



Those of us who attended the first "Researching FEPOW History Conference" from 29th-30th April 2006, at the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, experienced a very special week-end. Rarely can there have been a coming together of as many academic and amateur researchers and historians of Far East Prisoners of War, as there were present at the end of April. From the opening

lecture on Saturday morning by Roderick Suddaby, Keeper of the Department of Documents at the Imperial War Museum, to the closing lecture on Sunday afternoon by Rod Beattie, founder of the Thailand/Burma Railway Centre Museum in Kanchanaburi, for which he received a standing ovation, the delegates remained completely absorbed by the wealth of information so freely shared by all attending the conference. As one Dutch delegate said to me, "I have never before been to a conference on Far East Prisoners of War where the speakers have been happy to exchange details of their research work and knowledge so openly."

There were several FEPOWs themselves attending the conference as guests, including 3 of our own Volunteer Members – Ron Mitchell, John Hedley and the Revd. Geoffrey Mowat. In all 16 members of the MVG attended the conference. It was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and meet new ones, and we all welcomed the chance to talk and discuss our own particular viewpoints within the framework of the conference.

A full report of the conference is included with this newsletter, except for those MVG Members who attended the conference, who will already have received the report. We look forward to a second conference which is proposed for the Spring of 2008.

MVG PLOT at THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM.

At the end of April, an on-site meeting took place at the proposed MVG Plot, with Paul Kennedy, Grounds Manager of the NMA. As there have been no objections to the Plot from members, the plans are being submitted to the RBL Board of Trustees of the Arboretum in July. Once these have been passed, we will proceed with the landscaping and planting of the plot in the Autumn.

The 8m. by 15m. plot lies adjacent to the NMBVA Plot on a 15 degree sloping bank. It is planned to plant Chinese birch trees (*Betula albosinensis*) at the top of the bank to create some shade for our 2 benches, which will be moved from the FEPOW Plot. These will be set on a levelled paved area overlooking the lower part of the plot and the Arboretum itself. Between the benches, there will be a black polished granite commemorative stone, which Maurice Humphrey of the NMBVA is kindly preparing for us. Below the benches, there will be a paved "V" laid into the grassy bank, about 5 metres in overall length, which will lie parallel to the Malay Kris in the NMBVA Plot. It is hoped that the 2 symbols will complement each other.

Towards the lower part of the plot, there will be some clumps of hardy bamboo (*Fargesia murielae* var.) at each side. This bamboo has low arching branches and new culms appear vertically through the leaf canopy to give a 2 tiered effect, growing to about 2 metres. The idea is that the paved "V" will be framed by the clumps of bamboo, and the view from the benches will look down over the "V" between the bamboo.

The project has not yet been costed, but we will need to raise about £4000. To date we have £645 towards this project.

RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY CONFERENCE WORKSHOP – A personal account.

"ANGLO-DUTCH RELATIONS within POW CAMPS in the FAR EAST" – By Pieter Tesch (Son of a Dutch POW)

Having met a Dutch Researcher called Arno Ooms, from the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation last October while in Kanchanaburi, it was good news to hear that he was attending the FEPOW Conference, so that we would be able to meet up again. In correspondence with Arno over various matters, it had become clear that there were several similarities between the Dutch and the Malayan Volunteers in that they all had "tropical experience." Indeed, the idea in Dutch literature is that the Dutch POWs were different from the other groups because the large majority of them had this "tropical experience" having been born and raised in Asia. Thus they knew about getting food from the jungle and how to treat tropical diseases. As there is comparatively little literature written by Malayan Volunteers about Volunteers, this experience has not been brought to the attention of the British public to the same extent. Indeed, little is known in this country about who the Volunteers were or what role they played in the Malayan Campaign, and in captivity.

At the Conference, therefore, it seemed appropriate to join Arno in the Workshop taken by Pieter Tesch on "Anglo-Dutch Relations within POW Camps in the Far East." Several interesting facts emerged from this workshop. Firstly, of the 18,000 Dutch Prisoners of War on the Railway, there was only an 18% death rate which was much lower than that of both the British and Australians. This was attributed to the fact that the Dutch knew how to obtain food and medicines from the jungle and were used to cooking and eating rice. Secondly, the Dutch did the minimum of work and took as long as they could to do it, to the minimum standard which the Japanese would accept, without having to re-do it. Generally speaking, the British finished their set targets as quickly as possible, and as a result of this they were given extra work the next day. Thirdly, they resented the British Regimental Way of life, although as an exception they admired Col. Toosey.

The Dutch Eurasians (called Indo-Europeans in the Netherlands East Indies) suffered more than their Eurasian counterparts in Singapore and Malaya. All Indo-Europeans in the N.E.I. were imprisoned by the Japanese, regardless of their status, (Dutch if their father was Dutch, but, generally, Indonesian if their mother was Dutch). About 70% of the Dutch who ended up on the Railway had been born in the Far East. In Singapore, most of the Eurasians were left alone unless they were

members of the Volunteer Forces and were captured in uniform, or had British Passports. The Dutch Eurasians also felt that they were ignored by their own countrymen, and that they were looked down on by the British.

