



APA KHBAR

9TH EDITION
JANUARY 2007

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MVG MEMBERS

As we look forward to the year ahead, with much still left to do in this country to achieve our goal of developing a Garden Plot in the National Memorial Arboretum, we can also reflect on the successes of 2006, in time honoured tradition.

MVG members have attended and taken part in two conferences during the year – a FEPOW Medical Conference in London in January, and a Researching FEPOW History Conference in April at the National Memorial Arboretum in Airewas. Members have attended the V-J Day Service organized by the Shropshire FEPOW Association on 15th August, and the Dedication Service, in September, of the re-designed Memorial Cross and Malay Kris, in the NMBVA Plot at the Arboretum. This memorial bears the MVG logo on one arm of the cross.

Following the donation of £900 of MVG funds to Rod Beattie in April, for the library books in the Thailand Burma Railway Centre Museum, in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, there is now a prominent and specially designed plaque commemorating the Malayan Volunteers in the Museum, and a board in the Research Library giving a brief history of the Volunteers and dedicating the library to them.

A good gathering of MVG members attended the Annual Lunch in London at the end of September, and were privileged to meet and listen to an enlightening talk by author Sheila Allan on the Changi Quilts.

Finally, in November, a small group of members attended the Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph, and during the march past presented a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers.

Three other MVG events during 2006 deserve mention on a more personal level. Firstly, we are most grateful to **Jonathan and Peter Moffatt** for setting up and maintaining our excellent website, which has been very well received and created an interest in the Volunteers worldwide. Secondly, we congratulate **Hannah Barker** on achieving a 1st Class Award for her dissertation on the "Far East Prisoners of War" as part of her History Degree Course. This was in memory of her grandfather **Maurice Priest**, who was a Volunteer in the **SSVF**, and who worked on the Burma Siam Railway. Lastly, we salute a happy little girl called **Freya**, granddaughter of **Christine Cavender** and great granddaughter of **Melville Hartley SSVF**. At only 5 months old, Freya attended the Remembrance Day Service in London on 12th November, with her parents and grandmother. She captivated everyone around her, including Sky TV News who photographed her perched on her father's shoulders, prior to the start of the Service. We hope to recruit Freya as our youngest member!

THE REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE -- SUNDAY 12TH NOVEMBER 2006.

On making our way through Green Park and along the Mall at about 8.30a.m. on Remembrance Sunday, we were struck by how quiet and peaceful it was. There were a several joggers and one or two cyclists in the Park, but very few people in the Mall except for a few policemen. St. James Park was equally deserted, with only the occasional dog-walker and a group of geese strutting across the grass. It was a typically grey autumnal day, but as we walked along, the sun came out fleetingly to give some warmth to the freshness of the morning.

Towards Horse Guards Parade, people were beginning to gather in small groups. There were ex-Servicemen and Women, with their medals gently clinking as they walked purposefully towards their allocated assembly points, and members of the public staking out their places along Horse Guards Road, to gain a good view of the final march past. We cleared the security cordon opposite the Guards Memorial, and collected our marker board. This year we had no problems in walking through the arches from Horse Guards into Whitehall, where we were greeted by the Column M Marshall. It was still only 8.50 a.m.

Gradually other MVG members began to arrive in Whitehall. This year, our allocated position at number 8, was near the front of Civilian Column M, just outside the old War Office building. Heather Barker was the first to arrive, shortly followed by Karen Harney, Sue Evans and Christine Cavender, with her daughter Caroline, son-in-law Tim and baby 5 month-old granddaughter Freya, who was much admired and beautifully behaved throughout the morning.

Soon after 10 o'clock, the columns started to form up in Whitehall. Ex Service Personnel marched through Horse Guards from the Parade Ground where they had assembled, applauded by onlookers and civilian marchers alike. Once they had lined up, it was the turn of Civilian Column M to march forward, until we were within eye-shot of the Cenotaph. To our left, we were fortunate to have a large television screen, and as 11 o'clock approached we were able to watch HM The Queen, and other members of the Royal Family emerge from the Foreign Office, followed by the Politicians and foreign Ambassadors.

Even in this part of Whitehall, the crowds were up to 10 rows deep, and without doubt the crowds were equally as large as last year. The short, simple service followed the laying of the wreaths by the Queen and dignitaries, and then it was our turn to march. It is a most humbling experience to march in such an atmosphere, with bands playing and the crowds applauding, but a proud moment as well, as the wreath, commemorating the Volunteers Forces in Malaya, was passed over for placement on the Cenotaph.

This year, the final salute in Horse Guards was taken by HRH The Duke of Kent, and the end of the Parade was marked by the playing of the National Anthem. Four of us rounded off the day in style, with a leisurely lunch on the South Bank.

COMMENTS ON THE REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE.

A brief history of the Malayan Volunteers was sent to the BBC Events Team, who prepare the commentary for the annual Remembrance Day Service. Sadly, the Volunteers were not mentioned again this year, nor were our marchers shown. Audrey Holmes McCormick has made an excellent suggestion about the way we could remedy this another year. She pointed out that the groups which were mentioned had been identified by some kind of "uniform" such as a beret, a blazer or a skirt. Audrey suggests that the MVG marchers could, perhaps, all wear a scarf in the background green colour of the original SVC Standard, with our logo or the SVC badge on it. This would enable the TV cameramen to pick out the group for comment.

It is certainly worth considering for the future. The scarves would be purchased by MVG and handed out to those on parade each year. It would be good to hear your views on the matter. Please let me know what you think.

One sad event, which marred an otherwise successful day, was the absence of Sandy and Mike. Their car broke down on the way to London, and they were unable to get to Whitehall to join the group of marchers. We missed them very much.

GARDEN PLOT IN THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM.

We are most grateful to all those MVG members who have contributed so generously towards the cost of developing the Garden Plot. However, we will be unable to proceed with this project in 2007 **UNLESS ANOTHER £2,000 IS RAISED WITHIN THE NEXT 3 MONTHS.**

In consultation with Paul Kennedy, Grounds Manager of the NMA, three firms have been asked to quote for the landscaping of the Plot. The quotes are as follows:-

1. Scott Developments, Burntwood, Staffordshire.
Cost of Preparation Work **only** for the Landscaping -- £2,285-38p.
(Cost of materials is EXTRA)
2. Tony Benger, Landscaping, Dalwood, Devon.
Cost of Landscaping **and** materials -- £3819-00p.
3. SCV Landscaping, Lichfield, Staffordshire. -- £3,829-00p.

The costs for the trees and bamboos have been sourced at 2 local nurseries. Both quotes are much cheaper than buying them through the Arboretum, and are as follows:-

- a). 7x Trees -- £96
- b). 6x Bamboos -- £91

Details of the trees and bamboos to be used can be seen on the plan for the Plot, which was sent out to all members in August 2006.

It is proposed to accept the SCV Landscaping quote, for several reasons. This firm is experienced in building dry stone walls; has undertaken other jobs at the NMA; is conversant with the standards required; and is accustomed to working with Paul Kennedy.

We also still owe the NMA £2,000 for the Plot. At our request, the original "donation" of £3,000 was reduced to £2,500, and £500 of this sum was paid in April 2006. The NMA has generously agreed, on Paul Kennedy's recommendation, to allow MVG to pay the balance of the donation as and when we have the funds at our disposal. They are keen for us to have this particular plot, because it fits in well with the surrounding plots, and The Board of Trustees were impressed with the garden-style of our plans for it, which they passed without seeking any alterations. It is now up to the Malayan Volunteers Group whether or not we have the determination to proceed with the landscaping. It would be a great disappointment to be unable to retain the plot due to lack of interest and support, after all the effort that has gone into the planning stages.

Those of you who have visited the NMA will know that it is home to over 120 major memorials to both military and civilian organizations, as well as to individual dedications. Recent memorials include the "Shot at Dawn Memorial" and "The Armed Forces Memorial" which is currently under construction. It is, without doubt, the right place for a memorial to the Malayan Volunteers in this country, and, if accomplished, it will enable the MVG to raise historical awareness of the Volunteers, which we have worked so hard to achieve.

CORRECTIONS WITH APOLOGIES -- A.K. EDITION 8, OCTOBER 2006.

Page 9. RAPWI should read "Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees" for repatriation. Malayan Volunteer Veteran John Parsons JVE, lives in Peterborough, England -- not in Canada.

