bamboo”: “But the feats of Japanese airmen or ‘Wild Eagles’ were the stories which the papers loved. No Japanese plane was ever shot down by the enemy. Such trivial losses as were admitted were always due to the fact that the pilots crash-dived into their objectives. In the air battles of Burma, one Japanese pilot, being out of ammunition, shook his fist at the British plane. The British pilot was so terrified that he landed his plane in a padi field, in accordance with the Jap pilot’s wishes. Another Jap pilot secured victory over his opponent by covering him with a pistol, so the cowardly enemy hastened to land his plane in Japanese territory. In New Guinea, the Japanese pilot forced his enemy down in the jungle. He then landed his own plane (apparently in the jungle treetops), ran back to the British plane, overpowered the enemy pilot,

tied him up with jungle vines, and marched his captive back through the jungle to a Japanese aerodrome.

It gets even better. “Facts of time, space, speed, and elementary aeronautics did not disturb the Jap scribes. One of the most famous stories told under bold headlines is how a Japanese pilot, out of ammunition, found himself pursued by a huge Liberator. The pilot, with great gallantry, hurled his rice cake at the pursuing plane, causing it to crash ignominiously into the sea.

“The finest performance was that of another ‘Wild Eagle’ who, though out of ammunition, wished to attack a British destroyer. He dived at the warship upside down, making straight for the bridge. Then he drew his Samurai sword and leaning out of the cockpit, valorously decapitated the commander of the destroyer as he swept past.

“Finally, we had the hero, who, after shooting down innumerable foes, returned to his base with less than half his plane, in fact with one wing missing. He staggered to the operations room and reported in detail to his commanding officer. ‘It was only after he finished,’ the report ran, ‘having fulfilled his entire commission, that it was discovered that the lieutenant was dead.’

Another tall story? From another source comes the following: “Surrender of any sort does not enter into even the pipe dreams of the honourable sons of the Rising Sun. It therefore came as a distinct surprise when, in Burma, a Japanese officer who turned out to be a colonel, advanced under a white flag and made it clear he wished to surrender – not the brigade, just himself. The British were naturally suspicious and treated him with caution. ‘You wish to surrender?’ The Japanese hissed and bowed in affirmation. ‘But Japanese soldiers never surrender, no?’ ‘Iss true. Yess. Japanese soldier never surrenders but I am non-combatant. I am in the artirrery (artillery)’.

Link to book:

<https://www.biblio.com/book/behind-bamboo-hell-burma-railway-australian/d/1456722996?aid=frg>

MEMORIALS

Her Majesty The Queen Visits the Royal Air Force Club, 29th August 2023



The Royal Air Force Club was honoured to welcome Her Majesty The Queen on 29th August 2023 to unveil a portrait of Assistant Section Officer **Noor Inayat Khan**, GC, a heroine of the Special Operations Executive (SOE).

The purpose of SOE was to conduct espionage, sabotage, and reconnaissance in occupied countries during the Second World War. Noor was recruited in 1943 from the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and was one of only two members of the WAAF to be awarded the George Cross (GC). Alongside the Victoria Cross, the GC is the highest award bestowed for acts of the greatest heroism, or for the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger.

Noor was the first woman SOE operator to be infiltrated into France and was landed by Lysander aircraft on 16th June 1943. During the following weeks, the Gestapo arrested most of the Paris Resistance Group in which she worked. Despite the danger, Noor refused to return to England because she did not wish to leave her French comrades without communications, and she hoped also to rebuild the Group. The Gestapo had a full description of Noor, whom they knew only by her code name 'Madeleine', and in October 1943 she was captured by them. Despite brutal interrogation she refused to give any information, either as to her work or her colleagues. She was imprisoned in Gestapo HQ, during which time she made two unsuccessful attempts at escape and was then sent to Germany for so-called safe custody. She was considered to be a particularly dangerous and uncooperative prisoner. On 12th September, she was moved to Dachau Concentration Camp where she was subjected to further brutal treatment, then taken to the crematorium and shot. Khan displayed the most conspicuous courage, both moral and physical, over a period of more than 12 months.

During the visit, Her Majesty met Shaik Mahmood, Noor Inayat Khan's cousin, before unveiling the portrait by Paul Brason, a former President of the Society of Portrait Painters. His works are held in many public and private collections, including the National Portrait Gallery.

The portrait now hangs opposite the stained-glass window which celebrates Women in the Royal Air Force (RAF). This was unveiled by The Late Queen Elizabeth II in 2018. The stained-glass window highlights female roles in the RAF since its inception in 1918. Queen Camilla named this room formally as the 'Noor Inayat Khan Room'.

Following the portrait unveiling, Queen Camilla joined a Reception in the Sovereign's Room attended by members of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Air Force Club and serving female RAF personnel representing the Royal Air Force Stations of which Her Majesty is Honorary Air Commodore, and other areas of the RAF. Her Majesty was presented with a book '*The Spy Princess – The Life of Noor Inayat Khan*', a biography of Noor Khan, by the author Shrabani Basu. It was a privilege to host this special event to honour the extraordinary courage of Noor Inayat Khan.