The Dutch Colonial Army was raised more as an armed police force to fight domestic unrest than as a military force, unlike the Volunteers who were trained in the Territorial tradition. For this reason, the Dutch civilians had a higher status than military personnel, although this situation was reversed when the Japanese invaded. As POWs, the Dutch came under British Military rule. This caused much resentment amongst the Dutch who, as mentioned before, disliked military practice and as a result, were regarded by the British as totally undisciplined.

Like the Dutch, many Volunteers had been in Malaya for 20 years or more. In particular, those who were Planters, in the Forestry Department or were Medical Officers could call on years of "tropical experience." Others in the Malayan Civil Service spoke several languages and dialects. This knowledge stood them in good stead in the prison camps and the jungles of Thailand, and was of benefit to the British Military Commanders. Unlike the Dutch, fewer Volunteers had been born or raised in the Far East, and there was less inter-marriage.

Pieter Tesch's workshop was most interesting and informative, and served to enhance and reinforce the concept that the Dutch and Volunteer Forces had much in common, and were different from other groups of Far East Prisoners of War.

A FEW EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER-DUTCH RELATIONSHIPS.

".....some from the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force, local Europeans whose knowledge of the country, the languages and the possibilities and limitations of the rice-based diet which they were all to exist on, proved of great value to the British prisoners who were woefully ignorant in these matters" (Kinvig 1998: P.52 River Kwai Railway.)

"Those with experience of tropical conditions adapted more readily to the circumstances along the railway trace; prominent among them were medical officers of the Federated Malay States, the Straits Settlements Volunteer Forces and the Dutch Colonial Forces. These often knew of unusual sources of food supplements, local cures and alternative treatments for some of the tropical complaints which afflicted their patients." (Kinvig 1998: P.79)

"Eurasians from the Singapore Volunteer Force come into Changi."

".....the Eurasians knew how to cook rice ... and they taught our cooks to cook rice and things got very much better off after that time.when I purchased fish, in the typical British way, all the heads were thrown away. And these Eurasians saw this and they collected these. And they were eating much better than the other people because they were eating all these heads of fish which the British wouldn't look at."

(Oral History Centre [103: Dato Haji Mohd Yusuf Bangs] National Archives of Singapore, National Heritage Board.)

"The quality of the food improved when the first Dutch prisoners arrived from Java in September 1942. They taught the British and Australians how to cook rice and how to use blachang, the Malay fisherman's equivalent of "Gentleman's Relish," a powerfully fishy paste of prawns and small fish, dried and powdered, and a good source of protein. The British turned it into fish cakes, merely adding it in its raw state to give an anchovy flavour to soggy rice balls. It was sold in the shape of a loaf, and looked like a piece of toast when cut and grilled. The Javanese recipe was to fry it in palm oil with hot chillies and garlic (bought on the black market and later at the canteen set up by the Japanese), and to add it in small amounts to boiled rice. The mixture was then pushed into a short length of bamboo sealed at both ends with mud plugs, and baked under hot coals. (MacArthur: P.44 Surviving the Sword.)

Loet Velmans was one of the Dutch POWs who set up "Smokey Joe's," one of the first "restaurants" in Changi. Velmans was allowed to stay behind to keep the restaurant running until he was finally sent to Thailand as part of H-Force. (Velmans, Loet [2003] "Long Way back to the River Kwai. Memories of World War 11.)

".....we were at a considerable advantage over the Australians and other British troops, especially those from the 18th Division. Most Volunteers could speak, or understand a little pigeon Malay and thus found it easier to converse and get help from the Asians" (Mitchell 2004: P.15 Baba Nonnie goes to War.)

On the matter of tropical hygiene however, the Dutch drew contrasting comments and revealed how they had absorbed Asian culture to a greater extent even than the Volunteers.

"Look at the canteen, it is stocked like Harrods.....even some rough looking toilet paper. A pity this paper costs about ten days pay. With mild diarrhoea, it would be gone in a day." (Mitchell 2004 P.81)

"Furthermore," said Stephen Alexander, " they (the Dutch) introduced the British to an improved form of personal hygiene. Nothing excited our mirth more than seeing the Dutch colonials walking to the latrines carrying bottles of water instead of toilet paper. But it was borne in upon us that quite apart from saving our books (or our pay in buying Thai toilet paper) Moslem ablutions cost nothing and were more suitable to the climate. After delicate experiment we were soon following their example and wondering why we hadn't thought of it months before..... It was a godsend to us the Dutch coming in and showing us how to use water." (MacArthur P.76)

Volunteer Doctors Hardie and Pavillard were shocked by this toilet behaviour, claiming it was unhygienic and caused dysentery. Yet writer Gavan Daws was convinced that this tropical hygiene regime of the Dutch saved them from cholera.

SMILES.

By M.F.SEIKER

It was the year 1944. Somewhere near the Three Pagoda Pass on the Thai-Burma border. They had force marched us from sunrise to sunset for two days. "Us" being prisoners of war. "They" being two Japanese soldiers. The group consisted of Dutch and British P.O.W.s.