COINCIDENCES.

The following article by **Rowland Lyne SSVF** was sent to me by Carol Cooper, for which I thank her very much. In 1967, Rowland Lyne wrote to my mother about his association with my father, **Eric Reeve**, at Kanyu. His article, written in April – May 1978 in the Fepow Forum, ties in very well with the information he sent my mother. I do not know who **Thomas Pounder** was, or whether he was British, Australian or a Volunteer. Does anyone else have any information?

FROM ROWLAND LYNE, WESTERN AUSTRALIA TO THOMAS POUNDER.

May I introduce myself as a fellow sufferer. I went to Singapore in 1924 to be the Director of Physical Education for the YMCA of Singapore. In 1926 I joined the Singapore Volunteer Corps and by the time the Japs attacked us I was commanding "Malay Company" in the 2nd Battalion, SVC which was part of Fortress Troops under General Keith Simmons. 1st October 1942, I was in a party, mostly composed of Volunteers from Singapore and Malaya, to proceed to Thailand. Your description of that journey brought back all the agony of it. We were about three days at that filthy shambles Bam Pong and then taken by lorry to Kanchanaburi. The night we arrived there it poured and we had no shelter. The slit trenches overflowed with all sorts of things floating all over the place.

The next day we started to march north up the left bank of the Kwai. Tamarkan camp was full and busy building the infamous bridge and also a temporary one of wood for use until the big one was ready. We crossed the river by weird ferry arrangement two days march north of Kanburi. We then took two days to march cross country to Tarsao which was a complete shambles of disorder.

After two days we were marched to the river and loaded on to barges but did not move until the next day. We had been removed from the camp before the evening meal so we were unfed and as we were cut adrift until we reached another camp we had no food. Next morning several pompom boats arrived and took us in tow and we made slow progress up river against the strong current. When darkness came we were in the midst of jungle with no sign of human presence. We complained bitterly about being hungry and eventually the Japs forced the Thai boatman to let us use his rice. We pulled into a sandy shore, boiled plain rice and stayed there until morning. The following afternoon we pulled up to a bit of a clearing where a small hut was visible and eventually a Jap officer, complete with sword, appeared. We were lined up and he made a long, silly speech about "if you want to live like monkeys you can live in the trees, but if like men, you can build houses." The whole area was a forest of bamboo. We were issued with inadequate tools and set to work to clear an area on which to build a camp. During the evening meal of rice the heavens opened and we were soaked.

That was Friday, 13th November, 1942 and that was the beginning of Kinsayok Camp. We built several long huts during which I got a scratch from a bamboo thorn and developed the first jungle ulcer.

Early December some of our people were taken north to build Rintin Camp and others south to build Kanyu Riverside Camp. Just before Christmas I rejoined the Kanyu party where a drunken Lt. Usuki carried on a reign of terror. We had a majority of officers, mostly Indian Army, and a conflict developed about officers working on enemy projects. We were lined up and machine guns levelled at us. Eventually some of us were put on to camp duties and all the spares were returned to Tarsao. I became a grave digger.

In April 1943 we were moved to Kanyu No.2 which was 800 feet above the river where we enlarged a small camp and three weeks later I was sent in charge of a party, four miles south to create Kanyu No.3. The rains began in May and we were joined by a party new up from Singapore under Major Jack Marsh. A party of Australians under Major Schneider also joined us. Our job was clearing the routes in preparation for the line laying parties. We were later joined by a Dutch bridge building party. Kanyu 3 remains a most unhappy memory. We had every sickness including cholera. It was wet and muddy, our huts leaked and the daily battle about sick men working became worse daily. In June, my brother-in-law died in Kanyu 2.

In July, the railway track passed our camp and our "speedo" eased off. We had an easy week and then they took 120 of the least sick and marched them north for more "speedo." I was left with a bunch of very sick men and ordered to take them back to Kanyu Riverside. Many had to be carried and when we eventually arrived the bamboo could be seen beginning to grow through the floor of our old huts, and we had no fit men to do any work. The Jap in charge was a bossy sergeant who we called "Doctor Death." As the line passed north the heavy sick were piled down to me at Kanyu Riverside until the situation was desperate and the conditions appalling. The sick were supposed to go by barge to Tarsao but no barges came and our death rate was awful.

I had malaria every three weeks but it was not a bad life by comparison. This continued until April 1944 when we were suddenly moved to Tamuang. After your people left to go to Singapore and Japan the Japs began making up parties to go on various projects until Tamuang was nearly empty. In January 1945, I was sent to Kanburi where the balance of officers left were concentrated and given a hell of a time by a specially selected collection of Japs and Koreans. We dismantled and carried the bamboo from Tamarkan Camp and rebuilt our own camp. In February, the RAF bombed and damaged the Bridge (I watched that lovely operation) and a new bridge had to be built. In May, the railway line and some engines were bombed but three bombs fell into our camp with tragic results. The Kempeitai took away Col. Lilley (Cambridgeshire Regt.) and questioned him under torture. Our Adjutant was put into a hole in the ground and left there and given a bowl of rice twice a day - he was saved only by the atom bomb in August.

On 4th August I was in a party that left Kanburi for a destination miles away N.E. of Bangkok called Nakom Nayok. It was a dreadful journey and we arrived in a very sorry state late at night on the 13th August. On 14th we were out all day felling and clearing jungle. On 15th August we were building a fence when I went down with Malaria. Then on 16th the news came that all was over. We raided the Japanese stores and found mail dated 1943, Red Cross and YMCA gift parcels. After a week I was in a party sent to Bangkok and on 1st September was flown out to Rangoon on the first stage home.

Editor's note:- All spellings of places are exactly as written in the article by Major Rowland Lyne. His biographical details, which are given below, were provided by Jonathan Moffatt:-

LYNE R. [Rowland] JP, MBE 1956 b.1900 Lincoln. To Singapore 1924 as Director of PE YMCA. Later General Secretary YMCA Singapore. Also founded Singapore Lifesaving Society 1924 and was their Hon.Rep. 1925-1967 and President 1967-68. Joined SVC 1924. Lt. to Major CO Malay Company 2/SSVF. POW in Changi. Sang in 1942 Changi POW Camp concerts. Singapore to Thailand 10.42. Wife Elsie evacuated to Melbourne. Her brother died at Kanyu 2. Returned to YMCA Malaya postwar. Retired to Abergavenny 1968 where Elsie died 2.11.68. In 1970 he married Ada Duncan, widow of H.S.Duncan. To WA - there 1978. Died 15.10.88 aged 88 Nedlands, Perth, WA. Ada died 31.7.90 aged 84 Nedlands, WA

OBITUARIES.

JOHN DAVIS.

February 12th 1911 - October 27th 2006. From "The Times."

SOE leader in Japanese-occupied Malaya who later found himself opposing Communist guerrillas who had been wartime allies.

At the time of the Japanese invasion of the Malay States in December 1941, John Davis was serving there with the police Special Branch, responsible for intelligence on the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). In anticipation of a Japanese attack, a plan had been devised by the Oriental Mission, Far Eastern Office of the Ministry of Economic Warfare, to harass the invaders with "stay-behind" parties left in the jungle.

The MCP had agreed to co-operate with these, but the speed of the Japanese advance precluded Davis's participation at that stage. On the day after the surrender of Singapore on February 16 1942, he and Richard Broome, of the Malayan Civil Service, crossed to Sumatra to seek news of the stay-behind parties there. Japanese activity forced their almost immediate return. Davis, Broome and others were then dispatched by the head of the Oriental Mission in a small vessel to Ceylon (Sri Lanka), where they arrived after 35 days without fresh food and only a tiny amount of water.

Only a handful of 40 or so Europeans left behind in the Malayan jungle – who included Lt. Col. Freddie Spencer Chapman – avoided capture or death. Responsible for them and for guerrilla action against the Japanese was transferred from the Oriental Mission to the Special Operations Executive (SOE), Far East Office (later known as Force 136) headquarters in Ceylon. Plans were now put in hand to restore contact with the guerrilla forces in Malaya, to trace any survivors of the stay-behind parties and maintain contact by radio and submarine.

Davis, by now commissioned into the 6th Rajputana Rifles, landed from a submarine with a group of Chinese on the coast of the northern state of Kedah in May 1943. Having established these as agents with the local population, he withdrew to Ceylon by the next submarine.

