

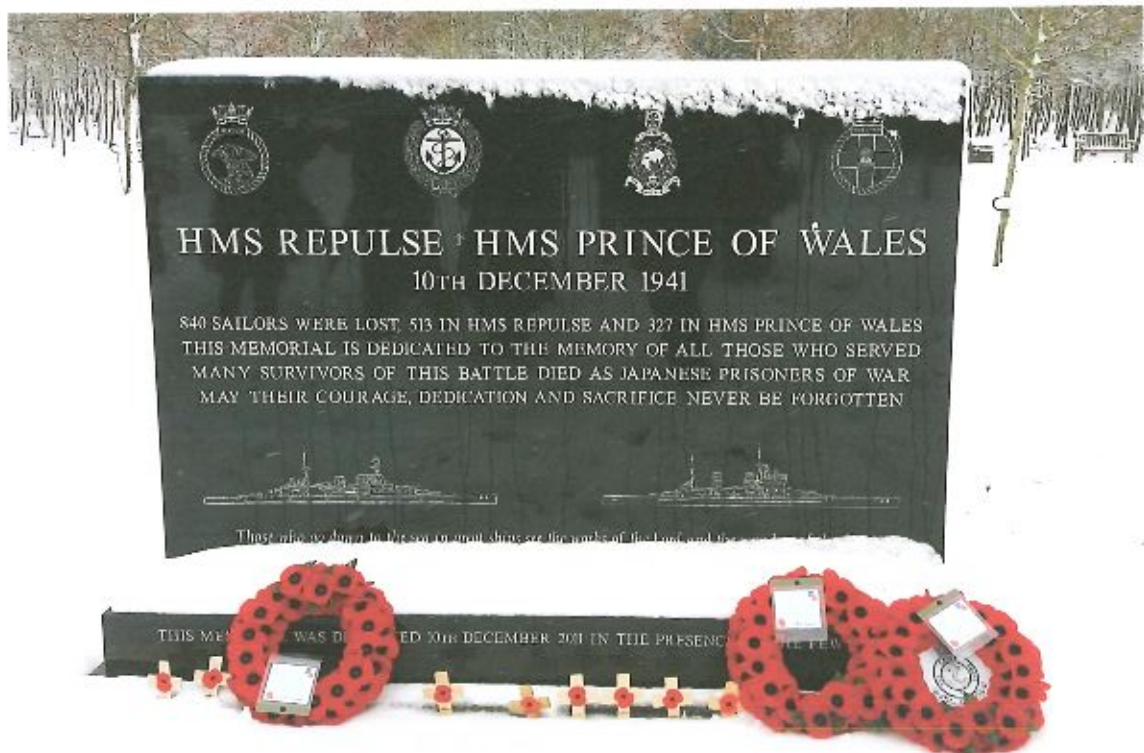
APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**53rd EDITION
JANUARY 2018**



10th December 2017

**A snowy day at the National Memorial Arboretum
for the Annual Service of Commemoration for
the sinking of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales**

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MVG'S NEW WEBSITE GOES LIVE IN 2018
MEMBERS MARCHED AT THE CENOTAPH IN 2017
IN MEMORY OF THE VOLUNTEERS
ELECTRICITY FOR MUNTOK'S PEACE MUSEUM
A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

We are delighted to announce that the MVG's new website went live on 2nd January 2018. For some time we have been aware that the website set up by **Peter Moffatt** was difficult to use and needed an overhaul. We thank him for all the work he has done, together with **Jonathan Moffatt**, our Researcher and Historian, on getting so much information and news on to the website for people to read and use. Our new webmaster, **Maxine Lawson**, has created a modern and lighter look to the website without losing any of the material, and we are very grateful to her, as a new mother, for all the work she has done for the MVG. We hope **Maxine** will be able to continue as our webmaster.

It was with enormous pride that a group of MVG members marched past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday in November 2017. We were given tickets to line up in Column F on Horse Guards Parade, along with other military charities – quite a different position from our former place in Whitehall with the civilian Column M. Placed between “**The Ammunition Technicians**” and “**Help for Heroes**” our 12 marchers were slightly overshadowed by these two larger groups and they, of course, were mentioned and shown on the BBC TV outside broadcast. A glimpse of our backs was seen as the camera panned over the “**Help for Heroes**” marchers, but that was all. Nevertheless, the important thing was that we were there representing the Malayan Volunteers. See full report on Ps. 4 and 5.

Looking back over the past year, the MVG still has some way to go to achieve due recognition for all the Malayan Volunteer Forces who were taken prisoner by the Japanese and the civilians who also suffered as internees, but there have been a few successes. We are pleased to say that the names of all British members of the Malayan Volunteer Forces and civilians who became FEPOWs will now be included in the nominal roles in the FEPOW Memorial Building at the National Memorial Arboretum. It will be a long process with so many names to add to the roles, but we have **Keith Andrews** to thank for beginning the addition of these names. We also thank **Meg Parkes** for giving the MVG the opportunity to explain to the delegates at the Researching FEPOW Conference in June 2017 who the Malayan Volunteers were and the role they played in the Malayan Campaign. Recognition by this wider audience resulted in some new members.

During the visit of MVG members to the Peace Museum in Muntok on Bangka Island in February, it was apparent that the building was suffering from the lack of electricity on several counts. Firstly, it was difficult to read the information pertaining to some of the exhibits because there was insufficient light. Secondly, the building had suffered from rain leaking in after a particularly violent tropical storm, and the atmosphere was somewhat damp – not ideal for keeping the various documents, pictures, items of clothing and other things in the museum in pristine condition. And thirdly, the building was of limited use to the local community as well as to visitors, as it could not be used in the evenings. In consultation with **Judy Balcombe**, whose untiring efforts raised most of the funds for the museum's construction, it was decided that the MVG would approach **Mr. Fakhri** of the Tinwinning Museum in Muntok who is the designated keyholder for the Peace Museum, and ask him to quote for the installation of electricity in the building. This has taken some months, but we are pleased to announce that the MVG has now donated £1,400 to cover the cost of installing electric lighting and an air conditioning unit in the Peace Museum. We thank everyone who has contributed to this project and look forward to reporting the 'grand switch-on' in due course. In particular we thank **Judy Balcombe** who has agreed to liaise with the Tinwinning Museum Director, **Mr. Fakhri**, who will oversee the work. **Judy's** drive to bring this project to fruition and to continue to add more material to the Museum, are truly inspiring. **HOT OFF THE PRESS: Electricity has now been installed – see P.6**

Our thanks also go to **Bob Hall** who travelled to the NMA in extremely difficult snowy conditions to attend the annual Service of Remembrance on the anniversary of the sinking of **HMS Prince of Wales** and **HMS Repulse** December 10th. The conditions were quite extraordinary, as can be seen from the photograph on the front cover of this newsletter, and in complete contrast to the tropical seas in which these 2 capital ships were sunk by the Japanese.

Two weeks earlier, on 27th November 2017, another disturbing report appeared in the Telegraph newspaper relating to the continuing desecration of the sunken remains of **HMS Repulse** which has the status of a war grave. Local scrap metal scavengers have blown up and removed sections of the ship including the bronze propellers. British divers have been monitoring the situation and it has been proposed that the 15in. gun barrels and an anchor should be recovered and put on display in the U.K. – along with the ship's bell from **HMS Prince of Wales** which was recovered previously. [See P.27/A.K. 49] It is with great sadness that we announce the death of **Sir Roger Moon** on 16th October 2017, just over a month before his 103rd birthday. **Sir Roger** was a member of the **Johore Volunteer Engineers**, and our only member left who was captured and became a military FEPOW. He was sent up by train on 28th October 1942, with Letter “U” Party, to work on the Burma-

Siam Railway along with many other Volunteers. We send our sincere condolences to his family. See his obituary on Ps. 22/23. We also send our deep sympathies to **Andrew Hwang** on the death of his father in September 2017, and on the ongoing ill health of other family members. Sadly, this has meant that he has not been in touch with me since May, and I have had little information about our members in Malaysia and Singapore, and no paperwork pertaining to the 2016-2017 accounting year. On a happier note, congratulations are due to **Anton Rippon** who has been named "**Columnist of the Year**" in the 2017 Midland Media Awards. A former Sunday Telegraph football writer, **Anton** has worked for the Derby Telegraph for the past 17 years, writing a weekly column. In 1982 he founded **Breedon Books** which he built into one of the UK's most successful sports book publishers before selling it in 2004 and setting up his own freelance agency. It is difficult to report on all the news which comes in on a fairly regular basis from members in different parts of the world. We thank you for keeping in touch. Your messages are very much appreciated. Please keep them coming. **We are delighted to announce that Sallie Hammond has offered to become Secretary in Canada & the USA.**

ANNUAL REUNION AND LUNCHEON HELD AT THE RAF CLUB, PICCADILLY, ON SATURDAY, 21ST OCTOBER 2017 – Report by Rosemary Fell

A very successful and enjoyable reunion and luncheon took place, once again, at the RAF Club in Piccadilly. Now that so many of us know each other, it is easier to introduce new members and friends and to make them feel welcome. The ambience at the Club and the friendliness of the staff is an additional factor in providing a happy and relaxed atmosphere, and this year was no exception. Members of Staff were on hand soon after 10am to arrange the Ballroom tables to suit our needs, and set up the lectern and computer leads for our speaker **Roger Willbourn**. **Roger** and his wife, **Caroline**, who was to show the slides during his talk, arrived early to make sure all his equipment was set up correctly.

We are very grateful to **Anthony and June Jackson** and to **Donald Fell** for their help in organising the Ballroom and to **June** for her help with buying and arranging the flowers for the tables. As always the 'backroom boys' do so much work which goes unnoticed, but it is much appreciated.

Despite worrying reports of travel disruption due to "Storm Brian" over that weekend, no-one was inconvenienced by it and everyone arrived in good time. Members started arriving just after midday and soon there was a healthy buzz of conversation as old friends met and new ones were made. This hour before the meal is served is such an important time for making new connections, and is the main opportunity in the year when members can meet each other, due to the nature of our geographical diversity throughout this country and the world.

Once everyone had found a place, the lunch started with grace said in Latin by **Anthony Jackson**. A lighter menu had been chosen for this year and this was appreciated by members and several wrote later to say how much they enjoyed it. Each table was decorated with a small vase of red, yellow and cream roses which made a bright splash of colour.



Roger giving his talk

After the toast to the Volunteers and while coffee was being served, we settled down to listen to **Roger's** excellent talk about his grandfather, **Major Eric Willbourn**. Entitled, "**The Surveyor Surveyed**", we were enthralled as his life unfolded in front of us from the time he arrived in Malaya as an Assistant Geologist in June 1914, amply illustrated by slides shown by **Caroline Willbourn** as the talk progressed. **Eric** became a member of the Malay States Volunteer Rifles despite the fact that he moved around the country in his geological survey work. In 1917, while on leave in England, he served in the regular forces during WW1 and was commissioned as 2nd Lt. in the Signals Service of the Royal Engineers. Before returning to Malaya in 1919 to take up his duties once again as a Surveyor, he married **Jessie Cooper** and they sailed back via Canada taking in various ports around the Japanese coast. They lived very full and interesting lives – **Jessie** accompanying her husband on some of his geological survey work. Their two children (**Roger's** father **Tony**, and his sister **Elizabeth**) were sent back to England to boarding school – as so many colonial children were in those days.

As war loomed again in Europe in the late 1930s, **Eric** became a major and commanding officer of "C" Coy in the 1st Battalion FMSVF (Perak) – later to be transferred to the Training Battalion – and **Jessie** signed up with the Medical Auxiliary Service. **Eric** had been acutely aware of the threat from Japan from the mid 1940s, and even approached the Military Directorate in Singapore offering them the entire staff of the Geological Survey for intelligence duties. With their extensive and detailed knowledge of the Malayan countryside, this would have been a valuable resource. Needless to say, the offer was refused as being "quite unnecessary".

When the Japanese did invade, tragically **Jessie** lost her life on the "**Giang Bee**" and **Eric** was captured and

sent to the Burma–Thailand Railway. He survived and after the war he returned home to Bridlington. The vote of thanks was given by **Michael Thompson** for a fascinating, albeit brief, insight into the colonial life of a very interesting man.

The draw took place after the talk having raised the excellent sum of £252. To this was added another £75 from the sale of 3 of the 5 unwanted plaques* recovered from the NMA after their new building was opened. This money is earmarked for the installation of electricity and air conditioning in the Muntok Peace Museum. **[Ed: Funds have now been sent].** Thank you to everyone who brought such interesting and lovely draw prizes and to the **Jacksons** and **Penny Dembrey** for selling the tickets.

[N.B. * The 2 remaining plaques represent the Johore Volunteer Engineers and the Kelantan Volunteer Force. If anyone would like to purchase these @£25 each please contact Rosemary.]

Date for next year's lunch – Saturday 20th October 2018

Speaker – Mary Harris

Topic – “Bouches inutiles – who were they and what happened to them?”

November Lunch held in Perth WA

Report by Elizabeth Adamson

The end of year lunch for the West Australian MVG members was held again at ‘The Left Bank’ Restaurant, Fremantle, on the 21st November 2017. The weather was beautiful, with a good breeze coming off the Swan River.

Those present were: Bob Patterson, Janet Robinson, Kaye Bruechle, Robert Gray, Janet Zanetti, Warren & Janet Harvey, Bill & Elizabeth Adamson. Apologies were received from Tony Brand, Glenice Gray, Sheena Wheeler, Patricia Giudice, Patricia Wood, Rhuwina Griffiths and George Page. It was great to have a good catch up and exchange family histories which enhanced knowledge of the various circumstances we had all experienced as youngsters.

We look forward to the Fall of Singapore Commemoration again at Stirling Civic Gardens which will be held on Saturday, 17th February 2018 at 10am.

N.B. Patricia Giudice had to be flown home by med-vac, having contracted pneumonia while on a visit to Katmandu in November. She has since made a good recovery.

CROSS PLANTING CEREMONY – Thursday 9th November 2017. Report by Karen Harney.

We arrived at Westminster just as Big Ben chimed 9.00. We thought it was a recording but have since read in the newspaper that it was the actual chime as they were checking the mechanism for Remembrance Day. We crossed over to Westminster Abbey and went through the security gates easily. For a first timer it was a perfect time to go as there weren't many people ahead of us and we could have a good look round. Alan enjoyed chatting to fellow signaller at the Plot for the Royal Corps of Signals.

My uncle, **Colonel Desmond Freeland**, was also in the Signals serving in India and Burma – one of the Chindits who was on the Long March. So it was good also to find the Burma Star Association's Plot – his grave has the Burma Star on it – it was what he was most proud of. Also there was a plot for the SOE with **Violet Szabo's** name on one of the crosses. Again, of great interest as my mother, **Rosemary Freeland**, served in the SOE under **Leo Marks** in Baker Street. An office girl by day and working in the theatre by night!

It took a little while to work out where the FEPOW Plot was, but we found it situated in the middle triangle. It was a little confusing because we had blue tickets which were for a completely different area. We met up with others at the Plot including **Chaplain Pauline Simpson**. The designated person at the front of the Plot was **Bill Mundy** who survived in the camps by being a bee keeper. He was able to donate honey to the FEPOW doctors as well as to the Japanese Guards.

The ceremony itself was short with the trumpeter standing on the roof top of St. Margaret's Church. **Prince Harry**, or as the programme called him “**Prince Henry of Wales**”, reviewed the Plots. He did the rounds talking to all those on the pathway.

Progress was slow.

He had a good chat with **Bill** remembering him from last year.