We were pronounced "fit" by a Japanese medical person with the rank of Private, who assured us that we were going for "short walk, good camp." Experience told us that this meant "long walk, no camp."

Ahead of the column strode the Japanese sergeant, our pathfinder and pace setter. At the rear, a disgruntled Japanese Private slouched along, prodding stragglers with a bayonet ridiculously large for the size of the soldier.

The jungle was oppressively hot, humid and dense. We carried our rations, cooking utensils (discarded oil cans) and tools on three makeshift carriers. The carriers were made up from old rice sacks and bamboo poles, a kind of stretcher. Each stretcher was carried by a team of four men. Those with ulcerated legs were not required to be pack mules. This was not a Japanese gesture. It was our decision, after lengthy arguments and several face slapping sessions from the sergeant.

One team was already carrying a man who had collapsed with dysentery. The two remaining teams now had to carry the additional load of the stretcher occupied by the sick man. The sergeant would not allow us to make up a fourth stretcher, because he had already given us a concession with regard to the men with ulcerated legs!

We had not drunk a sip of water all day. Our bodies were dried out, our throats were hoarse, our tongues felt like leather strips in our mouths. We were giddy from exhaustion and most of us suffered from stomach cramp. The familiar gibbon calls could no longer be heard. It meant there was no fresh water for miles around.

We made camp at dusk in a clearing close to a muddy pool alive with insects. Several thrust their faces into the murky water, drinking greedily. Moves to stop them were met with violent objection. Most likely we would bury some of them later. The Japs grinned!

Fires were lit for boiling the pool water and cooking the maggot infested rice. A portion of this and a small piece of dried fish was our meal for the day, washed down with boiled brown pool water.

Our bodies ached and our minds were numb as we crouched around the fires, which were kept burning to keep wild animals at bay. No one spoke. What was there to talk about? Each man was cocooned within his own thoughts. They were a comfort, your own thoughts. The night was black now. The jungle canopy had closed in over us.

I realised that further marching the following day would decimate our numbers. Was that the plan, perhaps? A chill ran down my spine. For the first time in my life I knew total misery, I felt alone and very frightened.

Then I became aware of a voice mingling with the many sounds of the night jungle. At first softly, haltingly, then louder, more certain, singing "Ave Maria" in a clear tenor voice. The jungle sounds around us subsided one by one as if the night creatures were also listening. The voice was now singing jubilant and triumphant. It was a moment of awe and wonder. The voice filled our hearts and minds as it rose into the silent blackness above us. I knew then that this magic moment would sustain me in whatever situation I would find myself in the future.

Faces lifted, tears glistening in the fire's glow. Men struggled to their feet, some helped by their comrades. It seemed an impulsive gesture of defiance, as if to say "We cannot be beaten." Were they feeling the same as I did? Were they also ashamed of their earlier misgivings?

I believed they were. A glow of pride rose inside me. A pride of belonging. Also a feeling of victory. Victory of the human spirit over adversity.

Both the Japanese soldiers eyed us with bewilderment and suspicion, rifles at the ready. Their eyes darted around the group of quiet men. Men with haggard faces, damp rags hanging from their bones. We were no threat to their wellbeing, yet their eyes showed fear. Fear of something they could not understand. I felt pity for them, then.

As the voice softly re-mingled with the returning jungle sounds, the Japanese soldier suddenly snapped, shouting "kurra, kurra," threatening everyone in sight with the glistening, menacing bayonet.

As he approached me, I smiled. It sent him into a rage. After all, how do you fight a smile? The rifle butt thudded into my body, sending me crashing to the ground. I looked up into his face, now grinning, fury spent, the ridiculously large bayonet aimed at my throat! After a short while, the Jap ambled away, kicking the ground as he went, mumbling to himself.

My mates hauled me back onto my feet, their eyes tearful with suppressed anger. I realised, then, that my chest was throbbing with pain. "No sense of humour, these bastards," someone murmured. I smiled. How right he was.

This article was written by M.F. ("Fred") SEIKER, Veteran Dutch FEPOW. Merchant Navy Veteran. Artist and Author of "Lest We Forget." MVG Member.

PRISONER OF WAR CREED.

YOU HAVE NEVER LIVED, UNTIL YOU HAVE ALMOST DIED. THOSE WHO HAVE
STRUGGLED FOR LIBERTY, LIFE AND THE PURSUIT OF FREEDOM, HAVE A
VALUE OF LIFE THE PROTECTED WILL NEVER KNOW.

Bill.

*I held his hand for comfort no longer felt,
His savaged body trembled, accepting eternal peace.*

*When I go home my friend, I will tell them of you,
I will tell them, you gave your today for their tomorrow.*

Few listened, none understood nor cared.

*The widow held my hand, furrowed face,
Sad eyes, dark pools of loneliness,
Seeking comfort, ease the pain within.*

"Did you know my Bill?"

*"Yes, I knew your Bill, a shining light to all,
a man amongst men, a friend and hero true."*

A lingering smile: "Yes, that is my Bill."

She walked away, slowly, proudly, head held high.

Did I see a shadow walk beside her, guiding her path?

Fred Seiker.