Returning to Malaya by submarine in August 1943, Davis met **Chin Peng**, nom de guerre of the MCP guerrilla leader operating in Perak, south of Kedah. Chin Peng explained to Davis his opposition to the Japanese occupation and also the extent of the combined guerrilla and civilian organization, the Anti-Japanese Union and Forces (AJUF) opposing it. They had heard that a European (who they guessed was Spencer Chapman) had been training guerrillas in the AJUF camps for two years. Chin Peng arranged for the three men to meet on Christmas Day 1943. At a conference with the AJUF and MCP leadership on December 31st, Davis signed an agreement on behalf of the Allied C-in-C South East Asia, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, to provide arms, supplies and money in return for the guerrillas stirring up labour disputes and sabotaging Japanese shipping.

With radio contact with Ceylon broken for a long period, because of the loss of their sets, Davis and his party lived with the guerrillas in deep jungle. When contact with Colombo was restored in February 1945, he was appointed head of the Force 136 groups of agents in Malaya and promoted to colonel. A plan to co-ordinate operations against the Japanese in anticipation of Operation Zipper, the Allied landings in Malaya, was overtaken by the atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 and the Japanese surrender. Davis was awarded the DSO for his leadership in Malaya in 1942-44 and appointed CBE for his liaison work with the resistance from February 1945.

After the war he joined the Malayan Civil Service, but his association with Chin Peng was not over. At their first meeting in 1943, Chin Peng had made it clear that as an avowed communist he was also opposed to British rule in Malaya. Even so, he co-operated loyally with the British against the Japanese in pursuit of the agreement Davis had signed in December 1943, and was appointed OBE for his services in 1946.

He now resumed his MCP activities, declaring the use of force against the British as a justified means of establishing a communist state. After a series of communist-inspired strikes in the tin mines and the murders of a number of European managers of rubber plantations, the MCP was proscribed. Chin Peng led about 5,000 of his followers into the jungle, where they dug up their wartime arms and, on June 16th, 1948, "declared war" on the British administration.

The 12-year Malayan Emergency began at that point, yet it might have been brought to a peaceful conclusion as early as 1956. By 1955, Chin Peng had recognized that his campaign of terror against the rural Chinese and Malays had failed. He sought talks with Tenku Abdul Rahman and David Marshall, the chief ministers of Malaya and Singapore respectively, but demanded a guarantee for his safety.

Davis, then a district officer, was asked, on the strength of his wartime friendship with Chin Peng, to be the guarantor. A delicately negotiated arrangement was made for Davis to meet the communist leader in a jungle clearing. There he greeted

him with, "Long time, no see" in Cantonese, and conducted him to the meeting, close to the border with Thailand. But despite the friendly atmosphere of the talks, agreement could not be reached with Chin Peng. He went back to the jungle and led his dwindling band of terrorists for a further six years.

Davis remained with the Malayan Civil Service until the Emergency ended in 1960, at which time he was deputy chairman of the war executive committee of Kedah State. His service to the country was recognized by the award of the JMN (Commander of the Order of the Defender of the Realm) in 1959 and the SMJ (Faithful to the Crown of Johore) in 1960. On his return to England he became general-secretary of Kent Council Social Services (1961-74). He was subsequently to meet Chin Peng again during the latter's visit to England. During his call on Davis at his home in Sussex, Chin Peng conceded: "I have great experience of struggle but not of how to build socialism."

TRIBUTE TO JOHN DAVIS BY CHIN PENG. The Times – 6th November 2006

Many people tend to believe that friendships cannot bridge the divisions of international conflict - particularly in situations where those with close bonds of trust and understanding find themselves in bitterly opposing camps. I would differ; and would even suggest that perhaps there might be a lesson for our troubled world today in the decades-long relationship that existed between myself and my friend **John Davis**.

I first met John in September 1943 in Japanese-occupied Malaya. He was there to establish links to the outlawed Communist Party of Malaya (CPM), and the only active anti-Japanese resistance group then in existence in the country. John's credentials were signed by Admiral Louis Mountbatten, head of Britain's Ceylon-based South-East Asia Command (SEAC). I was representing the Perak State committee of the CPM.

That meeting forged an association that was expedient: we wanted to rid Malaya of a common enemy. But we both realized ultimately that the period of being allies in a common cause would eventually end. It did; but I can never forget my time with John in the Malayan jungle. He was an implacable leader in the most harrowing of circumstances. Once, John and I, with a band of CPM guerrillas, had gathered to recover a joint personnel and arms drop by the RAF. Things went terribly wrong. Parachutes landed in wrong areas. We came under heavy Japanese machinegun fire. I was 20 at the time. John was in his early 30s. Perhaps for the first time in my life I knew the feeling of real fear. John appeared calm and in control.

He was a man of principle and I recognized that very early on. I knew it when the CPM signed the Blantan agreement with SEAC in February 1945. This tied his cause and mine to an honourable agreement, albeit of limited duration.

I knew it when I saw him during the Malayan Emergency at the Baling peace talks in northern Malaya in 1955, which, sadly, failed. John had been deputized to look after me during the negotiations. He escorted me to and from each session. My one-time ally was now my enemy. We acknowledged this; we strongly differed on matters of politics and principle, but there was still great mutual respect that precluded personal enmity.

So when I visited the United Kingdom in 1998, I sought out my old friend. I wanted to show my deep gratitude for a man who, despite being vehemently opposed to my anti-British colonial struggle, always treated me fairly and decently. You cannot ask more of a man or friend.

HUBERT STRATHAIRN.

Malayan Police Officer – Died 25th June 2006, aged 89.

STRATHAIRN H.W. [Hubert William] b. Perthshire 1917. Educated Morrison's Academy & Merchiston Castle School. Spent 3 years as a Law Apprentice with Colville & Drysdale. Territorial Commission in 6/7 Black Watch taking the Crieff Company to Perth then Aldershot. FMS Police Cadet 1940. Lt. 2A & SH 1.42. POW Singapore to Thailand with F Force 29.4.43. Senior Malayan Police Officer post-war: CPO Kedah & Perlis 1958. Awarded the Kedah Star. Wife Judy nee Constable [post-war]. Senior Assistant Commissioner. Retired to Crieff 1960. Died 25.6.2006.

SURGEON-COMMANDER SIDNEY HAMILTON.

Doctor in Repulse when sunk in December 1941 – Died 2006, aged 94.

Sidney Hamilton saved many lives in the battle cruiser Repulse when she and the battleship Prince of Wales were sunk in December 1941. He was conducting his daily surgery as the air raid alarm sounded at 11.00 hours. He went immediately to his action station and continued to treat men who had been burnt and scalded. After the ship was hit by torpedoes, the injured were helped up to the quarterdeck, but as the ship rolled on to her port side he was thrown into the sea. All around him there were men in the water with blood streaking their oil-covered faces. The oil burned his eyes "as though someone was jabbing hot poker into them," he recalled. After an hour, Hamilton was rescued exhausted from the sea by the destroyed Electra, which rescued 800 survivors. With Electra's doctor and Repulse's dentist, who had also survived, Hamilton sorted his patients between the dying, the surviving and those who might be saved. After cleaning them first so he could see their wounds, he ensured that everyone was labelled ready for evacuation when Electra reached Singapore that night.

An eyewitness recalled that no praise was too high for Hamilton, who looked no more than a boy. He was mentioned in dispatches. After Electra had reached Singapore, Hamilton continued to care for his patients in the naval hospital there until he was appointed principal medical officer of the light cruiser Durban, which became the last warship to leave Singapore. She was hit 3 times by dive-bombers before limping in to Colombo, where Hamilton transferred her wounded to the hospital ship Karapara.

EVACUATION SHIPS and DATES.

As a piece of research, it has been suggested that the MVG should try to record the ships on which members were evacuated, and their destinations. The following ships were used for the evacuation of civilians from Singapore and Sumatra, with their dates of arrival, where known. If you would like to let Jonathan Moffatt or Rosemary Fell know which ship you were on, it would be helpful. From information which many of you have already sent to Apa Khabar, the evacuation details of several members are already known. I have not included those ships which were, very sadly, lost at sea.

ENGLAND.

Empress of Japan – arrived Liverpool 19.3.42 via South Africa.
Duchess of Bedford – arrived Liverpool 4.4.42

AUSTRALIA.