A portrait by Paul Brason of Assistant Section Officer Noor Inayat Khan, GC, a heroine of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) with her family, including Shaik Mahmood, Noor Inayat Khan's cousin,



Her Majesty was presented with a book 'The Spy Princess – The Life of Noor Inayat Khan', a biography of Noor Khan, by the author Shrabani Basu.
Royal Family Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DjZIL-k8V0U>



V-J DAY SERVICE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM, ALREWAS, STAFFS., 15TH AUGUST 2023

Colin Hygate

A regrettably small number of us met to mark V-J Day, arranged, for the first time, by myself although guided and assisted by Rosemary who gave me the freedom to put together the service of Readings and Hymns. In the absence of Allison Brierley, on holiday, her brother, Michael Mowat arranged the Prayers. Jim Tribble not only played the organ for us but also gave one of the

readings. He had travelled alone from Scotland as Sandy Lincoln had to pull out at the last minute with Covid. Richard Brown agreed to undertake the Wreath Laying both in the Chapel and at the MVG Memorial. Roger Willbourn guided us through the service in the absence of Jonathan Moffatt.



Rosemary had warned me that adapt and improvise were often the watchwords for the service and I can add 'expect the unexpected' from this, my first experience of not only visiting the NMA but also of the Service, let alone arranging it! Arrangements started with booking the chapel and obtaining confirmation that the organ was working after last year's debacle. Wreaths for both this Service and Remembrance Day were duly obtained, and dedications added. After some contemplation I decided that the theme of the Service would focus on the many different circumstances of V-J Day and what that meant for those surviving prisoners in camps, those still engaged in combat and those at home. Having thought through the readings I asked a number of those who had confirmed attendance if they would be prepared to read specific readings to which all readily agreed.

Accompanied by my wife, Sue, we collected Michael Mowat from Lichfield station and found our way to the NMA where we were met by Roger Willbourn and his wife Caroline. Our initial concern was that Roger had seen a notice outside the Chapel announcing a talk at 12.30 which was in the middle of our reserved time! We arranged for this to be removed and replaced with a notice advising that all were welcome to join the MVG V-J Day Service. A number of Members had started to congregate in the Coffee Shop area beyond the Main Reception from where we made our way to the Chapel. We were met by NMA Staff who were at pains to reassure us that the organ was in working order, before swiftly arranging the "All Are Welcome" sign. Jim checked out the organ and despite the relatively modern configuration he induced some most delightful sounds from the instrument. Caroline distributed the Orders of Service and Richard took charge of the Wreath whilst Roger and I ran through the detail of the Service. Unfortunately, Rosemary was suffering from a bee sting but accompanied by Imogen she was gradually recovering. We were also delighted that Keith Andrews was able to join us despite recovering from a small operation which prevented him from taking any specific role in the Service.



We were joined by at least two couples who had responded to the sign, as Jim played 'Nimrod' before we started our Service. I gave a general welcome and introduction before Richard laid the Wreath at the Chapel Altar. We held two minutes silence remembering all those Volunteers and Internees who had given their lives and service such that we could enjoy this freedom. We then sang 'Praise My Soul the King of Heaven' as lustily as a small congregation can. Roger then gave the reading from the Scriptures, taken from Luke Chapter 15 verses 18-24 (the Prodigal

Son). I had been impressed with Charles Dance's rendition of Kipling's 'The Road to Mandalay' during the National 70th Anniversary V-J Day Service on Horse Guards Parade. My opportunity to

include it was that Jonathan had recently unearthed a story of a Johore Volunteer Engineer, Albert van Arsdale, who had escaped Singapore and fought with the Chindits in Burma. I read this (which is included elsewhere in this edition of Apa Khabar) before reading Kipling's famous poem that evokes such an image of war and post war South East Asia. Anne Hinam then read an extract from the chapter entitled "The Setting of The Rising Sun" from Paul Pancheri's "Volunteer". This gave a contemporaneous account of his experiences in Changi during August and September 1945.

Michael Mowat led us in a series of most appropriate prayers, concluding with The Lord's Prayer which was followed by the hymn 'Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer'. Imogen Holmes then read an extract from 'In A Fair Ground' by Bishop Peter Howes who was an internee in Batu Lintang Camp, Kuching where my father was also held. The extract not only provided a description of the circumstances in the camp at the time of the Japanese surrender but also the reflections of a Christian Clergyman on the dropping of the atomic bombs. To provide a comparison to these descriptions Richard Brown then read a press report on the V-J Day celebrations in Southampton from the Southern Evening Echo newspaper. Our final reading was given by Jim Tribble, in Sandy's absence, from the book of poems entitled 'A Form of Consolation' written by John Durnford during his time in captivity at Khanchanaburi on the Thai-Burma Railway. The notes to the poem described the background to the announcement that the war had ended. The poem is printed in the Order of Service (a copy of which is on our MVG website).

Concluding our Service in the Chapel, Bob Hall gave the Exhortation, FEPOW Prayer and the Kohima Epitaph. Jim played Dvorak's 'Largo' as we collected the Wreath and tidied up the Chapel before walking to the MVG Memorial Garden. The Wreath was again laid by Richard as Michael led us in a final prayer whilst we all reflected on all those who are memorialized there as well as those who could not be with us on the day. The Garden is becoming overgrown and was somewhat unkempt which was a disappointment. I have taken up the issues of future maintenance with the NMA Grounds Manager as well as the replacement of one of the now collapsed Memorial Benches. We will be giving greater thought for next year's Service as to how we can arrange better transport for members who are unable to drive but able to travel by train. This will give us an indication of how we can best arrange for the significant 80th anniversary V-J Day Service in 2025.

<https://www.thenma.org.uk/what%27s-on/events/21alayn-volunteers-vjday-service>



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS VISIT SARAWAK



Australian veterans who served in two post-WWII military campaigns in Malaysia are visiting Sarawak for the anniversary of the 1966 Malaysia-Indonesia peace treaty signing.

The Malaysian Insight pic, August 24, 2023.