Afterwards there was a short ceremony at the FEPOW Plot ending with the FEPOW Prayer:-

And we that are left grow old with the years

Remembering the heartache, the pain and the tears

Hoping and praying that never again

Man will sink to such sorrow and shame

The price that was paid we will always remember

Every day, every month, not just in November.

3.

Prince Harry with Bill Mundy



**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY PARADE AT THE CENOTAPH,
WHITEHALL, LONDON – NOVEMBER 2017 – Report by Rosemary Fell**

Following last year's disappointment at not being allocated tickets, we were delighted to receive our 12 tickets for the Cenotaph Parade. They came as the result of a battle with the organisers of the parade to gain recognition for the Volunteers and allow us to march on their behalf as relatives of WW11 veterans and Far East Prisoners of War. So it was with a sense of achievement that we collected together on a cold winter's day on 12th November 2017.

This time we were designated a place in Column F which formed up on Horse Guards Parade. Security was very tight, as to be expected, and we each had to show our personalized tickets and proof of identity before being allowed onto the parade ground. It was a bitterly cold day, but at least the sun came out and it was dry after overnight rain. How lucky we have been on the 12 occasions we have marched – all have been dry except for one Sunday when there was some early drizzle.

Anthony, June Jackson and I arrived at Horse Guards first, soon after 9am. The boards with our allotted numbers had been laid out in order and we quickly found our place in Column F. We were joined soon after by **Lt. Col. Geoff Strivens** who was marching with us first the first time.

We found ourselves between 2 well known charities – “**Help for Heroes**” and “**The Association of Ammunition Technicians**” – a strange place to put us, we thought, representing FEPOWs and civilian internees of WW11, but we were pleased to be there.

Sandy Lincoln arrived shortly afterwards, followed by **Karen Harney**. We were visited by two members of the Malaysian High Commission who were attending the ceremony, and they chatted to us for some time. They wanted to know who we were and who we were representing, and were very interested in our stories. Later we met two veterans who had fought in the post-war Confrontation in Borneo, who chatted for some time.

Our contingent was joined by **Alison Keating, Jean Goyder** and **Anne Hinam**, all of whom had had early train journeys to London. We were pleased to see **Mike** and **Christine Cavender** arrive just before 10am to complete our numbers. Sadly, **Pat Wilson**, one of our regular marchers, was unable to attend at the last minute.

At 10.05am precisely, we were ordered into our marching positions and followed the disabled wheelchair groups through the Horse Guard arches and into Whitehall. Although it was good to be closer to the Cenotaph than in previous years in Column M, unfortunately we were unable to see a TV screen and therefore could not follow the lining up of the Parade, the laying of wreaths by the Royal Family and officials or the service.

In an break with tradition, **HM The Queen** and **HRH The Duke of Edinburgh** observed the ceremony from a balcony at the Foreign Office and watched as **HRH The Prince of Wales** laid the first wreath, followed by other members of the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, members of the Government, Ambassadors and High Commissioners. The short service which followed was taken by the former Bishop of London, the Rt. Revd. and Rt. Hon. **Richard Chartres**, now the Dean of Her Majesty's Chapels Royal. It followed the traditional format, and after the departure of members of the Royal Family and other dignitaries the massed bands of the Guards Division started to play and the march past began.

This time, we didn't have to wait very long before it was our turn to march and we stepped off smartly, kept in step by the shouted instructions from our “**Help for Heroes**” neighbours behind us. Those of you who watched the BBC broadcast may have seen a brief glimpse of our backs as the camera panned over the rows of “**Help for Heroes**” marchers – but a blink and you would have missed us and there was no mention of the Volunteer Forces. The crowds seemed larger than ever, especially as we reached the end of Whitehall and turned right into Great George Street and again into Horse Guards Road. The salute at the end of the Parade was taken by **HRH The Duke of Wessex**. We lined up on Horse Guards until all the marching columns had passed the saluting dais, the National Anthem had been played and we were given permission to disperse. This final line up seemed rather



Rosemary Fell & June Jackson with
the board and wreath

shambolic, I have to report, because many of the marchers did not wait but simply went off. We may not have stood silently or to attention, but I am pleased to report that all MVG marchers stayed until the end and then we went our various ways. Nine of us made our way to the Premier Inn on Belvedere Road behind the former City Hall where we enjoyed a long and leisurely lunch and conversation.

Lunch at the Premier Inn after the Cenotaph Parade



Report on Remembrance Sunday in Malaysia.

The Malay Mail reported from Kuala Lumpur that about 700 attended the service at the National Monument, to honour those who served in both World Wars and later conflicts, both military and civilian. 39 wreaths were laid.

Report in the Star Newspaper

The 16th Annual Remembrance Day ceremony was held at Penang's Esplanade Cenotaph on 19th Nov. attended by more than 200 people. Veteran MVG member **James Jeremiah** attended and laid a wreath.

REPORT ON THE COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT THE NMA FOR THE SINKING OF HMS REPULSE AND HMS PRINCE OF WALES

By Bob Hall

Due to the adverse weather conditions it was touch and go as to whether I would be able to attend the memorial service. I did leave Bristol at 8.30am and eventually arrived at the National Memorial Arboretum at 12.30pm after the motorway was reduced to one lane and being stuck in a 'snowed in' traffic jam for an hour. The journey back home was not much better, but needless to say, I did make it and I'm able to bring you a report from the Memorial Service.

It was our annual memorial service for the sinking of both **HMS Prince of Wales** and **HMS Repulse**. These two ships were part of 'Force Z' which **Churchill** sent to Singapore and were subsequently sunk in the South China Sea by Japanese aircraft at approximately 1.30pm on 10th December 1941.

Capt. Ian Groom with Bob Hall



The service was scheduled for 12pm, but due to the bad weather conditions it was delayed until 12.30 in order to accommodate my late arrival. The Guest of Honour was **Captain Ian Groom** from the newly commissioned aircraft carrier **HMS Prince of Wales** which is currently under construction at Rosyth Dockyard.

Due to the adverse weather conditions, our party was somewhat reduced and it was decided to hold the service in the NMA Chapel. The Chaplain, **Revd. Tony Wood** led us in the act of Remembrance followed by the last Post being played by a Royal Marine Bugler. Two minutes of silence was observed followed by Reveille and the laying of wreaths on the altar. The service was brought to a close with prayers being said by both the **Chaplain** and **Capt. Ian Groom**. With temperatures falling below freezing and a recent heavy downfall of snow, those of us who were brave enough, made the slippery walk to the ships' memorial. Here, **Capt. Ian Groom** led us in prayers before the wreaths were finally laid. The service was brought to a close with Reveille.

Royal Marine Maurice Pink (rt.) lays a wreath*

Our small party, now feeling the effects of the weather, were rewarded with that old naval custom of receiving a 'tot of rum' before returning to the refreshment area of the Arboretum.

With the weather closing in we had a short time of fellowship together, remembering those who were unable to attend due to the bad weather. This included representatives from the New Zealand Navy who wished to be there for the service. Unfortunately the weather must have played a part in their absence. Perhaps next year the weather will be kinder.

* **Maurice Pink** is the last surviving Royal Marine from these ships.



REPORT BY JUDY BALCOMBE ON THE PEACE MUSEUM IN MUNTOK

In September 2015, the Peace Memorial Museum opened in Muntok, Bangka Island, Indonesia. The Museum was built in memory of the many people (estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 evacuating from Singapore) killed by bombing in the Bangka Strait, those killed by Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach, Bangka Island on 16th February 1942 and the many civilians and Australian Army nurses kept prisoner in harsh Japanese Camps in Muntok, Palembang and at Belau. One half of male prisoners and one third of female prisoners died in these camps from Malaria, Dysentery, Beriberi & starvation. The Muntok Peace Museum was built by contributions from surviving prisoners and their families, The Malayan Volunteers Group and BACSA (the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia). It contains drawings, photographs, newspaper articles, artifacts used by the prisoners and a bilingual display about the Palembang Women's Camp Vocal Orchestra. In this choral group, women prisoners sang wonderful classical music transcribed from memory by internees **Norah Chambers** and **Margaret Dryburgh**. The audience of ill-fed and ailing women, were able to experience beauty and transcend above the horror of the Camps. Many said this helped to save their lives. **Marjorie Jennings**, who was not so fortunate and died in Camp, wrote:

*I thank God for music
Which to my soul brings
Release and strange beauty
As sweetly as it sings
Of joy and deep sorrow,
Of love and of life;
Of strength and great blessing,
Of peace after strife.*

The Muntok Peace Museum contains an Australian Army Nurses' uniform in memory of the 42 Nurses who lost their lives either by drowning (12) or who were shot (21) or lost their lives in Camp (8). Biographies and photos of civilian internees have been submitted by some prisoner's families. Articles of Japanese uniforms are on display, in addition to 1,000 folded origami cranes in a wish for world peace.

Lectern to hold Donald Pratt's letters.



The Muntok Peace Museum has recently benefited from the installation of electricity and air conditioning through the generosity of members of the MVG. This will make visiting more comfortable and will help to preserve the exhibits. A Lectern was also very kindly provided by MVG funds to hold letters written by internee **Donald Frederick Pratt** to his wife just before the Fall of Singapore, and donated to the Museum by his son **Anthony Pratt** on the occasion of his 80th Birthday.

The Muntok Peace Museum has an excellent website maintained by MVG member **Mr. David Man** in New York. The website is frequently added to, as David is aiming to write a brief biography on each internee. It can be found on:

<http://muntokpeacemuseum.org>

David's Grandfather Gordon Reis died in Muntok in 1944 and his Camp diary can be read online. It is planned that an annual "Walk for Humanity" will be held in Muntok on 16th February, 2018, and all will be welcome. See Dates for details P.26

NEWS JUST RECEIVED FROM MR. FAKHRIZAL IN MUNTOK – 3rd January 2018

As mentioned in the Editorial, £1,400 was transferred to Muntok for the electrical installation – of which over £600 was donated by members and the rest came out of MVG funds. Thank you very much to those who kindly sent donations. We have just heard that the electricity and air conditioning have now been installed, the leaking roof has been repaired and the building painted inside and outside.



REPORT BY CAPTAIN J. W. SMITH, RA, ON INCIDENT
MONDAY, 5th NOVEMBER 1945 AT BENKOLEN (sic)

[Editor: Following Judy Balcombe's report on the Peace Museum, news of another internee in Muntok has emerged, called Matthew Trevorrow. His great nephew in New Zealand contacted Judy to say that Trevorrow was originally from Cornwall and worked in a gold mine near Benkolen (sic) pre-war. He was first interned in Benkolen Jail and then, after some research in McDougall's diaries, it appears that he was transferred to Muntok Jail in September 1943, ending up in Belalau Camp by the end of the war. He returned to Benkolen only to be killed in a rebel ambush on 5/11/45 together with a Dr. Mockler who had been part of the medical team helping to release internees from the camps. Both men were returned to Palembang and buried in the New European Cemetery next to the Charitas Hospital. In 1961 the cemetery was closed and the graves transferred to the War Graves Cemetery in Jakarta. The grave next to Dr. Mockler was inscribed "Unknown Soldier" but after further research this was identified as that of Matthew Trevorrow. A report by Captain J.W. Smith, who survived the rebel attack, names Treveroe (Trevorrow) as being killed. This is his report].

A party consisting of Captain J. Mockler I.A.M.C., Captain J.W. Smith, R.A. Driver Mechanic Jackson, Lincs - Regt., and Mr. Treveroe, ex British Civilian Internee, left Palembang on Saturday, 3rd November 1945 proceeding by road in two cars to Lahat and Benkolen for inspection of hospitals and medical stores, and also for me to collect and escort RAPWI personnel at Benkolen to Palembang.

We left Palembang at 1200 hours on Saturday 3rd November and travelled to Lahat by road, arriving at 2230 hours and spent the night at the Residency. The journey was entirely without incident. On the morning of the 4th we arranged to have all medical stores laid out for inspection on our return journey in a few days. We left Lahat at 10.15 hours making our way by road to Loebock Linggau, where we arrived without incident and collected personal belongings of a party of ex-internees who came from there two days previously. We continued our journey, and en route from Loeboek Linggau to Benkolen, Captain Mockler's car broke a half-shaft and was left with Jackson at KEPALATIOEROEP 69 kilos (sic) from Benkolen. Captain Mockler, Mr. Treveroe and myself continued the journey in my car reaching Benkolen 2220 hours without incident. On the morning of the 5th Captain Mockler saw the Director of Jap Medical Services and I saw the Jap Military Officers, advising them of our intentions to round up and evacuate RAPWI in that area to Palembang. Some RAPWI families were in hospital and there was a rumour that another two Eurasian families were in the vicinity of Benkolen.

At 10.00 hours on the 5th we left Benkolen to investigate and if possible to collect these families for evacuation. We proceeded quite slowly in a Northerly direction and about two miles out of town we ran into a large road block with about 100 natives. I pulled up at the road block and as I stopped Mr. Treveroe got out to talk to the natives. At the same time Captain Mockler seemed also to have opened his door and left the car and then turned back, presumably to pick up cigarettes or something. I was still in the driving seat and the first indication that I had that anything was wrong was when the Doc suddenly yelled "Oh Jesus." I turned in my seat and saw him turn away from the car with a spear in his back. I got out my gun but immediately my thumb was cut to the bone by a knife which caused me to drop the gun. I fought my way against the spears and left the car by the near-side door. As I left the car the Doc went down with the natives still thrusting at him. I fought my way round to the front of the car where Treveroe was making his stand, but by the time I reached him he was also dead. I was now completely ringed with spears and decided there was no future in remaining so made a break for it. I succeeded in getting so close to the natives that their spears and knives were useless because they were so densely packed. I managed to break through the ring and then dashed in amongst the native houses. I reached the sea and ran into it for about 70 yards until the water came up to my chin. The natives gathered on the shore and used my exposed head as target for my own gun. I remained there for about ten minutes undecided whether to swim to Benkolen or return in case the Doc was not dead. The natives seemed calmer by this time so I risked coming out of the sea.

I was immediately seized, my arms bound in front of me and all my personal belongings were stripped and I was then led up the road to the scene of the fighting. The bodies of Captain Mockler and Mr. Treveroe had been pulled into the side of the road and completely stripped. The natives surrounded me with spears and the leader came up to me and shouted Nica straight into my face. The remainder immediately took up the call and kept shouting Nica, Nica. I shouted back just as loud, "I am not your B..... B....." I then asked if anyone spoke English. After standing in the middle of the road, bound, for about ten or fifteen minutes, a car approached from the direction of Benkolen and a native who seemed to have some authority came out of the car and approached me. I immediately said do you speak English, he said yes, so I asked that he free my hands and take me back to Benkolen to the so called Indonesian Resident Tjauja. He gave no reply but walked on to where the leader of the

gang was standing. He then proceeded to argue, pointing to the bodies and then to me, and then came back towards me. I asked him again to release me. His reply was to point to the bodies and say, "This must be kept quiet." I then said you are a bigger B.... fool than you look. He went. I was then led back to the beach and the remainder of the rope, about 20 ft long, was wrapped round and round me to ensure I was securely bound. Fortunately, they only bound the upper part of my body and by straining against the rope while being bound, I managed to keep it reasonable slack. When they had finished this, I was held by a native holding the end of the rope, about a yard long, and was guarded by eight spearmen. They then started to dig my grave on the beach and about the same moment a middle aged native appeared with a short sword and started walking towards me. Once again, I decided it was a case of now or never, so bowled the native holding the end of the rope against the nearest spearman and escaped into the sea. This time I did not hesitate, but divested myself of the rope and my clothes and started swimming to Benkolen, a distance of approximately 2 miles.

