

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**67th EDITION
JULY 2021**



**HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visiting Chungkai Cemetery in 1996,
and chatting to Donald and Rosemary Fell at her father's grave,
with Rod Beattie and other dignitaries on the right.**

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WE MOURN THE DEATH OF HRH THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH WONDERFUL TOTAL RAISED FOR THE TBRC APPEAL – THANKS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS FOR THEIR GENEROSITY

It was with great sadness we received the news of the death of His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh. Sadly, the numerous reports of his many notable lifetime achievements made little mention of the fact that the Duke also took a keen interest in the Far East Theatre of World War Two, having witnessed the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay in 1945 while serving on board the British Warship, **HMS Whelp**, a brand new destroyer which escorted the **USS Missouri** to Japan. His interest was apparent in 1996 when the Duke visited the Commonwealth War Grave Cemeteries in Kanchanaburi during Her Majesty The Queen's official State Visit to Thailand. It was here that he renewed his special interest in the plight of the Far East Prisoners of War and the building of the Death Railway. **Donald and Rosemary Fell** were privileged to meet the Duke during this visit while on a Royal British Legion Pilgrimage arranged to coincide with Her Majesty The Queen's State Visit. The Duke flew up to Kanchanaburi to look round the cemeteries and visit the graves of those attending the Pilgrimage. When he arrived at the main cemetery in Kanchanaburi, he attended a short service held at the Cross of Remembrance in the centre of the cemetery. This was also attended by the RBL pilgrims and a few former FEPOWs living locally in Thailand. After the service, the Duke was shown round the cemetery by **Rod Beattie** who was then the curator of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries. **Rod** took him to see the Arch made of Portland Stone bearing the names of those prisoners who had died from cholera and therefore had been cremated, not buried. They walked between the sections of the British and Dutch Graves, and the Duke insisted on looking at the Dutch graves as well as the British. After visiting the individual graves of the RBL pilgrims in Don Rak Cemetery, everyone was taken to have lunch at the Felix Hotel. In the afternoon, the Duke was driven to Chungkai Cemetery beside the River Kwai, where he visited 3 graves. During the short service held at the Cross of Remembrance, the Duke insisted on standing with the relatives, instead of at the designated place reserved for him. Two of the 3 graves he visited were those of Volunteers – **Charles Hatton Short**, 1/SSVF, "B" Company, PWD architect father of **Frances Francis**, a founder member of MVG who sadly died in September 2010 (see A.K. 24 P.20) and **Lt. Eric Wilfred Reeve**, 4/SSVF HQ Wing, father of **Rosemary Fell**. The Duke spent time at each grave talking to the relatives and showed a keen interest in being told about the role of the Malayan Volunteers in the Malayan Campaign – who they were and why they had been sent to work on the Thailand Burma Railway. He was also interested to hear about the evacuation of families from Singapore and was highly amused at the story of how **Rosemary's** teddy bear was rescued from the "**Ulysses**" when the ship was torpedoed in the Caribbean. **Rosemary's** father's grave was the last one the Duke visited before being whisked away by car to Kanchanaburi and the helicopter which took him back to Bangkok. He refused to visit the Bridge over the River Kwai due to its reputation as a tourist attraction. The Duke also expressed an interest in the opening of the **Thailand-Burma Railway Centre Museum (TBRC)** in **January 2003**. He wanted to know about **Rod's** work in uncovering and mapping the route of the Railway, and the research being done at the Museum into the men who had worked on the Railway.

TBRC Appeal.

There has been a wonderful response to the appeal for funds to help the TBRC during the Covid pandemic. Overseas tourists have been unable to travel to Thailand and the Museum's visitor numbers have dropped dramatically, together with, of course, their income. As with so many businesses throughout the world, the few local visitors have not created sufficient income to cover running costs and the salaries of the staff. We are therefore very grateful to have received generous donations from our members, many of whom have benefited from the TBRC's wonderful research into each and every man who worked on the Railway – the camps they were in, their health problems and where, if relevant, they are buried. We owe the TBRC Staff a huge debt of gratitude for their incredible research and dedication into uncovering every man's details. Individuals from other FEPOW Groups have also sent donations via the MVG – Java Club, RFH Group, BAFEPOW, Brooke Trust, NFFWRA & COFEPOW – and these organisations have also sent donations to the TBRC. To date, £20,000 has been sent, plus a sum of £5,000 via a charitable foundation which was gift aided. This includes £5,000 from MVG funds. Another sum will be sent to cover the final donations. A very big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this appeal.

MVG's Website.

We are grateful to **Michael Pether** for his continuing research into the fate of the small ships which left Singapore just before it fell, and the names of the passengers on board. Details of what happened to **HMS Scorpion**, and the passenger lists have just been added to the website in the "Singapore Evacuation Ships" section. It is a section of the website which is very well worth visiting. The amount of information about what happened to these small ships is due to **Michael's** detailed research.

MVG's Archival Material.

The MVG does not have a natural place where archival material can be saved for posterity. Both **Jonathan Moffatt** and **Rosemary Fell** are running out of space where this material can be housed. If anyone has any ideas where this material could or should be kept, please let us know.

Opening of Changi Chapel and Museum.

The Changi Chapel and Museum (CCM) had its official unveiling on Tuesday 18th May 2021, and opened to the public on 19th May. It has been closed since 2018 and has undergone a major redevelopment. The National Museum of Singapore took over the management from **Jeya Ayadurai**, the former Director and our friend and colleague, whom many of us have met both in Singapore at the Museum and at RFH Conferences in the UK.

