

# **APA KHABAR**

**Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk**

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)



**57th EDITION  
JANUARY 2019**



**The Annual Reunion and Luncheon 2018  
held in the Sovereigns' Room at the RAF Club  
L to R: Liz Moggie, Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk, Jonathan Moffatt,  
Mary Harris and Rosemary Fell**



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**70 MVG MEMBERS ATTEND THE 10<sup>th</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANNUAL REUNION  
AND LUNCHEON AT THE RAF CLUB DURING  
THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF THE RAF,  
AND THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF ARMISTICE DAY  
WAS REMEMBERED AT SERVICES IN LONDON,  
TORONTO, KL, PENANG AND AUSTRALIA**

**A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL MVG MEMBERS**

We were delighted to welcome our **Patron, Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk**, to our annual reunion and luncheon at the RAF Club on 20<sup>th</sup> October 2018. It was a special and splendid occasion, taking place just 3 days after Her Majesty The Queen had unveiled a spectacular and beautiful stained glass window celebrating the role of women in the RAF. The window had been commissioned to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Royal Air Force, and this anniversary also coincided with the MVG's 10<sup>th</sup> year of holding its annual luncheons at the RAF Club. [See the full report on P.2]

In London, we are grateful to **Alan and Karen Harney, Jane Nielsen and Yvonne Wurtzburg** for attending the Cross Planting Ceremony on the Thursday before Remembrance Sunday in the Garden of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey. The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of World War 1 was remembered on Armistice Day itself, at the traditional service which takes place annually on Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph in London, followed by the Parade of Veterans including MVG marchers representing the Malayan Volunteer Forces. The Parade of about 10,000 marchers, watched by larger crowds than ever, made for a very emotional day. The MVG was mentioned and shown marching on the BBC outside broadcast of the Cenotaph Parade. We proudly presented our wreath as we passed the Cenotaph. Afterwards we enjoyed a relaxing lunch at the Cellarium Café at Westminster Abbey, despite the tight security in place around Westminster Abbey. Marching tickets had to be shown before we were allowed to enter the Abbey grounds.

We are pleased to note that the MVG was represented and wreaths were laid at services in Toronto, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Australia. We are very grateful to **Sallie Hammond**, our secretary in Canada, for organising a group of MVG members in Canada and the USA to attend the Service of Remembrance in Toronto and for arranging a get-together the night before the ceremony. The Canadian wreath was laid by our veteran child internee **Wilma Howe** and we salute her fortitude, together with the other members, in braving the cold weather in minus temperatures and taking part in the 2 hour outdoor service. **Sallie's** work in arranging their attendance at this ceremony for the first time has been much appreciated by those members who were there. [See report on Ps. 7 & 8]

Wreaths were also laid in KL and Penang by **Andrew Hwang**. We thank him for attending both ceremonies and to **Richard and Terry Parry** for sending photographs of the Penang Service and Cenotaph.

We are grateful to **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson** who each laid a wreath at the State War Memorial in Kings Park, Perth WA during the service held there on 11<sup>th</sup> November. [See reports on these ceremonies on P.9]

## **"The Art of Survival Exhibition."**

We received a message from **Meg Parkes** just before Christmas, to say that the Heritage Lottery Fund has approved the grant application for this exhibition to go ahead in October 2019. The Crowdfunding appeal in A.K. 56 also raised the £10,000 required to ensure its financial success. See the following link & details under "Dates for your Diary"

<https://www.lstmed.ac.uk/news-events/news/lstm-awarded-national-lottery-support-for-the-secret-art-of-survival>

The Researching FEPOW History Group is holding a Workshop in London in June 2019, and is planning another International FEPOW History Conference in Liverpool from 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June 2020. [See dates on P.31.]

## **AN IMPORTANT DATE – SATURDAY, 15<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2020 – V-J DAY 75**

This date marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V-J Day. Please put this important date in your diaries. The MVG is planning to hold a service in the Chapel at the NMA and afterwards the congregation will process down to the MVG's Memorial Garden for the laying of a wreath. The arrangements will be sent out in good time. The service will be followed by a buffet lunch in the Visitor Centre.

In September 2020, we also plan to take part in the events in Singapore and lay a wreath during the Service in Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. We hope to announce our plans for the visit in April.

**NOTE:** A pair of glasses with bronze-coloured metal frames was found on the floor after the Luncheon at the RAF Club on 20<sup>th</sup> October. Please would the owner contact Rosemary Fell.



**ANNUAL REUNION AND LUNCHEON**  
**RAF CLUB, PICCADILLY, LONDON**  
**20<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

The RAF Club celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. It was founded in 1918 and its doors opened in 1922. Located in the heart of London's Mayfair, the Club has an elegant interior with major aviation artworks lining the walls and the unique squadron badge corridor on the first floor. At the end of this corridor is the striking stained glass window running almost the full height of the staircase. We are fortunate to be able to hold our annual reunions and luncheons in this Club, where service and attention to detail always make for a delightful afternoon. This year was no exception. We had a very successful and enjoyable day.

This was the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of holding our Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club. It took place three days after **Her Majesty The Queen** visited the Club to unveil two beautifully and intriguingly designed stained glass windows, dedicated to the role of women in the RAF. The windows were designed by **Helen Whittaker** who is based in the Barley Studios in York. They are intriguing because if one studies the windows more closely one notices small windows inset into the stained glass, representing the rivets on wartime aircraft. On looking into these windows, one can see wartime photographs of the women who served with the Royal Air Force. The keys of a typewriter depicted in the window show the initials of the women's services in WW 2 and 2 – **WRAF, WAAF and ATS**. The windows can be found on the first floor in the recess almost opposite the Ballroom, between the Victoria Bar and the Presidents' Room. In honour of her visit, **The Queen** also unveiled a new portrait of herself seated in the White Drawing Room at Windsor Castle, with her handbag on the floor and a painting of a Spitfire in the background. The portrait, painted by **Benjamin Sullivan**, has been hung in the Ballroom, together with another painting showing The Queen presenting Colours to the RAF. In honour of her visit, the Ballroom has been renamed "Sovereigns' Room," and this is where our luncheon will be held again next year on **Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019**.

We were delighted to welcome our Patron, **Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk** to the reunion lunch this year, also **Zaharah Othman**, a journalist with the New Straits Times, together with 68 members and friends. Members had come from as far away as Singapore – **Tony Daintry**; from Kuala Lumpur – **Liz Moggie**; and France – **John and Diana Hembry**. It was good to see so many new faces as well as those members who have regularly attended this annual event.

Members arrived early to avoid getting caught up in a march due to take place in Piccadilly, and by midday, there was a good crowd happily reminiscing about times past times and family connections. New security procedures in place at the Club meant that we had to 'man' the entrance lobby and tick members off a list as they arrived. As well as this, we introduced a table seating plan for the first time. We are very grateful to **Karen Harney** and **Liz Moggie** for kindly giving up their time to comply with these regulations, and for showing the seating plan to everyone as they arrived. It would seem that the seating plan worked well and was generally approved. With greater numbers coming to the reunion and more members attending on their own, this is perhaps a good arrangement for future lunches.

On the whole, the lighter menu which was introduced last year, seems to have met with the approval of all but the most hungry! We will work with the Club next year to find a similarly light and interesting menu to meet all tastes.

As coffee and petit fours were being served, we settled back to listen to **Mary Harris's** talk entitled, **"Bouche Inutile. Who were they and what happened to them?"** Not quite knowing what to expect, it soon became very clear that **Mary** had opened a very powerful defence of the role of the women married to men in the British ex-pat community who were involved with the war work for the colonial government. They were not the 'useless mouths' or 'flibbertigibbets' that have been portrayed in so many books, including definitive histories of the Malayan Campaign, and documentaries and drama such as "Tenko," dancing the nights away at Raffles Hotel while Malaya and Singapore burned and were being overrun by the enemy. They were also involved with war work and doing other useful jobs in tandem with their men folk. Many of them worked as secretaries; as nursing auxiliaries; in signals intelligence, including **Mary's** own mother, **Elizabeth Alexander** who was recruited by the Navy to work in Radio Direction Finding at the Singapore Naval Base; and in many other Voluntary services dealing with the flow of refugees from up country Malaya and the local population which had been traumatised by the bombing and whose homes had been destroyed. **Imogen Holmes** thanked **Mary** for her fascinating talk, which had helped to dispel some of the myths surrounding the role of ex-pat women in the Far East during the Malayan Campaign. The full unedited version of **Mary's** talk will be serialised in this edition and in future newsletters.

**Mary** also mentioned the book she has just finished about her mother's lifetime work, called, **"Rocks, Radio and Radar. The Extraordinary Scientific, Social and Military Life of Elizabeth Alexander."** It is to be published in March 2019 in Singapore. The book will be available online at a reduced cost to MVG members.



The draw raised a record total of £385. Thanks go to **Anthony** and **June Jackson** and **Becca Kenneison** for selling so many tickets, and to everyone who gave so generously. We are grateful to those who brought the prizes which made a wonderful array. The tickets were drawn by our Patron, **Georgina Norfolk**, and by **Julian Beavan** and **June Jackson**. The money is going towards the electricity in the Muntok Peace Museum - £250 was sent in December, and more will be sent in June 2019.

Next year the date of the Luncheon is **Saturday, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019.**

Our speaker is **Dr. Hilary Custance Green**, whose grandparents lived and worked in pre-war Malaya and whose father fought with the British Army and became a FEPOW on the Thailand-Burma Railway.

The Title of **Hilary's** talk is "**Malaya - A Family Affair.**"

She is planning to talk about the work of her grandparents. Her grandmother, **Barbara Evans**, (whose father **William** was Resident Councillor in Penang) worked tirelessly in championing education and for the Malayan silver industry. Her grandmother's sister, **Joyce Evans**, did valuable charity work, including running a War Market. She was the recipient of the King's Silver Jubilee Medal and a founder member of the Singapore Ladies Rifle Association. Her grandfather, **Alan Custance Baker**, was a Malayan Civil Servant and his life's work was 'Malaya'. He trained Malayan Volunteers, amongst other activities, and both grandparents broadcast in Malay for the BBC during the war. **Joyce** married **Roger Elvy Prentice** who was a rubber broker. She was evacuated on the **SS Kuala** and died when it was sunk.

**Mary Harris giving her talk**



**Pre-lunch get-together**



**Selling Draw Tickets**



**Her Grace chatting to Julian Beavan**



**Liz Moggie and Zaharah Othman**



**Anthony Jackson, Her Grace, the Duchess of Norfolk, Rosemary Fell, Julian Beavan**



## THE 90th OCCASION OF THE FIELDS OF REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

by Jane Booker Nielsen

*Members of the Malayan Volunteers Group were represented by Yvonne Wurtzburg, Jane Booker Nielsen and Alan and Karen Harney.*

The morning of Thursday the 9<sup>th</sup> November was a sunny but cold day, especially for those gathered in the shadow of Westminster Abbey for the Fields of Remembrance Ceremony. As we waited behind our particular plot, laid out with crosses with poppies for those who had taken part in WW11 in the Far East, we had time to gaze in wonder at the hundreds and thousands of crosses with poppies with personal messages and names surrounding us in the Abbey grounds.

**His Royal Highness, The Duke of Sussex** arrived shortly before 11 o'clock. Then after the Abbey clock had struck eleven, a short prayer was given by the Dean of Westminster and the Duke was then invited to lay a Cross of Poppies in front of the two plain crosses representing the unknown British soldiers of WW1 and WW2.

"The Last Post" was then sounded from the parapet of St. Margaret's Church by a bandsman of the Scots Guards, after which a two minutes silence was held.



Yvonne Wurtzburg & Richard Brown talk to other FEPOW relatives.

The Duke was then invited to walk round the grounds meeting ex-service men and women from the armed forces who have served in a number of conflicts and also civilians who represented older wars and The Duke of Sussex with Rev. Pauline Simpson

In front of the FEPOW Plot



### *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.  
We Shall Remember Them.*

As The Duke walked slowly around the other side of the grounds we noticed that because of renovations to the church, the young bandsman who had played "The Last Post" was having to climb down from the parapet by a long ladder! We noticed under the bearskin helmet that the young bandsman of the Scots Guards was, in fact, a young woman and as she walked down our side of the grounds she was given a cheerful round of applause. Standing in front of our plot to represent our group which consisted of FEPOW, COFEPOW and Malayan Volunteers Group members, was the FEPOW Chaplain Revd. **Pauline Simpson**. We were all very pleased that **The Duke** stopped to shake her hand and talk to her briefly. She told us afterwards that he had remarked on how smart she looked. After the ceremony was completed, **Pauline** invited us to stand round in a circle together to say the FEPOW Prayer.

The FEPOW Plot with MVG's Logo and the Volunteer Forces Cross





**REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2018**  
**THE CENOTAPH, WHITEHALL, LONDON**  
**11th November 2018**

It was with great pride that the Malayan Volunteers Group marched at the Cenotaph in London on this the 100th anniversary of the 1918 Armistice Day, to mark the ending of The Great War. We were there to remember our fathers, grandfathers and other relatives who fought in this terrible 'war to end all wars', but we were also marching in memory of our fathers and other relatives who fought in the Malayan Campaign of World War Two and became Far East Prisoners of War.

We were marching for the 13th time and our designated position was in Column F13. Perhaps it was 13th time lucky for the MVG, for not only were we televised marching, but also the Group was mentioned by name and the reasons for our marching were given.

The build up to the parade started back in June when the application for tickets had to be sent in to the Cenotaph Team at the Royal British Legion. With 10,000 veterans marching this year, followed by a second parade of 10,000 people – The Nation's Thank You Procession – we felt privileged to receive our full allocation of tickets.

The weather was particularly wet during the week before Remembrance Sunday, and there was heavy rain during the night and at about eight a.m. on the morning of the Parade. However, by the time we arrived on Horse Guards Parade the clouds had rolled away, the sun came out and it was warm. Everyone arrived early as advised by the RBL due to the huge crowds marching and the large numbers of on-lookers who were expected to line Whitehall, Parliament Square, Great George Street and Horse Guards Road. We are grateful to **Neill Aitken** for holding the MVG's marker board to indicate our marching position in Column F, and to **Morag Aitken** for accompanying Neill from Scotland. It was their first time at the Parade. Also marching this year were **Karen Harney, Christine Cavender, Yvonne Wurtzburg, Sandy Lincoln, Anthony and June Jackson** who regularly represent the MVG, together with our other first time marchers **Imogen Holmes** and **Ruth Rollitt**. Sadly **Mary Harris** was unable to come as she was unwell. Thus we were eleven marchers but joined as an onlooker by **Jane Nielsen**, who had attended the Cross Planting Ceremony on Thursday 8th November. Sadly, due to the tight security, and personalised tickets, **Jane** was unable to march in **Mary's** place, but she joined us for lunch afterwards.

The seemingly chaotic crowds of veterans collecting on Horse Guards gradually became more orderly as they found and formed up into their designated Columns and by 10a.m. we were marched through the central Archway from Horse Guards into Whitehall where we first turned left towards Trafalgar Square before being ordered to turn to face down Whitehall. The Columns were all marched through from Horse Guards and formed up in Whitehall by 11a.m. when at the first stroke of the hour the guns boomed out to mark the beginning of the 2 minutes silence.

Unfortunately the sound on the huge TV screen which showed the laying of the wreaths by the members of the Royal Family, Politicians, Ambassadors and High Commissioners, was not working and so we were not aware when the short service started, taken for the first time this year by the new lady Bishop of London. This made it difficult to follow, but very soon after the end of the service we were ready to march.