After swimming for about half an hour, nearly halfway, an outrigger made upon me, whereupon I surface dived and swam under the water for as long as possible. This was repeated three times and then the last time I surfaced, I came under the bows of a second boat of whose approach I was not aware. In it were two Indonesian policemen who invited me to come aboard. I was extremely dubious of this, and insisted on hanging on to the outrigger only. They seemed harmless enough on closer inspection and eventually I climbed on to the stern of the boat. They invited me to the middle of the boat but I refused. I then insisted that they take me to Benkolen which they agreed to do in the end, and I was handed over to Mr. Ating, Indonesian Commissioner of Police under the old Dutch Regime.

I was then out into the hands of a Jap doctor and a Chinese doctor Lee who found I had ten wounds from spears and knives, which they dressed and made me comfortable.

While my wounds were having preliminary dressing at the Police Station the Indonesian Resident Tjauja came in and I demanded the return of all our personal belongings, including the car, and also asked him to accompany the police for the recovery of the bodies. None of our personal belongings was returned.

Dated: 6th Nov '45

Signed: Captain RA

**INTERVIEW WITH HANAKO KUYAMA ON 18th NOVEMBER 2017 CONCERNING THE STATE VISIT OF
EMPEROR AHIHITO TO LONDON in 1998**
By Sibylla Jane Flower

[Editor: On 25th October 2017 the MVG was contacted by Hanako Kuyama on behalf of JUK Media, the European agent for Japanese public television broadcast, NHK, concerning work on a biographical documentary programme about Emperor Akihito of Japan, and in particular about his State Visit to the UK in 1998. They wished to interview someone about the State Visit. We asked Sibylla Jane Flower if she would be willing to respond to this invitation. This is her report.]

I was involved with the visit of the **Emperor Akihito** to London in 1998 on many levels. Hanako is a very experienced documentary film maker and we spent the day firstly in The Mall and secondly in my house in London. I had asked a civilian internee **Brian Gander** (a child in the Pootung Camp in China) to accompany me. He was the secretary of ABCIFER at the time of the visit and had taken part in the demonstrations in The Mall.

I was at the time a member of the Anglo-Japanese History Project (to research and write about POWs of the Japanese) under **Professor Ian Nish** of LSE and thus had connections with the British and Japanese Foreign Offices and the senior FEPOW community. I had just returned from a visit to Japan where I had lectured on the POW experience to Japanese officials including members of their Foreign Office.

I was highly critical of the way in which the FCO had failed to include any of the more moderate former POWs in their plans (e.g. **Lt. Col. Peter Dean** – a POW in Thailand and Military Attache in Tokyo after the war – or **W.M. Drower**, tortured as a POW in Thailand, who had been English secretary at the Japanese Legation pre-war and later a Minister in Washington). I had arguments with **Harold Payne** (then President of the National Federation of FEPOW Clubs and Associations) who was not prepared to speak to a Japanese. But on his own initiative **Col. Dean** was able to have a long informal talk (in Japanese) with the **Emperor** at a Japan Society Reception and **Col. Dean** told me how grateful the **Emperor** was to have had this talk. None of these senior people was invited to the State banquet (though I believe **Eric Lomax** was included as an afterthought – a very dubious choice).

Brian Gander described the protests in The Mall in which he had taken part. I was standing near the women internees* who turned their backs on the **Emperor** as he passed – as an observer I stressed - not as a demonstrator.

The following year, **Tony Blair** announced the special ex-gratia payments.

[Ed: * One of these civilians was **Hils Hampson** who had been interned as a child in Stanley Camp in Hong Kong].

Tan Sri Dato' Dr. Haji* Abdul Mubin Cecil ffrank Sheppard MCS

By kind permission of Dave Croft RAFBPA

Until 1957 when he converted to Islam, **Abdul Mubin Sheppard** was known as **Mervyn Cecil ffrank Sheppard** (with the 'ffrank' from his father, **Canon James William ffrank Sheppard**). Born 21st June 1905, he joined the Malayan Civil Service in 1928, arriving the 26th January, and was posted to Temerloh in central Pahang as a MCS cadet, followed by promotion to private secretary to the Chief Secretary in KL, September 1928 – September 1929. He was then appointed Assistant District Officer (1929-1932) followed by Assistant British Advisor Kemaman 1932-1934, and Trengganu 1935-1937. In 1938 he became 2nd Assistant Secretary to Government in the Federal Secretariat in KL. His next MCS appointment was as District Officer, Batu Gajah, Perak, until becoming a POW of the Japanese in Singapore, 1942 to 1945. This article mainly covers the period 1938 to 1945 when he was involved with the Malayan Volunteers.

In 1938, **Mervyn Frank Sheppard** (as he was also known) was, as well as being 2nd Assistant Secretary, also appointed Company Commander of "D" Company, Selangor Battalion (2/FMSVF), with responsibility for the training programme of three Malay and one European (mainly planters) platoons stationed at Klang and Kuala Selangor. From September 1941, he was placed in charge of the Land Office at Batu Gajah in Perak (MCS posting). Also with this move, he took command of a company of the Perak Volunteer Battalion (1/FMSVF) and a training programme based on the jungle was introduced this in turn drew much (unwanted) comment from the Kinta District regular army officers who appeared to be complacent about a forthcoming war with the Japanese.

1st December 1941 saw the mobilisation of troops and Volunteer Forces in Malaya. The company was tasked with the defence of Ipoh airfield and deployed around the airfield perimeter on or around the 8th December. Ipoh was effectively an advanced landing strip with few facilities and a handful of permanent staff. With the arrival of the Brewster Buffaloes of 21 RAAF Squadron and a number of serviceable RAF Blenheims following the evacuation of Butterworth on the 9th December, plus the influx of airmen and soldiers retreating ahead of the Japanese, RAF Ipoh was in a state of chaos. On 24th December, **Sheppard** was ordered to hand over command of the company to his second in command and report to **Lt. Col. Warren RM** (Staff Officer GHQ – officer i/c clandestine operations) at the Station Hotel in KL. Prior to this, intelligence relating to the war situation north of Kuantan and Sungei Lembing was passed to HQ by MCS officer **Walter Cole**(a), who, in the 1930s, had been commissioned into the Malay Volunteer Infantry which became the MSVR and then the FMSVF. On 26th January 1942 he joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Unfortunately, **Walter Cole** appeared to have disappeared whilst operating on his own in a daring private war against the Japanese in Trengganu – leaving a 'hole' in intelligence reporting for his area. This might have prompted the decision to place two wireless telegraphy (W/T) units in south Trengganu with **Mervyn Sheppard** being officer i/c along with Special Branch/MI6 officer, **John Davis**** accompanying him to establish stay-behind parties. On 27th December a clandestine W/T party was established in secondary jungle near to Kuantan airfield and on 29th December **Mervyn Sheppard** and **John Davis** set out to assess the possibility of being able to establish another W/T site some 30 miles north of Sungei Lembing. A return to Sungei Lembing on New Year's Eve revealed that the 'stay-behind' transmitter appeared to have a faulty valve, rendering it inoperative. Both 'leaders' decided they would attempt to obtain a replacement valve from Singapore, and with the rapid advance of the Japanese there was a need to return post haste to KL. Both left early the following morning, with a Malay guide, using a little known route over a 3,000 foot jungle covered ridge to the Kuantan – Maran road. There they hid at the riverbank until they were able to hitch a ride on a British Army lorry to Raub. Eventually they made it to KL in early January. In the meantime, Kuantan airfield had been captured by the rapidly advancing Japanese Army.

* When the pilgrimage to Mecca has been made in full, with a simple ritual also observed, then pilgrim is entitled to place 'Haji' before his name.

** **John Davis** referred to **Sheppard** as '*Fuff*' in his book "Our Man in Malaya". It is possible that this nickname was an abridged version of **Sheppard's** third name 'ffrank'.

For **Walter Cole's** actions against the Japanese in Trengganu see the following website:

<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straittimes19460421-1.2.22?ST=1&AT=search&k=COLE%20TRENGANNU&QT=cole,trengannu&oref=article>

Eventually a spare valve was tracked down and **Sheppard** collected it from Command HQ in Johore. With **Davis**, he travelled up to Segamat where he announced his intention to proceed on his own to Sungei Lembing with the valve and plastic explosives. **Davis** didn't think it a good idea, more so as **Sheppard** was looking unwell but still determined to make the (long) journey on foot. He travelled with him as far as the Keratang River, still attempting to get him to call off the march, but to no effect. **Davis** returned to Segamat, **Sheppard**, now feverish, continued north. He failed to get much further and called off his attempt to reach Sungei Lembing, ending up instead in Singapore General Hospital with 'tropical typhus'.

On 16th February following the signing of the surrender document the evening before, **Mervyn Sheppard**, in the company of **Leslie Davis**^(b) and **Capt. Clements**, ADC to the Governor, removed the Union Flag that had flown over Government House until 12th February. The flag was sewn into a sarong belonging to **Sheppard** and was concealed during his imprisonment as a civilian internee. The flag was raised again over Sime Road Internment camp on 5th September 1945 in the presence of **Lady Thomas** and **C. E. Collinge CBE**^(c), Head of the Male POW Camp, Sime Road and senior officer MCS. On 24th July 1946, the first postwar reunion of the Argylls was held at Stirling. The 'top' table displayed the Regimental Silver, a significant proportion having been discovered on Kundur Island (in the Riau Archipelago) in September 1945 by **Mervyn Sheppard**. The 'silver' had been looted by the Japanese from safe storage in Singapore and then found its way to Kundur. The Regimental Silver was returned to the regiment by the Royal Navy in December 1945.

Post war, **Mervyn Cecil Frank Sheppard**, later **Abdul Mubin Sheppard**, was awarded the Military MBE from **Sir Edward Gent** on 17th February 1947. He had a successful post war career with the MCS and thereafter as an historian and academic, remaining in the country for the rest of his life. He died 11th September 1994 in Subang Jaya, Selangor.

(a) **2nd Lt. Walter 'Dato' Cole** was captured by the Japanese during his 'solo' operation in Trengganu and became a POW. He died of cholera in Thailand on 31st May 1943.

(b) **Leslie Harold Newson Davis MCS** and **FMSVF** (Liaison Officer with 22 Indian Infantry Brigade), 1941-1942. POW Changi and Sime Road Camp. Cell mate of **Mervyn Sheppard** during internment.

(c) **Major Cyril Ernest Collinge**, Commanding Officer SSVF Armoured Car Company.

Note: There are a number of 'areas' in this account where more information would be appreciated from MVG members and others.

References:

Buffaloes over Singapore – **Brian Cull, Paul Sortehaug and Mark Haselden** (2003)

Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF): Mubin Sheppard – **Times of Malaya** (2011)

IWM Oral History: L.H.N. Davis MCS

Moon Over Malaya – **Jonathan Moffatt and Audrey Holmes McCormick** (2003)

Our Man in Malaya – **Margaret Shennan** (2009)

Shenton of Singapore – **Brian Montgomery** (1984)

The Straits Times Annual for 1962.

Echo of the Malayan Campaign – Article in the Straits Times, 21st April 1946

Further to Dave Croft's request for more information, the following article details Walter Cole's wartime exploits.

Kemaman and Dungun, pre-war Jap-owned iron ore mines, provided the scene for one of the most interesting episodes of the Malayan war which few heard about and is recalled now by news confirming the death of **Mr. Walter Cole**, formerly Assistant Adviser in Trengganu and stationed at Kemaman.

It has devolved on **Mr. A.T. Sreenivasan**, who was an eye-witness of the events, to fill up the blanks in the story which was in circulation during the occupation.

A Jap, **S. Arai**, provided the fuel for the rumours. He attracted interest by the way he travelled all over Malaya earnestly looking for information about **Mr. Cole**.

"When I get him," **Arai** was wont to boast, "I'll tear his limbs away slowly in public."

And well he might, for **Arai**, manager of Dungun mines when Japan declared war, was robbed by **Mr. Cole** and some friends of the chance to gain undying fame. He had tried to capture Trengganu single-handed long before **Yamashita's** advance hordes were in the country and was routed by **Mr. Cole**, a **Capt. Cummings** and 4 Indian soldiers. It happened two days after war was declared. The Japs at the iron mines, quite certain that everything was already theirs, boldly sauntered forth and ran up their flag at Kemaman. They had 'seized' the government for their

country and, esconced in a building opposite the Rest House, were already giving orders. But, three days later a small boat arrived at the Chukal wharf and out stepped two Europeans and four Gurkhas. Let Mr. Sreenivasan describe the scene which followed:

"Mr. Cole and Capt. Cummings went to the Rest House where they got to hear about the new government. Straightaway, they walked to the new governor's house. I never saw anybody more perturbed than the Japs. They meekly surrendered. The British and Gurkha party packed them into buses and moved them to Kuantan before starting out again, this time to collect some more new governors who were in Dungun and Kuala Trengganu.

It was on their way back from these places that they encountered the other Japs. These men were in a car. They stopped, but unlike the Kemaman set, refused to come quietly. They bit and scratched and one man threw

a grenade but forgot to pull out the pin. He was shot. Net result of this excitement was three men arrested, on the enemy side, and one hand, Mr. Cole's, bitten on the British-Indian side. One Jap escaped.

Capt. Cummings and Mr. Cole remained in the area and made preparations to leave on Dec. 23, and then they went as far as the ferry where they waited for the Japs who were expected at any moment.

The Japs arrived on Christmas evening, the advance party in buses and motor cars. They were met by a hail of fire from Capt. Cummings and his Gurkhas."

Says Mr. Sreenivasan, "I think about 30 Japs were killed before Capt. Cummings and his party left off. I don't know what happened to Mr. Cole but I know Capt. Cummings had to strip and swim the river in his attempt to escape but at the other side he was stopped. With the help of an Indian he managed to get away again, and I think he finally escaped along the coast. Three Indians who had helped the party to escape were later caught and executed by the Japs. Throughout the occupation we hoped and prayed that Mr. Cole had also got away. Arai was never tired of telling us what he was going to do to him, and we know that during the occupation he flew all over Malaya trying to find him."

It has been established that Mr. Cole joined up with the Aygyll and Sutherland Highlanders and died a prisoner of war in May 1943.

NEWS IN BRIEF – The following replies have been received in answer to items included in "News in Brief" in Oct '17 A.K. 52.

1. New Sunday Times Story about "Nepti"

Nepti, Jane and Capt. Webb



Jane Nielsen writes:

I promised I would write a few lines about "Nepti" – "The Silent One" for the Newsletter. Enclosed is a photo of "Jane together with Capt. Webb of the 7th Gurkhas and "Nepti – the Silent One". Bahau 1952.

My mother tells me that 'Nepti' was given to me by George Leonard a gamekeeper who was also in the Secret Service during the Emergency in Malaya. He always stayed with my parents, George and Miriam Booker, in the Manager's bungalow on Ladang Geddes, a Dunlop Rubber Estate, when coming in and out of the jungle and my mother tells me he was very fond of a cup of tea during his visits. Nepti soon became too boisterous even at the age of six weeks for the Booker family and she was given to the 7th Gurkhas to look after. But Merilyn (at home from school) and I used to visit Nepti whilst she was still with the Gurkhas in their camp at Bahau. Later in 1952, Nepti was given to Regent's Park Zoo in London. We saw her

in 1953 and then again in 1957. Bursting with pride, I told some people standing next to me in the crowd looking at Nepti that I once used to look after her – but of course by the look in their eyes I could tell that no-one believed me!