The opening was shown on a short film, and a quick tour of the eight galleries was given by **Rachel Eng**. The tour revealed a very modern look to the Museum with displays of artifacts and personal objects collected from families of former internees. The display boards are similar in appearance to those in the Ford Factory Museum. The narrative is centred on remembrance and reflection and there is a "living" database of over 50,000 POWs and civilian internees. Visitors can access specific, personal stories and are welcome to contribute memories they have of the internees to add to and preserve the legacies of those who passed through Changi's gates. There is also a recreation of a Changi Gaol cell where the internees were housed, with historical recordings of conversations which offer a glimpse into their living conditions and a daily experiences. However, it is sad to note that all the donated regimental and personal badges and plaques, which were displayed in the Museum before its revamp, have been removed. This includes the 2 plaques donated by the MVG – the teak board bearing the 5 Volunteer Badges, which was unveiled in 2008 by **H.E. Mr. S.R. Nathan**, the then President of the Republic of Singapore, and the Sumatra Plaque commemorating former civilian internees in Sumatra and the 21 murdered Australian Army Nurses. This was unveiled in February 2014 by **Mrs. Rosa Daniel**, CEO of the National Heritage Board in Singapore. The Sime Road Plaque, unveiled in September 2015 by **Olga Henderson** and **Vilma Howe**, was not shown in the film preview of the Museum. It had deteriorated by 2019, and in a meeting with **Rachel Eng** and her colleague, **Jermaine Huang** at the National Museum of Singapore, **Liz Moggie** and **Rosemary Fell** discussed the renovation of the Plaque, and payment for it. The Museum subsequently said that they would bear the total cost of this. No mention of this Plaque has been made since and it may have been removed. Enquiries will be made at the National Museum of Singapore.

The good news is that the other badges and plaques, which were removed, have been saved by **Jeya** and are due to be put on display in the Battlebox Museum, although in February 2019 there was still no sign of them. We hope they have been kept.

Singapore on Film.

The PBS America Channel recently aired a 2-part programme about Singapore showing very early film footage dating back to 1900. The films included 'Coolie Boys' and 'Ananas', filmed more than 100 years ago by Pathe Brothers. It was also shown on Channel News Asia. The films were interspersed by comments from local historians and members of the National Museum of Singapore.

FEPOW Service at Wymondham.

We are very grateful to **Richard** and **Susan Brown** for representing the MVG at the annual service held in the Church of Our Lady and St. Thomas of Canterbury, and for laying the wreath. The service was held under strict social distancing guidelines. It was allowed to go ahead but without the communal singing of hymns. Instead, a soloist sang the hymns including "The Captives' Hymn" which is also sung at the MVG's service on V-J Day. **Richard's** excellent report on the service is enclosed as a separate booklet.

Webinar Meeting of the Japanese POW Reconciliation Group.

This meeting was attended by **Judy Balcombe**, whose presentation will be included in the October newsletter. We thank **Judy** for her participation, and for her commitment to keeping alive the memories of those who died in Sumatra in WW2.

Judy says that the webinar was very interesting with nearly 100 academics watching from Japan. People were very interested and supportive. The group has a special focus on understanding and educating the Japanese public about Comfort Women. They especially wanted to hear from **Georgina Banks** (great niece of **Dorothy Elmes** who was massacred on Radji Beach) and from **Judy** about their families' experiences and their knowledge of oppression and violence from Japanese soldiers towards their families and other people's families.

Judy Balcombe also took part in a Zoom Meeting on 30th May for the **Friends of Banka Island (FBI)**. The Group members include **Arlene Bennett** (President of the Australian Nurses' Memorial Centre); **Georgina Banks**; **Michael Noyce** (nephew of Nurse **Kathleen Neuss**); **David Man**; **Bruce Bird**; **Mr Fakhrizal** and **Agung Purnama** (his assistant). They discussed how to run the Zoom Service in February 2022 – the 80th Anniversary of the Radji Beach massacre – and how to help the local people including the Muntok Red Cross, the local orphanage and men in Muntok Jail.

Judy also mentioned that the Widnes Town Council would not allow a statue of **Captain Thomas Wilkinson VC** of the Li Wo to be erected in the town, because there are already 2 VC statues in the town! (Editor: How mean spirited it is that?)

Instead a Plaque has been made which is to be installed in the grounds of a private pub on the River under a flag pole with a display inside the pub. The remaining funds have been used to make a small replica of the plaque, which is to be displayed in the Tinwinning Museum in Muntok and is to be unveiled in February 2022.

Bataan Death March Commemoration.

A service of commemoration for the Bataan Death March was held on 9th April 2021 at the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC) WW2 West Coast Memorial. This is a small independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government responsible for commemorating the services of the American Armed Forces where they have served since 6th April 1917 – the date of America's entry into WW1. The ABMC West Coast Memorial is at the Brookwood Cemetery. There are 2 such American cemeteries in the UK – in Surrey and in Cambridge.

OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF

MVG's Webmaster

We send our congratulations to our lady webmaster who gave birth to a baby son (named Occo) in the middle of May. Mother and baby are doing well. **N.B.** Check our website for the addition of **HMS Scorpion** to the Evacuation Ships section.

God's Little Acre Ceremony 2021

Richard Parry has received an e-mail from **Ms Lau** (MPOA Secretary) informing him that the Memorial Service at God's Little Acre, Batu Gajah, will not be taking place this year:

We regret to inform you that in view of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Malaysian Palm Oil Association – Perak, will not be holding its usual Annual Commemorative Ceremony for year 2021.

However, depending on the status quo of the Pandemic, consideration will be given to hold a low key memorial service at the Centre Point of the Cemetery to commemorate those who sacrificed their lives to curb the Communist Terrorists menace during the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960. The said memorial service will only be attended by a small group from the MPOA Perak Committee.

A report of the low key memorial service, which was held last year on 19th September 2020, was sent. This service was attended by 11 people including members of the MPOA, Rev. John Kennedy Samuel and 2 Buglers from the 9th Royal Rangers. MPOA Perak Chairman **Mr. R. Sivalingam** gave a speech in which he praised the sacrifice of all the young men from Britain and the Commonwealth who answered calls for help to overcome the threat from the Communist Terrorists.