Orion – arrived Fremantle WA 6.1.42
Centaur – arrived Fremantle WA 13.1.42
Charon – arrived Fremantle WA 18.1.42
Aorangi – arrived Fremantle WA 23.1.42 and Adelaide 29.1.42
Narkunda – arrived Fremantle WA 24.1.42
Empire Star – arrived Fremantle WA 23.2.42
Zaandam – arrived Fremantle WA 7.3.42
Khoen Hoea – arrived Fremantle WA 9.3.42

INDIA.

Felix Rousset

FROM SUMATRA to CEYLON.

HMS Hobart
Palima
Danae

FMSVF LIGHT BATTERY 1941 – 1942.

Ian Stitt has sent the following excellent research article and writes to new MVG member Hamish Patterson as follows:-

"Having read the October edition of Apa Khabar, the Patterson name triggered my memory. I would welcome a fellow member of MVG, a fellow child born at Batu Gajah Hospital, a fellow son of a member of the FMSVF Light Battery. As you can see below, I have started to investigate the campaign as seen by the FMSVF Light Battery, in the hope that it may be of interest to you. Even better, I would appreciate any information that you can add."

I, like most of my generation, failed to enquire about my father's war years. However I have now started to read books on the campaign and to guddle through some of the archives. I must acknowledge the help I have had through MVG and COFEPOW and particularly from John Brown, Jonathan Moffatt and Paul Riches.

My father, Sholto Douglas Stitt, had been a long standing member of the Volunteers. Among his medals, I found he had been awarded the Good Conduct medal with Bar, indicating more than 15 years of service. I have photos of the Malaya States Volunteer Reserves (MSVR) taken in 1928 and 1932, copies of which I have to sent to Jonathan Moffatt for the MVG website.

During January and February 1941 my father, then a gunner in the FMSVF Light Battery, was away at Volunteer training camps, at least one being held in Northern Malaya near the border with Siam. This ties up with the published Order of Battle (Ref.1) in which the FMSVF Light Battery (LB) was scheduled to provide artillery support for Operation Matador. The LB comprised 4 guns, (actually a half battery), in two sections, the left, Perak section and the right, Selangor section of two guns each. They were equipt with 3.7 inch howitzers, then the British Army's modern artillery piece, and were commanded by Major Wilshaw with Capt. Akhurst (Soils Dept., Research Institute, Kuala Lumpur) as second in command.

On mobilisation on the 1st December 1941, the Perak Section moved south to Kuala Lumpur, the rendezvous point. Operation Matador was never implemented and was substituted by incursions into Siam by two columns. The LB was scheduled to participate in the Krohcol incursion under Lt. Col. Moorhead. In one of the few books on the campaign (Ref 2) purchased by my father, he wrote "but we did not arrive in time to take part" beside the description of Krohcol. Around 10th December the LB was dug in at Kramat Pulai near Ipoh and the observation post (OP) placed on the limestone pinnacle containing the Chinese Temple, commanded a view of the airport and over Ipoh. This is an area that my father would have known well. Firstly the mine workings nearby came under the same General Manager, AJ Kelman, as the company my father worked for, Malayan Tin Dredging (Ref 3). Secondly the old mining ponds were the original site of Ipoh Swimming Club (ref. 4). I still have photos dated 1927 of this site with the pond, the club house and the diving pontoon with the limestone pinnacle in the background. It is a mile or so south of the current Ipoh Swimming Club which I remember well. It was during their time at Kramat Pulai that the British Army exchanged their "new" 3.7 inch guns for "old" 18 pounders. Gen. Sir Martin Farndale (ref 5) refers to the 7th Mountain Battery, who having lost their guns at Jitra, were re-armed with FMSVF 3.7 inch guns at Bukit Mertajam. L/Bdr MC Hay (Ref 4)

describes, with disgust, the 4 18 pounder guns, one a relic of WW1 with wooden wheels, and laments the inadequacies of their sighting systems that were old fashioned, awkward to use and of doubtful accuracy. In papers (ref 6) responding to Gen. Bond's "Appreciation of the Defence of Malaya 1940", the War Office propose the refurbishment of old artillery pieces that were already in the country and which had spent the previous 20 years being used for display and ceremonial occasions. An example that the War Office thought "make do and mend" was sufficient for the equipping of the Malayan defence forces.

On the 16th December my Mother received the instruction to pack two suitcases and go south to Kuala Lumpur. At this point my father, with a diversion from his task of delivering an injured cook to Batu Gajah Hospital, arrived, in the midst of an air-raid, at the bungalow for a very brief visit. My mother departed next day. On 23 December the LB moved south via Tapah and their next mention is at Kampar (ref 7) where they were celebrating Christmas Eve. Here a member of the FMSVF Light battery was recruited by Spencer Chapman for his incursion west of the Perak River. Beside the description of this event, my father (ref. 2) has written "I think this was Ian Patterson who was sent to TA (Telok Anson) from Tapah to recce". The aim of the recce was to link up with an incursion behind enemy lines by the Regular Army's No 1 Independent Company. Spencer Chapman's team observed units of the Japanese Imperial Guard moving south along the west river bank to join with the Japanese 5th Army units coming in from the sea, both aiming to capture Telok Anson which was well behind the Kampar defensive position. Spencer Chapman's party failed to link up with the Independent Coy. which had also observed the Japanese movements and had the strength to shoot up a group of Japanese Officers (ref 9). Although the LB passed through the Kampar line, I am certain they did not participate in this battle as on Boxing Day and on the 27th December my father, having a short pass from the camp on the Race Course, found my mother (and me) at the Hill's bungalow in Ampang Road, Kuala Lumpur. On the 28th December my mother went to return some laundry to the camp but found the LB had pulled out.

According to the reports by L/Bdr HR Oppenheim and L/Bdr MC Hay (ref 4) the LB had left to reinforce the 63/81 battery of the 5th Regiment RA based at Klang. These forces came under Brig. Moir as Commander of the FMSVF and the Line of Communication (L of C) Troops. The L of C Command had just received the task of defending a section of the west coast from seaborne infiltrations. In the first joint engagement the LB and 63/81 battery fought off (ref. 8) an attempted Japanese landing at Kuala Selangor, followed by further later attempts at Port Swettenham. At Port Swettenham, an Anti-tank battery was fulfilling the naval role by placing their 2 pounder guns on launches and trying to disrupt the Japanese at sea (ref 8). They were severely limited in this endeavour by the total air superiority held by the Japanese. The problem of the Japanese air superiority was an equally important factor in limiting the further "behind the lines" activities of the Independent Coy. as their mothership and launches were sunk by the Japanese airforce soon after the incursion near Telok Anson referred to above. It must be remembered that since 1940 when the Royal Navy withdrew most of the Far Eastern Fleet and relinquished their role as lead Service for the defence of Malaya (ref 10), this role, of the leading the defence until such time as the "in place" forces could be relieved and reinforced, had devolved onto the RAF. The army had the supporting role of defending the airfields and the naval dockyard, none of which had been sited in places that were considered to be easily defensible. The totally inadequate quantity and quality of the aircraft and hence the ultimate inability to implement the revision to the defence plan was solely the responsibility of the Churchill's Government and War Office priorities.

The 5th Regiment RA war diary (ref 8) records the regular army as having a low opinion of the Volunteers in the LB, to quote: "put them in a position where they can fire over open sights". One assumes this has nothing to do with the poor state of the 18 pounder gun sights. The incursions along the west coast were becoming a serious problem and the coastal defense forces were strengthened by "tired" units from the Kampar defense line. At the later retreat from Klang, Major Rose (ref. 9) then attached to the Independent Coy., describes an argument with a Major of the Volunteers and makes very uncomplimentary (and unnecessary) generalisations on the Volunteers capabilities.

The LB remained around the Klang area whilst the Japanese advanced southward from successful landings at Sabak Bernam and Telok Anson until 10th January when the British forces relinquished Klang. At which time the LB seems to have remained on coastal defence duties, whilst the 5th Regiment RA battery returned to the front line. The LB was successively located; on 14 January at Pontian Kechil, on 16 January at Ayer Baloi and on 17 January at Pontian Besar. The coastal defence duties were performed in consort with other regular army units, for example, Lt. Col. Toosey and his 135th Field Regiment RA arrived in Pontian Kechil on 24th January (ref. 11). On the 14th January a number of the Volunteers received leave to say farewell to their wives and my father made the 50 mile trip into Singapore spending a few hours with my mother (and me). Mother and I evacuated next day departing for Melbourne on the "Aoranji".