2. With reference to Jonathan Moffatt's article on the Cambridge Library Visit Ps 5-6 A.K 52 Oct. 2017

Dave Croft sent this further information about WFN Churchill:

Churchill was reported to have assisted to move 6,000 wounded men from Singapore General Hospital out to 'Miyako' the mental hospital. 'Miyako Byoin' was the pre-war Singapore Mental Hospital (named the Woodbridge Hospital) which was sited near RAF Seletar. When the Japanese took over Singapore, a number of civilian patients at the mental hospital were

MCS Memorial in St. Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore.

**IN MEMORY OF MEMBERS OF THE
MALAYAN CIVIL SERVICE WHO LOST THEIR LIVES
1939 – 1945**

B.G. ARMSTRONG	K.G.A. DOHOO	J.D. LAMBERT	J.C.R. RENDLE
W. ARMSTRONG	H. FRASER	G.A. MCCASKIE	H.R. ROSS
R.H. BANCROFT	J.F. GREGG	J.C. McEVETT	J.J. SHEEHAN
G.L. BIRD	R.C.S. HARRIS	D. McPHEE	L.C. SIMPSON GRAY
R.J. BLEAKLEY	C.A. HARRISON JONES	S.M. MIDDLEBROOK	G.F. STAYNES
A.C. BOYD	A.W. HAY	J.R. NEAVE	A.W.J. THOMAS
R.V. BRANT	T.D. HUGHES	H. NORTH HUNT	G.A.G. WALKER
H.I. COCKMAN	R. IRVINE	J.H. PEDLOW	R.A. WARD
W. COLE	G.M. KIDD	RAJA AMAN SHAH	H. WATSON
C.H. DAKERS	C.M. KNAGGS	J.G. RAPPOPORT	F.L. WILLIAMS

sent out to relatives, but 500 were sent to stay in isolation on St. John's Island where I often dived with the Seletar Sub Aqua Club off the island's reefs. Survival for these patients was not good. The 'Miyako' hospital became the wartime civilian hospital for the duration of the war, as the SGH was used by the Japanese Military. I presume that the wounded WFN helped to move were transferred to other hospitals.

At the end of the war, when 81(RAF) Mobile Field Hospital took control, the roles were reversed. The SGH became the civilian general hospital once again and the pre-war mental hospital ('Miyako') took on the temporary role of a military hospital (81MFH) where the former male mental patient's building was used for Japanese POW patients, and the former female mental patient's building became the hospital for released RAF ex-POWs.

N.B. Lady Heath (wife of Lt. Gen. Lewis Heath) had her baby delivered by a British Doctor in the 'Miyako' hospital, and Dr. Cecily Williams had a major op there in July 1942, before being returned to Changi Gaol. The Japanese retained many of the original hospital staff in this hospital.

3. Report on the exhibition "Witness to War" at the National Museum in Singapore by Liz Moggie

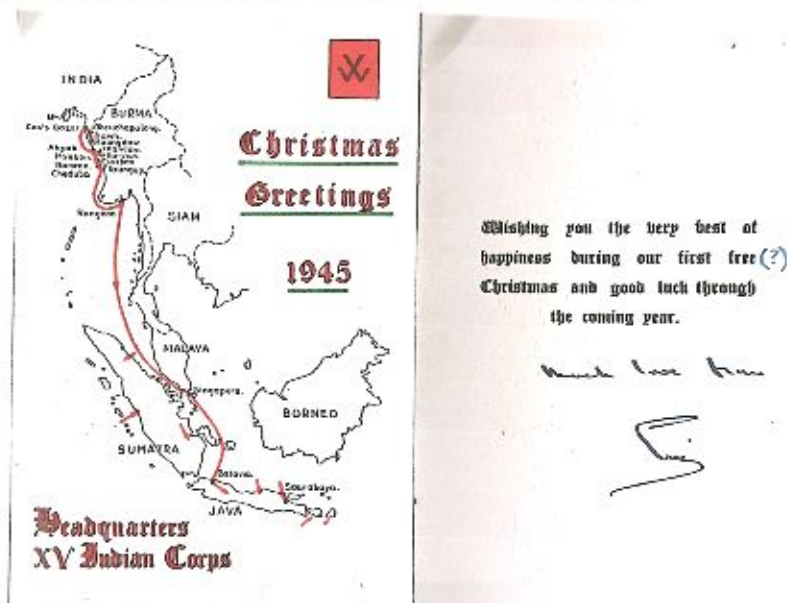
Liz reports that she and Leo had reservations about the exhibition, and felt that a better title would have been "War is Futile". The beginning was about WW1, but they didn't link this up with either WW2 in Europe or Japanese ambitions in Asia. Then they wanted to show how widespread the War was in Asia and the Pacific with interesting footage of civilian retreating in Burma with road clogged with bullock wagons etc. Much of this part of the exhibition was too bitty.

Then came the interviews/memories, which were quite good but seemingly not linked to the former displays, but there were no benches to sit on to watch the film clips. There were interesting conversations with 2 of Lim Bo Seng's 7 children – Nos. 1 and 5. The George Hess's exhibition must have been popular as it wasn't working properly! Becca Kenneison's name was mentioned and her book was on sale in the shop. On the whole Liz felt it was not worth a special trip to Singapore to see it.

4. Christmas Card 1945 – sent home by David Wingate's father Major Eric Wingate from the Far East.

David writes:

My father Major Eric Wingate, CBE., MBE (Mil) TD of the Devonshire Regiment volunteered to go out to the Far East after VE Day. He was sent to the NEI as assistant quartermaster, general movements. This is his Christmas card sent home in 1945.



5. The Bachelors of Amoy

Mason Nelson writes:

The article on P.11 of the October 2017 newsletter reminded me of an old friend who lived in Singapore, called Desmond Neill. He had a highly distinguished ex-MCS career in CT Emergency, later headhunted by Tan Chin Tuan (OCBC Group Tycoon) to become Managing Director of the hugely successful F & N Group. He was a fluent Hokkien speaker, learnt when posted early on in his MCS career (circa 1947) with an Amoy family home. In 1956 he wrote his own biography, "Elegant Flower" published by John Murray in 1956, which was based on his life in Amoy. The book was never reprinted, but may have some useful background to life in Amoy.

5. Edward Shebbeare – Head of the Snail Farm

Further to the correspondence about E.O. Shebbeare Dave Croft sent this amusing cartoon of him snail hunting at Sime Road. As a biologist, Dave reckons that judging by the size of the snail depicted, they could possibly have been the Giant African Land Snail *Lissachatina filica* which was introduced pre-war, either deliberately or accidentally in shipping imports.

6. Report in the Star newspaper on 24/10/17

"Abe to push revision of Japan's pacific constitution."

Buoyed by a huge election win in which 80% of seats in Parliament's lower house were won by parties in favour of amending the US-drafted postwar charter, Abe is now likely to push towards his long held goal to add a clause to Article 9 to legitimize Japan's Self-Defence Force. At present a standing military is banned but it allows armed forces for self-defence.



Edward Shebbeare, head of the Snail F

THE SURVEYOR SURVEYED

ERIC STEWART WILLBOURN OBE., ED., MA (cantab)., FGS. – 21/10/1889 – 25/11/1977

By kind permission of his grandson Roger S. Willbourn assisted by

Amanda E. Royde-Smith (granddaughter) and Caroline V. Willbourn (granddaughter-in-law)

[Editor: This is the full story of Eric Willbourn's life - an edited version of which was delivered by Roger at the MVG's Annual Luncheon on 21st October].

Eric Willbourn was born on 21st October 1889, precisely 128 years ago, and so Saturday, 21st October 2017, was a most appropriate day on which to deliver the talk to the annual luncheon of The Malayan Volunteers Group.

Eric was born and brought up in Bridlington, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, the fourth of eight children born to

Isaac and Jane Willbourn between 1884 and 1898 – a typically large Victorian family of three girls and five boys.

Isaac was for 20 years the Headmaster of the Priory Church School in Bridlington, a National School, but sadly he died in 1904, when he was only 46; his widow, **Jane**, lived for another 41 years until the ripe old age of 85. The five

Willbourn boys all attended the Bridlington Boys Grammar School and so received a good academic education before making their ways in the world, some more successfully than others!

Eric was the most naturally-gifted academic of the boys and gained entry into Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, to read Natural Sciences, matriculating on 1st October 1908. The College archives record that he was awarded a Scholarship in each of his three years as an undergraduate and that he achieved a First in all his annual College and university Tripos exams, being awarded a First Class degree and the Natural Sciences Tripos Prize when he graduated in June 1911. The College records show that he spent a further year living in Cambridge, possibly undertaking further scientific research, but we have no definitive information. One suspects that finance may by then have become an issue, as he applied for the position of Assistant Master at Dean Close Memorial School in Cheltenham.

Founded in 1886, only three years before **Eric** was born, Dean Close was in many ways a typical Victorian public school, producing the usual plethora of hearty, athletic, Christian gentlemen to run the Empire. The school opened new science laboratories in 1908 and so it would have been looking for young and competent science graduates to add to its staff. **Eric** started teaching the Sciences there in September 1912 and the school magazines of that era note his lectures to the 'Field Club' on such matters as volcanoes and his sporting prowess for various masters' teams playing cricket and football against the pupils' senior teams. I was also interested to read that in 1913, *"...the keenness and improvement in the boys' water-polo team is beyond question and that much of the credit must be assigned to the precept and still more the strenuous example of Mr. Willbourn"*; from this we can assume that **Eric** was a strong swimmer, no doubt as a result of regular bathing during his youth in Bridlington's bracing North Sea waters. Not surprisingly, he must also have demonstrated his well-developed sense of humour at Dean Close, as the school magazines report that he often performed light-hearted songs in school concerts. On his departure in April 1914, the magazine records that in the end-of-term concert, *"...Mr. Willbourn sang a duet from 'The Mikado' and the school will miss him very much as a humorous and willing vocalist"*.

This departure from Dean Close after only five terms was because he had by then taken the decision which would define the rest of his working life – **Eric** had successfully applied for the post of Assistant Geologist in the Geological Department of the Federated Malay States.

The Federated Malay States Government Gazette of 19th June 1914 records that, *"The Right Honourable the Secretary of State for the Colonies has been pleased to approve the appointment of Mr. Eric Stewart Willbourn to be an Assistant Geologist in the Geological Department with effect from 7th May 1914. Mr. Willbourn reported his arrival and assumed duty on the 7th June 1914"*.

The Geological Department of the FMS government had been set up in KJ in September 1903 by an Oxford Geologist, **Mr. John Brooke Scrivenor**, who initially undertook field investigations in the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Pahang, Negri Sembilan and Perak). Then in 1908, **Scrivenor** moved his headquarters to **Batu Gajah** in Perak, as the Kinta and Larut districts showed much more promise than Pahang and Negri Sembilan. He employed his first assistant (a **Mr. William Richard Jones**) in 1912 and then, in mid-1914, **Eric** arrived as his second assistant geologist. **William Jones** overlapped with **Eric** for a year or so but only completed that one 'tour' in Malaya, returning to the UK in 1915; however, he later had a significant influence on Geological Surveying in the FMS, because it was **Jones** who, 20 years later in 1935 as Professor of Geology at Imperial College, London, persuaded the remarkable **James Richardson** to apply for a post as a Field Geologist at the FMS Geological Survey, when **Eric** (by then the Director) was dramatically expanding the number of geologists and chemists at the GS - but more of **Richardson** later. A chemist was also employed at the same time as **Eric** in mid-1914 and the expansion of the geological survey work was now gathering pace. Whilst all members of the MVG are probably more than well aware of the tin-mining industry

in Malaya, it is worth mentioning at this point how vital tin was to the wealth and development of Malaya. The major tin 'gold rush' had started back in 1880, with early activity being centred on Taiping – hence the establishment of the first European Hill Station in Malaya at Maxwell Hill on the edge of that fine town. However, in 1884 **Batu Gajah**, just to the south of Ipoh in Perak, had been made the administrative HQ of the Kinta district, which subsequently became the richest district in the entire FMS on the back of tin mining, the lease fees charged for the mining concessions and the duties paid on the exported tin ore. The Kinta Land Office in **BG** became the most important Land Office in the country and this effect can still be seen to this day, as a number of the impressive late Victorian and Edwardian colonial administrative buildings are still standing in **Batu Gajah**. As an aside, there was also a large 'European' Hospital built in **BG**, which served the medical needs of not only the colonial servants and their families but also the large numbers of European tin miners and rubber planters throughout the whole of Perak. So, as well as **Eric's** children, the parents of a number of my own school friends were born in **BG** – the town was clearly very much the centre of the universe for inter-war Malayan colonialists!

The outbreak of war in Europe a mere two months after **Eric's** arrival in **BG** did not provide any reason for him to break his contract with the FMS Colonial Government, particularly as locating further tin reserves was regarded as a vital contribution towards the war effort. However like, one would imagine, all relatively youthful government servants, **Eric** did join the local territorial forces. This was the Malay States Volunteer Rifles, the precursor of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force [FMSVF], and **Eric** was initially Private Number 1682 in "B" Company, for a time down in Seremban. This town is, of course, located in Negri Sembilan, half-way between KL and Malacca, so this shows he was being moved around the country in his geological survey field work. With Japan being on "our" side in WW1 and the other European countries with significant Asian Colonies (i.e. France and the Netherlands) also being British allies, there was no serious threat to the Straits Settlements or other British interests in S.E. Asia during the First World War. However, one major purpose of the Territorial Forces was to deal with any local disturbances and ensure that the colonial subjects did not take advantage of what was, for the most part a European war, in order to foment rebellion against His Imperial Majesty. And so regular and vigorous training was carried out!

By June 1917, **Eric's** first three-year tour was complete and he sailed for England, ostensibly on leave but also with acquiescence from **Scrivenor** to serve in the regular Forces for the duration of the Great War, in the knowledge that his post as Geologist would be held open for his return after demobilisation. **Scrivenor** himself had been a Signals Officer and that may be why, after training, **Eric** was commissioned on 20th April 1918 as a 2nd Lieutenant into the Signals Service of The Royal Engineers – and I guess it would have been deemed to be an appropriate service for a scientist and surveyor. The **Willbourn** boys were all active in the First World War. **Eric's** older brother, **Horace**, was the only one to be killed; having originally been in the Canadian submarine service, **Horace** latterly served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Duke of Wellington's regiment. Junior officers in WW1 infantry regiments had a very short life expectancy and sadly **Horace** was killed in France on 8th May 1918. **Eric's** three younger brothers also served, variously, in the East Yorkshire Regiment and in the British East African forces, our great-uncle **Hubert** winning the MC for his achievements under fire whilst fighting the German East African army. I have no information about **Eric's** service in the Signal's Regiment, other than he was commissioned on 20th April 1918 and served in France from 8th July 1918. His demobilization was greatly delayed, as he was not demobbed until 3rd July 1919.

Of course, by this time he was back in England and in the absence of any hostilities, he would have been able to take weekend leave etc. without any problem. He knew he would be going back to Malaya, once demobbed, but first he had to make sure he could marry his teenage sweetheart, my grandmother **Jessie Cooper**.

Jessie was also from a Bridlington family, the youngest of five children of **George** and **Mary Cooper**, and was the same age as **Eric**, having been born a mere six days earlier. The **Willbourns** were a 'high church' Anglican family, firmly attached to Bridlington Priory, but the **Coopers** were very staunch Catholics – whose ancestors had remained Catholic throughout England's penal years.