Many of you may have been watching the service on television and seen that the MVG was not only shown marching, but also mentioned in the commentary. It was a highly emotional day, made even more so by the enormous crowd of onlookers who were very appreciative and clapped us all the way down Whitehall and into Horse Guards again. Her **Royal Highness, The Princess Royal** took the salute this year – not an enviable job with 10,000 marchers to keep watching and saluting. We had to wait on the Parade Ground until the march was finished, the National Anthem played and **HRH** had been driven away, before we could leave.

Lunch was booked at the Cellarium Café in the Cloisters at Westminster Abbey – a new venue this year. Luckily we were able to access the Café with our marching tickets because the whole of the Abbey area was closed due to the evening service which HM The Queen attended. Security was tight even in the café, which was closed to the general public. But we were given the "all clear" by a couple of sniffer dogs! We all enjoyed the atmosphere in the café and it



was mutually agreed that we should book our lunch there again next year. Everyone felt that it had been a very special parade and that we had been part of an historic day.

**THE MVG AS SHOWN MARCHING IN THE VETERANS' PARADE ON BBC'S TV BROADCAST**



Front Row L to R. Anthony Jackson, June Jackson, Christine Cavender, Karen Harney, Ruth Rollitt, Rosemary Fell.  
Back Row L to R. Sandy Lincoln, Imogen Holmes, Yvonne Wurtzburg, Morag Aitken, Neill Aitken.



The MVG marching towards Parliament Square



Lunch at the Cellarium Café, Westminster Abbey  
L to R: Yvonne, Imogen, Karen, Anthony, June, Ruth, Sandy, Rosemary, Morag and Neill.



## REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE IN QUEEN'S PARK, TORONTO

**By Sallie Hammond**

*[Editor: We are delighted that our Canadian and American members attended the service in Toronto on Remembrance Sunday for the first time and laid a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers.]*

It was wonderful to be together on this Remembrance Day in Toronto. What a memorable experience! We are grateful to **Jonathan Russell** for sending the photos of the MVG members attending the Service. Altogether there were 17 of us - including relatives and friends - four MVG members from Canada - **Pippa Schmiegelow, Vilma Howe, Wendy Freeman and Sallie Hammond** - and one from the USA - **Jonathan Russell**. Vilma's younger brother, **Nelson Stubbs**, also attended. He was born in Sime Road Camp.

It was a freezing, cold day with temperatures of minus 6 with a wind chill, but no snow or rain. **Vilma Howe** laid the wreath on behalf of the MVG in Canada and the USA. It was a reflective and meaningful moment for us all.

**Pippa Schmiegelow** wrote afterwards:

*Sallie did the most marvellous job of organising our get-together at the Royal York on Saturday evening and subsequent attendance, courtesy of the Ontario Government, at The Veterans' Memorial at Queen's Park, seat of the Ontario Government.*

*Her attention to detail was meticulous, nothing was left to chance and we were kept informed every step of the way. She did the MVG proud and we are extremely grateful to her for the considerable amount of work she undertook on our behalf. Apart from the logistical arrangements, Sallie prepared detailed folders full of pertinent background information for each of those MVG members present on Sunday.*

*It was a delight for both Denis and me to meet Sallie and the other members of the MVG: thank you for your part, Sallie, in organising a North American Branch of the MVG and to Jonathan (Moffatt) for all the time spent over these many years on identifying and where possible locating Canadian and American families whose members served in the Malayan Volunteer Forces.*

A footnote from **Jonathan Russell**:

*I hope all got home safely. On a winter's day, wearing a kilt on a metal chair was "interesting". Next year, God willing, hot water bottles!*

A word of thanks to Sallie from the Editor:

*Thank you so much for your report and the photos sent from Jonathan Russell. I am sure you feel quite exhausted after the event with all your wonderful organisation. But I hope you also feel fulfilled and pleased that it all went according to plan and that the Malayan Volunteers Forces have been remembered and honoured in Canada for the first time. It is a great achievement and we are grateful to you for arranging it all.*

**MVG WREATH CANADA/USA NEXT TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE NETHERLANDS**





Sallie Hammond (L) accompanies Vilma Howe (R) to lay the wreath



Saturday evening at the Royal York Hotel, Toronto  
L to R: Vilma & Wilf Howe, Alex & Jon Hammond,  
Ron & Wendy Freeman



Front l to r: Pippa Schmiegelow, Sallie Hammond, Vilma  
Back l to r: Denis Schmiegelow, Jonathan Russell



Lt. Col. John McCrae



The well known poem *"In Flanders Field"* was written by **Dr. John McCrae** - a young Canadian physician from St. Thomas, near London, Ontario, who was sent to the battlefields in Europe during WW1. He took his horse "Bonfire" with him, and frequently travelled on horseback to make his surgical rounds and to reach wounded men on the battlefield. In one letter he wrote to his family he said, *"I have a very deep affection for Bonfire, for we have been through so much together. And some of it had enough."* John McCrae died of pneumonia on 28<sup>th</sup> January 1918. He is buried in France.

The McCrae family in Canada has funded a memorial to Dr. John McCrae which is to be unveiled in Ottawa on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WW1.

A footnote from Sallie:

**Dr. Emerson McCrae**, a relative of Dr. John McCrae, is an ENT surgeon at the Cancer Clinic in London, Ontario, and was a colleague of my husband, Dr. Alex Hammond, and it was Dr. Emerson who told us about the Memorial to his relative.



## PENANG REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY – report by Richard Parry

The Remembrance Service took place at the Cenotaph on the Esplanade in Penang on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> November. It was well organised with speeches by **Vicki Treadwell**, the British High Commissioner (born and educated in Ipoh) and the Penang Chief Minister. The Australian Military were much in evidence and provided the Catafalque Party. The British Military were less obvious, but there were some senior Army and Royal Navy officers. **James Jeremiah** was there and received a round of applause from everyone. The wreath on behalf of the MVG was laid by **Andrew Hwang**. I saw **Andrew** very briefly after the Ceremony but, regrettably, he had to leave almost immediately.

**Cenotaph on the Esplanade.**

**Congregation at the service.**

**MVG poppy wreath**



Wreaths were also laid at the Remembrance Sunday Service in Perth, WA.

**Elizabeth Adamson** writes on behalf of her husband, **Bill Adamson** and the MVG in Australia:

We attended at the State War Memorial on the 11<sup>th</sup> November to commemorate the Centenary of the Armistice of the First World War, and we each laid a wreath. It was a most moving occasion, weather was good and the howitzer in the park firing off at intervals until 10.55 and 10.59 was only a small representation of the noise on that day in 1918. There were 63,000 knitted poppies planted on the surrounding lawns – a very impressive sight. Then we joined the invited crowd to have a lovely lunch in the Reception Centre in Kings Park.

**Andrew Hwang** also laid a wreath on 11<sup>th</sup> November at the Cenotaph in Kuala Lumpur on behalf of the MVG in memory of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

## COMMEMORATION OF THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF HMS PRINCE OF WALES AND HMS REPULSE

Report by Bob Hall

This year at the National Memorial Arboretum, the weather was much more friendly than that of last year. A small group of twenty five consisting of family and friends gathered in the main building with our guest of honour, **Lieutenant Commander David Prowse**, and one of his ratings from the newly commissioned aircraft carrier **HMS Prince of Wales**. At midday, we made the short walk to the Memorial Stone where we held the annual remembrance service in honour of those who were lost at sea and to remember the men who served aboard these two great battleships.

**Revd. Tony Woods** opened the service with a short word which was followed by a lone bugler who played the Last Post. As we stood in silence one could hear the bugler's notes as they reverberated through the trees and eventually faded into the distance. The laying of wreaths followed with accompanied salutes from serving personnel. We all joined together with the Lord's Prayer and the service was brought to a close with the Royal Navy and Royal Marine prayers.

Before we dispersed the customary 'tot of rum' ritual was observed. This, of course, was carried out on a daily basis to all serving crew members aboard their ships, and today we were no exception.

The elderly gentleman in the photograph is Royal Marine **Maurice Pink**. He is the last remaining survivor from the two ships and regularly attends the Memorial Services. The lady on the far right is **Betty del Mar**. Both our fathers served aboard HMS Prince of Wales and were imprisoned in the same Japanese POW camps in Palembang, Sumatra.

Eventually we all retired back to the main building where tea and cakes were most welcome. It was a good day to honour those who gave so much for us.



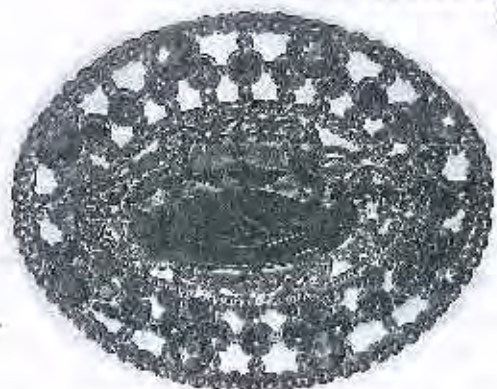
Memorial Stone to HMS Prince of Wales & HMS Repulse.



"Tots of Rum"  
Maurice Pink (L) Bob Hall (C) Betty del Mar (R)



### CHRISTMAS IN CAPTIVITY – a Christmas brooch story By Vilma Howe (nee Stubbs)



For many children, Christmas is the season for gift receiving, happiness and enjoying the bountiful meals at family gatherings. In February 1942, I became a Far East Prisoner of War, a captive of Japan, and began internment life in Muntok and Palembang, Sumatra, and subsequently in Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp, Singapore.

Christmas 1942/43 had both passed with scant rejoicing in our confined environment. Our living space now consisted of boxes or anything that could "mark off" and separate us from the next interned family. 4-6 families shared one section of our atap hut in Sime Road ... we slept on wooden floors.

Christmas day 1944 ... I woke up, raising myself off my floorboard space, careful not to awaken my younger siblings.

Mother was up and hugged me a Merry Christmas ... then silently motioned that I should look at a colourful little packet sitting on top of one of the boxes we used as a table.

Curiously, I approached the object which was wrapped in an old newspaper comic strip page. On tearing it open I stood in shocked disbelief at an ornate jewelled pin, its magnificent blue stones glittering and winking up at me. Since early childhood jewellery had fascinated me, I even treasured trinkets extracted from Christmas crackers! Here now lay this mesmerizing brooch, holding me spellbound.

In silence and with moistened eyes my mother watched my delight as I hugged her tightly and thanked her. The joy reflected in my face was her reward.

I later discovered half of my mother's food ration had been traded to a fellow prisoner as the price for my gift. I will hold and cherish forever this priceless piece of jewellery.

It was a Christmas I'll never forget ...



## THE CHRISTMAS PRESENT – contd.

By Freddy Bloom

*[With acknowledgement to "Leader Magazine," 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1949]*

### **Initiation contd.**

Though there seemed to be a rule that a sentry should be on constant guard, marching up and down, passing each cell about once a minute, this had slackened considerably during the past few weeks and was only in force when higher officers were expected at our lockup. Ironically enough, the head quarters of the Singapore Kempeitai were housed in what had been the Y.M.C.A. This morning the guards were all busy with their own affairs and paid no attention to us.

### **The First Present**

Walter got up and came to me. "Merry Christmas, and here is something the postman left for you." With care he took a little picture out of the Bible and gave it to me. It was the type of highly coloured little holy card that is often given to children in Sunday schools. Perhaps one of Walter's children had put that particular one in that particular Bible. Now he was giving it to me as a Christmas token. I held it carefully; it was very beautiful.

And then our first meal of the day arrived. Choy, the young Chinese conscript, clanked down the corridor with a high stack of tin dishes, the size of small cake tins, and a bucket of rice. He stopped outside our cell, counted the number of inmates, slung a dollop of rice into that many tins, unlocked the small door in the barred wall, and slid all the dishes on the floor. The men sat down in the places they occupied all day. I got up and handed each man a tin. This had been my duty ever since the beginning, when there had been squabbles. There never was very much rice. We ate all meals with our fingers; there were no utensils. When we had finished, we waited for Choy to come back with the tea bucket. Then we lined up at the door while he poured tea (no milk or sugar, of course) into the tins. This led to difficulties and contortions, for many of them were rusted and full of little holes, and we had to try to hold the tins so that the fingers plugged all the offending holes. Since the tea was often boiling hot, my fingers used to blister, and often one of the men would hold the tin for me while I drank.

### **Greetings to Cicely**

One of my cellmates was a Chinese Communist called Tang, who was the head of one of the up-country resistance movements. He was short and squat and, unlike most Chinese, grew a thick stubbly beard. He was the toughest man I ever knew. No matter what the Nips did to him, he never changed his expression and never made a sound. When anybody tried to nurse him, he just shook his head and said, "Tidapa." Malay for "Never mind." He spoke no English. Sometimes I thought that I would rather be a white woman in Japanese hands than a Japanese in Tang's hands. He was tough ... and he was always the first one up to hold my tin when the tea was hot and he would tilt it carefully like a mother feeding her child.

Remembering Christmas, 1943, there is a great deal of sentiment but no sentimentality. We were a group of extremely mixed people sharing a most unpleasant experience. Some showed up better than others. As far as I personally was concerned, there was not a man, European, Indian, Chinese, Eurasian or Malay who was not thoughtful and kind and they had a great deal more than my presence to think about.

That particular breakfast differed from the others in one respect. Three or four cells down was Cicely, another woman and a good friend. They had brought her in the day after me. We had seen each other on one or two occasions since then. As far as we knew, we were the only women who had been taken from Changi Camp. While Choy poured out my tea, I whispered, "Christmas greetings to the other lady." He did not bat an eyelid. Later, when he collected the empty tins he growled, "She say you too."

I was just going to the w.c. to wash my hair when there were heavy footsteps in the outer office. Quickly we all sat down in a straight row facing the bars, knees bent, feet tucked in, and waited. We spent at least 14 hours a day in that position. To straighten your legs was considered very bad form. And so we sat on Christmas Day as we had sat for weeks before silently, all in a neat row, looking through the bars into the corridor, and then through another set of bars into the cell opposite, where a similar row of miserable beings faced us. The thing to do was to wriggle into a position where the gap between one's bars coincided with the gap of the person opposite and one had a clear, if not large, view for signalling.

### **Sign Conversations**

Opposite me sat Perry. We had known each other before the war in Penang, where we had played games in the same club, danced at the same hotels, and been invited to the same cocktail parties. The next time we saw each other was through the gap in the bars. It did not take us long to work out an inconspicuous sign language and we



spent the tedious hours having long conversations. We also passed on information about what had happened at the various interrogations.

Christmas morning we wished each other all the best and while the sentries marched up and down we made rude remarks about them. Suddenly the noise in the outer office increased. Three of the Nip bigshots stamped down the corridor, followed by a drip of slouching, arrogant interpreters. They looked at us the way a person looks at a harmless beetle before stepping on it. They called out a few names in front of cells further down, then turned round and stopped at our cell. We looked into space, our hearts pounded, there did not seem enough air to go round. They called Dr. Choo's name and turned to the cell opposite, where they called for Perry and two Chinese. The rest of us relaxed.

Cell doors were opened and those who were due for questioning got out and put on their shoes. Perry held on to the bar in front of me while he put someone else's *trompahs* on his swollen feet. He wiggled his fingers at me and before he left he winked.