On 27th January towards dusk MC Hay reports the LB firing at a vessel proceeding north in the Straits of Malacca. The action was questioned by the regular army whose OP had not seen the vessel. It is possible that the vessel was a Royal Navy ship that was trying to make contact and extract Brig. Challen's troops cut off near Batu Pahat, an event that was beginning about this time (ref 12). If this supposition is correct, then

the coastal batteries had not been told of this operation. This is an example of the lack of efficient communications and proper communications equipment that was faced by the defending forces throughout the campaign and was of critical importance during the battle for Singapore.

Later that night the LB was ordered to Singapore Island to occupy a position on Ponggol Peninsula again alongside the 5th Regiment RA. However the 5th Regiment RA was ordered to move to a position at Jurong and the LB came under the 88th Field Regiment with the recently arrived 148th Field Regiment RA nearby. On the night of the 8th February, the LB moved to the edge of Seletar airfield, received the news of the Japanese landings and the following day started shelling the Johore coast. On 10th February the RAF abandoned Seletar airfield and the LB was able to collect and re-employ working and militarily useful equipment which the RAF had failed to destroy. On 11 February the LB took up an anti-tank position in Thomson Village. On 12 February the LB moved to their final fighting position, an anti-tank role in the school grounds at Monks Hill, north of Government House. They remained in constant action in this position until the cease fire was ordered. Their position came under attack firstly by shells aimed at Government House, which was struck, then later with shells aimed at their position. By the 14th February the LB was sufficiently close to the front line to be shelled by mortar rounds but suffered no damage. At 15.40 hrs on the 15th February they received the news of the surrender and the orders to disable the guns. This news was greeted by the enemy laying down a heavy barrage on their position causing a fatality and injuries.

My father ended up a PoW in Changi but Messrs Hay and Oppenheim informed Capt. Akhurst of their intentions and made a successful escape which included assisting Gen. Gordon Bennett, Commander of the Australian 8th Division, and party to escape. Their comments on Gen Bennett are hardly complimentary. It was HR Oppenheim, who through mutual friends in Colombo, passed the first news received by my mother, that my father was fit and uninjured at the fall of Singapore, so she then had to assume he was a PoW.

Ref. 1: History of the Second World War, Volume 1; by Woodburn-Kirby (HMSO 1957).

Ref. 2: The Fall of Singapore; by Frank Owen (Pan Books 1962).

Ref. 3: Directory of Malaya 1931 & the 1940 version annotated by Capt. David Nelson. Imperial War Museum.

Ref. 4: BAM Series of Papers in the Royal Commonwealth Library Collection. Cambridge University Library.

Ref. 5: History of the Royal Artillery, Vol. VI The Far East Theatre; by General Sir Martin Farndale.

Ref. 6: Comments on Appreciation of Malayan Defence. WO 208/208/3828; Public Records Office (now National Archive).

Ref. 7: The Jungle is Neutral; by F. Spencer Chapman. (Reprint Society & Chatto and Windus 1950)

Ref. 8: Reconstituted War Diary, 5th Regiment RA. CAB 106/157; Public Records Office.

Ref. 9: Who Dies Fighting, by Major A. Rose (Jonathan Cape 1944).

Ref. 10: Malayan Campaign, a precis of a lecture by Lt. Gen Sir Lewis Heath. WO 106/2542; Public Record Office.

Ref 11: The Colonel of Tamarkan by Julie Summers. (Simon & Schuster 2005).

Ref 12. The Fall of Malaya. (Media Master Guides to Pacific War Battles (1941 - 1945).

MEMORIES OF PRE-WAR SINGAPORE.

Mary Harris replies to Diana Mirkin, who has just joined MVG, and who wrote for information in the 8th edition of Apa Khabar, as follows:-

"I was very excited to read your note in the newsletter of the Malayan Volunteers Group. My father was Norman Alexander, Professor of Physics and we lived next door to each other on the Raffles College Campus. My father survived Changi and Sime Road where your father's senior lecturer Charles (?) Owen died, just before the end. He was diabetic and there was no insulin.

My father wrote some notes about it all a few years before he died 10 years ago. And you get a mention in them! He wrote [with my own notes in square brackets (*and italics - ed.*)]:-

"...plans for the evacuation of women and children began, but Singapore pursued a rather leisurely way, and it must have been in the first or second week of January that we had word for Elizabeth [*that's my mother*] and the family [*I am the middle one of three*] to go to be picked up at Raffles Hotel and be put on a flying boat for Australia [*my father was a New Zealander so we had somewhere to go*]: so I went back home. Before long refugees from Malaya began arriving in Singapore and I put up a family for a week or two: but my most hair-raising experience was involved with the wife and baby of our Professor of Chemistry who lived next door. He had been called up for military service (I was exempt because of my scientific work) when his wife was just about to give birth to their first child. I did what I could, and she got a message to report to the docks, where she had a passage on a liner, the Felix Roussel. I took her there, and found the ship, heavily blacked out, tied up alongside with a long gangway up the side. This gangway was quite narrow, and had no outer rail of any kind, nor of course was there any chance of a grip on the ship's side: but up I had to go, with a 10 days old baby in a carry cot, park the baby and come back for the mother. I think it must have been this episode that led to the story that reached New Zealand later that I was dead. A number of Europeans did attempt to escape in small boats, and nearly all perished – but some survived ..."

I was three when we left Singapore but kept a recollection of your house, which I was able to reinforce when I went back for the first time in 1949. My older brother Billy and I used to play in the monsoon drain which ran along the back of our house, and under the hedge into your garden. Amah can't have been looking! Billy used to dam the flood, I would sit in the drain, then he would release it and I would whoosh under the fence into your garden. I can't imagine that we got away with it for long.

Do please come back to me. I have some photos of yours and our houses, which are still there and listed so they won't be pulled down.

I am writing the biography of my mother Elizabeth who was a geologist and physicist. In New Zealand she did some fundamental radar research which is now declassified, and she kept a diary which is the core of the book. She went back after the war, acted as Registrar when the College became the University and, as Government Geologist, did the first full geological survey of the island, for sources of granite for reconstruction.

Do let me know what happened to you all next, including you mother's name.

In a later e-mail, Mary writes:-

Diana tells me that her mother wrote a book (unpublished) while it was all still fresh and that we, neighbours and good friends appear in it. Likewise, her mother appears in my mother's diary which is the core of the biography I am writing. Diana and I have lots to exchange: I've just sent her some pictures of her house and ours, both pre-and post-war.

Mary's article on her research into her mother's life is as follows:- [*Editor: I have taken the liberty of giving it this title*]

ELIZABETH ALEXANDER – SCIENTIST EXTRAORDINAIRE.

Most of what has been written about expatriate life in Singapore before the fall was written by people who did not actually live there. Somerset Maugham and Noel Coward passed through, seeing what they chose to see and for many Malaysians, who worked hard in planting, mining and many other professions on the Malay peninsula, the island of Singapore was a great place for a holiday, or a romantic weekend with wonderful shopping and lots of good nightlife. We were all supposed to have been a lot of gin-swilling (sorry pahit-swilling) servant abusing ("Boy, another stengah") adulterers. But for people who lived and worked there, life just doesn't fit that stereotype. Part of what I have been doing is collecting evidence of the academic community in Singapore - yes, there was one. It centred on Raffles Museum, Raffles College, the Botanical Gardens and the College of Medicine and there was lots of it. But very little has been written about it, though Raffles College Alumni published a fascinating book in 1993, back numbers of the Royal Asiatic Society Journal are also fascinating and the Singapore National Archive has a very good oral archive. And you only have to look at the membership of the various Singapore volunteers' groups to see what a lot of professional intellect ended up in Changi, the railway, or Japanese labour camps.

My own research centres on the life of my mother, Elizabeth Alexander, a geologist and radar scientist who defied all stereotypes. But the life of any professor at Raffles College (Norman Alexander was Professor of Physics) is not very stereotypical of 'Sin-galore' either and in those days a wife was a wife and that was that. I have been researching hard to find out more about the detail of what actually went on at Kranji and the Naval Base where Elizabeth worked and what actually was her contribution to international science when she worked in a top secret radar establishment in New Zealand after she had arrived in 1942 with two toddlers and only what she could carry (including a baby), expecting to go back with some secret gear for the Naval Base. New Zealand did not declassify her radar records until 1998, because of some lasting security implications, so very little has been published on how both New Zealand and Australia were making radars for the Royal and indeed US Navies in 1942 and on Elizabeth's work within that - she set up the operational research section. That has been a very productive line of research and I now have lots to tell.