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Edited by Steve Twelvetree. SB ISBN 1 84602 008 5

48 Hour's Leave.

**HASTY STEPS, EAGER HEARTS, SEARCHING EYES,
AN UPTURNED FACE, SMILING.
TOUCHING HANDS, HAPPY EYES, CONTENTMENT
AND TOGETHERNESS.
WORDS, SENTENCES MEANING ALL AND NOTHING.
EYES MEET, LIMBS TOUCH, TELLING ALL IN SILENCE.**

**RELUCTANT STEPS, CLINGING FINGERS,
HEAVY HEARTS, TIME RUSHING,
A BRUSH OF LIPS, THEN....BLURRED FACES,
STRANGERS ALL.
A DISTANT SMILE, LONELINESS COMPLETE.
A GLOWING HEART, KNOWING SHE LOVES ME.**

FRED SEIKER.

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Inspired poems of remembrance and reflection on the adversity of war. Edited by Steve Twelvetree. SB ISBN 1 84602 003 4

THIS BUILDING WAS GENERALLY KNOWN AS:

*Rest Home for Japanese Officers
Japanese Officers Club
Home for Nurses
Recreation Centre for Japanese Officers
Recuperation Centre for Japanese Officers
Field Brothel for Japanese Officers*

The last one was the true purpose of this building.

Nong Pladuk, Southern Thailand. 1943.

Fred Seiker ©



REPORT ON THE TBRC MUSEUM LIBRARY.

It was good to meet up with Rod Beattie again at the "Researching FEPOW History" Conference. Although there were many people wanting to talk to Rod, and the tight schedule of the conference itself left little time for lengthy meetings, we managed to meet to finalise the plans for the Library board and Plaque in the TBRC, one evening. The Malayan Volunteers Group has now donated £900 for the sponsorship of the books in the Library. Also handed to Rod were 2 Malay Kris and an SSVF Regimental Shield for the Plaque, which he is making for us. The FMSVF and JVE Shields have now arrived and will be sent out to Thailand by hand later in the year.

The Library/Research Centre/Conference Room is being dedicated to the Malayan Volunteer Forces and will have a board outside with the following information:-

The Malayan Volunteer Forces.

As was the case with other British Colonies there were people in Malaya who realized that they should be at least partially responsible for their own defence. And so the first of the Volunteer Forces of Malaya originated in 1854 with the enrolment of the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps. With their proud motto "In Oriente Primus" Volunteers continued to serve the Crown in other conflicts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

As war clouds gathered in Europe in the 1930s many men of all walks of life and nationalities (European, Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian) joined the Volunteer Forces. The men remained in their civilian employment and received military training at night and on weekends. At this time the forces were re-organised along the lines of the British Territorial Army. The units of the force were based on the administrative area of Malaya in which the men worked and had enrolled. As such there were three main groups of Volunteer Forces:-

1. The Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (SSVF)
Singapore 1st and 2nd Battalions
Penang and Province Wellesley 3rd Battalion
Malacca 4th Battalion.
2. The Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF)
Perak 1st Battalion
Selangor 2nd Battalion
Negri Sembilan 3rd Battalion
Pahang 4th Battalion.
3. The Unfederated Malay States Volunteer Force (UFMSVF)
Johore Volunteer Engineers
Kedah and Kelantan Volunteer Forces.

Other men joined the:-

Malayan Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve
Malayan Volunteer Air Force
Armoured Cars Squadrons
Singapore Royal Artillery
Singapore Royal Engineers
Special Operations Executive (SOE)

With considerable "local" knowledge to draw upon the Volunteers were well versed in the terrain, climate, diseases, language and customs of the population and could have made a major contribution to the defence of Malaya and Singapore. Sadly, this expertise was not appreciated and given credence by the British High Command during the Malayan campaign and the Volunteers played a minor role in the battle for their own country.

At the surrender of Singapore, there were more than 18,000 Volunteers in the armed forces, most of whom were imprisoned as military personnel, although some were imprisoned as civilians along with many non-native women and children who had not been able to escape from the island.

In captivity, the Volunteers had much to offer and played a unique role as POWs. Using their "local" knowledge they were equipped to deal with many of the problems so foreign to the regular British and Australian troops.

It is to the memory of these men of the Malayan Volunteer Forces that this Research Library is dedicated.

ALL BRITISH INTERNEES DESERVE JUSTICE.

Extracts from the above article in the Daily Telegraph were printed in the last edition of the Newsletter. As a result of this article, the following letter was received from **Ian Aviet**:-

"Thanks ever so much for a most interesting and informative Newsletter, especially about the article "All British Internees deserve Justice." Do you know, my brother and I were turned down because the M.O.D. said we had no "blood ties" with this country. Now they are offering us £500 each which we have refused and would rather have an apology from the top. It's all or nothing! When I was refused the ex-gratia payment I wrote to the Veterans Office giving them the facts of my Britishness which was this:

My grandfather was of Armenian origin but born in INDIA, so was a British subject. He worked for Cable & Wireless and was posted to Singapore where my father was born. So my dad was British too. When my grandfather retired from Cable &