Muntok Ambulance

Judy Balcombe has written to say that the Ambulance was delivered to Muntok on 25th April – ANZAC Day and the Muntok Red Cross held a small ANZAC service at the Nurses' Memorial at the Lighthouse at Tanjong Kelian in Muntok, together with the Ambulance. Sadly, Muntok is currently suffering from another wave of Covid, so the Ambulance has arrived at the right time. Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Ambulance Fund.

V-J Day Service

The Events and Functions Supervisor at the NMA, **Rachael Brereton** has sent the current regulations which are in place at the NMA at the time of writing this newsletter. They are as follows:-

"We are still required to collect the test and trace information from all visitors, so we would need each of your guests to book online before their visit, or to provide their full contact details on the day. [Book Tickets](#) | [Plan Your Visit](#) | [National Memorial Arboretum \(thenma.org.uk\)](#).

Please note these spaces are only released two weeks in advance. The tickets for your event date will be released on the 29th July 2021.

Muntok Palembang – Article on TROVE newspapers (Australia) about Joan McIntyre

Jonathan reports that he has found a 6+ page article on the online TROVE newspapers. The article is by **Joan McIntyre** (nee Sinclair) who, as a 17 year old in 1941, was interned in Muntok/Palembang and ended up in Lubok Linggau. Entitled, "Girl in a Prisoner-of-War Camp", it appeared in the Australian Woman's Weekly on 12/11/1969. **Joan** was captured with her parents and brother, **Ian**, after surviving the Giang Bee sinking. They were in a lifeboat for many hours before being rescued. The wording can be read beside the link – <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/41450345/5343565>

FEPOW History of Entertainment – Message from Meg Parkes

There is a new blog series from **Emeritus Professor Sears Eldredge**, entitled **"Rice and Shine"** which was launched on 9th June on the Researching FEPOW History Group blog.

American Professor of Dance and Performance, **Sears Eldredge** is the leading authority on the history of the entertainments staged in camps in Singapore and along the Thailand-Burma Railway during the Second World War. His is by far the most comprehensive study of its kind yet to be shared, having been published as an online free-to-download e-book in 2014. Now **Eldredge** wants to share much of his unpublished research concerning camps in other parts of southeast Asia and the Far East, in regular **"Rice and Shine"** blog posts on RFHG's blog, starting in June.

See: <https://fepowhistory.com/2021/06/09/rice-and-shine/>

Malaysian Newspaper Cuttings

Reports in the Malaysian newspapers demonstrate confused and contradictory messages coming from the South Korean Courts about the historical abuse of Koreans during WW2.

In January 2021 the NST reported that a South Korean Court had ordered the Japanese Government to pay compensation to 12 WW2 sex slaves. This drew an immediate denunciation by Tokyo. Yet in April 2021, the Star reported that the same South Korean Court has dismissed a case brought by other sex slaves and their families for compensation due to Japan's "sovereign immunity" over the claim. Mainstream historians say that up to 200,000 women from all parts of Asia, but mainly from Korea were forced to work in Japanese military brothels during WW2.

Also in April, The Star reported that the new Japanese Prime Minister, **Yoshihide Suga**, sent a ritual offering to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine which honours Japan's war dead including war criminals. This was his second offering since taking office last September. Former P.M. **Shinzo Abe** also visited the Shrine in person at the same time.

The Daily Telegraph reported on 8th June 2021 that the location of the remains of Japan's most senior war criminals, including **Hideki Tojo** and 6 other leaders, who were hanged and their bodies cremated and dumped at sea, has been discovered. A Japanese academic found a document in the US National Archives in which it was reported that the remains were scattered at a specific place in the Pacific Ocean in January 1949. The exact place was kept secret to avoid creating a memorial which could be turned in to a rallying point for nationalists.

MVG Annual Lunch – RAF Club.

This is booked for 16th October 2021 and we hope that it can go ahead as planned. Please see "Dates" for details and menu.

**BISHOP JOHN LEONARD WILSON'S ACCOUNT OF
THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF SINGAPORE on 24th October 1946**
Printed in the Scottish Association of Retired Anglican Clergy
and broadcast on the BBC

When the Japanese captured the city of Singapore early in 1942, they ordered all Europeans except neutrals to parade and be ready for internment. Certain people were exempted because they belonged to essential services such as telephones, electric power stations, transport etc. I went to see the Japanese authorities to ask for exemptions for certain church ministers. I have always taken the line that the churches are an essential service, but, as I had not always got the British Government to agree with this proposal, I did not have much hope of getting any satisfaction from the Japanese authorities. They told me that I must be interned because the British had interned all the Japanese bishops and priests. I assured them this was not so. I said to them, "The British did not intern a single bishop or priest in Singapore." I did not tell them there were not any to intern. Eventually, rather to my surprise, they gave permission for myself and two of my clergy to remain on parole. They told me they would not provide any pay or rations as they were doing in the case of other men not interned. I knew, therefore, that I should be dependent upon the local population – Chinese, Indians and Eurasians (Eurasians being the children of parents one of whom is Asiatic and the other European).

Material and Spiritual Gifts

I need not have worried about my dependence because, while we were on parole, we received gifts which were ample enough to feed and clothe us during the whole time of liberation; but, however great were their material gifts, they were nothing compared to the spiritual gifts. I have known something of the meaning of fellowship in the parishes that I served in England – in Coventry, in Sunderland and other places – but never have I known so deep and understanding a friendship as I received from the local population of Malaya. I began to understand for the first time what the Church should be; a forgiving society, a beloved community. Remember that the people had been brought face to face with a great crisis of their life. The whole foundation of their lives seemed to have gone; their future was insecure; their very lives were in danger. Most of the things in which they had trusted had turned to ashes, but in that day when the heavens were falling, they had found one thing secure; their faith in Christ was as firm as a rock. It was no wonder that they came together in spite of many difficulties and dangers to praise God and to help each other. We were lucky in Singapore in being allowed to hold our services. In Rangoon the Cathedral became a distillery, in Hong Kong a social club, but throughout the whole time of the Japanese occupation, services were held every day. This was largely due to the fact that a Japanese Christian, **Captain Ogawa**, was made Director of Education and Religion. He was quite courageous in claiming for the Church the religious liberty which the Japanese had promised, and he got himself into great difficulties with his own military police because of his friendliness to the Christian Church. I felt I had a responsibility, not only to my own church members, but to all Christians in Singapore, because most of them had been deprived of their European leaders and friends; and so we formed a Christian federation of all churches. Very soon, however, our troubles began.