<https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/458796>

A GROUP of Australian military veterans who served here during the Malayan Emergency, and in Sarawak during the Malaysia-Indonesia confrontation, are in Kuching for ceremonies marking the 57th anniversary of the signing of the Malaysia-Indonesia peace treaty, which ended the conflict.

Some of the veterans, members of the South Australia and Northern Territory branch of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association Australia Inc (NMBVAA), came with their families.

KUCHING: A group of veterans from Australia and New Zealand will hold a commemoration service at the Sarawak Heroes Memorial Park here to mark the 57th anniversary of the end of the Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia.

Paul Rosenzweig, president of the South Australia and Northern Territory Branch of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association Australia (SA Branch NMBVAA), said the service next Monday (Aug 28) was a significant part of the veterans' visit to Sarawak this year. He said it would be attended by 30 Australian veterans and 28 from New Zealand as well as members of the Sarawak Veterans' Association.

During the Confrontation from 1962 to 1966, Australian and New Zealand units fought in Borneo and Peninsular Malaysia as part of a larger Commonwealth force under overall British command.

'The Confrontation was brought to an end with the signing of the Malaysia-Indonesia Peace Agreement or Jakarta Accord at Istana Merdeka in Jakarta on Aug 11, 1966 – 57 years ago this month,' Rosenzweig told a press conference here on Thursday (Aug 24). He reported that 71 Australian servicemen lost their lives on operational service during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, including 11 who died in defence of Sarawak during the Confrontation.

'In their commemorative events, the Australia and New Zealand contingents of veterans and families honour all those who served and remember those who lost their lives'.

Rosenzweig said the veterans and their families would also visit the **Batu Lintang Memorial** here to commemorate the liberation of the Batu Lintang prisoner of war camp in 1945. They will later travel to Bau district to hand over financial donations and books to three schools adopted by the SA Branch NMBVAA in areas where Australian troops served during Confrontation. The schools were SK Serabak, SK Suba Buan and SK Stass. 'In this way the branch remembers the support of the Sarawak people in 1965-1966 and supports the upcoming generations,' Rosenzweig noted.

This will be followed by a visit to Kampung Gumbang, the site of an Australian military position known as Bukit Knuckle in 1965. Sarawak Tourism Federation president Audry Wan Ullok said the Australian and New Zealand reunion visit was an important event for Sarawakians to recognise the heroes who fought for Sarawak and to cherish and remember the state's history.

She said it also served to celebrate and value the state's freedom, cultivate patriotism among Sarawakians, motivate the younger generation to learn more about history and develop tourism products and post-war tours.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/08/24/veterans-from-australia-new-zealand-to-visit-sarawak>



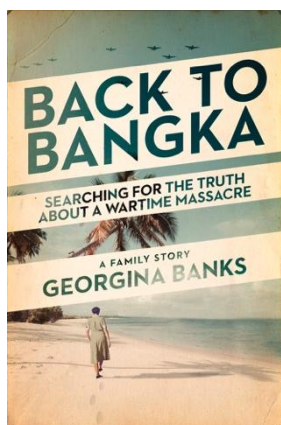
Batu Lintang Memorial,
Kuching



BOOKS

'Back to Bangka' by Georgina Banks

<https://www.penguin.com.au/books/back-to-bangka-9781761341137>



Georgina Banks searches for the truth of what happened to her Great Aunt 'Bud', killed in the Second World War.

Bangka Strait, Indonesia, 1942. Allied ships are evacuating thousands in flight from Singapore, the island having fallen to Japanese Imperial forces. Facing terrifying assaults by fighter planes, one ship, the *Vyner Brooke*, is badly bombed and sinks. Its survivors swim or paddle for hours to the nearest land, a beach on Bangka Island, parched, many dreadfully injured.

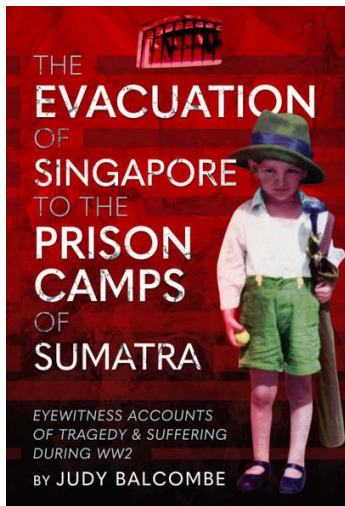
One of the survivors is Australian Army nurse Dorothy 'Bud' Elmes, the great-aunt of Georgina Banks. Bud, along with other nurses from the *Vyner Brooke*, including one **Vivian Bullwinkel**, make it to the island, where they tend to the wounded as a plan is formulated. But it is soon discovered the place is occupied by Japanese forces, and two days later they arrive on the beach.

Seventy-five years on, Georgina receives an invitation to a memorial service for her great-aunt. She knows little of the national history buried in her family but as she retraces Bud's steps in Indonesia, and then deep in archives back in Australia, she is left making sense of half-truths and confronting the likelihood that she may never know exactly what unfolded on the beach on that devastating day. *Back to Bangka* is a deeply moving intergenerational family story; a gripping retelling and investigation of events that throw a spotlight on women in wartime – in their vulnerability and profound strength.

Historic War Tours: <https://www.historicwartours.com.au/blog/2020/6/13/the-bangka-island-massacre-the-story-of-sister-vivian-bullwinkel>.

'THE EVACUATION OF SINGAPORE TO THE PRISON CAMPS OF SUMATRA'

JUDY BALCOMBE



<https://www.pen-and-sword.co.uk/The-Evacuation-of-Singapore-to-the-Prison-Camps-of-Sumatra-Hardback/24112>

The book is available for pre-order; published 23rd October 2023.