We continued to sit, looking straight ahead. Only those who had been badly beaten and tortured were allowed the luxury of lying down. When the Japs were working on a man, he never got much rest.

I wondered about Perry, about Dr. Choo. We had heard some cars leave. That meant some of the prisoners were being taken to the Y.M. for questioning. That was bad for they were very thorough. Others were being questioned here. The noises that went with questioning were too familiar by now. It is almost impossible to identify voices under such conditions, and yet one cannot stop trying.

We sat until the second meal, just like the first, was brought round. We put a tin of rice aside for Dr. Choo, and it was eyed greedily, for when a man has been questioned he has either been given food or he is in no condition to eat. In either case the cell may share his ration.

#### **Perry Comes Back**

After "lunch," we sat down again. I wanted to wash my hair, but thought it better to do nothing until the bigshots had left. After all, it had not been washed for ten weeks; Boxing day would really do as well as Christmas. We sat. A couple of people from cells farther down were brought back. They did not look too bad. We sat some more. A scuffle outside and two interpreters dragged an unconscious figure down the corridor. We could not be sure, but he seemed to be Chinese. We sat some more.

Hard to say what time it was when Perry came back. He seemed a bit stiff and his face was bruised, but not too bad. He did not look at me, but as he bent down to take off his shoes, he held on the bar nearest me. As he bent, his hand slowly came down the bar. When he eventually let go and turned to enter his cell, there was a tiny parcel on the floor in front of me.

It was not until a good deal later, when most of the prisoners, including the still silent Dr. Choo, had returned and the Japanese officers from headquarters had left, that I could examine the parcel. It was a single sheet of toilet paper, and inside was a sliver of real soap. They had allowed Perry to wash up after his interview, and he had stolen a Christmas gift for me.

Before the third and last rice meal of the day, I took my precious gift and, with great ceremony, washed my hair, with soap in the w.c., and a Eurasian lad lent me his shirt to dry it. And then, of course, there was Mahinder's comb ...

Many years have passed since then. Most of the people who were in that prison died. I was lucky. We are back in London and since then have had two wonderful babies. Looking back to Christmas, 1943, I remember that was the day I washed my hair and Walter gave me a holy picture.



*GIFT: "As he bent, his hand slowly came down the bar . . ."*

*GIFT: "As he bent, his hand slowly came down the bar...."*

#### **INFORMATION and COMMENTS**

We thank Anne Hinam for her information about the date of the dedication of the MCS Memorial in St. Andrew's Cathedral. (See P.4. A.K.56.) Anne writes:

"The MCS Plaque in St. Andrew's Cathedral was dedicated at a service on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1989. Jean (Goyder, Anne's sister) has a copy of the Order of Service which was sent to our mother. I have a copy of the address given by Sir Percy McNeice at the service, which I read at the V-J Day Service in 2014, and on which I had conveniently noted the date.

[Ed: Sir Percy's son Terry McNeice has produced a book, "*Prisoner under the Sun*" based on Sir Percy's memoirs.]



David Brent writes from Sydney, Australia:

"May I point out a small matter re: the address by Peter Tinley at the Merdeka Service of Remembrance on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018:

The Malayan Emergency was won mainly by innovative strategies [compared with the Americans' conventional strategies in Vietnam] and superb hard-won intelligence [compared with the overall failure in intelligence by the Americans in Vietnam] both of which guided the gallant police and military units committed in battle in every corner of Malaya until the final defeat of the Communist forces which permitted the welcome Merdeka for Malaya and then Singapore."

[Ed: Peter Tinley's address was included as a supplement with A.K. 56.]

Former MVG member **Chung Chee Min** has been in correspondence with **Helen Ely** from the Ipswich War Memorial in Christchurch Park, concerning information given on the Victoria Institute (K.L.) website about **Eric Wilfred Reeve** (the Editor's father). The information is given on the following sites:

<https://www.ipswichwarmemorial.co.uk>

and the FB site:

<https://www.facebook.com/ipswich-War-Memorial-Cenotaph-779067228815027/>

**Chee Min** went on to write:

I attended the Armistice Day ceremonies at Vancouver downtown on November 11<sup>th</sup>. It was a moving ceremony. In July 2014, I was at Normandy paying my respects to the **Talalla** brothers who had fought in WW2. I accompanied the surviving brothers of **Henry** and **Cyril Talalla** and their families and was honoured to pay my respects at the grave of **Henry Talalla**. My eldest son accompanied me and recorded the events here. (You can get a few glimpses of me in it!)

<https://vimeo/141022630>

[Ed: If you have a few moments to sit down and watch this video, it is well worth it. **Henry Talalla's** grave is on French farmland, and well maintained by the family who own the land.]

#### **AN INTERVIEW WITH Mr. LAURENCE CHARLES HURNDELL RNZN (Retd)**

**in February 1995, at his home in Canterbury, New Zealand**

***[With acknowledgement to Laurence Hurdell's family and to the New Zealand Navy who hold this interview in their archives.]***

**Now, Laurie, most of those other numbers, were they reasonably equally divided between Australians and British?**

No, there were quite a few Australians, there were quite a few English Army and Air Force personnel and the rest were Dutch.

**Quite a lot of Dutch?**

Yes, there were quite a lot of Dutch Army and Dutch civilians. We didn't get on too well with the Dutch to start with. Some of the civilians were a bit standoffish and arrogant. The Dutch Army ordinary soldier was pretty good. We got on well with them. The British were Navy, Air Force and Army personnel, a few off my own ship, only a few, a few off the **Dragonfly** and three or four off the **Prince of Wales** and some off the **Repulse**. They were drafted to other ships and they finished up in the prison camp. Quite a few Air Force and Army personnel – they were the British. We had one hut allotted to us. The Aussies had one hut to themselves and two New Zealanders in the hut with the Aussies, **Ivan Pardoe** and **Noel Betley** and the rest were Dutch. We had a Hospital hut and the cookhouse and we built a machine shop in this particular camp. The equipment we stole and brought back to the camp. They were pretty lenient for a start on theft, they didn't worry too much about it, we built up this little workshop. We had a drill press and that type of thing that the Dutchmen used to use. The time there was very boring when we didn't have any work parties. There was a hut for the officers who organised art and crafts. There was always a wood cutting party which went out to cut wood for the galley and they would bring back mangrove swamp wood which was ideal for carving. When it was polished up it was a brilliant red. It was like mahogany and we used to make smoking pipes, and we would make the stems out of buffalo horn. That was in the first 12 months and then things really got tough.

**After about 12 months?**

After 12 months they got tough.

**This is, say, March '43 things started to get pretty rough did they?**

February '43 they started to get very rough. We were very restricted to what we could do.

**Work much the same?**

Work was much the same, we were detailed off for a working party and there would be a party for the gardens and a party for different workshops. One of the jobs they would give us, when we went out to the machine shop to work, they would give you a hammer and a great box of bent nails and you had to straighten nails out. How your fingernails disappeared. Our fingers were badly bruised trying to straighten these blasted nails. That was the sort of job we were doing at that stage. I will never forget straightening nails. We were also filling in bomb holes in the beginning on Medan Airport. The Dutch had bombed the airfield before surrender and we got rocks out of the river bed and filled these bomb holes in so the Jap planes could get down.



**Laurie could you get any news at all?**

No, we didn't get any news until this British Air Force guy, he was a radio expert. I don't know how they did it, they raided empty Dutch houses, in the local Dutch residential area where we used to go to work there. They managed to build up a radio in the hut and **Guy McLeod** used to operate it. He used to sit in the rafters of the hut and operate this radio. He spoke fluent Malay and the Japs used to issue us with a local newspaper and **Guy** would sit in the hut and pretend to read the newspaper to us, he was giving us the news and we got that for the first year we knew what was happening.

**Where did the power come for the radio or was it battery?**

No. **Guy** tapped the power in the hut, there was electric light in the hut and he used to sit in the rafters with this radio. He was sitting there one night and the Japs walked in below him and they came in one door and walked out the other, never spotted him, never even looked up or otherwise they would have shot him.

**Yes?**

But they never found that radio, they knew there was a radio, but they never found it.

There was a bit of lawn outside this hut and guys used to put their bedding out, those that had any bedding. I made up a little mattress out of a bit of canvas and kapok, we used to pull the seeds out of kapok and stuff it.

(end of Tape 1)

(beginning of Tape 2)

**Guy** used to put his bedding out on the area of grass and he used to wrap the radio in his pillow. The Japs conducted searches, you had to line up outside, strip off and they would search your clothing and they searched the whole hut. They never found the radio, we knew they were looking for it, but they never ever searched the bedding out on the grass.

**How amazing!**

**You picked up bits of news from the outside world?**

We picked up a bit of news from the outside world like that.

**Do you remember any of the particular bits of news coming through?**

No, I can't. He used to read it out. Some of the Americans in the Pacific, some of the battles there, they were mentioned I can remember that. We never knew anything about the invasion of Europe.

**No it would be mainly Pacific news I suppose?**

Yes, the one station he was able to get through, it was just like a crystal set. Anyhow, I don't know what happened to that radio. He got rid of it because we went up north then.

**You went up north about March '44 was it you were telling me?**

It was about the end of '42 as I recall, things were getting pretty tough then and they wanted prisoners to build this road in Atcheh (sic) country. This is where the rebel Malay group were stationed in North Sumatra. We were transported up there two days journey by truck and a days walking, no three days walking, we had to walk a hundred miles.

**You would be exhausted by the end of that?**

Yes, we got up to the foot of this mountain. It was a pretty primitive life, there was a little primitive Malay village and as I told you we slept in the open at night and when it rained like hell we slept in this little creek as water was trickling past. We started to lose guys then. We lost one or two back in Medan. When we were in Medan the first year or so at the camp when we lost guys, the Japs would provide a firing party. That happened once or twice and then we never saw that again. People were drafted and I happened to get that draft to North Sumatra with **Noel Betley** and **Ivan Pardoe**. **Charlie Hood** didn't and of course was killed, but **Guy McLeod** got it as well. The rest left behind in Medan were subsequently put aboard a ship to transport to Singapore to Changi and that ship was hit by torpedo from a British sub in the Malacca Straits and we lost most of the guys including **Charlie Hood**. Most of the Navy guys were killed. A few of the Air Force guys got away, some of the Aussies got away and they were floundering around in the water and of course they were picked up by Jap ships and they eventually ended up in Changi. They were shipped back to us later on. We went up to this main camp up in Atcheh (sic) land to build this road across the mountain. The food at that stage was getting pretty grim. We were starting to get hungry and we were looking for food wherever we could get it. We never stole off each other, but we stole off the Malays and Japs anything we could lay our hands on we would grab. Of course the garden had gone when we transferred from Medan. We went up to this camp in Atcheh land. I can't remember if it was a village or a town we went through to walk from that town to the road head which, as I said before, was about a hundred miles. The Dutch were trying to carry packs but they got too exhausted and they threw them away. I remember they provided us with an animal to take with us for food and we had this thing on ropes tied round its neck and around its horns and the guys behind pushing it. We did that for a day and the second day the animal got a bit fractious. He wasn't being fed and so we decided we had better knock him off. The Japs wouldn't let us kill him ourselves and so they got a Malay in and this is the cruellest thing I have ever witnessed. I was supposed to kill the thing because I had butchering experience but nobody had knives and the Japs brought these Malay guys in. They turned this poor animal on its back and they sat on it, one each, four of them held the legs, another held the head and the headman had this great parang and he sawed through its throat like that. This poor struggling animal, the cruelty of it just left us gasping, but it didn't stop us eating it. It was in a stew, you couldn't fry steaks or anything like that, everything had to go in a stew and you poured the stew over the rice.



### **How many on that march, Laurie?**

There must have been about 1500 of us. We got up there and eventually made camp on a paddy field. We had to build our own huts and we built lean-tos like this. I borrowed a parang and cut some ferns to make bedding up off the ground to keep off the damp. A lot of guys, particularly the English had no idea of how to do that sort of thing until I showed them. They used to cut the scrub, bracken fern and we used to sleep on that, no other cover, you just lay your head on it. Then we were sent to work building this road. We had to travel through a native village. First of all we had to fell all the trees and one tree I can well remember was a huge massive rubber tree and there would be three guys in the party, one with an axe and two with a cross saw and we would fell these trees on both sides to let the sun in. It used to rain like blazes up there. I remember this rubber tree trying to saw through it and the saw would just jamb. A Jap officer came along and he could see that we were in trouble and so he took the axe and he waded into this tree just as a tropical monsoon hit. I had never seen anything like it and he felled the tree and he got soaking wet himself.

### **He kept going?**

It was spread all over the place and then we had to scrape all the mud off the road and get down to bare earth. Then they opened up a quarry where we had to blast out white marble-like rock. First of all they tried to do it themselves, but they had no idea at all. They would feed sticks of gelignite into a hole and just a cloud of dust would go up. This English Sergeant said, "No! You don't do it that way," and so they gave him the job and he knew how to use explosives. He used to blast this rock out and then we would break it up into small pieces the size of your hand and then there would be a gang carrying it up the road in baskets, placing it piece by piece and another gang tapping it down with a large log of wood fitted with handles. We worked for ten months on that job building that road so that trucks could get up, what the hell it was for I don't know. Japanese Army trucks travelled up and down with equipment. Eventually they said we are going back to Medan. We walked back one night in the middle of the night to this village a hundred miles and we stopped the night in the cinema. As we got back the Japs had shot a wild pig. We cooked it up and we had that and we had a nice sleep. That's when I told you the Korean guards were sleeping like little yellow pigs all over each other at this stage and then we were transported in trucks back to Medan where we had a few days rest there.

### **Now this is at what stage now, Laurie, what date are we now?**

We were way back towards the end of '44, it would have been about October '44. We were then transferred down on trucks to this branch line. We had to build a branch line on the railway up to a coal mine and we had to build this viaduct across a great ravine. We were on that job for a few months when we built this viaduct. We had the same Japanese engineers that were on the Burma rail road, the Burma rail road was finished by then.

### **Are you saying that this railway viaduct was built with no nails?**

No nails, logs slotted into each other.

### **Whose ingenuity was that?**

That was Japanese ingenuity. It was really amazing how they did it. They had the right angles and everything and they built this thing up. It was a big curved viaduct. It was slave labour, we did everything with ropes and that type of thing. We would improvise pulleys. We would build a few pulleys and haul them up. There was a base then, what they called stanchions, built up on logs, like a tier after tier, then we would raise the logs around the top. They went round in a curve and then we had decking placed on that. The Japs brought along decking and placed that and then we put the rails on top of that. There were no sides. We just built the railway up through the mud and through the slush and this is where we lost a lot of guys. Ivan Pardoe died up there.

### **You were saying that there was a particular individual who used to walk down the railway?**

He used to go up on the viaduct and try and drop his hammer on us.

### **Tell us about that particular brute?**

He was a Japanese Sergeant, a very dark fellow. We used to call him the gorilla. He used to strut out along the top of the viaduct, and have a hammer in his hand. If a prisoner of war was working below him, he would try and drop his hammer onto him from a great height. Fortunately, it never hit anybody, because everybody was watching and yelling, "Look out," and he would continue to do this for quite a while. I don't know what happened to him in the finish. We finished that viaduct and we were still in the same camp. They had built huts for us, built a latrine and we built a washstand down by the stream and that's where we saw our first tiger. We were in tiger country. I walked down there one day and everybody got a bit excited and said, "Look at this," and there was a big paw mark in the sand, the tiger had come down to drink.