Suspicion and Internment

It is not easy to know all the facts, but suspicion came upon us because of three things. First, I was not unmindful of the plight of my fellow-Europeans who had been taken to Changi gaol. It was a gaol built for seven hundred Asiatic prisoners and into it the Japanese had crowded nearly four thousand men, women and children. Many of them were sick and were brought to hospitals in the town. There I met them and heard of their conditions. They were very short of essential food stuffs. If they had the money they could buy eggs and bananas and coconuts. But few of them had any money, so I tried to borrow, first from the Japanese and then from the local banks and then from the International Red Cross. None of them was allowed by the authorities to lend any money to prisoners of war or internees, so I borrowed it on behalf of the Anglican Church. I told the lenders that the Anglican Church had outlasted many empires and, whoever won this war, the Church of God would go on and their money would be safe. So large amounts of money were sent into Changi, and the Japanese began to suspect it. Secondly, the congregation at the cathedral had become larger and larger because it was the centre of friendliness in a suspicious world. The services were in English, the language hated by the enemy. From their point of view we were a source of danger, and their suspicions increased. Thirdly, they found amongst my papers some letters that I had written on **T.E. Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia**. Many of you will remember that part of his work (a very small part) was the using of the money to influence the Arab leaders to revolt against the Turks. They seemed to imagine that I was carrying out the same policy and trying to stir up the local population to revolt against the conquering Japanese. It was no surprise, therefore, when after the thirteen months of liberation I was interned in March 1943, and sent to Changi gaol.

Here the conditions were appallingly crowded, but life was not too difficult until October of that year. It is

just three years ago since a great disaster fell upon the camp. The military police – that is, the Japanese Gestapo – raided the prison, searched all of our luggage and arrested some fifty of us. A few were released almost immediately; others remained for months, and fifteen died from the treatment they received. It is not my purpose to relate the tortures they inflicted upon us, but rather to tell you of some of the spiritual experiences of that ordeal. I knew this was to be a challenge to my courage, my faith and my love.

Long Hours of Ignoble Pain

I remember **Archbishop Temple** in one of his books writing that if we pray for any particular virtue, whether it be patience or courage or love, one of the answers that God gives to us is an opportunity for expressing that virtue. After my first beating I was almost afraid to pray for courage lest I should have another opportunity of exercising it, but my unspoken prayer was there, and without God's help I doubt whether I should have come through. Long hours of ignoble pain were a severe test. In the middle of that torture they asked me if I still believed in God. When by God's help I said, "I do," they asked me why God did not save me, and by the help of His Holy Spirit I said, "God does save me. He does not save me by freeing me from pain or punishment, but He saves me by giving me the spirit to bear it," and when they asked me why I did not curse them I told them that it was because I was a follower of Jesus Christ, who taught us that we were all brethren.

I did not like to use the words, "Father forgive them." It seemed too blasphemous to use our Lord's words, but I felt them, and I said, "Father, I know these men are doing their duty. Help them to see that I am innocent." And when I muttered, "forgive them," I wondered how far I was being dramatic and if I really meant it, because I looked at their faces as they stood around and took it in turns to flog, and their faces were hard and cruel and some of them were evidently enjoying their cruelty. But by the Grace of God I saw those men not as they were, but as they had been. Once they were little children playing with their brothers and sisters and happy in their parents' love, in those far-off days before they had been conditioned by their false nationalistic ideals and it is hard to hate little children. But even that was not enough. There came to my mind as I lay on the table the words of that Communion hymn:

*Look, Father, look on His anointed face,
And only look on us as found in Him.*

And so I saw them, not as they were, not only as they had been, but as they were capable of becoming, redeemed by the power of Christ and I knew that it was only common sense to say 'forgive'.

It is true, of course, that there were many dreary and desolate moments, especially in the early morning. I was in a crowded filthy cell with hardly any power to move because of my wounds, but here again I was helped tremendously by God. There was a tiny window at the back of the cell, and through the bars I could hear the song of the golden oriole. I could see the glorious red of the flame of the forest tree, and something of God's indestructible beauty was conveyed to my tortured mind. Behind the flame trees I glimpsed the top of Wesley's church and was so grateful the church had preserved so many of Wesley's hymns. One that I said every morning was, "Christ whose glory fills the skies." Do you remember the second verse?

*Dark and cheerless is the morn,
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day's return
Till Thy mercy's beams I see.*

So I went on to pray:

*Visit then this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief.*

And gradually the burden of this world was lifted and I was carried into the presence of God and received from Him the strength and peace which were enough to live by, day by day. This joy of prayer was used by God to help others. Many non-Christians came to ask me to teach them to pray because prayer evidently meant so much to those of us who were Christians. We were not supposed to talk to each other, but when the guards were not looking I told them of the elementary things of prayer, thanking Him, being sorry for things done wrong and praying for others and so we formed a wider fellowship than any I had known before, a fellowship of suffering humanity, and people knew that when they were taken out of the cell for questioning or torture there were others of us praying for them, praying that if it be God's will they should not suffer, but if they suffered they would be given the spirit to bear it and not involve others. One Chinese, after many weeks of teaching during the silent hours of the night, asked to be baptized, and I baptized him in the only water available, a lavatory basin at the back of the cell, which had to be used for all purposes. Later, I had the joy of confirming him before I left Singapore.