'The Evacuation of Singapore to the Prison Camps of Sumatra aims to describe the events prior to, during and after the Fall of Singapore and the ways in which former prisoners are remembered on Bangka Island today. It is the product of many years of detailed historical research, interviews with camp survivors and personal experiences discovering and locating the former Japanese civilian prison camp sites of Bangka Island and Southern Sumatra.

'Judith's aim has been to compile an accurate description of the fate of evacuees from Singapore who were bombed and killed in the South China Sea and Bangka Strait or imprisoned in harsh Japanese civilian prison camps. Many families have not known the fate of their relatives until contacting the author through the Muntok Peace Museum website

(<http://muntokpeacemuseum.org>).

All royalties from this book will be donated to the Muntok Red Cross in memory of the prisoners.



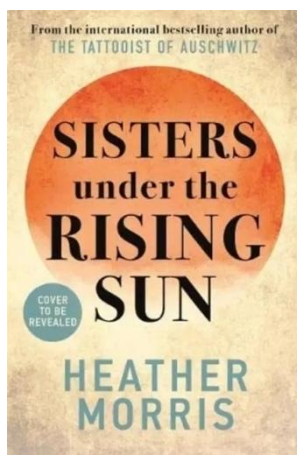
Muntok Peace Museum

https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page_id=71

David Man <davidgordonman@gmail.com>

The new Muntok Peace Memorial Museum at Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's prison Camp, is now completed and was opened in September 2015.

The land for this Museum has been donated by the people of Kampong Menjelang and the building work has been undertaken with donations from former internees, their families, Australian Nurses' families, the Malayan Volunteers Group, and BACSA, the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia.



SISTERS UNDER THE RISING SUN

Heather Morris

Publisher: Blackwell's

Sept 2023

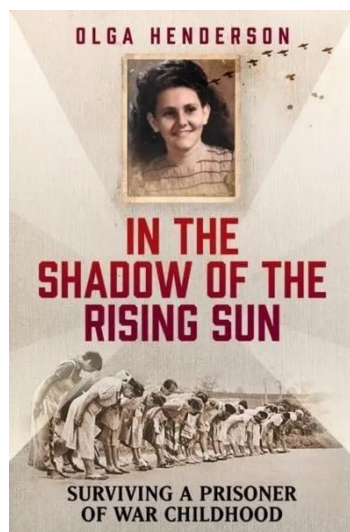
In the midst of WWII, an English musician, Norah Chambers, places her eight-year-old daughter Sally on a ship leaving Singapore, desperate to keep her safe as the island falls to the Japanese Army.

Australian nurse Nesta James has enlisted to tend to Allied troops. But as Japanese troops overrun the island she joins the terrified cargo of people, including the heartbroken Norah, crammed aboard the *Vyner Brooke* merchant ship. Only two days later, they are bombarded from the air off the coast of

Indonesia, and in a matter of hours, the *Vyner Brooke* has sunk.

After surviving 24 hours in the sea, Nesta and Norah reach the beaches of a remote island, only to be captured and held in one of the notorious Japanese POW camps. The camps are places of starvation and brutality, where disease runs rampant. But even here joy can be found, in music, where Norah's 'voice

orchestra' has the power to transport the internees out of the squalor and into the light. Sisters in arms, Norah and Nesta devote themselves to the women's survival while discovering their own extraordinary reserves of courage, love and strength.



'IN THE SHADOW OF THE RISING SUN: SURVIVING A PRISONER OF WAR CHILDHOOD'

Olga Henderson

July 2023

Publisher: Mirror Books

'Now in her 90s, Olga Henderson lives a quiet life in Eastbourne. In February 1942, aged 10, she was living in Singapore when the city fell to the Japanese Imperial Army. Sent to the notorious Changi Prison and subjected to unimaginable cruelty, this is the harrowing story of her life as a prisoner of war and how she survived against all the odds.'

Olga has been interviewed this summer by ITV and the BBC (no information on when the interviews will go out). Rosemary Fell writes: We are very proud of Olga and her story, together with our other civilian child internees, and I

feel all members of the MVG should have the chance to buy her book and read her story.

In February 1942, nine-year-old Olga Morris and her family were in Singapore when the city fell to the Japanese Imperial Army in the biggest defeat in history of the British Forces. Turned back at an evacuation ship's gangway as the bombs fell, Olga and her parents and siblings were forced to take their chances and hide out until, captured by Japanese soldiers, they were sent on a forced march to the notorious Changi Prison.

There's a certain stereotype of the British in Singapore in the '30s and early '40s, which Olga Morris – Henderson as she is now – definitely did not fit. Her family was not part of the privileged Raffles Hotel set, with their big houses and servants. Her father worked in construction. Olga and her siblings grew up in Johor Bahru, a diverse part of Malaya just across the causeway from Singapore, amongst children of all faiths and cultures. It was a very happy upbringing.

All that changed in 1942. Olga was playing with her guinea pigs when a British Army officer arrived to tell her parents that the family had just 30 minutes to pack and be ready for evacuation to Singapore. The Japanese were ten miles away. Olga's mother grabbed the family photograph album, and they ran...

Days later, Singapore fell. Three years of captivity followed. Three years of disease, malnutrition, deprivation, and oppression in Changi and Sime Road.

Desperate for food, Olga and her friends bravely raided the vegetable plot, 'dodging the searchlights' and sometimes endured severe punishments. She stood alongside the other women and children through the ordeal of Tenko in the blazing sun. Halfway through their captivity, Olga's ten-year-old brother was put into the men's camp, where he suffered terrible cruelty that scarred him for life.