For research tools you use everything you can: archives of many sorts in UK, Singapore and New Zealand; a quantity of published books and unpublished memoirs; and the websites of COFEPOW and many links, and the newsletters of MVG and COFEPOW. And sometimes you strike gold. Recently I have been doing quite well in finding people of my generation whose parents had been scientists in those days. One contacted me via the COFEPOW website as a very long shot and he has produced another. Both have unpublished records and lots to say. Then, via personal contacts, some very long, I found the sons of an extraordinary RN radar man Geoff Whitaker, who are currently trawling their attics for me. They had no idea how important their father's work had been.

But I only really knew one other Raffles College family, the Oppenheims, Professor of Mathematics, founder of Changi University, survivor of the railway and first Vice Chancellor of the University of Malaya, because our families have stayed in touch over three generations now. One set of people I simply could not find. Elizabeth mentions 'Carol' with no surname in her New Zealand diary, basis of the biography I am researching, and Norman, my father, left some notes including his hair-raising experience about loading the wife of the Professor of Chemistry (who was himself fighting with the Volunteers) with her 10 day old baby, up the dark, narrow, slippery, hand-rail-free gangplank of the Felix Roussel - but he didn't mention her name. Raffles College records for 1941 - 2 either were never written or have been lost and all I knew was that there was a new Professor of Chemistry, whose name I was not sure about, who had been appointed probably in 1941.

Then in Apa Khabar, 8th edition, page 4, came a note from that 10 day old baby, now Diana Mirkin, asking for anyone with memories. Of course I responded by return and she, in her generosity has sent me the unpublished book of her mother, the Carol of Elizabeth's diary, and the nameless wife of Norman's hair raising account, which she wrote after she eventually got home in safety to her family in the USA, when it was all still horribly fresh. Thus a whole chunk of life on Raffles College campus has been filled and I know rather more than the virtually nothing I knew about the life of Elizabeth in those days - even that she was called Liz. Norman stayed on to survive Changi and Sime Road and he and Elizabeth were reunited in 1945. Carol never saw Donald again. He died on the railway.

On the day that Carol Purdie's book arrived, I had been visiting Anne nee Tweedie, daughter of Michael Tweedie, geologist, palaeontologist and naturalist at the Raffles Museum before and after the war. Michael was a close family friend, indeed he saved my mother's research post war (you'll have to wait for the book) and Anne, with generosity equal to Diana Mirkin's has lent me her father's unpublished records too.

Sometimes the lengthy, painstaking grind of research can be very rewarding. Far too many people think that their small memories can't amount to much and therefore don't record them in newsletters or on websites. How wrong they are. They can be pure gold.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

Sir Roger Moon writes in reply to **Merilyn Hywel-Jones's** request for identifying the Volunteers in her Port Dickson photo:-

Well I have difficulty with the picture (p.11 A.K. Edition 8, "B" Co.Depot Bttn. Port Dickson). To start with I was a "new boy" arriving in Malaya June 1939. Stationed in Johore at the time the war started I had not met many Dunlop Plantation Staff other than from Johore or Malacca.

Re: **Bill Scott**. Perhaps this was a different one from the one I knew, who was in fact my "best man" at my wedding.

W.R.H. Scott was on Segamat Estate. When the war started he was designated "KEY MAN" and as the war progressed joined the Malay Regiment.

George Robey? M.E.L. Robey was on Ladang Geddes Estate at outbreak of war. He, too, joined the Malay Regt.

As for the others mentioned:-

Digby Gates. Dunlop or ex Dunlop

Eric Hawes, Ted Cooper, George MacFie, George Booker, Willy Wall, Doug Rennie, Bob Shotter, Arthur Goode – all Dunlop Staff. Most of them I knew post war days. I do not recall, sadly, meeting Merilyn. In January 1953, I took over management of HILLSIDE ESTATE from her father. Later on I was due for leave and her father took over from me, the management of Jasin Lallang (in Malacca). Returning from leave I took over from him once more.

MALAYAN VOLUNTEER VETERANS.

I was a bit staggered to realize I was but one of 32 still surviving!! Not many names are familiar to me – possibly **John Hedley, Robert McCall** (maybe he was on the **CHITRAL ex SOUTHAMPTON - SINGAPORE JUNE 1939**) & **Charles Letts**. Yes, and thereby hangs a story. In 1925, I was evacuated to stay with my grandmother because of polio at Prep School. When she died, she left me some money and a gold guinea. One day in 1936, my father and I were travelling by train to Liverpool. Father at some stage pulled out a golden guinea and said, "Your Grandmother left you this coin." When the lunchtime break came I walked down to Boodles and Dunthorne and with the proceeds of the Guinea, bought a Rolex watch - £9 something. The Clerk in the Office (Stockbrokers) was paid £1-17-6p. a week. Well, I managed to hang on to this watch, I don't know how, during the war. When the surrender came, I had only very little cash on me, tho' managed to get more on the 17th February 1942 - but that is another story. Well, the time came when I felt my luck might run out – probably early 1944. I contacted Charles, who spoke fluent Siamese and we arranged the sale of my Rolex. He would purchase a cheaper watch for me and obtain cash from which he could take a "rake off." A really decent fellow was Charles, and I hope he flourishes in his old age.

In 1994, I found I had been paired in a Golf Match with a charming young man: he and his family owned Boodles and Dunthorne. I told him the above story. I don't think he could quite comprehend!!! That is not surprising. The younger generations, including my own family, has no conception of what 3 ½ years on the Railway was like.

I, too, have little idea of how dreadful it must have been landing on the Normandy coast – Thank God for that.

Bill Vowler writes:-

I have been put into contact with Jonathan Moffatt who has passed me on to you. I would very much like to become a member. I was born in Malacca on 24/12/28, in the old Bandar Hilir Hospital, a corrugated shack in those old days, way before the Malacca General Hospital was built. I now live in the USA (*Ed. See list of new members for details*) My parents were planters on the Batang Malaka Estate. I was sent home to school in '38, and brought back again in '40. A group of us were then sent to Perth to school. I arrived back at the end of November '41 for the Christmas Hols and then..... Do you know **Peter Stephens**? His father was PWD in Malacca, and he was a great friend. I have lost complete contact with him. We were on the S.S. Sarpedon from UK to Penang in 1940, then to Aussie and back to Malacca. I am also keen to contact any of my contemporaries at Tanglin and Cameron Highlands Schools. I was evacuated on the Empress of Japan to South Africa.

[Editor: Can anyone help?]

Winston Mathews writes:-

Thank you for the 8th Edition. Alas those beastly Japs have caught up with me. My eyesight is impaired to the extent that I can no longer read text in papers, magazines or type written. However, the Association for the Blind has sold me ZOOMTEXT at a reduced price, including the installation of the software. I now have no trouble reading off my monitor. If there is some way where some one is able to put Apa Khabar online, I would be deeply grateful. If not, I will try and get some patient soul to read the material for me. I ask on the premise that "IF YOU DON'T ASK YOU DON'T GET." A special request. During the war I was paid 50c. per day as a private. The rate was \$1.05. Is anyone able to give me a reason for this difference? I was mobilized on Dec.1st 1941. A few years after release as a POW someone behind a military desk in Singapore sent me a letter stating I was overpaid as a POW, and requesting I part with \$750. Can any member explain why the British Government will not provide me with benefits to cover injuries and illnesses as a result of my service as a soldier and POW? Are Volunteers classified otherwise? I have been refused assistance for over 50 years. What qualification must a Volunteer have? I feel that I have been communicating with the monkey rather than the organ grinder. I would be happy for any explanation.

[Editor: We are now putting the newsletter on line, and hope to "deliver" them in this way to all overseas members. This will save on postage which is becoming very onerous.]

Christine Edmondson writes:-

"...it was interesting to hear Sheila Allan's account of her time in Changi (*at the lunch*). My sister and I also enjoyed meeting Ian Stitt who we knew well when we all lived at Batu Gajah in the '40s and '50s. I was born in Batu Gajah Hospital in June 1941. After the war I went to the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus in Ipoh for about 3 years and then had a year at the Convent in BG before returning to England in 1952 and St.Mary's Hall Brighton for the next 7 years.