### **You never saw one?**

Never saw one. We saw tons of monkeys and other wild animals like that. The Gibbons used to drive us mad.

### **The Gibbons are the long tailed monkeys are they?**

Yes, they swing from branch to branch. They would set up a chorus and the leader would go, "Boom, boom, boom," and then the whole chorus would start, and this would last half an hour in the middle of the night. It used to drive us crazy, but I guess it was one of those things.

### **What was your next task then?**

Our next task we were on the railway properly. We built the railway across Sumatra, right across the centre. It was over two hundred miles of railway.

[To be continued in April 2019.]



## THE JAPANESE CONQUEST OF MALAYA – Part 3 – by MARK MORRISON

### MONSOON

The attack was launched by the enemy in the early part of the monsoon season. The official view seems to have been that the intensity of the monsoon weather would mitigate against any enemy landings along the east coast of Malaya or southern Thailand and would also make land operations much more difficult for an invader. One eminent personage is believed to have gone on leave to Australia about November 1941 on an assurance given by high authority that an invasion of the mainland could not be expected until the end of the monsoon season. The monsoon season of 1939-1940 was remarkably mild. The season of 1940-1941 was also mild. The weather of November 1941 disclosed no indication of the return of the fierce seasonal weather experienced in the years prior to the year 1939. Even a normal monsoon season has its mild periods during which no difficulty is experienced in landing from small craft.

### AIRFIELDS AND AIRCRAFT

Malaya was well provided with airfields, but not with aircraft. Air Marshall Sir Robert Brooke-Popham is reported to have stated that he did not have the air strength that he desired. An air base requires, not only airfields, but planes for defence and offence, troops for defence and ground defences, adequate supplies, and means of communication to ensure supplies. The airfields along the peninsula were all constructed on a grand and expensive scale. The comfort of officers and ground staff was well provided for. Some of these airfields were in course of completion when Malaya was attacked. Possible explanations for their construction was their use as bases for some grand offensive plan against territories outside Malaya, to give serial protection to naval vessels patrolling the seas in the vicinity of the bases, and to give a greater reconnaissance area.

If peace had continued, it may have been that the deficiencies of the organisation for air control would have been rectified before the close of the monsoon period. At the time of the Japanese attack, these airfields as air bases were unbalanced. None of them had adequate fighter protection for defensive purposes and very few of them had sufficient strength in bombers for offensive purposes. In general, their ground defences were insufficient to meet any substantial land attack. The early capture of the northern airfields and their hurried repair enabled the enemy, with its superiority in aircraft, to establish substantial bases out of these airfields for the support of the advance southward. Later, with the capture of the Kuantan, Kuala Lumpur, Klang and Klang aerodromes, the Japanese were able to base a very large force of aircraft at no great distance from Singapore.

The air superiority of the enemy played an important but not dominating part in the capture of the peninsula. The jungle and secondary jungle afforded complete cover against aircraft detection. Rubber estates of mature trees also afforded similar cover. Transport was restricted to the roads. Most roads were narrow and windy and it required excellent marksmanship and low flying to obtain good results. Restriction of transport to the roads and the immediate vicinity of the roads caused concentration of enemy air activity to these areas. That the enemy possessed undisputed air control, the disadvantages to the defence were immense. In some of the road approaches to the northern defence lines, the destruction of vehicles at various points along the narrow roads bordered by jungle created congestion and confusion. This prevented supplies being sent up and when the line retreated many of the vehicles were left to the enemy.

Aircraft rendered great assistance in overcoming any immediate opposition which could be located by the enemy. In support of landing from small craft, it kept the seas free of Imperial Naval Craft. Dive bombing played havoc with nerves and affected morale. The understanding between the enemy's land forces and air forces was perfect and the communication of information expeditious. This was in striking contrast with the activities of the Imperial Air Forces which were apparently under a command independent from the command of the land forces. Infantry tactics of the enemy were designed to induce the British to disclose their positions and when such tactics met with success, the air arm of the enemy immediately responded. In addition to numerical superiority in aircraft, the Japanese possessed superiority in machine. The fighter aircraft mainly used by the enemy was the Navy O, a cheaply constructed machine but faster, more manoeuvrable, with higher ceiling and greater firing power than any fighter used by the British. The R.A.F. and R.A.A.F., whether officially or unofficially, had been led to believe that the Japanese fighters were inferior to their own. They had never been advised that the Japanese were employing this fast and manoeuvrable fighter. Apparently, information had not been received by the intelligence department or, if received, had not been properly distributed.

### TANKS

The Imperial Forces did not employ tanks. The Japanese employed tanks, sometimes with success and sometimes without success. There had never been any question as to whether tanks could be used in Malaya; the question had been whether the use of tanks was justified by the nature of the country. Tanks cannot operate in jungle, and their freedom of movement would necessarily be restricted to the roads and developed areas. They could be used, and were used with success, to break through defence lines which had no immediate artillery support. They were mostly used on roads and had to stand the hazards of tank traps, anti-tank guns and small artillery under the perfect cover of the jungle bordering the roads. Improvised tank traps and ambushes in the countryside providing such opportunities, were rarely successful. The use of tanks by the Japanese was justified, not by the nature of the country but by the nature of the poor defences of the country.

### TROOPS AND THEIR EQUIPMENT

The Japanese had the advantage of employing troops who had been used to active service conditions in China for some years. Their land forces had learnt from bitter experience how the Chinese lightly armed guerrillas could penetrate defence lines. Their Air Force had had years of bombing and target practice in China. The army leaders had the advantage of assistance from German strategists and technicians. Malaya, physically, differs considerably from China. It resembles in many respects some parts of Indo-China, which the Japanese had previously occupied. The ability with which the Japanese



penetrated the jungle and made use of all cover afforded, and their general familiarity with conditions, disclosed that the troops employed had received special training for this type of warfare. Troops of the class employed were generally recruited from the hardy peasants and, from infancy, by Imperial Japanese policy, their training was to regard death in the service of the Emperor as the greatest honour that could befall any Japanese subject.

Jungle operations require dexterity of movement and that physical exertion should not be encumbered. The Japanese dress and equipment was simple and intelligent. Most of the troops engaged were dressed with singlet and shorts and rubber soled shoes. This dress was similar to that worn by many of the Chinese inhabitants of Malaya. Infiltration troops operated in small units of four or five persons; one member carrying a sub-machine gun of small calibre and the remainder carrying ammunition in suitable containers. A suitable knife to cut away tendrils and vegetation and small rope equipment as an aid in tree climbing was also carried by one or more members of the unit.

Main column troops were also lightly equipped. The tanks used were mostly very light tanks but they had a number of medium tanks. The artillery used was mainly mortars. These mortars were light but deadly in accuracy and could be whisked from one position to another on the backs of troops.

Rice is the staple diet of the Japanese, as it is of the great majority of the inhabitants of Malaya. The acquisition of territory brought with it large supplies of food and reduced transport requirements. Japanese troops are frugal and carry very little food with them.

The Imperial Forces, British, Australian and Indian, were all too heavily equipped for dexterous movement in the jungle or rough country. The deadly, accurate and long range Bren gun was not suitable for the jungle. A sub-machine gun can quickly spray an area at short range and is ideal for quick and effective action. The 'tommy' guns carried were far too few. Opportunities for long range shooting were rare and the rifle carried was heavy and unsuitable. Diet varied according to the country of origin of the forces. Most foodstuffs had to be imported and a complicated transport and supply system was entailed.

Imperial Forces had large supplies of food, oil, ammunition, Bren gun carriers, mechanical transport, field artillery, mortars and armoured cars. They had large staff cars but relatively few troops who were combatant troops. In addition, the military had the use of trains and their leaders the power of requisition.

#### **SCORCHED EARTH**

One of the most lamentable features of the campaign was the failure of the civil and military authorities to organise any proper system to prevent local resources of military value being acquired by the enemy, and to carry away from the threatened areas goods likely to be of great value to the enemy or the allies or the defence of Malaya.

The territories occupied by the enemy in the first two weeks of the campaign, brought with them most of the enormous available resources of those territories. Destruction, when effected, was in most cases individual or due to enterprise. At Dungun and Kemaman, ports of Trengganu for the peacetime export of iron ore to Japan, official attempts were made to destroy lighters and steam launches, but the attempts were hasty and not successful. The early departure of the European officials from Trengganu for purposes of safety, and the lack of persons skilled in demolition mitigated against successful destruction. At Kemaman a European civilian, of his own initiative and with local assistance, effected destruction of lighters, launches and small craft but much still remained to fall into enemy hands.

The failure of the authorities at Penang to prevent the enormous resources of military value falling into the hands of the enemy directed the attention of the whole of Malaya to the consequences of such failure. Determination was expressed by the highest civil and military authorities in Singapore that precautions would be taken in future to prevent such a recurrence. Instructions were given and the so-called "scorched earth policy" put into force. Schemes for destruction were hastily prepared. Mining machinery was destroyed, dredges sunk, oil dumps blown up, rubber fired, river and sea craft either sunk or brought south.

These improvised schemes depended for their success on the intelligence of their authors, the ability of the persons given power to carry out the schemes and the co-operation of the civilian population. Throughout the whole campaign, civil law was never suspended to give way to military authority having power to obtain results by direct measures. The so-called "Martial Law" introduced on the 31<sup>st</sup> December was merely an augmentation of Civil authority. The appointment of **Brigadier Simson** as Director General of Civil Defence merely unified control and centralised civil and defence organisations under one authority. The law was still the cumbrous civil law with formality of administration reduced. Civil law supplemented by defence regulations governed requisition, acquisition and destruction. Administration was often by civil servants without knowledge of military requirements or military officials without knowledge of the reasonable requirements of the situation. Private interests questioned powers and asserted rights. The rapid advance of the enemy necessitated the co-operation of owners. Conflict between public and private interests or between duty to the State and duty to an absent employer often delayed or defeated destruction. The extreme optimism of the population militated against destruction of irreplaceable goods or machinery when in the public view any enemy possession would be of a temporary nature only. Requisition often received protest and was invariably followed by correspondence. In many cases motor vehicles were requisitioned for military departments when the vehicles under civil ownership were engaged in essential military works.

The unintelligent application of "scorched earth" is well illustrated by the experiences of the manager of a very large rubber estate near the Straits of Johore. Large quantities of rubber had been gathered and required preparation and shipment. The enemy was not within 70 miles of the estate. On the grounds of possible fifth column activities, the whole of the Asiatic regular staff was arrested. The estate had previously been Japanese owned and all regular employees were under suspicion. The manager obtained assistance and proceeded with the preparation of the rubber. After the defence lines in Johore collapsed, military arrived at the estate and destroyed machinery. The manager eventually, by improvisation, had his rubber ready for shipment and then discovered that his lighters for the transport of the rubber to Singapore had been recently destroyed. After



considerable delay, other lighters were obtained. Whilst the rubber was being placed on the lighters, news was received that the Japanese were approaching the estate. The manager succeeded in setting fire to the rubber and the lighters and then effected his own escape.

Even in the case of areas and installations under direct military control, destruction appeared unorganised and was very often incomplete. Transport confusion caused by road blockages due to bombing or road blocks, and the acquisition of control over bridges by enemy troops infiltrating to the rear of positions, often caused abandonment of vehicles and equipment, complete or in a repairable state. Even in the case of aerodromes, aircraft on occasions had to be sent to bomb installations after evacuation. And it is believed that on at least one occasion, aircraft were left which the enemy was able to repair. Towards the close of the fighting, the enemy was dropping British bombs, firing British shells from British guns, using British transport, and using railway facilities for the mounting of their guns.

#### **FIFTH COLUMN ACTIVITIES**

Attempts have been made to explain away the defeat by instancing the active assistance received by the enemy from local inhabitants. Instances have been grossly exaggerated. Large numbers of Chinese, Malays and Indians were often observed in the jungle in the vicinity of conflict, but their presence was not due to any desire to assist the enemy, but to a desire to get away from the enemy and his bombing.

The Japanese, through their peacetime contacts with the people had undoubtedly built up an espionage system but it is believed that those of the local inhabitants that were desirous to help the enemy were very few in number. It was due to their espionage organisation that the Japanese received so much information and assistance during the campaign and not to the general bewildered Asiatic population. In all states the Japanese had a few ready helpers, mostly amongst Malays. A distinction must be drawn between assistance which was readily given, and assistance which was indirectly enforced, of which the enemy was in a position to demand. The fact that assistance was given by Asiatics to enable the enemy to locate jungle paths, does not prove that such assistance was willingly given. In Trengganu, Malay police released Japanese from internment and assisted them to obtain arms. They did this only after the British officials had left the state and had left the Malays without protection to await the enemy forces. Malays possess charm but are undependable. If the British required information and assistance, the Malay would give such information and assistance, and if the Japanese required information and assistance, the Malay would give such information and assistance without appreciation of the treason involved. Illustrative of the degree of organisation of enemy espionage, was the location in Singapore just prior to the landing of secret broadcasting sets pouring out military information in code.

The regular bombing of large towns and some of the villages, and lack of protection caused many Chinese, Malays and Indians to seek refuge in the jungle. Particularly this was so when the defence lines were in the vicinity of these towns and villages. Few of the troops who had been brought into Malaya from Great Britain, India and Australia were able to distinguish between Malay, Chinese and Japanese. Japanese units, on occasions, assumed the dress of the Malay. The uniform of many of the Japanese resembled the dress of the Chinese coolie. In many cases, no risks were taken and it is believed that many loyal Chinese and Malays, seen or found in the jungle during operations, were shot by the Imperial Forces.

#### **THE BATTLE OF SINGAPORE**

On the 31<sup>st</sup> January, after the withdrawal of all effective Imperial units from the peninsular, engineers breached the Singapore-Johore Causeway; the only link between the Island of Singapore and the mainland. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, Singapore guns, aimed at Japanese communications, hurled their first big shells. The days following saw a continuation of this heavy firing. On the 4<sup>th</sup> February, the Japanese replied and thereafter artillery fighting continued, mostly taking place during the daytime. Most artillery fire from the Island was indirect in the early stages, and extraordinary precautions appear to have been taken to prevent any possible observation of artillery or other positions along the Straits of Johore.

The Japanese had been steadily advancing towards Singapore since the 8<sup>th</sup> December, but no permanent defence positions had been prepared along the Straits of Johore. In view of the enormous resources of men and materials in Singapore, the failure to prepare defence positions along the Straits of Johore appears most difficult to justify.

In the latter part of January, considerable reinforcements arrived, mainly from Great Britain. Together with the troops withdrawn from the mainland, the strength of the forces on Singapore must have been at least 70,000. About fifty Hurricane fighter aircraft had also arrived. Despite a long series of retreats and defeats and the dominating superiority of the enemy in the air, the presence of these much lauded fighter aircraft, before their use, reinforced the optimism still held by a somewhat bewildered public.

After the withdrawal from Johore, bombing raids on Singapore were intensified. The enemy concentrated on objects of military value. They plastered aerodromes, bombing shipping, fired oil dumps and dropped leaflets. On occasions, bombs were dropped on crowded residential areas and this affected morale. Aerodromes became unusable. Many Hurricanes were destroyed on the ground; others in the air. Their performance did not come up to expectation. Bombers and most of the fighters were sent to operate from bases in Sumatra. Hurried attempts were made to create strips for the few fighters retained.