February 2022 marked 80 years since the Fall of Singapore and Olga is now ready to tell the story of her years as a child prisoner of war. It's a story of great fear and deprivation; of a childhood utterly lost to conflict. It's also a story of class prejudice and unkindness that didn't end when Olga was freed from the camp and returned to England as a refugee.

Yet moments of humour and camaraderie also live on in Olga's memory. There were plays and imaginary tea parties and even a secret Girl Guide group that held clandestine meetings, where they worked on sewing a quilt. The Changi quilt is now held at the Imperial War Museum in London, as an emblem of the young guides' courage and faith. As Olga says, 'We always felt the end of the war would come, we lived for it, from month to month and tried never to lose hope.'

<https://blackwells.co.uk/bookshop/product/9781915306425?gC=4cfad707612>

CAMPAIGNS

LIVERPOOL REPATRIATION MEMORIAL – REPLACEMENT APPEAL



The Repatriation Memorial on Liverpool’s Pier Head was unveiled in 2011. It was funded through public subscription including M.V.G. and was organised by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG). The Memorial has deteriorated to an extent that it now requires replacement. We have already confirmed that M.V.G. will donate £500 in support of this Appeal which is expected to be formally launched during October.

Further details can be found at: <https://fepowhistory.com/2023/06/10/liverpool-repatriation-memorial/>



FUNDS NEEDED TO REPLACE LIVERPOOL’S WWII FAR EAST CAPTIVES’ MEMORIAL

One of the newer of the post-WWII memorials on the Pier Head, the Repatriation Memorial, is in urgent need of replacement due to severe weathering over the 12 years since it was unveiled.

The Researching Far East Prisoner of War (FEPOW) History Group, (RFHG) established the memorial after a national fundraising campaign in 2010-11. They are now seeking £2,000 to complete the fundraising for a new memorial plaque.

The existing memorial is a granite plaque. A central dedication remembers the thousands of FEPOW and Civilian Internees who returned through the port during the autumn of 1945, flanked by two columns of repatriation ships (in descending order) that docked at the Princes Landing Stage between 8th October and the end of December.

Regrettably, the type of granite recommended proved not to be resistant to rain and sea spray and was permanently affected by discolouration. In addition, over the years in such an exposed position the black lettering has degraded.

The RFHG will replace the memorial with a bronze plaque bearing the same inscription and ships' lists. The group is working in partnership with FEPOW groups in the UK representing the descendants of FEPOW and Internees held captive under the Japanese during WWII.

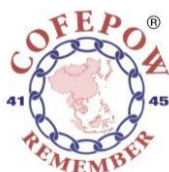
The Liverpool Repatriation Memorial Appeal will be launched nationally on 8th October this year, 78 years to the day that the first ship back to Liverpool from the Far East, M.V. *Monowai*, docked at the Princes Landing Stage.

The RFHG and their partners have already raised £4,500. They need to raise a further £2,000 to replace the plaque. For details about the appeal and how to make online donations visit:

<https://fepowhistory.com/>

Alternatively, cheques should be made payable to **Researching FEPOW History**. Please write Repatriation Memorial Appeal on the reverse and send to Mike Parkes, 83 Saughall Massie Lane, Upton, Wirral CH49 6LZ.

For further information and photographs, contact Meg Parkes – meg.parkes@lstm.ac.uk



MUNTOK DROUGHT

The annual drought is occurring in Muntok now and the Red Cross is delivering water where wells have run dry. The Bangka Island PMI (Red Cross) posted this picture of the water delivery to a school.



Judy Balcombe: I sent a donation from our garage sale fund and Dery replied yesterday: Thank you for your help, Mam Judy and our brothers in Australia, we will continue to carry out this humanitarian activity. we are all brothers. Hopefully in 2024 we can gather again at Radji Beach to convey the message of peace and brotherhood to the whole world. Thank you so much for your donation. Your generosity

means everything to us and to the community we serve. We will never forget the incredible support you have all given us. From the bottom of our hearts we thank you.

OBITUARIES

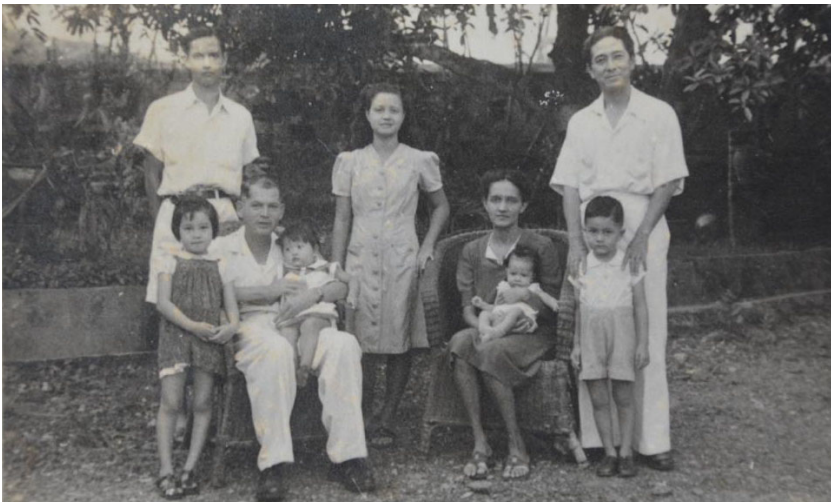
Dr John Henville

One of our long-standing members, Dr John Henville from Woodstock in Oxfordshire passed away at the beginning of August and was buried on V-J Day. He was the son of Laurie (Lawrence Arthur) Henville who served in 2 FMSVF. John was born on the Sungai Rambai Estate near Kuala Lumpur in 1939 where his father Laurie was the Acting Manager. John was evacuated with his mother Marguerite and sister Lorna on the *Narkunda*, arriving in Fremantle, WA, on the 24th of January 1942. They moved from Fremantle to Perth and then Adelaide before returning to the UK on the *Rangitiki* in 1945. His father, Laurie was captured in Singapore and transferred to Thailand on the 18th of May 1943 as part of H Force, where he died of ulcers. He was originally buried at Hintok on the 26th of August 1943 and later reinterred in Chungkai.