Ian recalled one story his mother had told him about the evacuation from Malaya in 1941-42. She said that on the Retreat, there was a car which had a large pram tied on the back of it – this was my pram, and my mother sometimes recalled that she was the only woman on board with a pram for her baby. The Captain had apparently insisted that all prams were to be left behind but luckily for my mother a sailor picked up pram and baby and carried both up the gangway."

Roger Barrett writes:-

As a child of a Volunteer, I would like to join the Group. The back copies of the newsletters, if you would send them, I will read and pass on to another friend who is interested in joining. Her father died on the Railway.

In a subsequent e-mail, Roger writes:-

Thank you for sending the data; I found much of interest in the editions of APA KHABAR which brought back many memories of those times; the sinking of the two battleships when all our hopes seemed to evaporate – we heard the news on the radio in our blacked-out bungalow. Shortly afterwards we were evacuated to Dublin Estate and there, at 4a.m. the next morning, we were woken and told to leave immediately as the Japanese were only hours away. We left with practically nothing for KL and then, as the situation continued to worsen, via stops in Malacca and Johore Bahru, to Singapore. We left for Australia, as it turned out, on the "Narkunda."

As you seem to have very little memorabilia of the KVF, this picture of the shield which my father had made, might be of some interest.



Ian MacKenzie writes:-

"...I have an enquiry about my uncle **Harold Edwin MacKenzie**. Harold was my uncle. Arrived in Malaya in 1926. In Johore from 1928. Rubber planter at Ulu Tiram Estate. Between 1930-40 was with the Johore Volunteer Engineers. Between 1941-42 was South Johore Group Commander. I know he later in 1951 became Dato and left Malaya in 1955. I'm looking for any info on him. Did they wear uniform? Did they have a cap badge? Where can I obtain one (to put with his other medals – WW1 with the A & SH) and decorations? His wife Margaret is in her 97th year, but is failing.

I would be very interested in joining your M.V.Group (and receiving the Apa Khabar newsletter). Having recently retired from 42 years Government Service (Royal Air Force & FCO), I now have the time to enjoy my hobbies (medal collecting and family research). I have Harold's WW1, WW2 medals and his Dato decorations from the Sultan of Johore. It's very unlikely, but I am still hoping to purchase (?) the Johore Volunteer Engineers' rhino cap badge. I enjoy my family medals and have mounted them in my den, my own, my Dad's, my sons-in-law (1xUS & 1xUK), my cousin, my father-in-law etc. I was fortunate to do postings to the Embassies in Washington DC and Moscow. I was able to amass a fair collection, trailing round the weekend flea markets!! I have already made contact with Paul Riches re medals.

I was fortunate enough to spend almost 3 years with the RAF at RAF Tengah and RAF Jurong, both in Singapore (1969-71). We were able to visit Changi Prison. What had been the WW2 hospital is now a dedicated Chapel of Remembrance (with

sunlight, regimental flags, beautiful flowers and an immense sense of peace). We went up to Johore Bahru, visiting Harold's old estate and Bungalow at Ulu Tiram. I have been fascinated by my Uncle. Quite a man. Perhaps members of the Group have heard mention of him?

[**Editor:** An article was sent to me by our late member **Ian Aviet**, taken from the Sunday Times 13th January 1946 (Singapore), in which details were given of a Japanese massacre which had taken place on the Ulu Tiram Estate. 12 Eurasian families, amounting to over 60 people were killed in the massacre. The article was sent to me because one of the families was related to Ian, and his own family had originally been invited to join the group. Instead, Ian's father decided that his family would be better off staying in the family home in Singapore. The families had brought large quantities of goods and food with them and lived in the bungalow. At first the Japanese seemed to be on friendly terms with the Eurasians, but on March 14th 1942 they killed the entire community and looted their possessions in a seemingly drunken frenzy. Local labourers were eye-witnesses to the tragedy.]

MVG ANNUAL LUNCH -- 30TH September 2006

The following report was sent by Jonathan Moffatt:-

We were pleased to be joined at the MVG London lunch by Sheila Allan, former Changi internee and author of 'Girl in Changi', now in its third edition. Sheila was visiting the UK from New South Wales to present her Changi Girl Guides Quilt to the Imperial War Museum. She gave us a lively, inspiring and moving talk and question & answer session.

Sheila's father was Australian tin mining engineer and dredgemaster John Charles Allan who served in the Volunteers in the 1920s. He died in Sime Road Camp in June 1945. Sheila was born in Taiping in 1924 and entered Changi Gaol as a 17 year old, one of some 400 women and children Singapore internees.

She recognised that Changi and the women internees there offered a security and protection that did not exist for young women outside the prison. The influence of medical staff such as Dr Eleanor Hopkins inspired her to pursue a nursing career after the War.

The Girls Guide Quilt, the first of the Changi Quilts, was made in 1942 under the direction of nursing sister Elizabeth Ennis and Dutch girl, Trudy van Roode. It is decorated with 72 flower rosettes each signed by its Changi girl guide creator. Sheila later contributed to the Australian quilt embroidering on her square patch a map of Australia and a kangaroo, representing her thoughts and hopes for the future. Several contributors to the quilt attended its handover to the Imperial War Museum.

The history of what had happened to the **Girl Guide Quilt**, was researched by **Mrs. Betty Hall**, who joined her friend Sheila Allan and MVG members at the annual lunch in London. Betty's fascinating story is included, on the next page, as it was through her interest in the Quilt, from the Guiding point of view, that it came to be presented by Sheila to the Imperial War Museum on 26th September 2006. Not only did Betty discover the whereabouts of the Quilt, but she also made contact with all the ladies (young girls in 1942) whose names are embroidered on the Girl Guide Quilt:-

Nellie Symons, Ossie Handcock, Olga Morris, Theresa Walters, Bessy Sanger, Queenie Smith, Eileen Harris, Cynthia Smith, A.Silbermann, Pansy Ng, R.Reilly, T. van Roode, Evelyn Harris, Jane Davidson, Helen Harris, Sheila Summers, Mary Gilfillan, Mary Trevor, Nelly Cummings, Shirley Harris.

The Guides made the Quilt for their Leader Elizabeth Ennis, as a birthday present, and it is now certain that this Quilt was the first one to be made, and acted as the inspiration for the other 3 quilts which were made in the Women's Prison Camp in Changi. These were the **Red Cross Quilt** which is at Red Cross Headquarters in Kent; the **Australian Quilt** and the **Japanese Quilt**, both of which are at the Australian War Museum in Canberra.

[**Editor:** I have more information on the Girl Guide Quilt, including a report on the Presentation to the IWM. If anyone would like to have this information, please ask me and send an A4 SAE]



THE STORY of THE GIRL GUIDES QUILT from CHANGI.

by Betty Hall

Chester Grosvenor Guild.

It all started at the end of World War 2.

I had a friend who was a couple of years older than me, and she had a boyfriend who had been a prisoner of war under the Japanese. When this young man was repatriated to the U.K., my friend introduced him to me. He would not talk about his experiences, however, knowing I was in Guiding, he did tell me a little about a quilt made by girl guides in the women's prison. This young man did not live long, a result of atrocities inflicted. I have never forgotten the terrible shock on seeing this emaciated human being, and I cannot ever forgive the Japanese.

If you wish to know more about prison life for the internees, Sheila Allan has written a book, "The Diary of a Girl in Changi." It gives an insight into the day-to-day life of a prisoner. She does not include many of the atrocities that went on, because, as she says, memories are too painful.

To move on: From then on, until a few years ago, the subject of the quilt would come to the fore of my memory, but life went on with career, marriage etc. so the quilt subject got put on the back burner. Then in 2001 while staying in Singapore, I visited Changi Prison Museum and saw a quilt hanging on the wall. This turned out to be a replica of a Red Cross Quilt, made by women prisoners. I asked the curators about a Girl Guide Quilt, but they knew nothing, and directed me to the book section, where they said I might find some information. Browsing through the books, I noticed Sheila Allan's book which I purchased.

Sheila mentioned the Guide Company started by a Mrs. Ennis. She also mentioned 3 quilts, a Japanese, a Red Cross and an Australian, but not a Girl Guide quilt. I was interested in the G.G. quilt, as I felt that it must be a very important part of Guiding history.