The Australian forces were allocated positions about the 4<sup>th</sup> February. They had seven battalions and auxiliary troops. Recently arrived reinforcements had been absorbed and the battalions brought up to full strength. The front allotted them, ranged from the causeway westward along the straits for a distance of seven miles to Sungei Berih. Indian troops were given positions on the left of the Australian forces. The front along the straits, eastward of the causeway, was defended by English and Indian troops. This front extended to the strongly fortified position at Changi, at the eastern entrance of the Straits. Along the seaward coasts from east to west there were strongly prepared positions manned by local troops and troops from Great Britain and India. Compulsory evacuation of civilian inhabitants had been effected before the forces took up their positions along the Straits of Johore.



From the time of taking up their positions, the Australians were subjected to constant attack from enemy aircraft. Much of the area bordering the Straits of Johore is swampy, and resort in many cases had to be made to higher ground to create defence positions. These positions took the form of a series of slit trenches. The night positions were on the seaward slopes of undulations and day positions on the reverse slopes. With the exception of a barbed wire entanglement extending for about half a mile, the area occupied by the Australians was entirely devoid of any created defence obstruction. Their front was indented by a number of mangrove creeks. No field of fire was cleared at any time on any of these creeks or on any other part of the foreshore. Towards the right, the Australian front was intercepted by the River Kranji. This river had no boom defences.

The shore of the front allotted to the Australians was very lightly held. Less than 1,000 men were spread along the most vulnerable section of five miles. Support was provided in depth. An equal number of troops were in positions about half an mile to the rear of the forward troops. Artillery was scattered from  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 2 miles back from the foreshore. Troops were in the rear of these artillery positions. The headquarters of the colonel of one battalion was near the road and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the foreshore. The forward troops were deployed in platoons. Communications between the platoons along the front was by runner and between the forward troops and field headquarters by telephone.

On the first and second nights after taking up positions, Australian patrols crossed the Straits and showing considerable initiative, penetrated some distance along roads and the railway behind the town of Johore Bahru. One party brought back the first news of a balloon which was being prepared by the Japanese. Its exact location was given to the command but no apparent attempt was made to shell it. It was later sent into the air for observation. Another patrol party located a gun, believed to be a 6 inch weapon taken from the Penang defences. This was on a railway mounting. Here again, the exact position was established but, although within range, no attempt was made to shell it.

Japanese tactics on the peninsular were designed to induce disclosure of defence positions. In Singapore the Command or the local commanders, were apparently determined that their advance artillery and other positions would not be disclosed. Australian 25-pounder batteries were posted within easy range of the town of Johore Bahru. The first sight gained of the Japanese by forward troops was when several lorry loads of their troops, in captured vehicles, drove along the sea front to the Johore end of the Causeway. Reports were made and guns laid on the targets. Instructions were received to hold fire as it was not desirable to give away positions. Later the same day, several car loads of Japanese officers drove down to the sea front; maps or papers were produced and the foreshore or Causeway surveyed through field glasses. This was in clear view of forward posts, and again guns were laid, but orders were given that the gunners were on no account to fire. During the night streams of lorries drove along the sea front showing lights. The indications were that a considerable amount of material was being taken to the Johore end of the Causeway. Again the batteries were forbidden to fire. Later the Japanese established observation posts on the Government Offices, a tall building on a hill possessing commanding views along the Straits and over Singapore Island. Another observation post was established on a water tower which stood on a hill 233 feet high. None of these observation posts was shelled. Even when the Japanese batteries were seen taking up positions no fire was permitted from forward positions. Despite these extraordinary precautions, the forward gun positions must have been observed as they were later subjected to intense artillery fire from the enemy guns in addition to dive bombing and a number of pieces were put out of action. Not until the Japanese had established ascendancy were the batteries allowed to retaliate. Meanwhile, some miles to the west, the Japanese set up mortar batteries east and west of Bukit Setajam, a hill 146 feet high. These operations were observed by Australian batteries; an anti-tank unit with 75s and two-pounders. They were instructed to reserve their fire for craft afloat and ignore any operations on shore.

On the morning of Sunday, the 8<sup>th</sup> February, the Japanese were established on points of vantage along the north shore of the Straits and subjected the Singapore line to concentrated fire. This was particularly intense along the front held by the Australians. Against this front the artillery used was mainly, if not entirely, mortar. For sixteen hours on Sunday this mortar fire was maintained. During this period, practically all field telephone lines connecting the frontal platoons with field headquarters were cut. Some communication was still maintained by runner but the intensity of the mortar barrage rendered this very unreliable. By nightfall, practically all anti-tank batteries had been knocked out either by mortars or dive bombing. The gun crews in their slit trenches suffered heavily but remained in their positions. Most disadvantageous to the defence in this area was the destruction of all their searchlights.

The Japanese landed on the Island after nightfall. Landing took place along the Kranji Estuary and west of the estuary to Pasir Labir, a distance of about four miles. The first sight of the invading Japanese troops was made by some of the Australian troops in forward positions. They first saw swimmers, who had crossed the straits, fix torch lights to the mouths of creeks for guidance of small craft. Speedy small craft arrived and bodies of Japanese troops quickly landed and began to infiltrate behind forward positions. The Japanese mortar barrage was continuous and the Japanese must have sustained many casualties from their own fire. The forward defending troops fired into the invaders and sent up Very lights but there was no response from the artillery in the rear. No flares were used in the straits. The survivors of the initial landing parties on getting behind the forward positions concentrated on the wiping out of danger spots. Apparently, no strong defence was put up by the forward troops; the main desire of most of them being to extricate themselves as soon as possible. Some escaped by going forward into the straits and making their way westward by swimming and ducking when in the proximity of invasion boats. Only when considerable landings had been effected, were signals given for the barrage to be shifted further inland. The Japanese apparently regard an entry into their own barrage as a normal risk to be undertaken by all advanced troops. The main purpose of the Japanese after landing was to create a bridgehead. After creating a bridgehead, troops that were landed fanned out so as to acquire a large enough area to protect the further landing of troops. Many of these subsequent troops were equipped with machine guns and mortars.

[To be continued in April.]



**"ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE"**  
**The Diary of M.C. Hay M.C.S. Ag. Chief Inspector of Mines**  
**L/Bdr. 7907 FMSVF Light Battery**  
By kind permission of his niece Alison Keating (nee Hay)

**Night of 27 and 28.1.42.**

We retreated to **Johore Bahru** and crossed the Causeway. I spent part of the night in **J.B.** where I once acted as General Adviser Johore, sleeping on the grass in front of the State Palace. This retreat was the most puzzling of all. We retired over 50 miles from a strong position, which we had been told to hold at all costs, without having seen an enemy or fired more than one shot. We retired in perfect safety. The whole army, with the exception (as was later announced in orders) of one brigade, passed the bottleneck of the Causeway without even air attack. Perhaps some tribute is due to the organisation which made this possible – but with what object?

**28.1.42.** We occupied a position in the Ponggol peninsular 91384/22320 with a troop of 4.5 Hows (63<sup>rd</sup> I think) on our right and a battalion of Norfolks (part of the 18<sup>th</sup> Div) arrived next day. It was stated in the news that the Causeway had been "demolished" but when serving with the Johore Volunteer Engineers some years ago I had studied the problem of demolishing the Causeway, and I had grave doubts whether any serious damage had been done to it. **[N.B. The Nips had no trouble in crossing it.]** We could hear the noise of demolition at the Naval Base – marked by a column of thick smoke from burning oil stores.

**31.1.42.** The right section moved to a "harassing position" 89050/20800 just north of the Mental Hospital, which we called "Pigstye Camp" because the command post was located in a pigstye. The eviction of the inhabitants took place at 1.30 hours and was quite one of the minor engagements of the campaign. The pig experts were forthcoming under whose instructions they were dealt with scientifically. The Light Battery was recruited mainly from – the F.M.S. Agricultural Dept., the Rubber Research Institute, the Mines Dept., and the Mining Community with a sprinkling of Lawyers, so it could produce an expert on practically anything when required. The RAF base had been evacuated so we sent a party and collected tarpaulins, duckboards, tables, chairs, basins, jugs etc. galore and made ourselves very comfortable in "Pigstye Camp." The local Chinese washed our clothes, our plates etc. and did everything they possibly could for us. We did a little firing in this position but it was well hidden and there was no reply or air attack. There was certainly no attempt by the locals to give away our position, they were wholeheartedly on our side. At no time did I observe any 5<sup>th</sup> column activity by 'locals'. **[N.B. Major Pritchard H.K.S.R.A. has since reminded me that Verey lights used to be fired at night when Jap planes came over.]** The Malays in Johore were certainly lukewarm and this can hardly be wondered at when they saw us retreating without a fight, but the Chinese everywhere were enthusiastically friendly.

**8.2.42.** (Sunday) I got leave and went into Singapore and lunched with some friends. The town did not look very much damaged at that time. It was on this day, I think, that shells began to fall on the town. It was rumoured that the enemy had captured a dump of 25 pndrs at **Mantin**. **[N.B. This was all rubbish I now believe.]** We felt very aggrieved as we considered they might have been given to us instead of the antiquated 18 pndrs. Our range drums were not calibrated for streamlined ammunition which we were now firing and false ranges had to be given. Certainly we had never heard any Japanese artillery prior to this (apart from mortars) but from now on the enemy used artillery freely. On the night 8/9 the battery moved to a position in square 87/23 on the edge of the RAF base. The ground staff were still assembling a few planes which were in crates. During the move, I was informed by a D.R. that the enemy had landed. We got no fire orders that night. A heavy bombardment by both sides was in progress and one, at least, of the 9 inch on **Blakang Mati** was firing at the mainland.

**9.2.42.** A.M. A survey party of the 88<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, of which we now formed part, arrived and surveyed us in and that evening the guns were in action putting fire on points to the east of **Johore Bahru**. We hopefully imagined that we might be covering a counter landing by our troops. There was no reply. The enemy must have moved all his artillery to his other flank.

**10.2.42.** We got orders to wire in our perimeter, which we did, though we did not get enough wire to go all round, a ditch and an existing wire fence more or less covered the remaining sector. By this time, an infantry unit had taken up a position a few hundred yards from our left flank, but there was no co-operation in wiring. Had any attack by infiltration occurred during the night, we and the infantry might have started shooting at each other.

That night the guns were in action. The RAF finally evacuated the airbase the same evening. Next morning we took stock of what they had abandoned. There were cases of tinned food, all kinds of equipment, several tents, about a dozen bicycles and one Farmall tractor in perfect mechanical condition, (one of our men drove it into our perimeter).

**11.2.42.** We got orders to move guns to an anti-tank position at **Thomson Village**, cooks and ammo



lorries and H.Q. staff to wagon lines near **Joo Chiat Rd.** The cooks' lorry took the wrong road and the Staff car (**Sgt. Harley, Gnr. Reason and Self**) followed it and we suddenly found ourselves at **Thomson Village** in the midst of an indescribable 'flap'. Lorries were trying to turn in the face of streams of traffic - an air raid was on, luckily no bombs fell. With some difficulty, we got our cooks' lorry and car turned and made our way to the proper rendezvous.

As we were going along **Braddell Rd.** there was a bombing attack by about six planes flying across the road which was covered with stationary vehicles and men running to shelter. Bombs were dropped but none fell on the road.

**12.2.42.** After breakfast, I got orders to go with **Sgt. King to Monks Hill School**, just north of **Govt. House**. This was our last gun position. We reached the position about 9.30 and the guns arrived a few minutes later. Shortly afterwards they were ordered to go and take up an anti-tank position. They left about 10.00 hrs. and the moment they had gone there was a bombing attack by six planes coming from our rear (i.e. over **Govt. House Hill**). They dropped large bombs of, I should say, 500 lbs. One fell on the hill behind us, and the rest on the football ground in front of the school. Craters 30' - 50' across were made. Almost the whole ground was covered with loose earth and stones. No-one was hurt except one Chinese killed on the hill.

I spent the morning taking crest angles and working out minimum ranges for various gun platforms while **Sgt. King** prepared the artillery board. The guns returned the same evening and occupied positions just in front of the school. A row of trees have a little cover from air observation and a hill (100ft. high) on our left afforded considerable protection from enfilading fire. The school was a reinforced concrete building, raised on 10 foot pillars and in the space beneath a sand bag shelter had been made, which we improved and made use of. In the direction of **Newton Circus** an ack-ack battery was posted. This battery was the object of constant attention from the enemy bombers but was never silenced. Bomb after bomb fell - as appeared to us - almost on top of them but the pop-pop-pop of the Bofors always replied as soon as the dust and smoke had cleared away. Unfortunately they had very bad luck with their shooting and we only once saw a plane actually brought down, though several appeared to have been damaged.

That evening as we were giving angles to the guns, having set up the director on the verandah of the building opposite, a salvo of shells came over. We thought they were meant for us and ducked behind some sandbags but they went over our heads to the East and as they burst **Sgt. King** remarked, "They've got the range and switch for **Farrer Park** beautifully." At that moment **Sgt. Ross** was in the middle of **Farrer Park** laying a line but **King** was not aware of this or his admiration of the enemy's gunnery would not have been so detached. There was also a bombing raid (mostly directed at the unfortunate ack-acks) and our own ack-ack stuff falling, but we were nicely ensconced under the verandah. Seeing a large lump of metal come down within a yard of us, impressed on me never to go out without my tin hat. The next day we heard that **Major Cowie** of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Mta. Regiment who was our **I.G. [Gibb]** for the 1st embodiment had gone out without his tin hat and had been found dead with a wound in his head.

That night the guns were in action for the first time since the 10<sup>th</sup> February. From now on, they were in action pretty constantly until the end. All that day, shells were going over our heads mostly aimed at **Govt. House**. **H.E.'s** personal servant was killed I heard later. I believe **H.E.** then moved to the Singapore Club. That night was fairly quiet.

**13.3.42.** Early A.M. our guns were in action and about 0800 hrs. the enemy's reply began from our left. He landed a few shells on the playground in front of us and it looked as if a small switch to the right must get us, but the next salvo went over to our right. He kept it up most of the day, but did us no damage. One or two shells hit the roof of the school. Several times he landed quite close to our ammo lorry but nothing happened to the ammo. The 25 pndrs on our right had some casualties. The enemy was using an observation balloon about 7,000 yds. away on our left (between the Golf Course and the Race Course). The ack-ack shot it down once but they soon sent up another. Planes came over constantly and made several attacks on the ack-ack battery.

That evening small arms fire was heard on both flanks and about 500 yards in front of us and we thought enemy infiltration might be taking place. **Sgt. Major I.G. Gibb** and **Dobree** went forward on a recce and came back and reported that they had gone two miles across country from **Newton Circus North** and saw no Japanese but the British Units were firing on each other. In many cases, they were able to stop this firing. That night we had sentries on every side of the building to watch for infiltrators.

**14.2.42.** A.M. The water supply failed, but the main supply was still running and we were able to get water from a house on the hill. We had to ration it and there was none for washing. During the morning while enemy shelling was going on, fire was called for and **Maj. Wilshaw** said, "It's not very nice boys but can we do it?" The gunners were very willing and the fire orders were carried out. None of our men was hit. Later in the day the enemy put over a few mortar shells which burst in the tops of the trees on the slightest contact. These came from our front. Luckily, we were not firing when these arrived, but were under cover. That night the enemy shelled the 25 pndrs on our right very heavily. The 52 pndrs replied energetically and



silenced the enemy. One of their wounded came to our shelter for treatment.