<https://johnhenville.muchloved.com/>

Terence A. de Souza

Please be informed of the death of Terence A. de Souza of Singapore. I write on behalf of my uncle who was born January 29, 1924. He died on May 17th, 2023, in Antioch, Ca., USA.
(John Hoshimi)



Adults: Left to Right: Uncle Terence, Granville (eldest de Souza), Norma, Muriel (my mum), Francis (dad)

Children L to R: Marie Therese (Mano), Anne (on Golipa's lap), Margaret (on mum's), Johnny (me). Terence was 21. All de Souzas except Francis (Hoshimi).
Anne, Margaret, and I remain from the pic.

“Dearest Uncle Terence, remembering all the good times and long life, especially in Singapore and Cardiff, and for all God has given us in eternal gratitude, Deo Gratias. Rest in peace as you join the heavenly hosts and your friends and family. Watch over us who remain.”

9th June 2023. 10 a.m. Mass at St. Edward the Confessor, London celebrated by Fr. Paul. Boniface Moran, OSB will offer Mass from Douai Abbey in Upper Woolhampton, Berks.

Terry de Souza was our last remaining Honorary Life Member of the MVG. Although he was not actually involved in the fighting; nevertheless, he was actively involved in the defence of Singapore as a member of the Civilian Observer Corps. Terry was not interned – he was too young.

Terry was one of our founder members. He would often ring me on his computer, and we had long conversations about his time as a boy in Singapore during the war. He told me that he would watch from the roof tops waiting to spot enemy bombers flying towards Singapore. This was his job. He would notify the authorities about the direction and number of planes he could see. His older brother, Clive, was in the 1st Battalion SSVF in Singapore, became a FEPOW, and was sent to Thailand with "D" Battalion. Post-war he became a major in the British Army and came to live in the UK. (Rosemary Fell)

THE BOMBING OF SINGAPORE - 8TH (7TH) DECEMBER 1941



British Empire & Commonwealth Forces in the Far East-SE Asia 1937-1946

(Photo: Japanese Mitsubishi G3M 'Nell' bombers)

The bombing of Singapore was an attack on 8th (7th) December 1941 by seventeen G3M Nell bombers of Mihoro Air Group IJN, flying from Thu Dau Mot in southern French Indochina. The attack began at approx. 04:30hrs shortly after Japanese forces landed on

Kota Bharu, Malaya. It was the first knowledge the Singapore population had that war had broken out in the Far East.

The attack on Singapore was assigned to 34 bombers of Genzan Air Group and 31 bombers of Mihoro Air Group. Their targets were RAF Tengah, RAF Seletar, Sembawang Naval Base and Keppel Harbour.

Six Squadrons from both air groups took off from southern French Indochina on the night of 7th (6th) December 1941. However, bad weather conditions were encountered over the South China Sea. Thick clouds offered poor visibility for the pilots, while rough winds caused most of the formations to become separated. After several attempts to regroup failed, Lt-Commander Niichi Nakanishi, Wing Commander of Genzan Air Group, ordered them to abort mission and return to base, thereby reducing the impact of a much heavier raid. Only seventeen G3M bombers of Mihoro Air Group reached Singapore on schedule, unobstructed by bad weather.

The Japanese formation was detected by a radar station in Mersing, Malaya, almost an hour before they reached Singapore. Three Brewster Buffalo fighters of No. 453 Sqn RAAF were on standby at RAF Sembawang. However, Flt Lt Tim Vigors' request to scramble and intercept the Japanese bombers was denied. Air Chief Marshal Robert Brooke-Popham feared that the anti-aircraft batteries would fire on the



friendly fighters, despite Vigors being an experienced night fighter in the Battle of Britain. He was supplemented by the belief that the Buffalo fighter was only suited for daylight fighting and could not be used at night. Paradoxically, there were 12 Bristol Blenheim Mark IF night fighters of No. 27 Sqn RAF stationed in Sungai Petani, Malaya, but were being used as ground-attack aircraft.

The streets were still brightly lit despite air raid sirens going off at 04:00hrs, allowing pilot navigators to locate their targets without difficulty. ARP HQ was not even manned, and there was no blackout,

as police and power station officials could not find the employee who had the key to the switch (only two practice blackouts were conducted in September 1941 before the raid). When the bombers began their attack at 04:30hrs, Commonwealth anti-aircraft guns immediately opened fire. The battleship HMS Prince of Wales and battle cruiser HMS Repulse also responded, but no aircraft was shot down. A formation of nine bombers flew over without releasing their bombs to draw the searchlights and anti-aircraft guns away from the other group. They were flying at 12,000 ft, while the second formation was at 4,000 ft.

The 'Raiders Passed' signal was sent out at 05:00hrs. The bombers succeeded in bombing the airfields at Seletar and Tengah, damaging three Bristol Blenheim bombers of No. 34 Sqn RAF. A number of bombs also fell on Raffles Place; 61 people were killed and more than 700 were injured. Most of the casualties were troops of the 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles, 11th Indian Inf Div. The Japanese bombers all returned safely to Thu Dau Mot, French Indochina.