So my quest began: where was this quilt?

I began by writing to the Archive department at headquarters. Reply was not very helpful!

However, Margaret Courtney (archivist) did some research, and got back to me, that she had discovered from records, that a Mrs. Ennis was N.E. Region Trefoil Chairman and that she had a daughter living in Australia. This daughter telephoned Margaret Courtney from Sydney and told Margaret, that her mother had been very hurt, when she had offered the quilt to headquarters, and they had turned it down. It had been her wish that the quilt go to headquarters as it had the names of the twenty guides on it.

Subsequently Mrs. Ennis bequeathed the quilt to Sheila Allan.

Sadly Mrs. Ennis died just before I received this information.

[Mrs. Ennis, who founded the Guide Company, was a military nurse, who married her fiancé, Dr. Jack Ennis, 4 days before the fall of Singapore. They were to spend the next 3 years apart as P.O.W. The dream that kept her going was to sail home to Scotland with her husband.]

The Guide Company was formed in 1942, the first year of internment. There were 20 guides in the Company and they met once a week in a corner of the Exercise Yard. Sheila Allan was not in the Company being too old to be a Guide at 17 years.

The Guides discovered the date of Elizabeth's birthday and they decided to make her a quilt as a birthday present. This they did using tiny scraps of material and re-cycled threads. To make the hexagonal flowers (not an easy thing to do) to create the quilt which is known as "Grandmother's Garden Quilt." What a beautiful gesture from the girls who had so little to give, and what a wonderful person Elizabeth Ennis must have been to merit such a gift. Each Guide stitched her name to the piece she had made.

We now know with 100% certainty that the Guide Quilt was the first and the inspiration for the other quilts.

I decided to write to Sheila Allan through the publishers of her book, and was really excited on receiving a reply from Sheila herself. I had finally located the quilt. Sheila wrote that as she was 81 years old she was worried about the future of the quilt and was considering what she should do about it. She arranged to meet me in Sydney to show me the quilt and discuss its future. At her request, and before travelling to Sydney, I contacted various quilt museums and organizations for their opinions, and all enquiries led to the same result – the best place for the quilt's future was the British Imperial War Museum. Here it would have the expert conservation work needed and would be on permanent display for the greatest number of people to view it.

And so it came to pass. Sheila wrote to the Imperial War Museum who accepted it, and who were greatly honoured by the offer.

Sheila then asked me to try and trace the twenty names embroidered on the quilt. Another quest. I wrote to numerous papers local and national, and magazines telling them about the quilt and asking if they would print the names on the hope of replies. Only the following publications were kind enough to publish, "The British Legion Magazine," "This England Magazine," "Trefoil Magazine," and "Cheshire Forest News," (the last two with the help of our County Chairman.) From this publicity I received about thirty replies, among which was one from the wanted list. This lady wrote to me and informed me that she knew of two more survivors still alive.

I forwarded this information to the War Museum from whence the ladies received invitations to attend the handing over of the Quilt, which took place on the 26th September 2006 and for which I was honoured to receive an invitation. I must add that I was very disappointed that no-one came from Guide Headquarters, considering the importance of the quilt to Guiding History.

Now to continue with the story of the 3 other quilts – quite different in design to the Guide Quilt. Ethel Mulvaney, a Canadian internee and wife of a British soldier, was the Red Cross representative in Singapore before the invasion, and became the Camp representative for the women prisoners.

When she saw the Quilt given to Elizabeth Ennis by the Guides, she immediately realized that quilt making would be an excellent activity to boost morale and alleviate endless boredom of camp life.

At the same time the quilts could be used as "letters" to pass vital information concerning the welfare of the women and children of Changi to men held in other camps. No contact of any form was allowed between male and female prisons.

Mrs. Mulvaney was an extremely shrewd woman, she decided that one quilt would be made for the Australian Soldiers, one for the British Soldiers and one for the Japanese. She obtained permission from the Japanese Commandant to present the quilts to the men, ostensibly as a gift to the wounded. She included the Japanese wounded in her request as a ploy to give the other quilts a better chance of reaching their destination.

The quilts were made from embroidered squares edged in Turkey red stitching. Most of the women had some sewing and embroidery skills and many had brought a few threads and patterns with them into camp. Fabric was obtained from unbleached calico flour, rice and sugar bags and eventually stitched onto an army blanket.

The Japanese quilt was embroidered with pretty floral motifs, but it was the Australian and British quilts that included concealed messages – poignant messages reflecting the thoughts and feelings of the women. An example of one is by Margaret Smallwood on the Australian quilt. She embroidered a picture of her prison cell – its barred window, trundle bed, packing case table, laundry drying on a small line and called it "room with a view." Another reads "Changi Holiday Camp," proving they never lost their sense of humour. Most importantly all the squares bear the initials or signature of the women who had sewn it so that their husbands and sons would recognize their work and know that they were still alive.

Sheila Allan, author of the book "Diary of a girl in Changi" was only 17 when incarcerated in Changi. She had grown up in Penang, where her Australian father worked as an engineer. Sheila weighed 140 lbs when she entered Changi, but illness and poor diet reduced her to 84 lbs when she was released. Sadly her father, who was in the men's section of the prison, died in captivity only a few months before liberation.

It had been his wish that Sheila go to his sister in Australia, when she was liberated, and this is what she did.

The women of Changi took part in some of the most dramatic events of the twentieth century. They witnessed horrendous acts that will forever be etched in their memories. And yet, they endured their captivity with dignified courage, tenacity and rare strength of human spirit.

The quilts created by them in Changi remain as a precious legacy, reflecting these times and these women and honouring the part they played in history.

The Girl Guide Quilt must be the perfect example of THE SPIRIT OF GUIDING and a very important part of Guiding History, the story of which should be better known in Guiding Annals.

This story is really Sheila Allan's and I recommend you to read her book.

3rd Edition ISBN 0 7318 12425

Betty Hall
Chester Grosvenor Guild.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY.

Saturday, 5th May 2007

FEPOW History Research for Beginners

Details of this one-day seminar were sent out with the last newsletter. There are still a few places left, and if there is anyone who would like to attend, please contact **Meg Parkes** (e-mail: mm.parkes@btinternet.com) or **Jonathan Moffatt** (e-mail: JonathanMoffatt@aol.com)

MVG SUBSCRIPTIONS for 2007-2008

In order to keep costs to a minimum, we would like to remind all MVG members that the annual subscription for the year 2007-2008 are due in **APRIL**. The subscription will again be £10 and cheques should be made payable to:-

Mrs. R. Fell, Volunteers Bench Fund.

Receipts for the subscriptions will not be sent, unless requested, but donations will be acknowledged.

Important Notice to all Overseas Members.

The cost of posting the newsletters abroad has become prohibitive. As we now have a very good website, on which the newsletters are posted, it has been suggested that we should **not send** printed copies to overseas members **after** the current January Edition of Apa Khabar (No:9) In future, you will be notified by e-mail when the newsletter has been posted on the website, where it can be read and printed off using the password "taiping."

Please let me know if you **DO NOT AGREE** with this suggestion, or if you would still prefer to receive a printed copy in the usual way.

GROUP PHOTOGRAPH of OFFICERS taken at HEADQUARTERS, MALACCA VOLUNTEER CORPS, MALACCA. His Majesty King George VI's Birthday Parade on 9th June 1938.



SEATED (L to R):- Unknown; Lt. Jetti bin Ahmad; Capt. Daniel K.C.Lim; Capt. H.M.de Souza; Capt. Mohd.Ali bin Maidin; Capt. W.H. Jackson; The Hon.George William Bryant (Resident Councillor, Malacca); Lt.Col. W.J. Curran-Sharp (CO of MVC) Unknown; Capt. Tan Cheng Chye; Capt. W.W. Johnson; Capt. Abbas bin Mohd. Said; Lt. Tan Peng Leong; Lt. Jones.
STANDING (L to R):- Lt. B.W. Frois; Unknown; Lt. R.A. de Vries; Lt. A.S. Pinto; Lt. Cho Seow Lim; Unknown; Lt. Abdul Rahman bin H. Noordin; Lt. D.I. Todman; Lt. D.K. Frampton; Lt. W.G. Ross; Capt. (Dr.) McDonald; Lt. Ong Kim Keat; Capt. (Dr.) H.S. Foo.

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