Wireless the whole family emigrated to England. When WW1 broke out my father returned to Singapore after qualifying as a doctor but his two younger brothers joined the British Army. In the 2nd WW my cousin was killed in the RAF, my brother in Australia was in the RAF for 20 years and I was in the Merchant Navy.(Postwar) My son served in the Army for 9 years all over the world and I have a daughter in the TAs. We were interned because of my father's family in England as they were British. In every generation there was an AVIET in the armed forces willing to shell their blood for this country, and yet the Government insults me saying that there is no "blood link." So we don't deserve any compensation at all. I have been here for over 50 years and I have never been on the dole, and I have paid all my dues and I am proud to be British. So I am disgusted by the way I've been treated, and I was really pleased to see your article in the newsletter, that there are people like you who really believe in justice and fair play. "

Editor's note: We do believe in justice for our Members. We hope that John Brown will be able to help Ian in his struggle to receive it.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

Fred Seiker writes:-

I am trying to find out some information about **A.A. Pels** on behalf of his son Jacques Pels. The only information I have about him is as follows:-

Name: Abraham, Alexander PELS, better know as "Bob" Pels.

Born: July 9th 1913

Nationality: Dutch

Occupation: Worked for Guthries in Malaya, probably on the Cheras plantation near Kuala Lumpur.

Military Service: Volunteered with the Malayan Volunteer Air Force, flying Brewster Buffalo planes. Was shot down and became a POW of the Japanese. Was sent to the Thai/Burma Railway and survived.

Return to Holland: Not known.

Philip Baddeley writes:-

If you have space, please ask if anyone has any news of **Mr. Sidney Baddeley**, Marine Superintendent of the Straits Steamship Company and particularly the report he wrote after the war which is mentioned in Tregonning's book on the Straits Steamship Company.

I also read in the newsletter that there is a website listing people who left for Perth in the last few weeks before the fall of Singapore. Please could you send me the URL as my Grandmother was on one of the last ships.

Editor: I hope you now have the URL. If not, Jonathan may be able to help you.

Terry de Souza writes:

"I want to thank you for the first 5 newsletters that I have received. They were most interesting to read, especially the articles of those who tried to escape from Singapore in February of 1942, and their hardships in avoiding the enemy warships. My sister, Pauline, and her husband, were not successful. Enemy forces sank their ship and both perished.

Here is what I can remember of my experience with the Observation Corps.

It wasn't long after I had joined the Singapore Improvement Trust (SIT), in July 1941, when we were attacked in the wee morning hours of December 8th. Soon after this attack, I became a member of the Civilian Observation Corps, whose recruitment office happened to be on the top floor of the Fullerton Building, and where our own SIT office was also situated. At that time, Mr. David Nelson, our SIT chief, a fine gentleman and a captain in the SVC, was away in camp, under the general mobilization of our city.

The Observation Corps operation's centre was situated in a bungalow type building, at Upper Paya Lebar Road, a short distance from its junction with Upper Serangoon Road. We received information of enemy formations from our aircraft spotters, located in Malaya, and we, duly, plotted the aircraft positions on a large table, on which was drawn the outline of the Malayan Peninsular. Beside the positions of enemy aircraft, we must have also plotted their strength and their direction. Subsequently, this plotted information was relayed to the proper authorities by other Corps members, who were on an elevated platform, at one end of the table.

We performed in 8 hour shifts at a time and, sometimes, we could guess when the next air raid would occur in Singapore from the information we had just received. Our duties didn't last very long, and we were disbanded about the time the Japanese forces had reached the Straits of Johore.

Singapore fell to the enemy forces on the 15th of February, 1942, at about 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening (I am not sure about the time.) A not too pleasant time was in store for us.

Charles G. Dickens writes:-

"Thank you very much for your letter and accompanying documents. However, I have not been able to find a familiar name from your list of members, most of whom, as you know, are formerly SSVF Volunteers. Those in the FMSVF have not stated their battalion. My own details are as follows:-

Joined in Selangor (K.L.) in 1937 and was posted to the newly formed "C" Company (9th Platoon). They needed a CQMS so I was rapidly promoted to Staff Sergeant! In November 1941 I left K.L. to take up a post in Johore (Diamond Jubilee Estate). I had just arrived there when the call came for me to return to K.L. immediately. By the time I got back to K.L. (on December 9th) "C" Company had moved out. I was posted to Port Dickson to look after the remnants of the Malay Regiment (mostly new and untrained recruits) and from that time to this I have not seen a single member of "C" Company, nor have I any idea what happened to them.

After the M.R. recruits had been dispatched back to their kampongs, I was ordered to Singapore, commissioned 2nd Lieut. and posted to join 3rd (Indian) Division. Most of the remainder of the campaign I was liaising between Singapore and the unfortunate 18th Division in Johore.

On the evening of Feb. 15th 1942 I returned to the Volunteers HQ in Raffles College, and at Brig. Moir's suggestion, joined a selected party to attempt an escape. The party was under the command of Major Stokes-Hughes of 3rd (Negri Sembilan) Bn. and some 20 of us eventually reached PADANG on the west coast of Sumatra. Most (if not all) of the party eventually got to Colombo early in March. I was commissioned into the Indian Army and after 3 years doing various jobs and ascending to the dizzy heights of Major, found myself back in Malaya as an SOE, among the first to re-occupy Penang and Province Wellesley, in charge of finance. Three months later, at the end of the Military Administration, I was appointed Treasurer of the Settlement.