The **Willbourns** and **Coopers** were close neighbours in St. John's Avenue, Bridlington, and had grown up playing together on the beaches and fields of Bridlington and the cliffs at Flamborough Head. At some point before WW1, **Eric** had confided in his older sister **Irene**, that he was determined to marry **Jessie Cooper** – and so he had clearly been holding a candle for her all those three years of his first tour in Malaya. In those days, a colonial civil servant had to request formal approval from his superior before he could marry and this was not generally granted before the end of a first tour; obviously, **Eric** had now obtained the necessary permission from **Scrivenor**!

Jessie Teresa Cooper was an adventurous and strong-willed woman whose life and exploits would justify a separate talk all on their own. She must have felt stifled by the patriarchal Victorian family atmosphere at the **Cooper** home in Bridlington – family portraits reveal a somewhat stern and severe line of ancestors! As a young woman of only 21, she escaped to work as a Governess in Cuba and her thoughts and feelings are revealed in some lengthy letters to her

much-adored older brother, which have survived. She contracted yellow fever out there but fortunately recovered and on her return to England again left for foreign parts, this time to work as a Governess in Austria. It would appear that she was determined not to settle for a conventional life in Yorkshire. She was an excellent horsewoman and after work in the VAD and as a Land Girl in WW1, she then went to work for the master of a Northamptonshire hunt towards the end of the war. **Eric** visited her there frequently at weekends, whilst still an officer in the Signals, from December 1918 onwards and they must have become formally engaged before Christmas of that year, although one suspects that it may actually have been soon after he returned from Malaya in 1917. They knew **Eric** would have to return to Malaya within a few months of being demobbed but **Jessie** did not wish to get married until June 1918, so they were hoping that **Eric** would not be demobbed before the spring! We can be pretty certain that **Jessie** would have been thrilled at the thought of an interesting and adventurous life in the somewhat exotic colony of Malaya. We know from **Jessie's** letters to her older brother that by February 1919, **Eric** had declared that he wished to become a Catholic "*as soon as ever he can*" - and definitely before the wedding, so that they could be married with all due ceremony in Bridlington's Catholic Church.

Having been demobbed on 3rd May, and having been received into the Catholic Church, **Lieutenant Eric Willbourn** duly wed **Miss Jessie Cooper** on Wednesday, 25th June 1919. **Eric** must have had some paid leave due as a result of time served during his first tour in Malaya and/or his time in the Army, as they did not set out on the return journey to Malaya until 19th November 1919 - and then they went the long way around, sailing from Liverpool to Halifax, Nova Scotia and then by train via Montreal (which **Jessie** found to be very beautiful) across Canada to Vancouver from where they sailed on 16th December to Japan on the NYK passenger liner, **S.S. Sua Maru**, arriving in Yokohama on New Year's Eve. They stayed on the ship for about two weeks as it called at various ports around the Japanese coast, including Kobe and Nagasaki, spending time ashore on excursions whilst the vessel was in port. Ironically, they really liked Japan and **Jessie** declared Tokyo to be a most beautiful city. Unfortunately, **Eric** had become very poorly and was confined to bed for much of the time. Then it went on to Shanghai and Manila. They were scheduled to stay on the ship as far as Hong Kong but they had to disembark in Manila and admit **Eric** to hospital, as he had now become seriously ill - with typhoid as it transpired. He was nursed there by solicitous nuns in a Catholic hospital for some weeks before he recovered, and so it was not until March that they steamed into Singapore and so travelled on to **Batu Gajah**. **Eric** resumed work at the Geological Survey on 11th March 1920 and two months later on 19th May 1920, their first child was born, my father, **Anthony** (always known as **Tony**). A second child, **Elizabeth**, arrived two years later on 19th September 1922 (always called **Betty** as a child, she was the mother of my cousins **Amanda** and **Chloe**, also present at the 2017 MVC luncheon). Whilst a large number of servants was a common feature of colonial life and would have helped enormously with the domestic affairs and the children, **Jessie** was not one to sit around idly gossiping at coffee mornings and the like. At **Eric's** insistence, she acquired a grand piano to sustain her love of music and also had her own beautiful horse, to continue her passion for riding, although I don't know if there were any hunts in the FMS!

Particularly in his days as the Assistant Geologist, before he became the Director himself, **Eric** spent a significant amount of his time on exploratory expeditions throughout the unknown jungle and mountainous areas of the country. He was not only carrying out geological survey work but also assisting with the cartographical land surveys and we have photos of him with parties of coolies erecting large wooden trig survey points on mountain tops to assist with this work. His trekking parties could often consist of large numbers of GS staff, both porters and rock-collecting assistants and lasted for up to six weeks in duration. On a number of occasions he headed up into the central highland spine of Malaya and then descended on the eastern side, through virgin jungle, building rafts when the rivers became broad enough and emerging on the Malayan east coast, from there to take a steamer round to Singapore, Port Swettenham or Penang for the train journey back to **Batu Gajah**. Apparently the adventurous **Jessie** often accompanied **Eric** on some of these journeys during their early years together in Malaya, although not the ones over the mountains to the east coast, as far as we can ascertain. **Eric's** photographs of these years show that he was climbing mountains and penetrating jungle areas what were previously unexplored by Europeans; dramatic vistas and mountain-scapes over thick jungle, rushing rivers with rapids and the huts of the orang asli in the middle of nowhere.

Notes on the back of photos show that he was exploring and surveying from the far north in Kedah, Kelantan and on the Siamese border all the way down to Johore in the south and over to the west in Pahang and Trengganu, as well as in the more mineralogically rewarding states of Perak and Selangor. The records of these journeys were written up in long-hand by **Eric**, and along with copious photographs, were archived in the Geological Survey offices. In 1974, and again in April 2016, I was able to read some of these accounts in the library of the GS in Ipoh, still located in one of those 1957 buildings designed by **Ruth Rollitt's** father - which we saw in the slides **Ruth** showed us in her splendid talk last year. The archives show that **Eric** also made a number of trips to the tin-mining areas in southern Siam and also to the Dutch East Indies Islands of Bangka and Sumatra - names no doubt redolent to many MVC members.

ERIC WILLBOURN and ELIZABETH ALEXANDER: Some geological continuity

By Mary Harris

Roger Willbourn's talk on his grandfather, Eric Stewart Willbourn gave us a very good account of the work of the Geological Survey of the Federated Malay States in the crucial period when he expanded the service out of the Great Depression, and led it until the Imperial Japanese Army arrived on the doorstep of the Survey Office in Batu Gajah. Nearly all his work was on the Malay peninsula itself for, unlike Singapore, Malaya had exploitable minerals, notably tin, a great motivator for government sponsored research. Willbourn took over the Directorship from J.B. Scrivenor, the first Director, who had been able to do more work on the geology of Singapore than had Willbourn [e.g. Scrivenor 1924] and it was Scrivenor's 1931 'Geology of Malaya,' which introduced geologist Elizabeth Alexander to the country. One of the first things she did when she arrived in Singapore in 1936 was to make contact with the Geological Survey and there is no doubt that Eric was delighted to find that there was now a geologist in Singapore, even though she had no status as such, being just a Mem, somebody's wife. This is the Elizabeth Alexander who, as an evacuee to New Zealand in 1942 came to do the paradigm-shifting work in radar, described in A.K. 33, 34 and 35. She was an extraordinary scientist but primarily a geologist, her radar work, as she saw it, being just a war job. On Singapore Elizabeth became interested in the fact that some of the minerals that constitute its rocks, were weathering far more quickly in the humidity and heat than the textbooks recognized and were, in fact, re-depositing in fresh rock.

There is no doubt that Elizabeth communicated regularly with Eric about her research, but it is also clear that most of their correspondence was lost during the occupation. That one very significant letter survived is due to the quick thinking of the Chief Clerk in charge of the office in Batu Gajah, S.A. Ponniah and to Chikao Nishiwaki a Japanese mining engineer who had been working just over the border in Thailand and was very swiftly to be found raising dredgers which had been sunk in a scorched earth exercise ahead of his invading army. The surviving letter was one written by Elizabeth to Eric in March 1940, just before she set off on long leave for six months in New Zealand, and it summarized her research up to that time. Since she would be flying, albeit in the luxury of Empire flying boats, flying was much less safe then than it is now, so making a record of her research was a wise precaution.

As Roger told us [at the 2017 Annual Lunch], following the dreadful story of his grandmother's death on the 'Giang Bee', Eric did not return to Malaya. He was succeeded by F.T. Ingham who wrote to Elizabeth who had returned to Singapore in 1947, telling her that he had found her 1940 letter to Willbourn and asking her how her work was going. Her response was that it was on temporary hold because she had other priorities. She was helping Raffles College back to normal life, looking after her husband who had survived Changi and Sime Road and was acting as temporary registrar for the new University of Malaya.

Furthermore, her house on Raffle College campus, including her geology lab and all her work, which had been well looked after by Japanese Army officers who had occupied it, had been looted to total emptiness by the British Army of Re-Occupation. Japanese road building works had also sliced the top off a hill bearing a triangulation point crucial to finding her rock samples buried in a mangrove swamp. She did pick up on her research later, however, and was able to use it to inform her work as Government Geologist, when she was commissioned in 1949 to survey Singapore Island for sources of granite for reconstruction. One product of her survey was the map of the island which she drew, the first since Scrivenor's of 1924. Singapore had had no geological survey of its own: the FMS Geological Survey was not funded to support work in Singapore, and it was only through the kindness of colleagues there that she was able to use their labs and the rather better labs of the Malay Rubber Research Board, to help analyse her rock and soil samples. Singapore had had its own Survey Department of the Public Works Department, in contrast to Geological Survey, which had dealt with other land surface matters like roads for example. Pre-war it had been headed by Tom Kitching, who died in Changi. [Kitching 1998]. Post-war, anything to do with maps, apart from Elizabeth's geological survey, was in the hands of the Royal Engineers until the British military finally pulled out in 1970. But conducting her geological work in 1949 under the British Military Administration, Elizabeth did have formal backing and, unlike in her pre-war work, access to both military transport and still-closed military areas. And she could use the services of the Natural History Museum in London to help identify fossils. Thus she maintained personal, professional contact with Eric who, as Roger told us, had become Deputy Director of Colonial Geological Services at the Imperial Institute in London.

Only very recently have I discovered another continuity in the geology of Singapore that would have pleased both Eric and Elizabeth. With the publication of her Granite Report, Elizabeth now had some formal

recognition as a professional geologist and found herself being asked to respond to a number of questions from both government and private sources relating to urgent needs of reconstruction. Just at that point however, her husband was appointed to a job in Nigeria, she went with him but continued to act as 'the only geologist on Singapore' by air mail.

One of the reasons why **Elizabeth's** name disappeared from post-war histories of Singapore was that historians were looking in a different literature in a changed world, if they were looking at all. Geological research did go on, in the theses of students of the geology department of the University of Malaya (a complicated history because of the Malay/Singapore politics of the time) which **Elizabeth's** careful preparation of samples and slides made possible. But it also went on in the literature of engineering geology in the hands of professionals needing geology for practical purposes. In 1976, The Public Works Department published its 'Geology of Singapore', which built on **Elizabeth's** work, particularly her geological map of the island which had become the starting point for all other geological mapping since. The authors of the second edition, published in 2009 by the Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency in collaboration with Nanyang Technological University and the Building Construction Authority*, now acclaim **Elizabeth's** 1950 map as crucial, because so much of Singapore's precious land is now built on or tunnelled through, and her work is the only survey of the ground before the expansion began. Most people know that Singapore has extended its lands by reclamation from the sea, something that has gone on since at least **Raffles's** time, but fewer know that Singapore has been extending downwards. Underneath the new lands of Jurong there are now giant caverns for oil storage and other potential uses are part of the continuing research.

The new work is summarized in two 2017 articles in the *Geoscientist*** one called 'Hidden Tiger' by **Graham Leslie** and **Rhian Kendall**, geologists from the British Geological Survey currently working collaboratively with Singapore's Building and Construction Agency, and one by myself on **Elizabeth Alexander**. Geology is very much alive in Singapore, not so much in the discipline of academic geology but in the hands of practical geological engineering. **Eric** and **Elizabeth** would have been delighted to find that, with the help from technologies not available in their day, but with the same kind of insights and analytical thinking, it has extended the island downwards. In a personal communication from one of the authors of the 2009 second edition, **Dr. Zhou Yingxin**, describes himself as a 'space engineer', but going the other way.

* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/291262201_Geology_of_Singapore_2nd_Edition

** <https://www.geolsoc.org.uk/Geoscientist/November-2017>

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The Wartime record of Cpl.13375 Alexander Auchinvole Russell - FMSVF Armoured Cars - POW Singapore to Thailand with "D" Battalion on 12/10/42

By kind permission of his son **Jonathan Russell**

My father, **Alexander Auchinvole Russell** was born in Rhu, Scotland on December 16th 1911 and died on 6th May 1980. He was a rubber planter and marine engineer. He moved to Malaya in 1937 and retired in 1968. When the Imperial Japanese Army attacked peninsula Malaya, my father was called up into the Armoured Cars Division of the FMSVF. The men were all Scots and came from different walks of life - rubber planters, engineers and businessmen. In February 1942, my father and the other Volunteers with the Armoured Cars were some of the last to cross the Causeway from Johore into Singapore. When Singapore fell, he was rounded up by the Japanese out of uniform and was in danger of being executed when a fellow Scottish friend and officer from the Argylls interceded on his behalf and he was taken prisoner and sent to Changi. From there he was sent to Thailand to work on the Thailand-Burma Death Railway with "D" battalion where he suffered from Malaria and other tropical deficiency diseases. His camp was liberated in 1945 and he was evacuated out to Rangoon weighing just 50lbs. He subsequently spent 9 months in Glasgow Royal Infirmary recovering and then returned to his job as a rubber planter in Malaya. He married my mother **Ella Vera Shaw**, who was in the WRNS and served in 'secret cipher' in Liverpool during the war, post-war in Ipoh's registry office which was blown up. Sadly their marriage records were also destroyed in a raid on their estate house by the Communists during the Emergency. My father was awarded the PJK medal and given Malaysian citizenship for his services to Malaysia and for his humanitarian aid for his workforce.

PRISONER OF THE JAPANESE – Part 4

The Trials and Tribulations of

Private William Munro – 1st Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Force 1942-45

By kind permission of Donald Ruffell and the late Diana Ruffell (nee Wallace)

Pre-war, Bill Munro was a partner in Allan and Gledhill, Advocates in Malacca and Singapore. On retiring to the U.K. he practiced in Edinburgh and became a Q.C.

In mid-September we were taken on a short train journey to an airfield and sent in large aeroplanes to an American transit camp outside Yokohama. Flying over Tokyo and Yokohama we were astonished at the almost total destruction of these cities. They were black and flat. Hardly a building still stood. How the inhabitants still survived I can't imagine. I can't remember much about that camp. We were, I think, in huts and had camp beds to sleep on which was a great luxury. Food was doled out on to trays and we queued for our helpings. We had coffee and doughnuts and we queued with mugs for Coca-Cola which came out of a large metal container through a tap. We were all starting to put on weight again. We had been weighed quite often while prisoners in Japan. Why this was done I do not know. What I do know is that my weight seemed always to be around 140 lbs which would mean that I had lost only about 40 lbs as a prisoner. Many, if not most of us, lost more weight than that and I believe I did too, though I was never a complete scarecrow.

We had only a few days in the Yokohama camp. Our next move was by Yankee Trooper to Manila. Some time either in Yokohama or Manila – I'm not sure which – we were issued with new clothes. I acquired American light khaki trousers and shirts, some underclothes and suede boots with rubber soles as used by the American troops.