But there were other battles to be fought. I do not know how many of you know what real hunger is, but the temptation to greed is almost overwhelming. Here again we were helped. There was a young Roman Catholic in the cell. He was a privileged prisoner; he was allowed food from the outside. He could have eaten all of it and more than all of it, but never a day passed without his sharing it with some people in the cell. It was a small amount we got, but what an enormous difference it made. It raised the whole tone of

our life and it made it possible for others to follow his noble example and to learn to share with one another. After eight months I was released and for the first time got into the sunlight. I have never known such joy. It seemed like a foretaste of the Resurrection. For months afterwards I felt at peace with the universe, although I was still interned and I had to learn the lesson or the discipline of joy. How easy it is to forget God and all His benefits. I had known Him in a deeper way than I could ever have imagined, but God is to be found in the Resurrection as well as in the Cross, and it is the Resurrection that has the final word. God in all His power and strength and comfort is available to every one of us today. He was revealed to me, not because I was a special person, but because I was willing in faith to accept what God gave. I know it is true not just because the Bible says so or because the Church has told us, but because I have experienced it myself, and whether you are despondent or in joy, whether you are apathetic or full of enthusiasm, there is available for you at this moment the whole life of God with its victory over sin and pain and death. I pray to God that for your sakes, for England's sake, for the world's sake, for God's sake, you will accept Him.

NOTES

John Leonard Wilson was a lifelong friend and colleague of **Bishop Ronald Owen Hall** of South China. He arrived in Hong Kong on 10th February, 1938, upon **R.O. Hall's** invitation, and was installed as Dean of Saint John's Cathedral, Hong Kong on the 20th of the same month. [See *Saint John's Review* 10 (February, 1938):41-42; *The Outpost*, (April-June 1938): 14-17, and **Wilson's** recollection in *The Outpost* (February 1957):17-18]. On 22nd July, 1941, Feast of Mary Magdalene, he was consecrated Bishop of Singapore. The service was held in Saint John's Cathedral, Hong Kong. [*Saint John's Review* 13 (August, 1941): 241-243]. From 1941 to 1948, he was Bishop of Singapore. The above is his account of the Church's ministry during the Japanese occupation. It first appeared in *The Listener*, and was reprinted in *Saint John's Review*.

For further reading on the Anglican ministry in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation, see:

George O. Daniel, *Love Unites People: Memoirs of a Christian worker in Singapore from 1913 to 1959*, (Singapore: privately printed).

John Hayter & Jack Bennitt, *The War & After No. 2: Singapore* (London: SPCK, 1946); **John Hayter**, *Priest in Prison. Four years of life in Japanese-occupied Singapore, 1941-1945*. (West Sussex, Churchman Publishing Ltd. 1989).

Roy McKay, *John Leonard Wilson: Confessor for the Faith* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1973).

J.L. Wilson, *Only Look on us as Found in Him* (Cambridge: Mass: s.n. 1961).

THE DIARIES OF MARY WILSON

1938 - 1957

Typed by Tim Wilson at Crowdall - February/December 1996

Preface

As many people do, Mother had kept a diary spasmodically over long periods of her life. Not all of her outpourings were meant for public consumption, and some entries, indeed, are very private and personal. In the last years of her life we, her children, encouraged her to write down some of the events and key points with dates that could serve as an aide-memoire for posterity. We even thought that she might weave this into a more formal collection of memories possibly for publishing. After her death in 1984, **James** undertook to sort her papers and came across the following collection of papers compiled over several years in different styles – some hand-written, some typed on scrap paper (typical of her not to waste anything). I pledged to transcribe all of this into a document which would be copied to each of her children and this is the result.

I have followed the chronological order of events as far as possible, but sometimes the text is in fluent descriptive style and at other times the style reverts to abbreviated note form. There is also a lengthy section obviously taken from **Susan's** letters home – Mother probably kept all our letters – edited and hand-written accompanied occasionally by her comments.

Here they are, transcribed by **Tim** starting 29th February 1996.

The Forge, Crowdall

In February 1938, when **Susan** was 4¾ years and **Timothy** 1½, we left England for Hong Kong in the German ship **Gneisenau**. **Len** was to be Dean of H.K. It was cold and in the Bay of Biscay there was an 80 mile an hour gale. We were all sea sick, except **Tim**, for the first 48 hours. It was a Nazi ship with pictures of Hitler everywhere and strict rules about meals. As we went East and the weather improved, it was quite enjoyable.

We lived first in a flat in Middle Road halfway up the Peak. Then we went to Mountain Lodge, later to Magazine Gap. At the age of 5, **Susan** started at the Peak School in July.

Mt. Lodge was the summer residence of the Governor, but it was lent to us for three months in the Winter. Finally a house was bought for the Deanery – on Lec(??), at Pok Ulan, near the Queen Mary Hospital. It had a nice garden and overlooked a Chinese cemetery. You could see the sea from one window.

We found a Eurasian girl, half Portuguese, **Constance**, to act as a nurse for the children. There were two Chinese servants, **Ah Sing** and a cookboy. While we were in Middle Road, **Susan** was asked to be a bridesmaid with another little girl from the Peak School. The bridegroom was **Charles Boxer**, who was some kind of intelligence officer. The marriage broke up some years later, and **Boxer** became the lover of **Lin Yu Tang**, the writer and communist. I don't know what happened to the wife and can't remember her name.

In 1939, we all had a holiday in Chapa, in what was then French Indo-China, now Vietnam. **Constance** came with us. **Len** and I went to Kunming, China, and visited **Gilbert Baker**.