During that afternoon, we had put up a heavy barrage on **Thomson Village** area and we were told that it had been effective which was very gratifying.

I should mention that all the time we were in this last position, the cooks' lorry brought our rations regularly, thanks to **Bdr. Gibbons** and **Gnr. Harrison**.

**15.2.42.** Early a.m. I was on watch on the hill on our left (**Monks Hill**) with **Gnr. H.R. Ross**. We were amused by a large poster in the middle of **Newton Circus** 'JOIN THE ARMY AND SEE THE WORLD'. Everything was pretty quiet, a few shells went over our heads towards **Fort Canning** and some enemy recon planes came over. At 8.30 hrs we two were relieved and shortly after, fire was called for us on the impounding reservoir just north of our last target. This seemed to indicate a counter attack. About 10 a.m. an order came to destroy all stocks of liquor, which was carried out. About 10.30 the enemy began a hot bombardment from the same position as before (left flank). Several shells burst on the crest of the small hill. **Maj. Wilshaw** then ordered the two sentries up there to be recalled. **Gnr. Tillbrook** was on air watch, taking cover in the drain just in front of the school and a shell made a large crater within a few yards of his head. A crater was made quite close to No.4 gun but no damage done. The upper storey of the school was pretty well wrecked but the floor and the supporting pillars were undamaged. Some mortar stuff also came over.

About 1300 hrs. the shelling died down, conveniently, and we got our dinners as usual. Water was still obtainable from the house on the hill – at some risk, and we were rationed to one half pint. We still had 780 rounds of ammo. After dinner the shelling began to get closer. I took the range of the captive balloon and found it 7,000 yards. As this was too far for shrapnel fuse, **Mr. Ward** said it was no use trying to shoot it down. At 1540 hrs. **Major Wilshaw** sent for 'Officers and Nos. One'. There was a short conference and then **Mr. Cook** came into the shelter where the rest were and said, "In a quarter of an hour the war's over, we surrender." At first, I didn't quite catch what he said and thought it was the enemy who had surrendered. They could only have a small force on the island and it seemed quite possible that they had been outflanked. However, the next order being to put the guns out of action and destroy all instruments and documents made the situation only too clear.

We smashed instruments and dial sights, destroyed range tables, maps etc. and damaged breech blocks by throwing them down on the cement floor. It was decided that we had not enough cover to blow the guns up. The 25 pndr troop blew their guns up. They had a good dugout.

About 16.10 hrs. the enemy began a heavy bombardment of our position. He had either moved his battery or opened with a new battery, for the fire now came from the left front and the little hill on our flank no longer afforded protection. The ack-ack battery seemed not to have had the order as it continued to fire at planes which came over. This heavy fire lasted for about half an hour, **Mr. Ward** was wounded in the hand and **Gnr. Ingram** was killed. A lot of damage was done to the upper floor of the school which by this time was nearly wrecked, and also to our sandbag shelter. It was obvious that we could not have lasted long in that position without underground shelters and that we ought to have made these earlier.

On orders of **S.M.I.G. Gibb** we threw all our leaden revolver bullets into a pit which was then filled in. The next order was that we should all stay in position till the Japanese arrived. **Sgt. Ross M.C., Gnrs. Wilkes, Harvey, H.R. Ross** and I decided to make an attempt to escape. The general opinion was that we should not have a chance and that the Japanese already held the water front. We filled our water bottles and put on our equipment which held an iron ration. I took the rifle which had been issued to the G.P.O. Acks – my revolver was useless as I had already thrown away the ammunition. The enemy was now sending only an occasional shell at us and was aiming mainly at **Govt. House** and **Fort Canning**. We did not take a vehicle for fear of drawing more fire, so we made our way on to the hill behind the school, struck the road and so on to **Orchard Road**. Lorries and cars full of troops were racing down **Orchard Road** and there were also many troops making their way down on foot. Shells were coming over for **Fort Canning**, but shots fell near enough to the road to make us run for cover at each cross road. It was about 17.00 hours when we left the gun position, and as we passed down **Orchard Road** we noticed the flag was still flying on **Fort Canning**, and wondered whether the surrender order had been a mistake or worse. It was no good going back to our useless guns, so we pushed on. All down **Orchard Road** shops had been looted and looting was still going on where there was anything left to take. Near the **Cricket Club** we found a 4.5 How. Battery and **Sgt. Ross** reported to the G.P.O. and told him what had happened. The officer told us that he was aware that we had asked the Japanese for terms of surrender, but we had not actually surrendered. He gave us permission to attach ourselves to his troop.

We got some tea from a canteen there and waited. The guns were not firing.

At about 18.30 hrs. p.m. this troop got orders to cease fire and move out of the position. The S.M. told us that this looked like the end, and advised if we had any plans, to proceed with them. We felt we could not leave till we were certain the surrender was a fact, and we proceeded to our own wagon lines in **Queens Street, Bras Basah Road**.

[To be continued in April 2019]



## NEW ZEALAND CIVILIAN INTERNEE, NURSE LILLIAN GLADYS TOMPKINS

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

The majority of ex-POWs and Civilian Internees returned to their homelands by repatriation ships. Not all went directly 'home', a number of 'British' ex-internees were taken to India to recuperate before making the long journey home. Nurse **Lillian Gladys Tompkins** was one of them! This is her story:

Born in 1893 on the North Island of New Zealand, **Gladys Tompkins** completed her training as a nurse in 1927, followed by nursing in Australia. She returned to New Zealand to do maternity training, followed by specialised training in child care. In 1939, while on holiday in Malaya, with the intention of going to India to nurse, she instead accepted a position as a health sister for three months at a hospital in Johore. This was followed by a position working in the Batu Pahat district for 2½ years. Following the advance of the Japanese through Malaya, she was instructed by the British medical officer to move to Johore General Hospital, working there until evacuated to Singapore which was deemed to be impregnable. When Singapore surrendered, **Gladys Tompkins** was detained at the Kalong Internment Camp, followed by a move to Changi Prison Camp on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1942, where along with other interned medical staff, she helped run a 'basic' hospital for internees.

During her stay in Changi she grew papaya to help supplement her sparse diet, and to stave off boredom filled some of her days painting watercolours of Changi Prison. She also kept a diary, hidden from the guards. After two years she was moved to Sime Road Internment Camp where conditions seemed better compared with Changi, but the food was terrible. On release from internment, on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1945, she had suffered a weight loss of four stone (56 pounds). She was evacuated (possibly by hospital ship?) to Madras and then to Bangalore, most probably to recuperate at the British Military Hospital there. Following her stay at Bangalore, **Gladys Tompkins** returned to New Zealand.

**Gladys Tompkins'** stay in New Zealand was not to last – the Colonial Office \* in London requested her to take the post of health sister at Johore General Hospital. Her duties included visiting kampongs to distribute medicines and food to those affected by the economic devastation caused by the Japanese Occupation. After six months in post she was transferred to Taiping with responsibility for restoring the run-down health services, again caused by the years of occupation. She retired in 1950 and returned to New Zealand.

Later in life, she had her internment diaries typed and privately published (1977) called, *"Three Wasted Years – Women in Changi Prison."* The book was a personal account of the fall of Singapore and hardships suffered at the hands of the Japanese during internment. The diaries and twenty nine watercolours painted by **Gladys Tompkins** during her internment in Singapore were later donated to the **Alexander Turnbull Library** in Wellington and are listed there.

\* Up to 1974, New Zealand passport holders were described as 'British subject – citizen of New Zealand.'

Reference: *Rae M. Riach. 'Tompkins, Lillian Gladys.'*  
*Dictionary of New Zealand Biography.*



**Nurse Lillian Gladys Tompkins**



**Sime Road Camp Library**



**Sime Road Womens' Camp**



**Sime Road Camp by Gladys Tompkins**



## **BOUCHES INUTILE**

Unedited talk given by Mary Harris at the MVG Lunch on 20.10.18

### **Bouches Inutiles, who were they and what happened to them?**

In the Malayan Volunteers Group, there is always somebody who knows more than you do about almost any aspect of the Fall of Singapore and what happened next. I am not trying to say anything new, but I do want to do a brief review, because we have come a long way since our first newsletter, "Apa Khabar 1" in 2005.

Over the past 10 years or so, while researching the biography of my mother **Elizabeth Alexander**, I have studied different literatures across several traditional and academic boundaries because she achieved so much in her short life. There is a brief account of her in A.K. 9 and a much more detailed one consecutively in A.Ks 33, 34 and 35, so I will just summarise that she was a geologist and physicist who, as an evacuee from Singapore to New Zealand in 1942, set up and ran the Operational Research Section of the country's very secret radar programme that had been crucial in the Pacific War since Pearl Harbour, during which she made the interpretation that began the new science of radio astronomy in Australia. On her return to Singapore after the war, she did the geological survey of the island for sources of granite for reconstruction, including drawing the geological map still in use: she also worked on surveys that underlie Singapore's water supply and green heart. She acted as registrar and did much of the fundraising for the University of Malaya, did more geology in Nigeria where she followed her husband, and then disappeared from history. Before I retired, I was familiar from my own work in mathematics education with the literature on how women disappear from science and mathematics and had even contributed to it, so my own reading and research for my biography were already tuned to picking up women who had been left out and putting them back.

With this experience and familiarity with the literatures I can say with confidence, that when it comes to wide and deep knowledge of the Fall of Singapore, mostly recorded by people who were there at the time, the Malayan Volunteers Group leads the field. Very importantly and, thanks to the style set by **Rosemary** and **Jonathan**, we have always shared what we know. The first issue of A.K. was **Rosemary's** introductory one side of A4. In the second edition, with **Jonathan's** and **John Brown's** lists of references in the National Archives and Imperial War Museum, we declared ourselves a research organisation. By A.K. 3 it was clear that we are and always were multicultural and of both genders, for there were only 2 genders in our day. From A.K. 3 on, we have had an active information exchange and personal accounts of evacuation and escape. By A.K. 6 **Rosemary** had so much information that she was having to hold some over for the next issue and by A.K. 10 we had our first list of evacuation ships. As a research exercise, I went right back to the beginning and started tallying accounts and mentions of escapes but stopped at A.K. 14 because I already had 35.

The one evening, after another day of wrestling with too much detail from too many different sources, I did some TV channel hopping and happened to find **Professor Mary Beard** talking about how women's voices have been controlled over the centuries. Her talk was called, "*Oh do shut up dear*" and has now been published [Women and Power, Profile Books 2017]. What she was saying connected so closely to my work that I contacted her with some examples and received a most useful response. The problem for all of us who work to build an accurate picture of what really happened when Singapore fell, she said, is that we are working in the restricted field of **Big Books by Blokes about Battles**. It explains a lot of what I was experiencing not least in the sort of dismissive and blokeish responses I was getting every time I opened my mouth on anything military or scientific, which was rather a lot. On one occasion, at a meeting held in the Royal Society no less, the topic under discussion was gendering in the sciences and one person protested that there was no longer a problem. I was so frustrated by then that I actually stood up to catch the chairman's eye and said that it certainly still was a problem. I told the meeting how every time I mentioned **Elizabeth's** work in a military or scientific context, people asked me who her husband was. I said that the crucial work that she did in radar in the South Pacific in WW2 had nothing whatsoever to do with her husband, because he was in prison at the time. Assuming that people at the meeting might not know a lot about Changi and Sime Road, I did not say what sort of prison he was in, but it did buy me some peace for a while. In fact, we ourselves already knew about the blokeishness of war. Here is what **Jennifer Howe** quoted her mother **Thyra Godber** as saying in A.K. 14 "*...it strikes me that while those long-ago wars were played out by big boys with rough playground tactics and dangerous toys, the more low-key valour of women tended to go unremarked.*"

What **Mary Beard** had done for me was to draw my attention to two very different literatures, one of which I shall call **Literature B** for obvious reasons, which has power and status enough to ignore all the other literatures that address the same issues but from different angles. I shall call these **Literatures A**. It is enormous and includes A.K. The problem is that **A** people read **B**, but **B** people don't seem to have heard of **A** and worse, don't see why they should. **Literature B** seems to operate almost as a gentleman's club, or perhaps a garden shed but both tend to keep the missus out until they want something to eat. I even heard two of the biggest blokes saying in a televised interview, that Singapore has been 'done':



there is no more to say about it. So at a conference on the War in South East Asia in Oxford in 2013 I mentioned A.K. to one of the big blokes who thought for a bit, and then said, *"Well, I suppose it is time we introduced a gender perspective."* He spoke as if he really believed that he owned the field. It is a phenomenon that I am used to because it is quite common in the academic world and sometimes difficult to manage when you are working in the same field yourself. But for the sake of balance, I need to say that the Literature B nowadays is opening up a little not least because the topic of Memory in History is now a recognised field of study and as we know, this year's BBC Reith Lectures *"War's Fatal Attraction,"* by Margaret Macmillan looked at the subject of war from many angles.

But then I saw the cover picture of Ronald McCrum's *"The Men who lost Singapore,"* published this year, which I showed in my talk. It is easily found online. It shows from left to right, Brooke-Popham, Duff Cooper, Shenton Thomas and Geoffrey Layton, possibly the only admiral in recent history to very nearly provoke a mutiny on his own parade ground by the way he addressed Prince of Wales and Repulse survivors. I admit that my first reactions to the cover picture were less that respectful and came almost simultaneously. I thought of Mary Beard's big blokes but also of Will Carling's famous remark about his selection committee for which he was sacked, but my comment to myself was that none of those blokes could have moved an inch without their cipher clerks.

But it is not fair to judge a book by its cover, so with my talk in mind, I looked for the words *bouches inutiles* in the index. They were not there, but I did find the following on page 170 in the paperback edition: *"...the urgent question now facing the government was the matter of evacuating people, particularly European expatriates and, above all, wives and children, referred to in official correspondence as 'bouches inutiles,' (literally useless mouths: in everyday jargon, members of the expatriate community was (sic) referred to as 'effectives' or 'non-effectives')."* Some time ago, when I told a friend who knows only a little about my work that I was going to be talking about *bouches inutiles*, she became quite angry, something I had not seen in her before and rebuked me saying, *"...that's a foul thing to say about anyone."* She was right, it is but it was still in use in my childhood.

It is easy to understand how, in mediaeval times, a small army about to go into battle, needed to concentrate its resources and get its non-combatants out of the way so they could not draw on them. Simone de Beauvoir's play of the name was set in mediaeval times but explored the situation of women as positive voices of protest in our period. It was published at the end of WW2 and made many resonances, not least with the specific use by the Nazis. The term was in use in England as a sort of shorthand for evacuating children to the countryside during the bombing of London, but soon faded out because it was inappropriate as well as offensive. In other words, by our time and place, the concept was recognised as out of date, so that in the War Office document actually called *Bouches Inutiles* (WO 106/2534) the words are placed between inverted commas.