Though the bombing caused only minor damage to the airfields, it stunned the British Far East Command. Despite intelligence reports of Japanese aircraft performance in the Second Sino-Japanese War, the command did not believe Japan's air forces were capable of striking Singapore from airfields more than 600 miles away in French Indochina. The raid came as a surprise to Lt-Gen Arthur Percival, who 'hardly expected the Japanese to have any very long-range aircraft'.

'Rudely awakened in the small hours of the morning by the screams of air raid sirens and the roar of ack-ack guns and in the clear moonlit sky around a formation of Japanese bombers. Bombs were dropped but none fell in our area. So the war in the Far East started – all day we heard news bulletins telling of the widespread treachery of the Japs Well! They've asked for it!' Diary and Line book written by the pilots of No. 453 Sqn RAAF.

In the days that followed, Singapore enjoyed a considerable respite from air raids, as the Japanese focused their attacks on key airfields and British, Indian, and Australian positions in northern Malaya. The next raid on the island occurred on the night of 16th/17th December 1941, which in itself was merely a minor attack on RAF Tengah by two Japanese Ki-21s. Only on the night of 29th/30th December did nightly raids resume in earnest on Singapore City. In contrast, daylight raids began much later, on 12th (11th) January 1942, following the fall of Kuala Lumpur to the Japanese the previous day and the shifting of the bulk of the IJAAF to southern Malaya.

Note: Although recorded as the 8th of December 1941 in Malaya/Singapore, it was actually the 7th of December in the UK. This is due to the International Date Line (IDL). The IDL is located at about 180° east (or west). It is halfway around the world from the prime meridian (0° longitude), the reference point of time zones, which runs through Greenwich, UK.

(https://www.facebook.com/BECFFESEA19371946/photos/a.1496591607284799/1858209747789648/?type=3&locale=hi_IN)
<https://www.historicwartours.com.au/blog/2022/2/14/singapores-dunkirk-1942>

The massacre of 21 Australian nurses on a beach on Bangka Island following the sinking of the SS *Vyner Brooke*, had everyone outraged that such a thing could happen. But the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke* was not an isolated incident. In an operation that would be described as Singapore's 'Dunkirk', the incompetence of the British-led Allied High Command in Singapore was evident, and many people died as a result.

It was clear when the last of the Allied forces crossed back onto Singapore on the 31st of January 1942, that a miracle was needed for Singapore not to fall into Japanese hands. On the 8th of February, the Japanese Army began their invasion and within two days established a foothold on the island. The City of Singapore

was subject to continual bombardment, fires raged unchecked and generally it was a scene of carnage and chaos.

Most of the women and children who had wanted to go had been evacuated from Singapore before the end of January 1942. But there was quite a number of small to medium-size boats, including river gunboats and motor launches, remaining. They were quickly made ready and crewed for further evacuations. With an estimated total capacity of about 3,000 personnel, a 'pass' system was arranged to designate those who were free to board these vessels. Army nurses were automatically included. But there was no sense of urgency for these vessels to depart Singapore.

In another blunder, on the 12th of February, the naval personnel responsible for the coding and decoding of signals left Singapore after destroying their equipment and code books, effectively leaving the High Command with no ability to read messages.

Finally, and only when the situation became more dire, it was decided that the boats must leave by the night of the 13th of February, just two days before the eventual Fall of Singapore. They were to sail during the night and shelter in the cover of islands during the day, until arriving at Dutch-held Southern Sumatra about 80 miles south of Singapore. However, the Japanese became aware of this plan and Radio Tokyo announced that they (the Japanese) would not allow another 'Dunkirk' to happen.

On the 13th of February, columns of evacuees formed in an orderly fashion to board their allotted vessel. As the Japanese Army tightened its grip around the city of Singapore throughout the day, Allied troops and civilians had to endure constant bombing and artillery shelling. The city was in flames and thousands of bodies littered the streets. As the last of the vessels prepared to leave, the situation at the wharf area became more chaotic as dozens of European and Eurasian civilian men as well as hundreds of Allied troops attempted to force their way onto these boats.

In all, about 47 vessels, either lightly armed or without any armed escort, escaped Singapore but the notion of freedom was short lived. A large Japanese fleet had assembled north of the Bangka Strait in the path of the escaping vessels. The Dutch knew of the fleet's existence and tried to inform the High Command in Singapore, but with no way of decoding the Dutch message, it went unread. One by one, the vessels were attacked, either by air or ship. The Japanese showed no mercy. In many cases, those that had abandoned their sinking vessel were shot in the water or had their lifeboat attacked.

A report shows that about 5,000 escaped Singapore on this motley flotilla. Nine vessels were sunk by aerial bombing, 13 sunk by ship gunfire, three scuttled, 13 captured and seven were unaccounted for. Only two vessels made it to their intended destination. Only a little more than 1,000 are thought to have survived.

Blog Source:

The Naval Evacuation of Singapore – February 1942, <https://www.navyhistory.org.au/the-naval-evacuation-of-singapore-february-1942>, Accessed: 12th February 2022

World War II in Pictures, <https://www.worldwartwo.filminspector.com/3019/11/the-fall-of-singapore-in-1942.html>

October 2023

Our very best wishes for a speedy recovery go to our Honorary Life Member **Vilma Howe** who is recovering from broken neck bones sustained in a car accident. Vilma was Changi/Sime Road child internee and has been contacted (through Rosemary) by the Singapore History Consultants about her schooling while in the camps. She was taught by Freddie Bloom and even took her "O" Level exams in camp. Freddy gave Vilma a Badge of Merit which is now in the IWM with her certificates. Sybil Mackenzie taught Vilma Pitman's Shorthand.