In July 1940, after we had been 2½ years in Hong Kong, we were suddenly shattered by the news that, presumably on orders from the Colonial Office in London, all British women and children were to be 'compulsorily' evacuated. Until recently we in H.K. had not felt much impact from the war in Europe, but with the Japanese advance through Burma to the borders of Thailand, and the obvious lack of any kind of defence for the island and its adjacent mainland, the government had become panic stricken. Hence the edict, which brought consternation among the British and bewilderment among the Chinese, whose women and children it was apparently not considered necessary to protect in the event of a Japanese invasion.

Rumours were rife. Where were we to go? Australia? The Philippines? England? Would there be any exceptions? It was alleged that **Mr. King**, the Chief of the H.K. Police had said that any woman who objected or refused to go would be 'carried on board kicking and screaming'. However, it soon became known that those women who had jobs in the government, or social services, such as nursing, however small the job was, might be permitted to stay. It was then found that a surprising number of British women whom one had supposed up to then had been leading fairly idle lives, had really all the time had jobs with the Red Cross or St. John's Ambulance, or auxiliary nurses, or teachers. Anything which could be wangled to be a reason for not going.

As the wife of the Dean of H.K. I had no possible excuse, not even a part time job, and we both felt that I ought to go. We had two children, **Susan** aged 6 and **Timothy** aged 4, and after several miscarriages and a near miss, I was seven months pregnant with **Martin** in the womb. But it was a shattering blow for us. In ten years of marriage, **Len** and I had never been separated before, and I felt afraid and helpless at the thought of leaving him. I have never been an independent person and I have always relied on **Len** in any major decisions in our married life. He had always made the arrangements, paid the bills, engaged whatever staff we had. How could I do all this on my own, how could I manage without him? We had not been long in our new Deanery at Pokfulam on the ?(sic) side of the island. When we had arrived at the beginning of 1938 there had been no house for the Dean; we moved from pillar to post, first to a flat in Middle Road, then for a short spell in Mountain Lodge for the winter, and at last after much importuning by the Dean, the Government had given permission for the purchase of **On Lee**, a lovely house and garden, overlooking a Chinese cemetery and in the distance the sea. I remember two things about it. It was partly furnished with basic things, and in our bedroom was the largest bed I've ever seen. Our Chinese servant, **Ah Sing**, said about it when he saw it, "It is for one master, two mississ." Then second thing I remember was there were paved concrete slabs all the way round the house, and **Tim** and **Susan** spent hours racing round and round on their tricycles.

The Government had chartered two Cunard liners to take the evacuees to their destinations, and we decided that I should go to Australia on the **Empress of Japan** (which had been renamed the **Empress of Canada**). After all, my mother being an Australian, I had cousins in Australia, and perhaps it would not be long before I was back in Hong King, and the Japanese scare would be over.

Then a new situation arose, which lessened the blow as far as we were concerned. The Government decided to send with the evacuees two men (I think this was at the insistence of the disgruntled husbands left behind) who were to make representations to the Australian Government about the payment of allowances to evacuated wives and to see to their welfare and help them to find suitable housing accommodation, schools for the children etc. etc. One of the two men commissioned to do this was the Dean as in the two years he had become a popular figure in all circles – government, commercial, police, army etc. and everyone trusted him and found him competent. The other one, concerned with finance, was a **Mr. Maugham**. The Dean had been a key figure in the organisation of relief for the large numbers of Chinese refugees who were pouring in from the mainland of China. He was to accompany the evacuees to Australia, see them settled in and return to the Colony. We reckoned this would take two months, so he

could wait until **Martin** was born before returning to H.K. which was a great comfort to me. We left at the beginning of August, and it turned out to be a marvellous trip, as **Len** and I were given the Number One Suite – the Bridal Suite. The ship was only half full because so many women had wangled permission to stay, and as the Government had organised provisions for a full complement, there was plenty of food, and lots of room on board.

When we arrived at Sydney we stayed at the Wentworth Hotel (can't remember how or why we went there or much about the first few weeks), but I know **Len** was very busy doing his welfare job. We found a furnished house for me in the charming little country town of Bowral (famous for being where the cricketer **Don Bradman** had been born!). The house was in Wahrenda Street. Several other evacuees came to settle in Bowral too, in fact there was a small colony of us, and the Australians were very good to us and did what they could to make us welcome and comfortable. Some, used to having servants, complained about having to do their own work, threw their weight about, and behaved somewhat disagreeably, and though there was only a small number who did this, they gave us a bad name and did nothing to enhance the reputation of English women among our Australian hosts. But in Bowral all was well, partly due to the good offices and influence of the Rector and his wife, the **Rev. Arthur** and **Mrs. Nona Pearce**. Bowral is about 80 miles south of Sydney, not far from the foothills of the Blue Mountains, and has a pleasant climate, hot and dry in summer (which corresponds to the English winter of course) and delightfully cool in winter. The main drawback in the summer was the flies, a real curse. Everyone wore nets attached to their hats, and most houses were screened. The blowflies were particularly bad. We were settled in nicely by the time **Len** had to return to H.K. I had been booked in to the local maternity hospital, we had found a doctor, **Dr. Herrington**, **Susan** had been accepted as a day pupil at the local Methodist School, Annarsley, we had found a daily, **Anne**, aged 14 to help with the children, and we had booked a maternity nurse for when I came out of hospital – first **?**, later **Barbara Bateman**. Two of my friends had also come out on the same ship – **Primrose Rosenthal**, wife of the Archdeacon of H.K. and **Dorothy Strong**, wife of the Missions to Seamen chaplain, **Charles**. They eventually also settled in Bowral, and after **Len** had gone back, **Dorothy Strong** shared the house with me. Later on, they both went to New Zealand to live.

Martin was born on 7th October 1940 and a few days later **Len** returned to H.K. I am alleged to have said when the nurse told me I had produced “a little Australian son”, “Oh, I don't think he can be an Australian. He hasn't said ‘bloody’ yet”, and when **Len** said his hair looked slightly ginger, “And what girl do you know who has ginger hair?” I must have been confused by the anaesthetic.