The "escape" party broke up in Colombo and my attempts to contact them have been unsuccessful. I would like to know what happened to "C" Company (C.O. Major Mummery) and to Brigadier Moir who must have become a POW. I have written and telephoned the Malayan Embassy but they do not respond. Moir and Stokes-Hughes were older than I and since I am 94 they have passed on.

Possibly a contact might be discovered through "Apa Khabar"? Barangkali! If you have any suggestions I should be glad to learn them."

In a second letter, **Charles G. Dickens** writes:-

"I have now scanned through all the stuff you kindly sent me and found much of interest but no names which I was able to identify as belonging to the 2nd Battalion. Names were related to the FMSVF but without indicating the State or Battalion. Regarding the controversy about the disbanding of the FMSVF, I did not hear anything about this, then or later, though I was under the impression that non-Europeans were encouraged to remain in their own state. In December '41, when I was sent to Port Dickson to look after the remaining Malay Regiment recruits, their uniforms were discarded and they were sent back to their Kampongs in sarong/baju attire.

As regards the "FMSVR," if it existed, I certainly had no knowledge of it. As I have already said, I joined up in 1937 as a Volunteer and when, in 1939 I think, ex-pats were "called up" I felt that this was a stupid move. Not the only one, unfortunately.

Finally, may I repeat that I would very much like to contact anyone from "C" Coy 2nd Bn. or anyone who escaped with Major Stokes-Hughes' party on 16th Feb. 1942.

I had almost no experience of Singapore in my bachelor days 1936-42, but my wife and I spent the first 12 years of our married life there and in Penang from 1946-1958. My three sons were born in Singapore (at Kandang Kerbau.)

Susan Whitley writes:-

I am writing to suggest a book recommendation for a future "Apa Khabar" Newsletter. It is "Towards the Setting Sun" by James Bradley. I read it some time ago (after I had met him) and I think it may be of interest to members of MVG. It makes very sad reading. Of the ten men who made the attempt to escape, one of them was in the SSVF and another, who died in the attempt, was in the Malay Regiment. You may already know about the book. But I enclose the details anyway.

Editor:- Details of this book occur in the "Book Section." Many thanks.

AN INTERESTING MAN. Details provided by **Jonathan Moffatt** from his Malayan data base.

HARDWICK R.K. [Richard Knox] b. 1880 Ashton-on-Mersey. "The Uncrowned King of Borneo", "White Wild Man of Borneo." Went to Australia as a cabin boy. A champion horse breaker in Queensland then served in the Boer War as Kitchener's mounted orderly. Went to Java, Singapore then Borneo. Went elephant hunting with Dayak Tribes. Made a District Officer but badly wounded dealing with a man who went beserk. Travelled in China then returned to Borneo as a professional crocodile hunter, using the "Hardwick method" of harpooning. Secret Service missions in Malaya before WW2. Evacuated 2.42 - reached Perth WA. Attached to Dutch Intelligence in Melbourne then to AIF: Enlisted 14.7.45 North Borneo. Z Special Unit. As a 65 year old Major active in the Celebes and North Borneo with the Allied Intelligence Bureau. Discharged 12.2.46. Died 25.5.68 [aged 87] following a fall at Raffles Hotel.

MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES.

I often wondered why particular individuals are Mentioned in Despatches for their conduct as prisoners of war. I think I've found the answer with regard to two FMSVF Officers, John Clemetson, who in civilian life was Manager of the Radio Branch, GEC Ipoh and Oliver Bellingham-Smith, Manager of Borneo Motors Ltd. K.L. In the Volunteers both were Captains, Clemetson in the FMSVF HQ Company then attached to RAOC, and Bellingham-Smith in 2/FMSVF Armoured Cars. Both in 1942 were interned in Changi POW camp.

In Changi, they managed to manufacture shoes, false teeth and even cricket balls in a make-shift workshop nicknamed "Changi Industries Inc."

Clemetson wrote about this in a journal as he travelled home on his repatriation ship in 1945:- "I have only one objective, namely to give every man who worked with me a record, perhaps of something best forgotten, but nonetheless of a job well done under the worst conditions."

Clemetson, who died in 1976, and Bellingham-Smith, who later died in captivity at Kanyu, Thailand, took five months to find a coagulant to mix with the rubber they tapped from trees in the area for their raw material.

The most crucial items they produced were 21,736 shoes along with 20,889 which were repaired. Many of the men in the camp were forced to help the Japanese to build an airstrip while others, survivors of F and H Force, had returned with virtually no clothing from the horrors of the Burma Railway.

They also made their own sandpaper to produce artificial limbs and special shoes for those who had feet deformed through injury. Needles for darning what remained of their clothes were made from old bicycle spokes.

The team mixed rubber, sulphur and lime to produce Dentures. About 1,400 glasses frames were repaired using a bottle of amyl acetate that was "found" by the prisoners.