The voyage to Manila took several days and it was wonderful sitting on the deck in the sun until, that is, it got too warm and we had to seek shelter. In the main saloon of the ship there was a large soda fountain where we could help ourselves and on a shelf were big bottles of salt tablets which we were to take if ever we felt faint with the tropical heat. Meals were collected on trays. I think there were no second helpings but we could have as much bread as we wanted. It was years since we'd had bread like that and I can remember after a meal helping myself to extra bread and eating it soaked in sweetened condensed milk. We were still all very hungry.

We sailed into Manila Bay one morning and were shocked by what we saw. The harbour was a shambles and the bay seemed a mass of sunken ships whose masts and funnels protruded above the surface of the water. We were taken off by tender and then by bus to a Transit Camp run by the Australians. Here we slept in tents on camp beds. Our food, I think, came mostly in tins, but we had issues of Hersey's chocolate and American beer in cans. I met three other Singapore Volunteers who had been in the *"Mucky Maru"* and had gone to different camps and I discovered that of the twenty six of us who had sailed at the same time from Singapore all had survived. This was most unusual among prisoners. Unfortunately, the survivors were not all in the same state of health and one or two died quite soon after getting home.

In Manila all British ex-prisoners of war including Singapore and Malayan Volunteers were advised that they were being sent home by way of America. About a score or so of us, however, pointed out that Singapore or Kuala Lumpur was our headquarters and indeed for some it was their home. I was amongst these agitating to be returned to Singapore because I was anxious to know what had happened to my old firm and the possessions I had left there. We were advised that all the authorities in Manila could do was to send us to Hong Kong in an aircraft carrier that was going there and we would have to take our chance there of getting transport to Singapore. So I and the other rebels were taken on board the *"HMS Colossus"* one day in early October. We'd had about ten days in the Manila camp. I don't remember much of that voyage except that I developed a temperature the first day out and spent the rest of the voyage in the sick bay. I must have recovered by the time we reached Hong Kong two or three days later because I went ashore at Kowloon with the other chaps and was taken with them to a row of terraced houses in Prince Edward Road which had been taken over for use as a transit camp. Our time in Hong Kong was very pleasant. We must have received some of our back pay for I remember having some money to spend there though there was not much to spend it on apart from what we could get in the NAAFI canteen. The food at Prince Edward Road came out of tins but it was cooked and served by Chinese "boys". Now we were getting back to the life that we were used to. We were able to roam Hong Kong and Kowloon as we wished. It had not been much damaged, but it was certainly not its usual bustling self and there were few shops open or goods for sale. Along with *"Tommy" Cowin* and a planter called *Sparks*, I regularly visited the deserted house – a sort of palace – of *Eu Tong Seng* and bathed in its large swimming pool. Then *Cowin*, who spoke Russian, discovered a Russian restaurant which was open and doing business and ordered a Russian meal for us. It was the largest and most civilized meal we had had since 1941. We started with

Bortsch followed by Chicken a la Kiev. Then there was a Russian pudding but I can't remember what. But it was a memorable meal. Another incident that stands out was when my name was called out one morning before I had left the house and I was escorted out to the street to meet **Lady Moubatten** who was doing a tour of transit camps in the East. The reason I was selected for the meeting was that the medical man in her entourage was an old friend of mine, then **Wing Commander Jimmy Hill**, who had been making enquiries about me and found out where I was. After ten days or so in Hong Kong, our little group was taken by flying boat to Singapore, where we arrived about mid-October. The flying boat was an RAF one and had no seats but we didn't mind sitting on the deck with our backs against the wall of the 'plane, and it was exciting to be going back to Singapore. We landed in the Kallang River at the old airport and, since this was near my old home the **Seaview Hotel**, I found my way there. The Swiss manager, **Gerber**, was still there but could allow me to sleep only one night there since the hotel was in military hands and could be used only for troops arriving or departing. The sad tale was, however, that all my books and clothes and other possessions that I had left in the hotel had disappeared. The Japs were blamed for this.

Next morning, I got a lift into Singapore and went first to my old office at **22A, Raffles Place**. I found it occupied by a Chinese firm but that part of our old office which was next door on the first floor of **Alkaff's Arcade** had been occupied by some of our old staff who were very pleased to see me. The **Alkaffs**, who were old clients of ours and owned the **Arcade**, had kept the room for us, and our files and ledgers (though some had been lost or destroyed) and library had been brought there by some of our clerks. **Chelliah**, our chief clerk, and **Wee Tian Poh**, my secretary, had been employed by the Japanese Custodian of Enemy Property at Raffles Museum and had kept an eye on our files and books which had been transported there. From them I learnt that my old friend "**Charles**" **Charlesworth** was Singapore's Legal Officer and had his office in the Registrar's Room in the Supreme Court Building. **Charles** had been in the Malayan Volunteers and had managed to get away on the night of the surrender. He had been in Ceylon on the planning committee for the re-occupation of Singapore and Malaya, and had been given the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He had been a private before. The civilians and ex-privates etc. who had been in Ceylon helping in the plans for re-occupation, were given military rank, generally colonelcies, and became known as the "Banana Colonels". Singapore in October 1945 and, I think, 'till about June 1946 was under the British Military Administration (BMA) and full of these "Banana Colonels". How they got the name I don't know, but it may have had some connection with the dollar notes which the Japanese issued during the occupation which became valueless on the British re-occupation and were known as "Banana Dollars", i.e. not genuine.

I went right off to see **Charles** in his office and get all his news and also find out, if possible, where I could live while in Singapore where I meant to remain until I got **Allan & Gledhill** going again. While I was speaking to **Charles** a young Wing-Commander in his RAF uniform walked in. It was **Murray Brash** and we could hardly believe it. **Murray** had been our junior partner at the time of the Japanese War and had managed to escape from Singapore. In India he had joined the legal department of the RAF and had spent the rest of the war in India. He had arrived back in Singapore the day before our meeting and was able to be stationed there. He had brought with him a power of attorney from **Frank Brewer**, the architect, with instructions to take over **Brewer's** house in East Sussex Lane off Holland Road and look after it until the **Brewers** returned. This solved my problem of where to live. We both moved into **Brewer's** house that day. We were just in time because the military were requisitioning unoccupied houses and had they got into **Brewer's** house before us they would have been difficult to move out. The British Army got rather a bad name for removing furniture and bric-a-brac from the houses they occupied and sending them back to Britain. **Brewer's** house, which had been occupied by the Japanese Army, was in quite good condition when we went in. Their furniture, pictures and books were all there and it was a great luxury to me to be living in a civilised house again.

Singapore was a strange place in those days. There hadn't been much damage to the buildings or roads but our golf course at Bukit Timah had been badly treated. There were concrete paths across some of the fairways and greens had disappeared. An ornamental bridge had been built across the lake at the third hole and led to a Japanese shrine that had been built amongst the trees at the far side. The bridge really was quite attractive and I think could have been retained but in the general clean up and restoration it was demolished. The city itself was swarming with minions of the British Military Administration, most of them in uniform of some sort. **Lord Moubatten** was in control as Supreme – a new word recently coined – and installed at Government House. Apart from the BMA and their activities the city was quiet. There was very little in the shops. Food was scarce. Fortunately I was able to draw weekly rations from Volunteer Headquarters. This was in tins in a cardboard box which I somehow managed to have conveyed to our home in East Sussex Lane but I do not remember now how that was done. Cars were few and far between and could not be hired. Some buses were running and sometimes I could get a bus from Collyer Quay to Holland Village. Sometimes I walked the whole way back. Coming in to the office in the morning I always managed to hitch a lift into town. I can't remember how **Murray Brash** got to work and returned from it but he must have had some kind of RAF

transport to his office which was in some other part of the island. He also contributed to our small store of food and we had a Chinese cookboy who cooked our meals for us and was able to buy eggs now and again and the odd chicken from Chinese smallholders. At lunch time I could generally get corned beef or chicken or cheese sandwiches at **John Little's** in Raffles Place or at another little restaurant at Finlayson Green, not far from the office. 'To drink I would have ayer limau (lime squash) or coca cola. As far as I can remember, there was the occasional can of beer that came from India or Australia and it was possible to buy small quantities of an Indian gin and a whisky called "White Stag" whisky. These were pretty poor imitations of the real thing and few people were tempted to drink much of them. I went to the office every day and we gradually got it tidied up. We had one large room which was on the first floor of the Arcade and facing on to Raffles Place. My office in it was partitioned off from the rest of the office where we started with one or two clerks and a typist. I was the only partner in the office. **Walters**, our then senior partner, had been a..... [Editor: Sadly the rest of the pages of the diary are missing, and it ends here].

HAROLD JAMES and GLADYS ISABEL PAGE in World War Two

By kind permission of their granddaughter Judy Barradell-Smith

*[Judy writes: This is the story of how my grandfather was captured by the Japanese and interned in Sumatra. I have been in contact with **Gareth Owen** whose father **Gwilym** also worked at the Rubber Research Institute and was interned in Sumatra with my grandfather. My grandmother escaped on **The Empress of Japan** arriving back in the UK on 19th March 1942].*

Having recently researched and written up in detail all about **Harold James Page's** 1st World War experiences, I felt duty bound to try to do justice to what he had to endure in the Second World War. Pieces of the tale came down the family but not the whole story.

When my father **Mike Page** died in October 2010, on clearing out his belongings, I took possession of a number of files. These had photos, family memorabilia and history from both his lifetime plus some of his own father's. I had only glanced at them and never gone through them with any discipline until I was rearranging my office. Much of the WW2 things were in different categories and different folders, so I took them all out, sorted through them and scanned lots of them. As a result, I realised the story I had been told about what happened to my Grandpa was only the half of it. These family treasures and photos plus the amazing amount of information on the internet has helped me finally to piece it all together. I was especially thrilled to find a first-hand account of the escape from Singapore written by a survivor who was not only one of **Harold's** work colleagues but also on the same boat as him. Here is that story alongside copies of all the relevant material from the family files. I felt I must share it with my brother, my children and my cousins.

Kuala Lumpur and Singapore:

This is both a story plus some research done about **Harold James Page** (29th May 1890 – 27th January 1972) and his wife **Gladys Isabel Page nee Shepperd** (17th September 1892 – 6th March 1969) and their experiences in World War Two from 1942-1945.

Harold and Gladys Page were living in Kuala Lumpur at the outbreak of WW2 and stayed out there until the invasion of the Japanese into the Malay Peninsula in January 1942. **Harold Page** had been appointed as the Director of the Malay-based Rubber Research Institute (RRI) in 1936 with its headquarters located in Kuala Lumpur. This is where the family lived and the young grown-ups – **Barbara, Mike and Denis** – visited from England in the long holidays when they could get away from boarding school or university. The family home was a substantial 2-storey house, with lovely grounds, located at 200, Ampang Road in KL.

The exact date of when **Harold and Gladys** left for Malaya is unknown. However, I have found a passenger listing for **Mr. H.J. Page** showing his intended destination was F.M.S. (Federated Malay States) leaving Southampton for Penang dated 28th July 1936. But no **Gladys**. Maybe she came out later?

It was a pretty idyllic place and time to live in if you were British with money – a life of servants, chauffeur driven cars, parties, dressing for dinner, G & T on the terrace (brought to you by a servant) polo matches, swimming, going to the races and regattas, with all the last vestiges of the dying days of the Imperial British Empire and its associated lifestyle, soon to be wiped away for good at the start of WW2. I think **Harold and Gladys** were very happy there.

I also discovered that both the British Authorities, the Red Cross and the Japanese referred to civilian captives as internees, whilst combatants serving in the forces, irrespective of their nationality were always called Prisoners of War (POWs). **Harold Page** was a civilian internee.

WW2

From a variety of sources, there appears to have been a rather lax and indifferent attitude from the British in Malaya to the Japanese incursions. There were some strong views that the Japanese would not dare to try and "take" a British stronghold. The life of parties, swimming, dancing and polo went on pretty much as normal. Singapore was initially very well defended by Naval gun boats until the real threat of invasion for Britain and the persistent attacks by "U" boats in the Atlantic called them all home. The British in Malaya still

believed that Japan would not be interested in them right up until the attack on Pearl Harbour. (7th December 1941). At this point things started to get serious as the Japanese pushed further south. Somehow the British still believed that no-one would be so stupid as to try a land assault through the jungle from the north down the Malay Peninsula so that any attempt to take Kuala Lumpur or Singapore by air or sea would be easily repulsed. How wrong they were!!

Kuala Lumpur – 1942

Kuala Lumpur was overrun by the Japanese in early January and fell on 11th January 1942. In the preceding days there was a mass evacuation south to Singapore in the misguided view that Singapore was strongly defended and would not fall to the Japanese.

Japanese naval aircraft launched the first air raid over Kuala Lumpur on 21st and 22nd December 1941. British anti-aircraft guns and RAF aircraft intercepted the attack and shot down one Japanese aircraft and damaged another. More raids followed on the 25th and 27th.

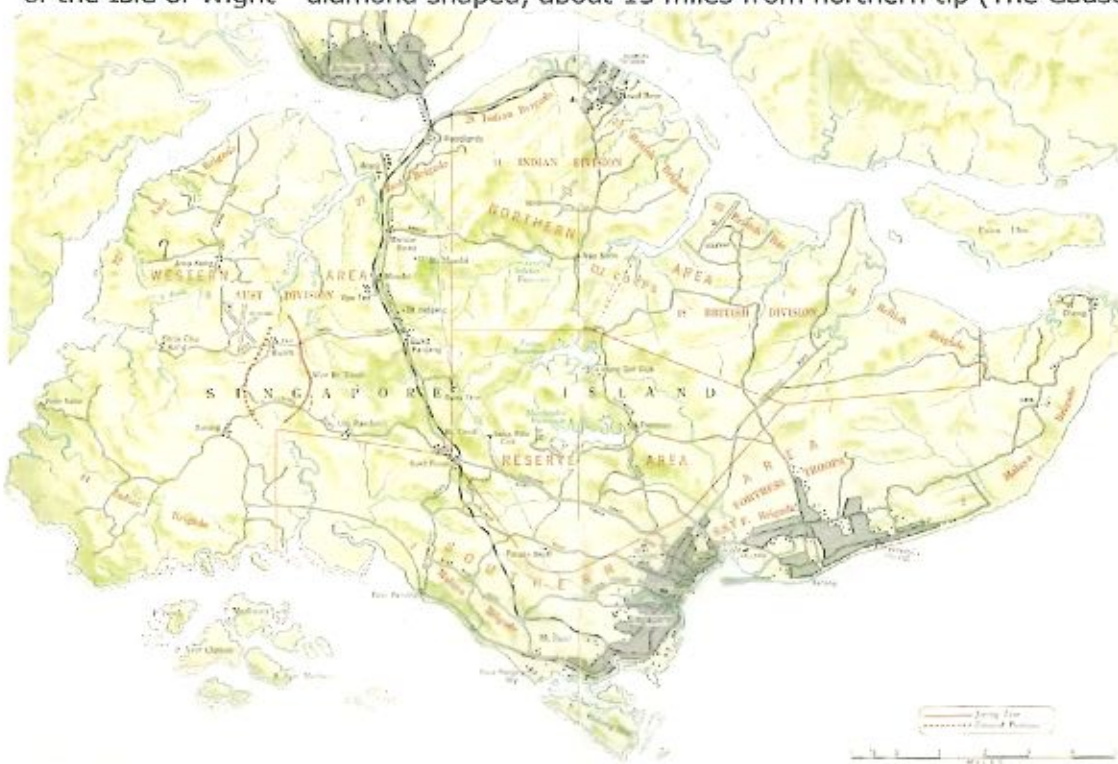
By 7th January, the northern part of Malaya including Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan, Trengganu and the Straits Settlement of Penang had fallen into Japanese hands. On 7th January, it was decided to abandon Selangor and Negri Sembilan to the Japanese, and British Forces began a quick retreat firstly to Johore and then to Singapore. The city, now abandoned, quickly descended into a state of anarchy and chaos. Looting was widespread. The last bombing was on 10th January 1942, after Port Swettenham fell.