On 15th January 1941 the Archbishop of Canterbury (**Cosmo Gordon Lang**) wrote to **Leonard** in Hong Kong, asking him to be Bishop of Singapore. He didn't apparently get the letter for some time, but after weighing up the pros and cons and seeking advice from various friends, chiefly **R.O. Hall**, he decided to accept and cabled me for my reaction. I cabled back: 15th March “Loving congratulations willingly accept whatever you decide wherever greatest need.” His father cabled, “You are well qualified. Accept. Loving wishes.” We seemed to correspond by cables for a time. On 20th March, I cabled, “Rejoice exceedingly eager await details cabling **Phillips Dorothy Primrose** send congratulations dearest love.” Then there was the question of where the consecration was to take place and after much cabling back and forth it was decided to have it in Hong Kong because of the difficulty in war time of getting to England.

Everything took such a long time to decide and arrange. In the event the consecration took place in Hong Kong Cathedral on 22nd July 1941, St. Magdalene's Day with the American Bishop of the Philippines, **Binstead**, presiding and assisted by **Bishop Hall** of Hong Kong, **Bishop Soong** of Szechwan (Chinese) and **Bishop Mok** of Canton.

Len came to Australia to fetch his family, and we all **Len, me, Susan, Tim** and **Martin** flew to Singapore. **Susan** was 7, **Tim** 5 and **Martin** 9 months. It took 3 days and we spent one night in Townsville, one night in Darwin and one night in Surabaya in Java. In Singapore we were given hospitality by the Manager of the Chartered bank and his wife, **Mr. and Mrs. Baxter**, a lovely family with 2 children. They had a beautiful house in Cairnhill and lots of pet animals and they kindly invited **Susan** and **Tim** to stay with them while **Len** and I and the baby went to Hong Kong by ship. After only 24 hours in Singapore I had been given special permission by the H.K. Government to enter the Colony. We stayed there a fortnight and went back to Singapore to install ourselves in the Bishop's House, called **Bishopsbourne**, in the district of Tanglin.

I cannot recall anything about the stay in Hong Kong or the journey there or back. There are photos and newspaper cuttings of the Consecration which took place on 22nd July 1941 – St. Mary Magdalene's Day, a magnificent day for **Len** – we were married on 22nd July 1930. The enrolment in Singapore Cathedral was in August and we began to enjoy life together as a family in the Bishop's house. The Diocese of Singapore included not only the island of Singapore (about the size of the Isle of Wight), but also the Malay peninsula up to the border with Thailand (formerly Siam), Java and Sumatra. I don't think we had any priests working in Sumatra, though we had one in Bangkok – **Eagling** – and this meant there was a lot of travelling to be done by the Bishop. Bishopsbourne was a pleasant two-story house with

downstairs an entrance hall cum lounge, dining-room and the spare room with a bathroom. The main sitting room was upstairs, and two good sized bedrooms with dressing rooms and bathrooms. The servants' quarters were downstairs at the back of the house. Across the lawn on one side of the house there was an annexe, about 30 yards away containing the Bishop's office, a chapel and a spare bedroom and bathroom. Here there were also quarters for the Malay Syce (driver) and his family, and the gardener, also Malay. House servants were usually Chinese and therefore their quarters had to be separate from the Malay or Muslim ones. We had inherited the former Bishop's cook, but we found him inefficient, slovenly and arrogant, and soon our dear Chinese boy, **Ah Sing**, came to join us from Hong Kong, and even returned to us after the war. Our driver **Ismail** (another **Ken**) was young and good looking, efficient, intelligent and loyal and took a great pride in his appearance and that of the Bishop's car and was delighted to use the Diocesan flag on the bonnet (incidentally this was made and embroidered by **Muriel**) which gave him status with other drivers! As well as **Ah Sing** who was in charge of the domestic staff, there were two Chinese amahs, one to do the washing, the other to clean and help to wait at table. **Ah Sing** did the shopping for meat and vegetables, I did the rest, mostly at the Singapore Cold Storage and Chinese grocery stores in town which was about 3 miles away from the house. The house was surrounded with stone rain water drains which were later to be a source of amusement and play for **Martin** and **James** who with **Angela Mainprice** sailed their boats and built dams, sometimes in the company of **Ismail's** children. Singapore, being almost on the Equator, was very hot and steamy throughout most of the year and in the monsoon season there were tropical downpours which turned the garden into a lake. Going across from the house to the annexe you could be soaked in a couple of minutes. (During the war when the Japanese occupied the house, they built a covered way between the two buildings). The garden on the other side of the house was on a slope, and there were not many flowers, and I remember seeing a plaque which said that **Bishop Winnington Ingram** had planted a tree on that spot. But it had disappeared. **Bishop Roberts** (L's predecessor) speaks of "a good tennis court as well as a badminton court", but I don't remember ever having seen either, and certainly we have never played tennis or badminton. There was a Bishop's chaplain, and at that time no Diocesan sec., but an Indian (**K.T. Alexander**) was treasurer and a young Indian girl acted as clerk/typist (**Mabel Charles**). There soon began a round of interminable social activities – receptions for the Bishop (and wife, of course) from the various communities – English, Chinese, Tamil, Eurasian (mixture of Asian and European). At first, I was fairly lied because of the children but when we began to know and trust our Chinese Amahs, they were sometimes able to baby-sit, which they enjoyed doing, as nearly all Chinese love children. Singapore before the war was an ideal place for small children. There were constant parties with lovely food, (you could get anything in those days) local food supplemented by imports from Australia and America, fresh English-type fruits and veg brought down from cooler highlands in the North etc. Local fruits like mangoes, pomelo, mangosteens, lychees, passion fruit, tree tomatoes, bananas, avocados and durian – a large yam-like fruit which has a strong repulsive smell but which is alleged to taste divine, and to have aphrodisiac qualities – melons of all kinds, oranges, limes, tangerines etc. etc. There were always special entertainments at children's parties – magic shows, conjuring, film shows, and there were slides and swings and all the guests got presents before they went home. It was an affluent society. Then there were dinner parties and cocktail parties galore. We could not compete on this scale, but had a few quiet little dinner parties and small cocktail parties. There was one splendid attribute of Singapore society – there was practically no race discrimination. At Govt. House receptions Chinese, Malays, Indian and British (or European) mixed indiscriminately.