But I was particularly bothered by McCrum's use of the language of his time, of 2018, in writing about Singapore in 1942 because it not only reveals historical insensitivity but distorts very badly the social structures of our time. The word *expatriate* is highly loaded with values and prejudices of today and is irrelevant to the situation of the time he was writing about. As we know, the crude distinctions of our time were between Europeans, Eurasians and Asiatics (and I cringe as I write it). European meant white and membership of the ruling class small in number but large in power, but even then the concept had woolly edges. My father was a Pakeha New Zealander which classed him as white, until the enormous red beard he grew in Changi to save razor blades, raised suspicion that there might be a touch of the tarbrush about him. The situation became so serious that he was dropped from his recitation of the *Green Eye of the Little Yellow God* at a camp concert and somebody more appropriate was found. More seriously, had he really had even a hint of Asia in his veins, it would have put him in breach of contract because a criterion of his appointment as a Raffles College Professor was that he had to be European. As we also know, European families who had worked in Malaya for generations were sometimes known as Malaysians and were proud of it. Becca [Kenneison, *"Playing for Malaya,"* 2012] has given us an excellent account of what was meant by Eurasian and what happened to them. Europeans of our time subdivided Asiatics into Chinese, Indian and Malay communities, with further subdivisions, depending on knowledge and interest. But there was no such thing as an expatriate community because the whole setup was colonial.

My concern about McCrum's historical insensitivity was heightened further by what I read next, that ... *"in view of the Penang calamity, care was taken that equal account was given to any members of the ethnic community also wishing to leave."* It is brave of anyone to try to reduce to one sentence the horrors of what happened in Penang and why, but this superficial interpretation so enraged me that I began to make cynical remarks to myself, wondering for example if in modern Singapore it is possible to be an 'ethnic expatriate', but I decided that that was too provocative. But I did go back and read the beginning of the same paragraph where I found the following: *"There are corroborated reports that the European population, even at this point, appeared to show little regard, or an illusory lack of concern, for the destruction around it and the drama unfolding on its doorstep. The Europeans continued to carouse and socialise, visiting restaurants and hotels for dances and even the Corps Commander, General Heath, is reported, in Meg Spooner's diary of 4<sup>th</sup> February,*



as attending a dinner party at the Spooners' house, together with his "young wife", as if there were no threat to society at all." There is a lot that can be packed into 'illusory' and I will set aside the titillation which places General Heath's young wife in inverted commas, but I did wonder why McCrum had chosen for his example of the European population carousing, socialising and dancing, two of the most senior officers of the recently arrived armed forces and their wives. I call them recently arrived to distinguish them from the members of the British Army who were already there, I mean, of course, the Volunteers.

To me, the tale of the women of Singapore dancing to the end (because men did not dance on their own those days) is even more wrong than the story of the guns pointing the wrong way, so I e-mailed McCrum through his publisher and asked him for his references to his 'corroborated reports' so that I may read them. My e-mail to his publisher is dated 23<sup>rd</sup> September, who copied McCrum's response to them the following day, saying he would 'be delighted to help Mary Harris if I can.' As my e-mail shows clearly I was asking for evidence and I'm tired of patronising pats on the head even when people don't ask me who my husband was. I have heard no more since and don't think it unreasonable to assume that I can replace McCrum's "corroborated evidence" with "gossip." But it leaves the very serious problem that an authoritative-looking, Literature B book is perpetuating a slander on an identified group of people, which in Britain anyway, is now recognised as social prejudice to the point of illegality.

I also need to say a little about Megan Spooner because she was very far from being some dumb, party lady, and I need to remind us of the conditions in Singapore on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1942 because they are relevant to my search for who was meant by "bouches inutiles" by then. Mrs. Spooner's diary, held in the Liddell Hart Archive at Kings College, London, is so racy, particularly in its remarks about the big blokes that, before you are allowed to read it, you are asked to sign an undertaking that you won't quote from it without her Trustees' permission. As we know and anybody who really wanted to know could find out, by 4<sup>th</sup> February, the Japanese were in Johore and their heavy barrage was starting, the Causeway had been blown, the Naval Base had been abandoned, Navy HQ was in the Golf Club House and Rear Admiral and Mrs. Spooner were living in a house in Lornie Road, recently abandoned by someone else. Water was rationed, electricity was intermittent depending on the increasingly heavy bombing and, since the fuel tanks at the Base were burning, the characteristic rain of Singapore brought down oily soot which stuck to everything. Tom Klitching's diary ("Life and Death in Changi 1998") for that day records that the bombs from a 10.00 air raid of 27 Japanese aircraft had landed mostly on the docks, but that at noon, bombs had been dropped in the area of his home not far from Lornie Road.

As senior officer's wife, Mrs. Spooner had taken immediate responsibility for much of the care of survivors of the Prince of Wales and Repulse, and her diary notes that she gave Captain Bill Tennant a stiff drink and put him to bed. It is clear from her diary, too, that providing an evening meal for senior officers now and then gave them the only reasonable time and space there was in which to talk, depending of course on air-raids which by that time were getting less predictable. By 4<sup>th</sup> February, both Spooner and Heath knew that Singapore could not be held and there would have been urgent need to talk about it. It is surely to the credit of both Mrs. Spooner and her cook, that they could still provide a meal and time to talk, for the Rear Admiral, the Lieutenant General and his pregnant wife. Mrs. Spooner would not herself have described it as a party. No doubt some stiff drinks were consumed but nobody aware of the situation could describe this crisis meeting as 'carousing and socialising'. I began to doubt if McCrum had actually read Mrs. Spooner's diary.

She had been in trouble with the authorities when, back in the middle of December, and acting on her husband's knowledge, she had prepared Navy families with the assurance that the Navy would consider giving them passages out when ships became available, but had been reprimanded by a Very Big Bloke for inducing panic. She knew that the Naval Base was to be shut and given over to the military 3 days before it happened, and her diary is explosive again on how it was done. On 31<sup>st</sup> January she recorded that 3,400 women and children had left on the Empress of Japan that day and that all except a very few Dockyard officials had gone and all the women from the Naval Base. I would need to read the diary again to see if she uses the phrase *bouches inutiles* but it is reasonable to assume that Mrs. Spooner was doing her duty for the Navy. Eileen Cooper, Anthony's mother, acting as senior officer's wife did the same for the Manchesters while holding down a top secret job in radio direction finding at Fort Canning. She was soon to become Wavell's cipher clerk and you cannot get much more 'effective' than that. Like just about everyone else, Mrs. Cooper was already holding down two jobs before Wavell arrived. In her own life, Megan Spooner was an opera singer and, in addition to all the work she also did in passive defence, was still offering her clear voice to the Malayan Broadcasting Services. She was ordered out by her husband a couple of days after her hospitality for the Heaths while Spooner himself moved Navy HQ to the Oranje Hotel down town. She was one of those who wrote to The Times when she finally got home, to refute the nonsense being put about, that the women of Singapore danced to the end. And it was Mrs. Spooner who was responsible for making the Navy return to the Island of Tjibia and look properly this time for her husband's body and that of Pulford and the others who had died there, until they had found them and buried them decently in Kranji.

[To be continued in April 2019.]



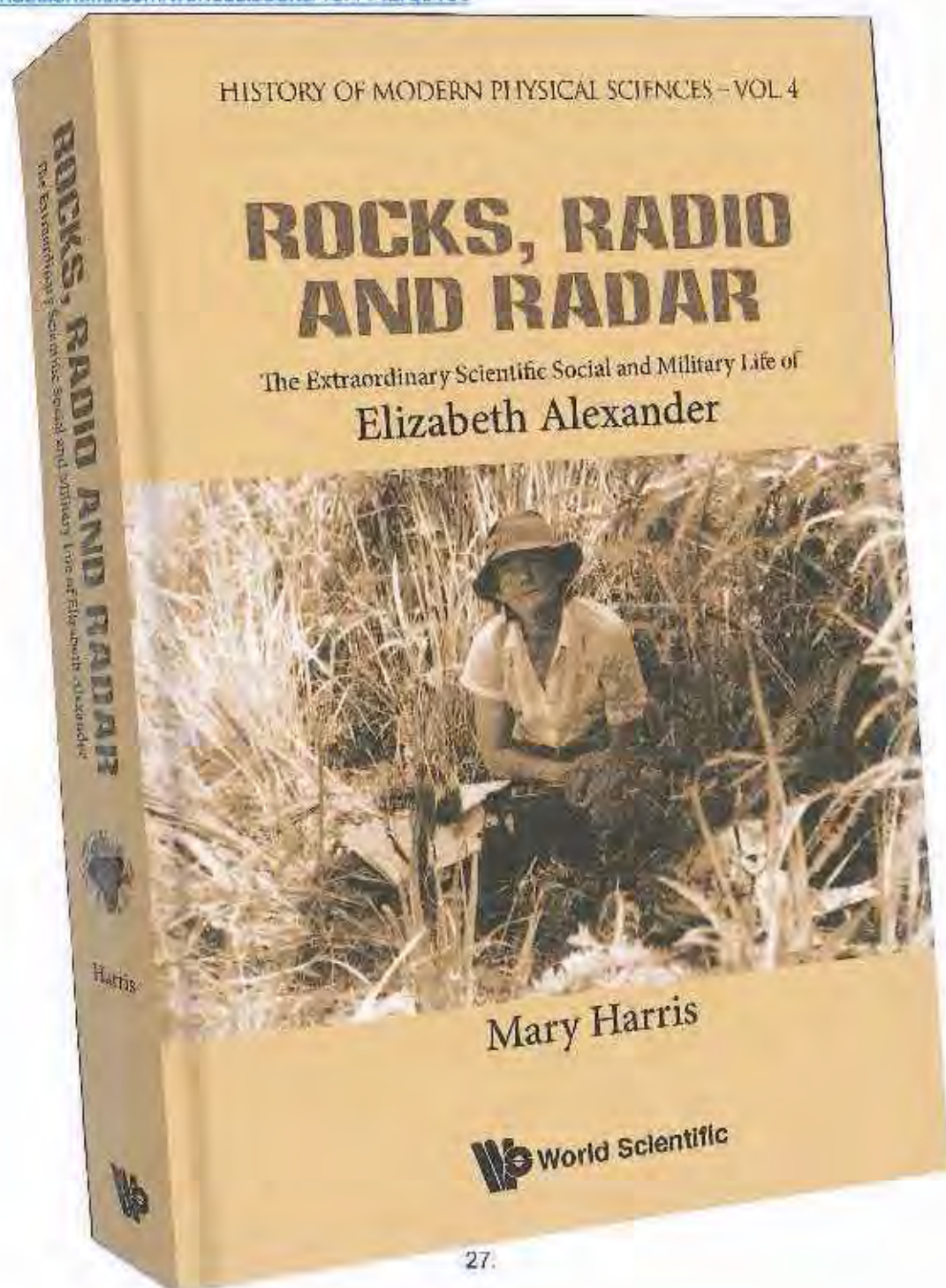
## BOOKS

Mary Harris has sent the following information about her book:

**"ROCKS, RADIO AND RADAR. The Extraordinary Scientific Social and Military Life of Elizabeth Alexander."**

Some of the research that lay behind my talk came from my work for my biography of Elizabeth Alexander, my mother. There is already quite a lot about her in back number of A.K. whose 33, 34 and 35 editions cover her work in the South Pacific radars in WW11 while she was an evacuee from Singapore. But in 1947, she returned to Singapore as the geologist she was, to begin her government-commissioned survey of the island for resources for reconstruction including granite and water. Current geological work in modern, built-up Singapore still uses her report and her geological map. This geological work, together with her radar work and more, are now brought together in my book, **"Rocks, Radio and Radar: the Extraordinary Scientific, Social and Military History of Elizabeth Alexander"** currently in press with World Scientific, based in Singapore. Because Elizabeth changed thinking in two sciences, the book is rather larger than that of a biography of a single-subject scientist and the price of the hardback edition is very high for the general readers for whom I wrote it. There will, however, be a considerable, but short-term, discount for people to buy the book online on publication. Please check the link and keep alert to the website in May 2019, publication time. If you would like to be reminded, please contact me by my e-mail address on the members' list.

<https://www.worldscientific.com/worldscibooks/10.1142/q0198>





Many women scientists, particularly those who did crucial work in two world wars, have disappeared from history. Until they are written back in, the history of science will continue to remain unbalanced. This book tells the story of **Elizabeth Alexander**, a pioneering scientist who changed thinking in geology and radio astronomy during WW11 and its aftermath.

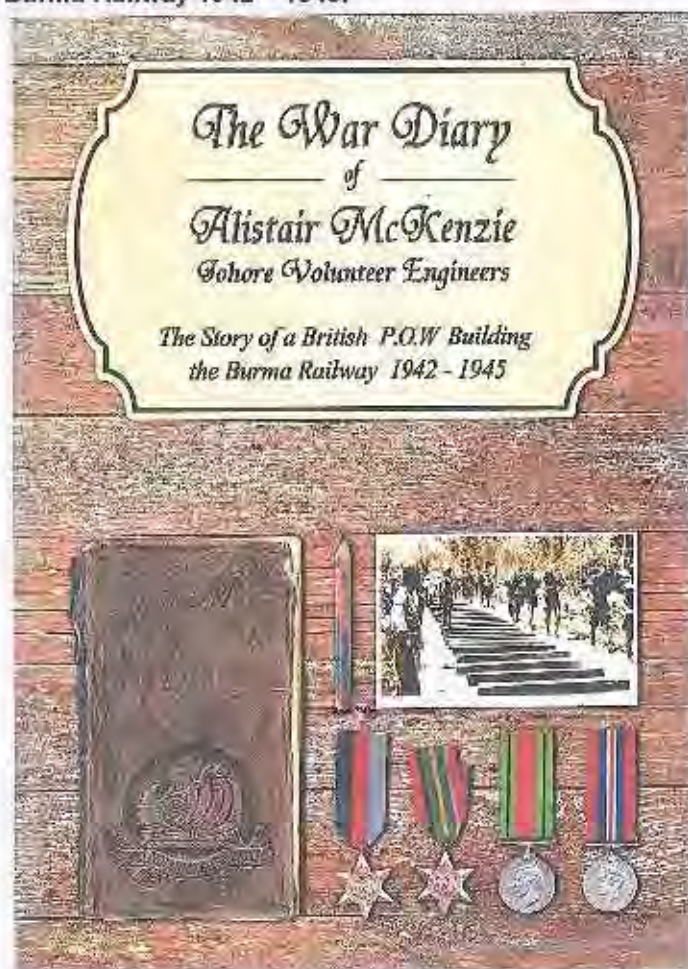
Building on an unpublished diary, recently declassified government records and archive material adding considerably to knowledge about radar developments in the Pacific and in Singapore before the war, and the country's education and physical reconstruction after it moved towards independence.

This unique story is a must-read for readers interested in scientific, social and military history during WW11 and historians of geology, radar as well as scientific biographies.



Mary giving her talk at the MVG Lunch 20/10/18

**"THE WAR DIARY OF ALISTAIR McKENZIE. Johore Volunteer Engineers. The Story of a British POW Building the Burma Railway 1942 – 1945."**



This diary, recording three and a half years of Japanese captivity as a prisoner of war on the Burma railway, is a testament to those who survived ... and for those who did not.

Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> 1943: A great to-do yesterday and to-day that a J general was visiting the hospital, nothing happened yesterday but to-day we were all turned out of our huts and all our *barang* was searched and that was the General's visit – this search business has often happened in the main camps but it was the first time my *barang* has been searched, I fully expected to lose this log, but I have been lucky. I do hope I get this out as I have become rather attached to it and it may prove of some interest to you, **Babs**, although most of it will be best forgotten.

August 1945: How did all this affect me? – you **Babs** will know – I sought a quiet corner and had a weep and sent up a prayer of thanks to my Maker for taking me safely through this – Yes, **Babs**, if it hadn't been for you – **Euan** – **Dad** and **Bess** – **Avochie** – the **Deveron** and my love for Scotland, I doubt if I would have made it.