Keeping up morale at the camp, where many died from diseases and malnutrition, was essential. Clemetson said:- "Moulding new covers on to old cricket balls was a standard activity of the factory almost from its inception."

Documents and pictures relating to this and other Changi stories can be viewed at the Changi Museum in Singapore.

Article written by Jonathan Moffatt based on a Daily Telegraph story in September 2005 by Duncan Gardham.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – 12th November 2006.

It seems a little early to be thinking about the annual Service of Remembrance and Cenotaph Parade at Whitehall, in London this Autumn, however we have received the details of this year's ceremony already, and we need to apply for tickets.

The Royal British Legion is, once again, co-ordinating the groups attending the Service and Parade. We have been allocated 12 tickets this year, and it would be very pleasing to find 12 MVG members who would like to march. Please think about it and let me know if you would like to join in this year. Last year there were 10 of us, and we felt very proud to be able to commemorate the Volunteers with a wreath, which was handed in during the march past the Cenotaph.

We are asked by the RBL to advise our members about the physical demands of standing in Whitehall for at least an hour, and then marching for a distance of at least 1½ miles, possibly in inclement weather. Having said this, the march did not seem as long as 1½ miles, but we were standing in Whitehall itself. The more difficult thing to contend with was the cold wind, and one needs to aware of that.

Last year we had not made any arrangements to have lunch together after the Parade, and it was felt that it would round off the day very well. If you think this would be a good plan, and you would like to attend the Ceremony, please let me know:- Rosemary Fell, Millbrook House, Axminster, Devon EX13 5EE. Tel:- 01927 33045

BOOKS.

"TALES FROM THE SOUTH CHINA SEAS." Edited by Charles Allen. Published by Andre Deutsch Ltd. In 1983. HB ISBN 0 563 20032 4. PB 0 7088 2494 3

In the third and final volume of his "Tales of Empire" Charles Allen chronicles the lives, manners and fortunes of the last generations of British men and women to go out East and seek their fortunes in the various colonial territories scattered round the South China Sea: the Malay States, the Straits Settlements of Singapore, Penang and Malacca, the British North Borneo Company's chartered territories in Borneo, and the extraordinary jungle kingdom of Sarawak – ruled for a century by the White Rajahs.

It was a world of sarongs and *tutup* jackets, of rickshaws and Shanghai jars, sampans and Straits Steamers, gin-slings, *stengahs* and *pahits*, and set against a background of palm-fringed beaches and tropical rain-forests, echoing to the calls of the *wa-wa* gibbons, the screech of cicadas, the chatter of *chi-chas* and geckos, the click of *mah-jong* counters and the whirring of fans.

It is also the story of the British Empire brought to its knees, with the fiasco of the British retreat down the Malayan Peninsula before the advancing Japanese in December 1941, the nightmare events leading up to the Fall of Singapore in February 1942 and the horrors of the years that followed. But above all, it is the story of "good, decent, normal people" living in exotic surroundings and extraordinary times.

"SINGAPORE DIARY. 1942-1945" The Diary of Captain R.M. Horner.

Hidden in the false bottom of a suitcase, this amazing story, supported by anecdotes, cartoons and stories, shows an

alternative insight into Japanese POW life. This account was not researched, being written at the time, and does not rely on archives for its content. The only gaps created were due to illness, physical exhaustion or the simple priority of trying to survive.

"TOWARDS THE SETTING SUN." An escape from the Thailand-Burma Railway 1943. By James Bradley.

Jim Bradley's story of escape from the Death Railway is unique. Five of the ten who broke out died in the attempt to escape. Survivors of other escapes were all executed by the Japanese. For Bradley the war ended after a year's interrogation, suspense awaiting execution and trial by military court.

He tells unemotionally, dispassionately and totally without exaggeration a story which has too often been sensationalized in journalistic attempts to attract attention. The full horror of Japanese and Korean brutality is not evaded – indeed these men escaped on order to tell the world the real truth of what was happening on the Death Railway – but Jim's story is historically accurate, told without rancour and with deep understanding. It is his very personal story, written at his wife's insistence.

Jim Bradley's obituary was recorded in the Daily Telegraph on Friday, May 30th 2003.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

JULY 2006 – Re-dedication of the Malay Kris, and MVG Memorial Stone in the NMBVA Plot.

At the time of going to print, the precise date of this re-dedication has not been finalized. The Cross on which the Kris is lying, will bear our stone memorial tablet at the bottom, and the MVG logo on one of the arms. The NMBVA will be holding the Service in the plot, and if possible you will be notified.