As the British retreated, they continued the scorched earth policy they had used in Perak – and tin mines, rubber plantations and munitions were simply torched. Fires continued to burn for days even after the Japanese took over Kuala Lumpur. We know from the telegram sent to England that **Harold and Gladys Page** were "safe" in Singapore on 13th January 1942.

Singapore

Singapore was bombed on 8th December 1941 in the early morning, on the same day as the invasion of Malaya by the Japanese further up in the north. It was not bombed again till 28th December, but then it was bombed on a daily basis with increasing frequency, with the targets being military and strategic rather than civilian. The Japanese advanced steadily south, reaching the tip of the Malay Peninsula by the end of January. From then on bombing was augmented by shell fire from guns. On 31st January, the Commonwealth troops were pulled back on to Singapore Island, and the Causeway breached. By this time there was already a lot of damage to buildings and roads, and getting around was becoming more difficult by the day. Nevertheless, the basic facilities of electricity, water and telephone kept working surprisingly well, except locally where there had been a direct hit on a facility. There was a comparative lull for a week while the Japanese prepared an invasion by boat across the narrow strait. The invasion was launched on the night of 8th February, accompanied by a fierce bombardment. They crossed over to Singapore Island itself, and started working their way across the Island towards the centre of Singapore City. The Island is about the size of the Isle of Wight - diamond shaped, about 15 miles from northern tip (The Causeway) to the southern tip

just beyond the city centre and 25 miles East-West. As the Japanese advanced, more and more people and people and vehicles became concentrated in the few miles around the city centre. This included a large number of refugees who had been pushed down the Malay Peninsula, including **Harold & Gladys Page**, but of course the pressure had been relieved by the flow of refugees out of the docks by boat. In particular, there was a large number of women & children (the women & children first policy) escaping in the big troop-carrying liners up to 8th February. This included **Gladys Page** on board **The Empress of Japan** on 31st January 1942. **Harold** voluntarily elected to stay behind.



The Island of Singapore showing the Causeway

OBITUARIES

Sir Roger Moon. Born 17th November 1914 and died 16th October 2017

It is with enormous sadness that we report the death of **Sir Roger Moon** just a month away from his 103rd birthday. We send our very sincere sympathies to his daughters, **Sarah, Gillian and Patricia** and their families. **Sir Roger** has always been a keen supporter of the MVG, and we mourn the loss of our last MVG military FEPOW. **Sir Roger Moon, 6th Baronet**, was Britain's oldest living baronet and the last surviving member of the Johore Volunteers. He was born on the 17th November 1914, the son of **Jasper Moon and Isabel Moon (nee Logan)**. He was educated at Sedburgh School and became a coffee planter in Kenya from 1933 to 1935. He returned to the U.K. and worked on the Liverpool Stock Exchange for a few years dealing mostly in Dunlop shares. He took part in the Monte Carlo Rally, encountering the aviator **Amy Johnson** en route, when he stopped to change her tyre. He went out to Malaya in June 1939 as an Assistant Planter on Dunlop's Sagil Estate in Johore – 1939 – 1941. He joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers as Sapper 965 JVE and was detailed to dig ditches for planting mines. He was hospitalised with malaria, returning to his unit for the battle for Singapore. When Singapore fell he was captured and sent to Changi, where he was assigned to "H" Block and sent out with work parties to quarry at Hindhede Quarry off Upper Bukit Timah Road, loading rubble on to trucks. He was at Caldecott Work Camp and Thomson Road. On 28th October 1942 he was sent up to Thailand with "U" party (along with many other Volunteers), to the following camps – Ban Pong, Kanchanaburi, Kinsaiyok, Lower Kanu, Upper Kanu, Kanu 1, Timonta (Three Pagodas Pass), Hintok and Tamuang. He contracted malaria 17 times and also suffered from jaundice, dysentery and beriberi. His 'work' on the Railway consisted of breaking rocks in teams of 4 using crowbars and hammers.

He was repatriated from Bangkok to Rangoon and then by ship, the **S.S. Worcestershire** to Liverpool. After recuperation he returned to Malaya as Assistant Manager on the Sagil Estate. In December 1950 he married **Meg Maxwell** daughter of **Brigadier Arthur Mainwaring Maxwell** and **Marion Maxwell (nee Bridges)** – a distinguished Australian military family. In 1953 became Manager of the Hillside Estate (taking over from **George Booker, Marilyn's and Jane's** father). Later he was Manager of the Jasin Lallang Estate, Malacca. From 1963-67 he became an Oil Palm Planter. He succeeded as the 6th Baronet Moon of Copsewood Stoke, co. Warwick [U.K. 1887] on 14th September 1988, and retired to Wykey, Shropshire in 2003. The Celebration of **Sir Roger's** life was held at Pradoc Church on Friday 3rd November.

The Eulogy during the Service, was given by **Andrew Johnston**, husband of **Sir Roger's** daughter **Gillian**:

"I'm not sure if I've been blessed with the easiest or the hardest role today in trying to cover almost 103 years of a very full life in such a short time. **Roger – Podge** to his parents, brothers and sisters; **Dodo and Papa** to his children and grandchildren – died within a month of his 103rd birthday and just a day away from what would have been his father's 136th birthday. It's hard not to feel an overwhelming sadness not just because of the death of **Roger** but also because it really is the end of an era. **Roger** was a conduit to times past – some better, some not – and it's a fascinating and sobering thought that when he was born on the 17th November 1914, anyone then aged 99 or more would have been alive during the Battle of Waterloo. **Roger** – he was christened with only a single name – was born at Hargrave Hall on the Wirral, one of six children, to his parents **Jasper and Isabel Moon** (herself one of nine), a brother to **Edward, Ursula, Eleanor, Mary and Humphrey** all of whom have pre-deceased him (his sisters all in their nineties or over a hundred) apart from **Humphrey** who now inherits the Baronetcy at the age of 98, which must be some sort of record.

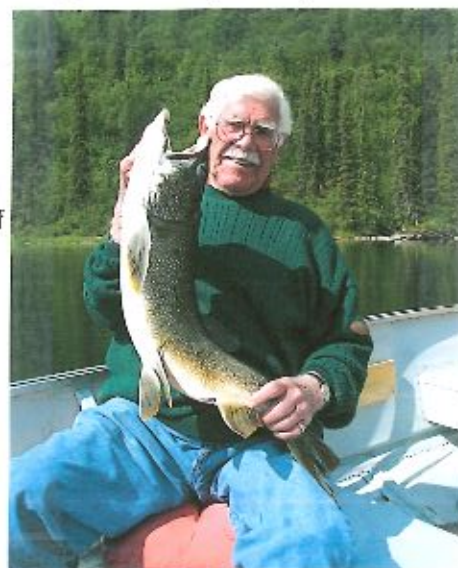
Shortly after **Roger's** christening, his father departed to join his regiment, the King's Liverpool Rifles, on the battlefields of France so the family moved to live with his grandmother at Great Ness House, just down the road from here; he often recalled to me his memories of travelling with a pony and trap on the dusty road to Oswestry, which is now, of course, the A5. After his father returned from the war, during which **Roger** lost three of his uncles, the family moved to Cheshire and lived in the wonderfully named Bleak House until they moved to the newly-built White Rock at Llanymenech in 1929 – **Roger's** father had bought a farmhouse there which was literally blown up to make room for their new home.

From all accounts **Roger** had a blissfully happy childhood at home, but schooling was another matter – he enjoyed his prep school Arnold House in Conwy where he was taught Latin and Greek for a short while by **Evelyn Waugh** and he became determined to follow his dear cousin **Cecil Hardy** into the Navy but his poor eyesight destroyed that hope from an early age. We are so pleased in the fact that **Cecil Hardy's** daughter **Thea** is with us today.

After Arnold House, **Roger** moved to Sedburgh School in what is now Cumbria from 1928-1932 – I hope there isn't a representative from the school here as **Roger's** recollection was that '**Sedburgh was the foulest place you could possibly find – a sewer and not much else and the less said about it the better!**' It can't have been all that bad though as he developed his life-long love of rugby football while he was there, playing regularly in the 2nd XV.

On leaving school, **Roger** travelled out to Kenya to work as a coffee planter – his elder brother **Edward** was farming out there too at the time – and returned to Liverpool in 1935 where he worked as a Stockbroker's Attache which, in his words, he found '**hard work and tedious**'. It was during this time that he met **Willie Fletcher** who was to become his best friend. **Willie** was quite a *bon viveur* and it was in fact only a month ago that **Roger** recounted to me how **Willie** used to lend him his Rolls Royce

Sir Roger Moon – June 2005
Dog Pack Lake, Yukon, Canada



to drive around Liverpool. **Willie** entered the Monte Carlo Rally with his sister **Audrey** in January 1939 and he recruited **Roger** as their co-driver, travelling all the way from John O' Groats to Monaco. They might have had great success except that they stopped on the way to help two lady rallyists who had had a puncture – one of which turned out to be the famous aviator **Amy Johnson**. With the outbreak of war on the horizon, **Roger** was also determined to join the RAF and took private flying lessons at Speke Airport (now John Lennon) where he went solo in a Tiger Moth after only four and a half hours of tuition. In May 1939, he left on a journey to Singapore that would change the course of his life, to work for Dunlop Malayan Estates as a rubber planter. Initially he looked after a 6,000 acre estate, living alone with a cook and a houseboy, but as the war progressed (in Europe) he decided to apply to the RAF but sadly though, in spite of flying a Tiger Moth regularly in Singapore, once again his poor eyesight confounded his ambition. All able bodied men were then conscripted so he joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers as Sapper Moon.

15th February 1942 was a date engraved in **Roger's** memory (he would often ask me each year what happened on that date) – it was **General Percival's** surrender to the Japanese in Singapore. **Roger** was captured and imprisoned in Changi until being transported by train to Ban Pong in Siam, as Thailand was then. The River Kwai, the Death Railway. In **Roger's** words, *brutality, starvation, dysentery and disease were the order of the day* – **Roger** suffered 17 bouts of malaria and dysentery during his time in captivity. There's no way I can do justice to describe the horrors that **Roger** experienced. He told me that he spent until the end of the war just dressed in a G-string; eating whatever insects, vermin or plants they could find; seeing his friends die of disease or punishment; working on a part of the railway that became known as "Hellfire Pass", so called because the sight of emaciated prisoners labouring at night by torchlight was said to resemble a scene from Hell. One of the most extraordinary things is that **Roger** never lost his spectacles throughout all of this – he said that he wouldn't have survived if he had.

Roger was only liberated after the Japanese surrender in 1945 and returned home to White Rock to recuperate before returning to work for Dunlop once again in Malaya in 1946 – only to be then involved with the Malayan Emergency, being beaten unconscious by rebellious workers in 1948. He met **Meg Maxwell** – whose grandfather was the celebrated **Major General Sir William Throsby Bridges** who commanded the 1st Australian Division at Gallipoli – in August 1950 and they married the following December. **Roger** had by this time a price on his head from the communist terrorists so after **Sally** was born he resigned and they returned to White Rock. They moved back to Malaya a year later where **Gilly** and **Isolda (Solly)** were born after which they finally returned to the UK in 1967 where he retired to live at the Mill House in Ruyton-Xi-Towns at the age of 53.

Roger's retirement for the next fifty years was rather less traumatic, spending his time initially playing golf, shooting and tending to his beloved garden, becoming the self-proclaimed Shropshire sweet-pea champion! I first met him prior to my engagement to **Gilly** when I returned to the UK on holiday – I well remember the sign on the gate saying 'No Hondas or Japanese cars allowed' and thought it was a joke until I also saw the sticking plaster hiding the Japanese name on his television – he never did forgive or forget until his dying day. **Roger** didn't suffer fools gladly – if you were a tradesman late for an appointment then you were sent back where you came from immediately and I suffered too – one time I didn't weed my asparagus patch at Wykey so that got dug up without mercy!

He was immensely practical, no doubt from making do and never wasting anything during his incarceration during the war. He never threw anything out and his vegetable garden made Steptoe's yard look pristine.

His enduring sadness, though, in his later years was caused by his adored **Meggie's** illness – she developed Parkinson's and then dementia – and she very sadly died in 2000 leaving **Roger** bereft. He was devoted to her. **Gilly** and I took him on holiday to Boston, New England and Maine but for the first time on our return he had to learn to cook and look after himself – aided on the cleaning front by **GwenIn** who became a lasting support and friend for the rest of his life. I would go for a whisky (or three) every Friday night and was continually staggered by his memories and interests in politics, sport and current affairs – he'd discuss Kenya, the jungle, Malaya, Liverpool in the thirties and even his naughty expeditions to Paris with **Willie Fletcher** – and no, I've never repeated those, as you made me promise!

I had the great honour of taking him not once but twice to go fishing in the Yukon in Canada – at the age 88 and then 91 years old. We never had a cross word and I genuinely think that they were some of the happiest days of his life – we talked about them in my last conversation with him. He used to tell me of the time that he went fishing in the River Kwai – lobbing in hand grenades to stun any fish that were there. I took the photo of him at Dog Pack Lake in the Canadian wilderness when he'd just learnt that this 12 pound trout was by far the largest that had ever been caught there. He was so thrilled and, of course, never failed to remind me of this for the rest of his life. We flew in a small four-seater float plane – **Roger** taking the controls over the mountains, reliving his Tiger Moth days in Singapore.

He eventually had to give up his golf as he became less mobile, but not before he'd completely retrained my gundog **Digger** to retrieve golf balls from the garden instead of pheasant – three or four balls at a time.

At this time, daughter **Sally** lived in South Africa and **Solly** in Dubai, but recently **Solly** returned to the UK to live in Ludlow, and came to Wykey whenever she could. **Sally** visited her father in September. But much of the credit for making **Roger's** life comfortable and bearable goes to **Gilly**, who cared for her father over the last seventeen years since the death of **Meggie**, providing him with meals and support.

I would like to give particular thanks to the wonderful staff at the Fairholme Nursing Home in Oswestry, where **Roger** resided for his last days. The care, compassion and understanding you showed to **Roger** and our families made the last few difficult weeks so much easier to bear.

Finally I recall one incident which will leave you with an image of **Roger**. It occurred at a restaurant in London when he was 88. A young lady came up to his table and said how wonderfully dressed he was *'the epitome of an English gentleman'*. [Edited].

Other Obituaries.

We are sorry to announce the death of **Tony Lucas** aged 98, who endured 3½ years as a FEPOW, including working on the Burma-Thailand Railway. In June 1939, as Intelligence Officer for 6th Royal Warwickshire Regiment, RA he drafted himself to Singapore and was placed in command of Indian troops near the north-east coast of Malaya when the Japanese invaded during a monsoon on the night of the 8th December 1941. Captured in Singapore, he made a daring temporary escape from the tented encampment where the POWs were held, to set on fire a Buick he had been given. He was part of the Selarang Incident in September 1942 before being sent up to Thailand by train. He was hospitalized with a scorpion bite which went septic, but his foot was saved using maggots from the latrines to eat the rotten flesh. He also suffered from dysentery, malaria, jungle ulcers and cholera – again saved from death by the injection of a saline solution. He made alcohol from rotten bananas and managed to antagonize “The Undertaker” a particularly cruel and sadistic guard who had bludgeoned 2 POWs to death. Lucas was saved by an interpreter but not before a savage beating with belt and fist, losing 3 of his teeth in the process. After repatriation he monitored the war-crimes trial and noted that “The Undertaker” was hanged for his crimes. Post-war his business took him to Japan, but he had a remarkable capacity for forgiveness sustained by his Christian faith. He was of the opinion that Japan’s military had perverted the country, not its people.