**[Note from Jonathan Moffatt:**

Hard copy of the published **McKenzie {JVE}** Diary arrived today. I was involved with identifying individuals in the diary. **Kevin Barnes** in Cyprus did amazing work over several years deciphering and transcribing the actual diary text. It is available on Amazon.Co.UK.

**"ON PARADE: Straits Settlements Eurasian Men Who Volunteered To Defend The Empire 1862 – 1957."** By **Mary Anne Jansen (nee Schooling)**. Published in November by Select Books in Singapore.

The book chronicles the attempts of Straits Settlements Eurasian men who took responsibility for the defence of the British Empire. Speaking at the launch of the book, Deputy Prime Minister and co-ordinating Minister for National Security **Teo Chee Hean** said the book celebrates an important core value of Singapore's Eurasian community – the spirit of service. He noted, among other things, that Eurasians played an integral role in the People's Defence Force, noting "a good number of our volunteers, including our Eurasian volunteers, were mobilised and formed the core of our fledgling armed forces." A roster of more than 1,000 Eurasian volunteers who fought for the Empire is included in the book, which took about two years to complete. It was researched and written by former librarian-turned-author **Mary Anne Jansen**, retired mechanical engineer **John Geno-Oehlers** and homemaker **Ann Ebery Oehlers**, and supported by the National Heritage Board's Heritage Participation Grant. **Mr. Geno-Oehlers** noted that the Eurasians had chosen to volunteer because they believed the future was at stake. He said: "The decision to volunteer speaks of duty, loyalty and a long-term commitment to home. The only home the Eurasians had was the Straits Settlements and England was not home."

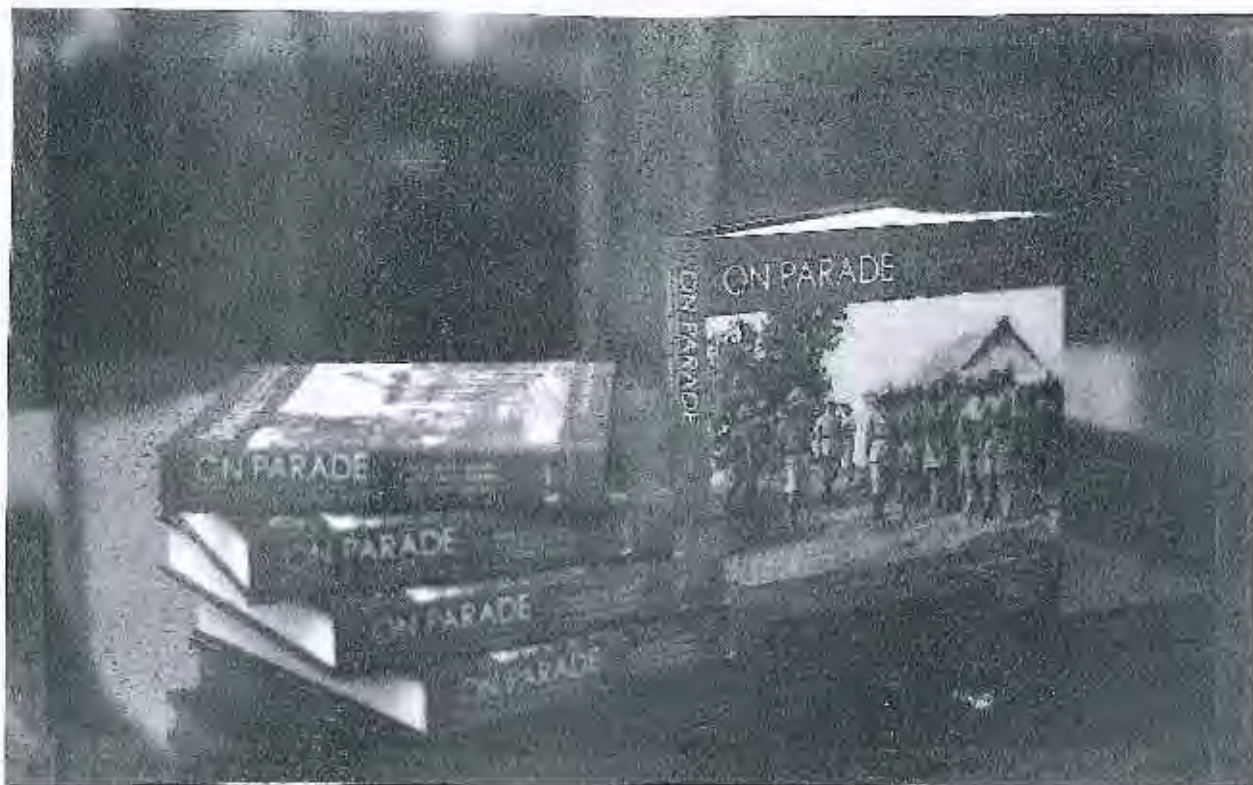


The book, *On Parade* was launched by Singapore Management University on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

The link to the Select website is: <http://www.selectbooks.com.sg/getTitle.aspx?SBNNum=061945> Postage & handling are extra.

See Straits Times article:

[https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/eurasians-who-defended-singapore-and-the-empire-chronicled-in-new-book?fbclid=IwAR2IUIDMI-k2A2W3QcXOCRdQCI\\_8eGNN1\\_pY7169r8v9p\\_p3k1-cB-XzPvI](https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/eurasians-who-defended-singapore-and-the-empire-chronicled-in-new-book?fbclid=IwAR2IUIDMI-k2A2W3QcXOCRdQCI_8eGNN1_pY7169r8v9p_p3k1-cB-XzPvI)



**"FROM HELL ISLAND TO HAY FEVER: THE LIFE OF DR. BILL FRANKLAND."** By Paul Watkins.

A new biography of Dr. Bill Frankland was published in October 2018.

Author Paul Watkins writes for the RFHG about Frankland's remarkable life.

The QSMV Dominion Monarch arrived in Singapore on 28<sup>th</sup> November 1941 after a 2-month voyage from Liverpool. On board were 35 doctors from the Royal Army Medical Corps, including Dr. Frankland.

Dr. Bill Frankland with his author at the launch



The Whistle.png  
209K

See:

<https://eudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-RCMS-00396/1>

An addition to the digitized Cambridge University Library Collection



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Report in The Daily Telegraph 21/9/18:

**Shinzo Abe** was re-elected as head of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in September, giving him and the LDP a firm grip on power with the next general election possibly not until 2021. **Abe** is soon expected to put forward the first proposals to amend the constitution, re-written in the aftermath of WW2, which says that Japan renounces war and forbids the use of force to settle international disputes – a change he has wanted to make for much of his political career. He is on track to becoming the longest serving Prime Minister.

### Reports in The Star and Malay Mail on 18/9/18:

Japan carried out its first submarine drill in the South China Sea in an area of disputed waters claimed by China. The Maritime Self Defence Force submarine **Kuroshio** joined three Japanese warships just south-west of the China-controlled Scarborough Shoal. The exercise involved the submarine trying to evade detection and was conducted away from island bases constructed by China to push its claims in this strategic sea, which has claims on it from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Tensions have been high over the Scarborough Shoal since it was seized from Manila in 2012. There are vital global shipping routes in this area. The drill included an exercise to spot enemy submarines using sonar devices and Japan claimed it was a legitimate naval exercise in neutral waters, with rights of access secured under international law.

Further tensions with China emerged earlier in September when **HMS Albion**, the British Royal Navy amphibious assault ship sailed close to these islands claimed by China. She was met by Chinese aircraft and a naval vessel. Other foreign aircraft and vessels in this region are routinely challenged by Chinese naval ships.

### Also reported in The Star on 20/9/18:

The Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force vessel **JS Akebono** docked in Kuantan on her way back from anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. It was reported that the **JS Akebono**, with her crew of 210 including 8 Japan Coast Guard personnel, was visiting Kuantan in order to promote mutual understanding and friendship. The ship is armed with a 76mm rapid fire gun, vertical launching system Anti-Submarine Rockets, two 20mm defensive guns, surface-to-air missiles, triple torpedo tubes and carries an SH-60J/K anti-submarine helicopter. No public viewing of the vessel was allowed.

### On 6/10/18 there were 2 reports in The Star:

Firstly: North and South Korea condemned Japan for flying the hated "Rising Sun" flag on a warship due to take part in a fleet review in October. Japan subsequently said that it would pull out of the review. Some South Koreans liken the ensign to Nazi symbols such as the swastika.

Secondly: The Japanese city of Osaka has cut her ties with San Francisco over a memorial to the women forced into wartime sex slavery by Japanese forces – the "Comfort Women." The statue bears an inscription referring to '*hundreds of thousands of women and girls ...sexually enslaved by the Japanese Imperial armed forces in 13 Asian-Pacific countries from 1931 to 1945.*' Activists have set up dozens of statues in public venues in recent years, many of them in South Korea in honour of the victims. The statues have drawn the ire of Tokyo which has pressed for their removal, and in April a bronze sculpture symbolizing "comfort women" was removed in Manila.

In May this year, Japan's Emperor **Akihito** steps down to make way for his son, **Crown Prince Naruhito** to ascend the Chrysanthemum Throne. This will mark the end of the Heisei era which started when **Hirohito** died and **Akihito** came to the throne. The new era will have a new name yet to be announced. It will reset Japan's calendar which uses its own Chinese-style imperial calendars as well as the Gregorian calendar which is used by the rest of the world.

### On 12/10/18 it was announced in The Telegraph:

"The chief priest at Japan's **Yasukuni Shrine** is stepping down after "highly inappropriate language" criticising the emperor was leaked to a magazine.

The **Shukan Post** quoted **Kunio Kohori**, 68, as saying that "the emperor is trying to destroy **Yasukuni Shrine**." The shrine in Tokyo honours the 2.5 million war dead but also Second World War criminals. It has been at the centre of rows with Asian neighbours that suffered from Japan's wartime atrocities.

[Ed: Thanks to **Liz Moggie** for sending these newspaper cuttings from Malaysia.]

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**PERTH WA – 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Service of Commemoration for the loss of the Vyner Brooke at Point Walter Reserve, Bicton.**

Please let **Robert Gray** know if you wish to attend this service, which starts at 10.30am. The Presbyterian Ladies College will be in attendance with Pipes and Drums, plus a display of historical material by the girls of Santa Maria College.

**PERTH WA – Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service, City of Stirling Memorial Park, Cedric St.**

The service will start at 10.30am. Please let **Elizabeth Adamson** know if you wish to attend this service.

**MUNTOK – Radji Beach, Bangka Island. Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2019. Commemoration for the Australian Army Nurses.**

Please contact **Michael Noyes** for further information about this service to commemorate the massacre of the Australian Army Nurses on Radji Beach and all civilians and military personnel who died on Bangka Island. Contact: [noyes@ms.com](mailto:noyes@ms.com)

**LONDON – Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Visit to the National Army Museum in Royal Hospital Road, Chelsea – at 12 noon.**

A number of members have already signed up for this visit, but there may be room for a few more. If you would like to join the group, please let **Jonathan Moffatt** know. It will be on a first come, first served basis.

The Museum was re-opened in March 2017 after a £23.75 million redevelopment. The Head of Corporate Partnerships, **John Palmer** is to take the MVG round the Museum, and we plan to raise awareness of the role of the Malayan Volunteer Forces in the Malayan Campaign in WW2.



**WYMONDHAM – Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury.**  
Please let Rosemary know if you would like to attend this service and lay a wreath on behalf of the MVG and the Malayan Volunteers. Attendance is by ticket obtained from: [administrator@wymondhamrccchurch.org.uk](mailto:administrator@wymondhamrccchurch.org.uk) The Service starts at 12.30pm and a finger buffet lunch is served afterwards. To view the names of your loved ones in the Books of Remembrance which are housed in the FEPOW Chapel attached to the Church, please contact Peter Wiseman the Church's Archivist and Historian [phandtnwiseman@gmail.com](mailto:phandtnwiseman@gmail.com)

**NMA – May 2019. Date TBA. Annual Gardening Day.**

**LONDON – Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019. RFHG Workshop at The Institute of Historical Research, Malet Street, WC1E 7HU.**

Entitled "Captivity, internment and forced labour across the Far East during the Second World War," this one day workshop is the prelude to the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference planned for June 2020 to commemorate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of V-J Day. Anyone wishing to give a 15 minute paper should submit abstracts of a maximum of 200 words plus a 50-word biography to Dr. Lizzie Oliver at [researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com](mailto:researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com) by 25<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

Spaces will be limited & cost £25 to include light refreshments. Speakers will be charged a reduced rate of £15.

Registration will open later in the year. The call for papers can be downloaded at:

<https://fepowhistory.com/2018/10/15/fepow-history-workshop-london-10-june-2019-call-for-papers/>

**NMA – Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019. V-J Day Annual Service. 12 noon in the Chapel & wreath laying in MVG's plot.**

PLEASE NOTE THIS DATE. The Chapel is booked from 11.30-13.30. More details will be given in April.

**PERTH WA. August 2019. Merdeka Day Service – Kings Park. Date TBA**

**LONDON – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2019. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12 noon to 5pm.**

Please note that this is a week earlier than usual. More details in April including the menu and cost. We are delighted that Dr. Hilary Green is giving the talk entitled, "Malaya – A Family Affair," about her grandparents lives and their work in pre-war Malaya.

**LIVERPOOL – 19<sup>th</sup> October 2019 – June 2020. "Secret Art of Survival"**

The Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) in partnership with the University of Liverpool's Victoria Gallery and Museum (VG&M) are putting on this new major exhibition of previously unseen and unpublished documentary art, created secretly by Far East Prisoners of War during WW2. Treasured by veterans, this "documentary art" illustrates many aspects of their captivity from disease, medical ingenuity and laboratories to faith, humour and survival. See website on P.1 and LSTM's "Captive Memories" website – [www.captivememories.org.uk](http://www.captivememories.org.uk)

**LONDON – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Cross Planting Ceremony at Westminster Abbey.**

More information in April

**LONDON – Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Remembrance Sunday Service & Veterans' Parade at the Cenotaph Whitehall.**

Further details will be given in April.

**CANADA, MALAYSIA and AUSTRALIA. Remembrance Sunday Services TBA.**

**NMA – Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Anniversary of the Sinking of HMS Price of Wales and HMS Repulse.**

More details in April.

**2020 DATES:**

**LIVERPOOL – 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> June 2020. 7<sup>th</sup> International FEPOW History Conference.**

Co-hosted by the Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) and the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM), the next conference will take place during the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of liberation from the Japanese in conjunction with the "Secret Art of Survival" exhibition. Speakers have already been confirmed. Places will be limited. Bookings open in Spring 2019. See: <https://fepowhistory.com/> for guest blogs and future announcements.

**NMA – Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2020. V-J Day Service to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese surrender in 1945.**

**SINGAPORE – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2020.**

**Kranji Service to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the date in 1945 of the Japanese surrender in Singapore**

Events and dates to be announced in April. Please keep the week before and after 12<sup>th</sup> September free if you wish to attend.

## **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Subscriptions are due in April annually. Enclosed is the subscription letter as a reminder, explaining how payment may be made. This letter will be sent out again in APRIL. It would be helpful if those paying by Standing Order could make sure that payment is made in April.

## **LIST OF MEMBERS**

Please check that your entry – including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers to make sure they are correct. If not let Rosemary know. This list does take time to prepare, and is useful to keep for reference.

## **CONTACTS**

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