SECRETARY REPORT FOR APA KHABAR OCTOBER 2023

Website

We have been working to develop a facility to search all of the information we hold on our website. While this is an ongoing activity we have a search facility on the footer. This can find information contained in the website, but we have yet to develop the ability to search all the editions of Apa Khabar. We intend to make this a facility that is exclusively for members and a member login is being developed.

National Memorial Arboretum MVG Memorial

During our V-J Day Service we already knew that one of our memorial benches had collapsed in disrepair and been removed but we also found the site sadly unkempt. It has become increasingly difficult for members to visit regularly to keep the Memorial in good order. We have therefore made arrangements with the Maintenance Department at NMA for them to refurbish the stonework and remove all the overgrowth as well as provide an annual maintenance service that will keep our Memorial in good order. We have also arranged for a replacement Bench with the original Plaque to be attached.

AGM

To facilitate the opening of a Business Bank Account we needed to produce a Constitution for the Group such that the bank (HSBC) could see that we operated MVG in compliance with the relevant banking regulations for such an organisation. We will consequently hold a very brief Annual General Meeting at the start of our Annual Lunch on the 14th of October 2023. All members have been circulated by email with the appropriate Notice as follows:

M.V.G. Annual General Meeting

Our Annual General Meeting will be held at 12 noon on the 14th of October at the RAF Club, 129 Piccadilly, London, during our Annual Reunion Luncheon. For clarity the current Management Committee comprises Life President, Rosemary Fell, B.E.M., Secretary, Colin Hygate, Treasurer Roger Willbourn and Archivist Jonathan Moffatt. Nominations for additional Members of the Management Committee must be received by the Secretary on or before the 1st of October 2023. Any other matters to be considered should be sent to the Secretary no later than the 7th of October with a proposer and seconder.

The agenda for this meeting is as follows:

1. Annual Report
2. Adoption of the Financial Statements for 2022 - 2023
3. Election of additional Management Committee members
4. Any Other Business

Please note that we are required to provide Notice of the AGM in compliance with our Constitution which we was produced to facilitate the opening of the Group's Bank Account as previously Rosemary had operated a personal bank account on behalf of the Group.

Remembrance Sunday, Cenotaph Parade, London

We have only three members registered to March at the Cenotaph Parade this year although we do have the usual crosses being placed, on our behalf, by FEPOW Chaplain Mrs Pauline Simpson BEM, in the Field of Remembrance.

FEPOW Repatriation Memorial Ceremony – 18th November 2023

A Ceremony will be held at the Far East Prisoner of War Memorial, Town Quay Park, French St., Southampton SO14 2DY.

Between September-December 1945, around 19,000 British Far East PoWs and over 3,000 Civilian Internees returned to the UK via Southampton; a similar number returned via Liverpool. The memorial lists the repatriation ships that arrived at Southampton during that period.

Any member wishing to attend should see the full event details which can be found at:
[https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/far-east-prisoner-of-war-repatriation-memorial-southampton-tickets-712434820727](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/far-east-prisoner-of-war-repatriation-memorial-ceremony-southampton-tickets-712434820727)

Liverpool Repatriation Memorial - Replacement Appeal

The Repatriation Memorial on Liverpool's Pier Head was unveiled in 2011. It was funded through public subscription including M.V.G. and was organised by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG). The Memorial has deteriorated to an extent that it now requires replacement. We have already confirmed that M.V.G. will donate £500 in support of this Appeal which is expected to be formally launched during October.

Further details can be found at: <https://fepowhistory.com/2023/06/10/liverpool-repatriation-memorial/>

Colin Hygate

MVG Secretary

MVG MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: SEPTEMBER 2023

I am pleased to report that the great majority of members have now renewed their subscriptions for 2023, albeit some rather tardily! I would be most grateful if those who do not currently pay by standing order can arrange to do so in time for the 2024 renewal – payable annually around the 20th of April each year – as this significantly reduces the admin time spent on chasing outstanding subscriptions. Naturally, we understand that those members who do not 'do' internet banking will continue to pay by cheque, which is absolutely fine.

So far in 2023, we have had about a dozen new members join the MVG – being a mixture of those descended from, or related to, men and women who lived in Malaysia in the first half of the 20th century, including some who served in the Volunteer Forces, plus a number of military historians and researchers. It is certainly encouraging that we continue to attract new members.

Members will be pleased to know that we have granted two Honorary Life Memberships this year.

Firstly, of course, to **Rosemary Fell** (now our Honorary Life President) in recognition of the extraordinary work she has done on behalf of us all over the past 20 or so years by creating and growing the MVG as well as editing the Apa Khabar Newsletter single-handedly for all those years.

Secondly to **Mr Jeya Ayadurai** in Singapore, who has been a great friend to the MVG and of enormous assistance to members visiting Singapore who wished to visit the Changi Museum, the Battlebox, the site of the Sime Road Camp and many other places linked to the 1941-1945 period of Singapore's history. We are delighted and honoured to have him as a member of the MVG.

Roger Willbourn
Subscriptions Secretary

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Email: editorMVG@gmail.com

DATES for your DIARY

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.

3rd December, Penang Remembrance Ceremony

A Remembrance Ceremony will be held at the Cenotaph at the Esplanade as usual.

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

Sunday 10th December 2023, NMA ALREWAS 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