Commander Bill Atkinson DSC, known as “Wild Bill” for his incredible flying exploits, was the highest-scoring fighter ace of the Royal Canadian Navy in WW2. In December 1944, he joined 1844 Naval Squadron in the carrier *Indomitable* and flew fighter cover during Operation Meridian – air attacks on the oil refineries at Palembang and Pladjoe on Sumatra. Later he took part in Operation Iceberg in support of the American assault on Okinawa. In June 1945 he was transferred to *Formidable* and achieved the rare distinction of shooting down 2 Japanese Grace torpedo-bombers and damaging a third. The death of **Air Vice-Marshall Ted Hawkins**, aged 97, was announced on 22nd October 2017. He was twice awarded the DFC for maritime patrol and anti-submarine operations during WW2. But from August 1942 to October 1944 he flew on convoy escort duties, anti-submarine patrols and special duty operations from his base in Madras, including dropping agents along the coasts of Burma and Malaya. Later he took command of No.230 Squadron in Singapore flying Sunderlands on relief operations to isolated garrisons in New Guinea and to repatriate sick POWs and Dutch internees from Malaya and Java to hospitals in India.

On 12th November 2017, the death was announced of **Lord Langford**, whose daring escape from Singapore is recorded in the book by **Ian Skidmore** called, “*Escape from the Rising Sun*”. When the surrender was announced on the 15th February 1942, **Geoffrey Rowley-Conwy** – then a Captain in the Royal Artillery – decided to try to escape with those of his troops who wished to follow. They commandeered a junk and sailed for Sumatra, but ran aground before taking a 66-ton coastal launch and, dodging bombs, made it to Rengat on the Indragiri River. He was told to try to rescue shipwrecked evacuees stranded on outlying islands and set off with a Malay crew again dodging Jap planes and bombs. He made the journey 3 times to the islands and rescued over 500 people, using a page from a school-boy atlas for navigation and the signs of the muddy outflow from the river into the sea to guide him back to Rengat. Eventually he made it over to Padang on the west coast of Sumatra. The port was crammed full of all nationalities trying to escape the advancing Japanese. Given a tip by the SOE, that there was a native boat available 7 miles up the coast which they could board and sail for Colombo, **Rowley-Conwy** and 17 men travelled by tonga and found the *Sederhana Djohanis* – a 30 ton Malay sailing boat. After many narrow escapes, they made the 1,659 mile journey across the India Ocean to Ceylon, having been rescued within sight of land by a British merchantman. The journey took them 36 days, 13 hours and 31 minutes. From Bombay, where they were taken, he joined the Indian Mountain Artillery in Burma and ended up commanding a regiment of the 17th Indian Division. He was mentioned in dispatches and appointed OBE (Mil) in 1943. He died on 12th November 2017 aged 105.

[Editor: The Story of the *Sederhana Djohanis* is also told in the book entitled, “*Singapore’s Dunkirk. The Aftermath of the Fall*”, by **Geoffrey Brooks**].

VISIT OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES and HRH THE DUCHESS OF CORNWALL TO MALAYSIA

The Court Circular from Clarence House on 4th November 2017 announced that:

The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall this morning attended a Service in St. Mary’s Cathedral, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. His Royal Highness this afternoon visited Taiping Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery and laid a wreath at the Stone of Remembrance and subsequently laid a wreath at the Cross of Sacrifice.

The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall later called upon The Sultan of Perak at Istana Iskandariah, Kuala Kangsar. His Royal Highness, with The Sultan of Perak, afterwards attended a Meeting on Malaysian Conservation at the Conservation Summit, Royal Belum State Park.

The Prince of Wales, with The Sultan of Perak, subsequently attended a briefing on Royal State Park at Temenggor Lake. The Duchess of Cornwall this morning visited the Lost Food Project at the Lighthouse Children’s Welfare Centre, Kuala Lumpur.

On Sunday, 5th November 1917, the Telegraph printed this report:

On almost every day since 1947, the small cemetery for the Second World War fallen has lain all but unnoticed, tended patiently by volunteers in a quiet corner of Taiping.

Surrounded by the chirping of crickets in lush vegetation, few realized it is home to a British Victoria Cross recipient, largely forgotten by history despite his extraordinary feat.

Yesterday, the remarkable story of **Squadron Leader Arthur Stewart King Scarf** was recognized by the Prince of Wales, who visited his graveside to pay tribute.

In the first visit to the cemetery from a member of the Royal family, the Prince joined military veterans at the



Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, laying a wreath in "grateful remembrance" of the "service and sacrifice" of 865 Christian and Muslim servicemen.

Drawn to the grave of **Sqn. Ldr. Scarf**, he was left "marvelling at the heroics" of the pilot, in an event aimed at sharing the stories of those lying in the Malaysian graveyard.

Sqn. Ldr. Scarf, who died on 9th December 1941, was awarded the VC posthumously for "supreme heroism" against "tremendous odds" for actions at RAF Butterworth in what was then Malaya.

As all available aircraft prepared for a daylight attack on the Japanese Air Force base at Singora, Thailand, they were instead bombarded by a surprise sortie from the air.

Dive bombing and machine gun fire devastated every aircraft except the Bristol Blenheim piloted by **Sqn. Ldr. Scarf**. Pursued by the enemy, he performed "brilliant evasive action in a valiant attempt to return to his base" but was mortally wounded just as he made it over the border to Malaya. Despite the severity of his injuries, he made an emergency landing so smooth that all of

his crew were uninjured.

After showing the "utmost gallantry and determination" he was taken to hospital, and treated by his wife **Elizabeth Lunn**, who gave her own blood in a futile attempt to try to save him. Soon afterwards, she lost their unborn child as well.

His death was not gazetted until 1946, as stories from the Malaya Campaign began to gain recognition.

His citation reads: "**Squadron Leader Scarf displayed supreme heroism in the face of tremendous odds and his splendid example of self-sacrifice will long be remembered.**"

The Prince was yesterday directed to the grave to ensure just that, pausing to reflect on the sacrifices made by British and Commonwealth forces alike. **Colonel Stephen Hall**, British defence adviser to Malaysia, who gave the Prince a tour of the Taiping cemetery, said he had been told of the story of the 28-year old VC in front of a small audience.

Laying wreaths and taking a moment of silence at two memorials, the Prince also met local volunteers who tend the cemetery in conjunction with the CWGC. He told them: "*You look like you take very good care of it. It makes such a difference. I can't thank you enough.*" **Datuk Kay Hai Thuan**, a retired First Admiral and vice-president of the Malaysian Armed Forces Chinese Veterans Association, said: "The families of the people buried here will be very proud and honoured."

It was a calm moment in a busy schedule for the Prince and Duchess of Cornwall, and followed a keynote speech from the Prince about the "pivotal" Commonwealth.

Speaking at a dinner celebrating the ties between the countries, the Prince urged those listening to work together to solve problems including terrorism, climate change and inequality, saying they were "beholden" to leave a better world for their children. "For I do not feel that it is realistic or fair for us simply just to pass our problems to the next generation in the hope that they will resolve them," he said.

The Prince also gave his personal vote of thanks to volunteer divers who have been helping to protect the wreck of the Royal Navy ship - his namesake, HMS Prince of Wales, from looters who are trying to strip the Crown property for scrap metal. A letter in the Telegraph on 9/11/17 also deplored the looting of the wreck on which the writer's Uncle died - one of the 327 who perished. The writer said that she had scattered flowers over the wreck area and that "anyone who desecrates the war grave is despicable."

[Editor: See also A.K. No: 44, October 2015 Ps. 19-21, and A.K. No: 45, January 2016 Ps. 9-10 - an article entitled "As I Remember It" written by P.M. Davies, wife of **Harley Boxall** and nursing colleague and friend of **Elizabeth (Sallie) Scarf (nee Lunn)**. This article was sent by MVG member **Sallie Hammond** daughter of **Patricia Boxall (nee Davies)** and Goddaughter of **Sallie Scarf** after whom she is called].



The last resting place of **Sqn Ldr Scarf** was among those visited by Prince Charles on his visit to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Taiping

JOINT MEETING OF THE MVG AND BRITISH MALAYSIAN SOCIETY – Thursday 5th April 2018 at 12 noon.

We are delighted to announce that a joint meeting of the British Malaysian Society and the Malayan Volunteers Group will be held on Thursday, 5th April 2018 at 12 noon at **52, Bedford Row, London WC1R 4LR** - the temporary premises for the Malaysian High Commission while renovation work is being carried out on the Commission's building in Belgrave Square. The talk is entitled, **"The History of the Malayan Volunteer Forces"**, and will be in two parts given by **Jonathan Moffatt** and **Rosemary Fell** followed by the two films which were shown at the Gala Dinner held in Kuala Lumpur for HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duchess of Cornwall on the occasion of their visit to Malaysia in November. The films commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Merdeka, and the 60 year relationship between Britain and Malaysia. A light lunch will be served afterwards. If you would like to attend the meeting, please let **Rosemary** know together with your payment for £10 for the lunch – unless you are also a member of the BMS. Details are as follows:

Time: 12 noon arrival for tea/coffee

Talk and films: 12.30pm

Lunch: 1.30 – 2.30pm. Function ends.

Cost: £10 for non-members of the BMS. Cheques payable to: **Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group**

Travel: Nearest tube stations – Holborn or Chancery Lane.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

PERTH Western Australia – Sunday 11th February 2018. Service of Commemoration for the sinking of the Vyner Brooke and Radji Beach Massacre of the Australian Army Nurses at Point Walter Reserve, Bicton

Please let **Robert Gray** know if you wish to attend this service – the 76th anniversary of the sinking.

PERTH Western Australia - Saturday 17th February 2018 – Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service

Please let **Elizabeth Adamson** know if you wish to attend this service, which will start at 10am.

MUNTOK – Banka Island, Sumatra – Friday 16th February 2018, "Walk for Humanity" on Radji Beach

Please contact **Judy Balcombe** or **Michael Noyes** if you wish to attend. More information may be obtained from **Michael** on noyce@me.com

LONDON – Thursday 5th April 2018 – Joint MVG/BMS meeting at 12 noon.

See above for details

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 13th May 2018. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury

If anyone would like to attend this service on behalf of the MVG and Volunteers and lay a wreath, please let **Rosemary** know.

Entrance is by ticket only and can be obtained from: administrator@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk The service starts at 12.30pm and a finger buffet lunch is served afterwards. This is a good opportunity to view the names of loved ones in the Memorial Books, housed in the FEPOW Chapel, but please check with **Peter Wiseman** to see if your names are listed at: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com **Peter** is the Historian and Archivist for the Church.

NMA – Sunday 13th May 2018. Annual Gardening and Plot Maintenance.

We have given up on the NMA replying to our offer to pay them a lump sum to maintain the plot in perpetuity. They obviously don't need our money which has now been earmarked for other projects! As long as we are able, we will continue to deal with the annual clean-up and pruning of the shrubs ourselves.

NMA – Wednesday 15th August 2018. Annual Service to commemorate V-J Day. 12 noon in the Chapel.

In a departure from the usual service in our Memorial Garden Plot, we are holding the service in the Chapel, which has been booked for us from 11.30 to 13.30. [See Report in A.K.52 Ps. 3 & 4]. The noise from the LaFarge machinery, just behind the Plot, has become unbearable and holding our services there has become untenable. Weather permitting, the wreath can be laid on the Memorial Stone in the Plot afterwards. More details will be given in April.

PERTH Western Australia. Merdeka Day Service in Kings Park. August 2018. Date TBA.

We thank **Bill** and **Elizabeth Adamson** for organising this annual service in conjunction with the MBVA WA Inc.

LONDON – Saturday 20th October 2018. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12-5pm

Please put this date in your diaries. A lighter menu, which was much appreciated last year, will be served and announced with the cost in April. We are delighted to announce that the talk is to be given by MVG member **Mary Harris**, entitled, **"Bouches Inutiles. Who were they and what happened to them?"** If you are intrigued by this title, do come to the lunch.

LONDON – Thursday 8th November 2018. Cross Planting Ceremony and Service at Westminster Abbey.

We thank **Alan** and **Karen Harney** for attending this ceremony and representing the MVG at the FEPOW Plot in 2017.

Please let **Rosemary** know if you would like to join them this year, so that we can apply for tickets in good time. We are grateful to **Revd. Pauline Simpson** for organising our MVG Cross for the Plot.

LONDON – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall

We plan to apply for the 12 tickets we were allocated in 2017 for the Service and Parade. Please let **Rosemary** know in good time if you wish to march and before August when the application has to be made digitally. Individual tickets will be supplied for each marcher, giving details of your full name, current address, place and date of birth. As this is the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, and falls on Armistice Day itself, there will possibly be a huge demand for tickets.

CANADA – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Sunday Service in Canada – venue TBA

We are delighted to announce that **Sallie Hammond**, our Secretary in Canada, has offered to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday. Please would Canadian (and American) members let **Sallie** know if they would like to join her.

MALAYSIA – Remembrance Sunday Services in KL and Penang – TBA

NMA – Monday 10th December 2018. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.
Please contact Bob Hall for details. His snowy report of the service in 2017 is on P.5. We hope it will be less cold in 2018.
SINGAPORE – 12th September 2020. Service at Kranji CWG Cemetery to mark the 75th Anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender.

A future date to keep in mind to join the MVG for the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Singapore.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

This is a reminder that subscriptions are due in **APRIL**. It would be helpful, please, if members would make a note of this date to save much time and effort being wasted on chasing up late payments. We have decided to keep the annual subscription at **£20 sterling** for another year. Payment may be made by cheque, standing order or by a BAC transfer to the MVG account. The annual subscription letter will be sent out in April with the bank details, and a tear-off section to be returned with cheques. Please return these to **Rosemary** at the address below. Cheques should be made out to:

Mrs R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

Australian members will be notified of their subscription rate in Australian dollars payable to **Elizabeth Adamson** and Canadian/USA members should pay **Sallie Hammond** as advised.

Malaysian and Singaporean members will be notified about payment in April.

MVG WEBSITE

As mentioned in the Editorial, our website has been updated, and now had a modern and clean look. The back copies of the newsletters are now available to read **without** the use of a password. There is a new section on the Evacuation Ships with details of their passenger lists. This invaluable research has been carried out by **Michael Pether** in New Zealand, and we are very grateful to him for such detailed work on a hitherto little known part of WW2 history in the Far East.

There is still work to be done on the website, and if anyone can see errors which need to be addressed or wishes to add other sections or material, please let **Rosemary** know. We know that the Picture Gallery needs more work, and if anyone can shed light on the names of people shown please get in touch. We thank our webmaster, **Maxine Lawson**, for all her work for us.

Please note new website address for the Researching FEPOW History Group: <https://fepowhistory.com>

FEPOW MEMORIAL STONE AT MORNINGTON CRESCENT

We are very grateful to **Ruth Rollitt** for sending this photograph of a granite and black slate Memorial Stone dedicated to the Far East Prisoners of War which can be found on the pavement at Mornington Crescent. For those wishing to view it, turn right out of Mornington Crescent Underground Station and cross the road. The Memorial is directly in front of you.



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