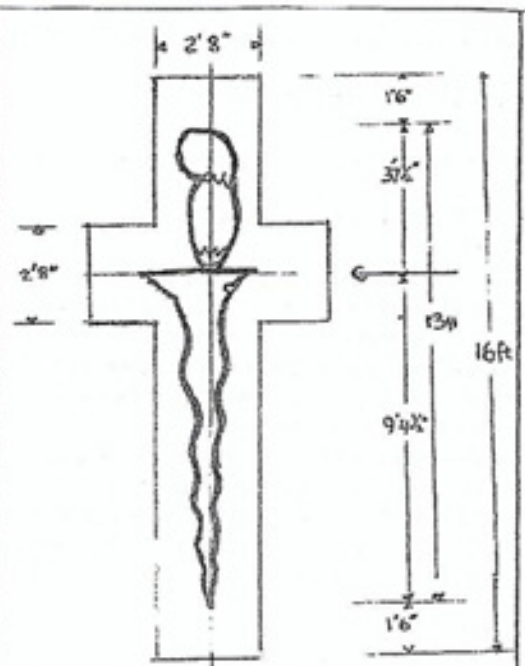
The following report about the monument appeared in the March 2006 edition of "Prickly Heat," the newsletter of the Doncaster & South Yorkshire Branch of the NMBVA.

In the June edition 2004 of Prickly Heat I reported on the parlous state of the Association's monument at the National Arboretum, Alrewas. Despite a great deal of work that has been carried out by the members of Doncaster and Birmingham branches the monument still needs to be constantly attended to prevent it from returning to the terrible state that it had become in 2004, which was little more than a overgrown gravel pit.

At the 2005 National AGM it was decided that Doncaster branch should take over the responsibility for the refurbishment of the monument so that it would be a fitting memorial to those who gave their lives in the defence of freedom.

It was also decided that the money for the construction of the new monument will come from funds left over from the money raised to place a plaque in St. Paul's.

After some discussion it has been decided that the present, high maintenance gravel monument should be dug up and replaced with a more permanent structure consisting of a concrete base and an emblem consisting of a Malayan Kris with memorial plaques and emblems mounted across the hilt. The work of clearing the site, a difficult job due to its location, and creating the waterproof



Plans for the replacement for the Association monument at the National Arboretum



Maurice Humphrey making repairs to the original

concrete base will be carried out by a local firm, Tudorworth Constructions. The wooden structure, from which the emblem will be constructed, will be made by Maurice Humphrey and then transported to the site where it will be fixed and the emblem cast in coloured concrete. Although the monument that is in place at the moment cost more than £3,000 it unfortunately did not, when finished and handed over to the Association, comply with the original plans. I think I can assure members that this time there will be much closer supervision of the construction of the work that is to be carried out and that the Association will not take possession of the new

AUGUST 15TH 2006. V.J. Day.

There will be a Remembrance Service at the National Memorial Arboretum on Tuesday, August 15th 2006. The Service will take place at the FEPOW Plot at 2.30 p.m.

INJUSTICE LIVES ON FOR BURMA VETERAN WHO ALSO SERVED IN THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY.

An 88-year-old veteran of the Burma campaign is living in penury because Whitehall bureaucrats are refusing to pay him full £86,000 recompense after a pension error.

On Veterans' Day when the Government honours those who risked their lives for Britain's freedom, Major Richard Perkins will remain at home musing on his battle with the Ministry of Defence.

For five months during the 1944 Chindit campaign he led 30 soldiers behind Japanese lines. But he says the deprivations he suffered in the Burmese Jungle are nothing to the seven-year campaign he has waged for compensation that the MoD refuses to recognize.

Major Perkins was among hundreds of medically discharged veterans who were incorrectly taxed on their pensions, an error that emerged in 1998. Millions of pounds in compensation were paid but he was at first denied the rebate on taxation paid over 42 years because the ministry said he had not been discharged for medical reasons. He fought for 5 years, employing lawyers and a psychiatrist, to prove that his later service during the **MALAYAN EMERGENCY** had contributed to a mental breakdown. After an appeal tribunal, the MoD paid £20,000 for the tax error but refused to pay interest estimated at £86,000. Once again, Major Perkins had to fight. He pays £20 every month towards legal aid as he tries to have the case heard in the High Court.

Major Perkins's MP, John Greenway said: "It is time the MoD did the honourable thing and gave him the compensation he is entitled to." The ministry advised Major Perkins to contact the Inland Revenue, as it was a matter of "tax legislation." Major Perkins accused it of "passing the buck."

Part of an article printed in the Daily Telegraph on 26/6/06 by Thomas Harding.

MVG LUNCH AND REUNION.

If you would like to attend the London Lunch this year, please contact Sandy. The date and venue will be announced later.

MEMBERS LIST. 2006-2007

An up-to-date list of MVG Members is included with the newsletter. We have produced it in a different format this year so that there is more flexibility for adding extra information. I hope most of the errors have now been corrected, but please let me know if there are any other mistakes, or if you would like to change your entry in any way for next year.

It would be helpful to know the State and Battalion to which Members or their relations belonged, and if possible, the Company. This would make our records really accurate, and as Charles Dickens says, it would help people to trace old friends or fellow Volunteers.

Thank you very much to everyone for paying their subscription so promptly. An April payment saves having to send out letters, and coincides with the yearly accounts which will be sent out in the next newsletter. Those who join at other times during the year, will receive the back copies of the newsletter for that year.

Finally, thank you for all your kind comments about the newsletter, and for donations sent with the subscriptions. It is much appreciated because as a "young" group the state of our finances is limited.

CONTACTS.

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