After a few months L began a series of tours up country and round the diocese.

St. Andrew's Cathedral is a Victorian Gothic building, built by convicts in the 19th century, light and airy, in the centre of the town. Congregations were good, and entirely mixed racially with a good proportion of English speaking Chinese Christians. There was only a handful of English priests scattered around the country, but a lot of Chinese and Indian priests, with fascinating names like **Gok Woh Mo**, **John Bang Hang Lee**, **P.I.S. Baboo**, **Gnanamani**, **Gnanasahamani** and **Yesidian**.

Singapore, an island about the size of the Isle of Wight and which gives its name to the diocese, is joined to the Malay peninsula by a stone causeway about 12 miles long. Great stretches of the mainland are covered with deep thick jungle, the trees are so thick and close together that if you are looking down from an aeroplane it looks like sprouting broccoli or lots of green cauliflower. The climate is hot and steamy, the ideal climate for growing rubber trees. Rubber is one of the main exports, and there are a good many plantations, which used to be run by British Expatriates with Tamil labourers. We had arrived in Singapore in July 1941, so **Susan** was 7, **Timothy** 5 and **Martin** 9 months. On 8th Dec, i.e. 5 months after we arrived, the Japanese entered the war by bombing the American base at Pearl Harbour in the Hawaiian Islands, near Honolulu in the Pacific. L was up country, having been to Bangkok, when the first bombs fell on the centre of Singapore, killing I don't know how many people, mostly Chinese. I had taken the children to

sleep with some friends (the **Bennetts** – **Jack Bennett** was a priest) nearby as I did not like being in the house alone, and my first reaction when I heard the crunch of distant falling bombs was anxiety lest the children should be awakened by the noise! In a few days time **L** returned to my intense relief and then began a time of increasing fear and worry about the future, as we learned that the Japanese troops had landed on the north east coast and were advancing rapidly through the peninsula with our troops retreating before them. Everything happened so quickly we could hardly believe it had happened. We had been led to believe that Singapore was an impregnable fortress, and we had the two great battleships, *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* in our harbour, to guard us from invasion – by sea! Many books have been written about the Singapore campaign (see especially, “The Fall of Singapore” by **Frank Owen**) and the ignominious defeat of the British by the Japanese in Malaya, some criticising, some seeking to justify this policy, the arrogant stupidity or ‘brave confidence’ of the civilian population of Singapore. One or two incidents during that time of waiting and apprehension come to my mind. The dark depression that came over us, as we sat in our upstairs sitting room at Bishopsbourne, listening to the radio announcing the sinking of the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* on 11th December on their way north to challenge the Japanese fleet, without any air cover. The unbelievable intrepidity, naivety, call it what you will, of **Admiral Tom Phillips**. We were soon to learn of the horrible fate of many of the sailors from these two ships from survivors with terrible burns from the boiling oil as the ships sank. One of the survivors, a chaplain, was a friend of **Leonard**, **Stanley Bezzant**, a theologian who was writing a book (I don’t know what the subject was, probably a theological treatise of some kind), but he had his papers and notes with him and, of course, they all went down, and many months, years perhaps, of work was destroyed. After coming out of hospital he came to stay with us while waiting to be sent back to England. Years later, he became Dean of St. John’s College, Cambridge, and was one of **Martin’s** tutors, so he must have recovered from the effects of oil and salt water in his lungs, and burns.

Another memory is of sheltering at first under the dining room table and later under the stone staircase during the Japanese air raids and reading stories to the children. I remember especially, “The Five Chinese Brothers” which I eventually came to know by heart.

These were night time raids, but later when the Jap planes began to come over in the daytime, trenches were dug in our garden, and there was a British soldier on duty near the house, though what he was supposed to do for us I never discovered, for he was more frightened that we were. Once, when Jap planes came over he jumped into the trench beside me absolutely trembling with fear, and he and I clung to each other while he shouted, “the bloody bastards” and other endearing oaths to the oblivious Japanese bombers overhead. He was quite beside himself with terror and rage. As is well known, the Japanese troops eventually landed on the east side of Malaya at Kota Bharu (sic) on 8th December 1941, and began gradually to gain possession, making their way across the country to Penang, which they took with very little resistance, making their way south through the jungle with the British (including Australians and Gurkhas) retreating before them. British civilians who had got out in time and made their way to Singapore told stories of terrible atrocities in Penang, of bodies unburied lying in the streets, of the town being unmercifully bombed and machine gunned. Some friends of ours, the **Tuckers** (**Hugh** had been at Leatherhead at the same time as **Leonard**) who had a rubber plantation at Kluang in Johore, arrived in Singapore with nowhere to stay, so we turned our chapel into a bedroom and housed **Ursula Tucker** and her three children, **Anne**, **Tony** and the baby **Timothy**. **Hugh** had been called up and was serving with the Volunteers. **Leonard** and I discussed what I should do – whether to stay with our 3 children – and I was certain I was pregnant again – or to go. **Ursula** had made up her mind to go to Australia, and I admit I did not take much convincing for I was, frankly, scared. **Ursula Tucker** and I managed to obtain passages on a ship [Editor: This was the *Aorangi*] which sailed on 15th January 1942. Singapore surrendered a month later on 15th February.

There was never a question about **Leonard** leaving. He would have to stay with his people – not only the British, but also the Chinese, Indian and Eurasian Christians. His story has been told many times, and can be read in many letters and files, and in his biography. [See: “John Leonard Wilson Confessor for the Faith” by **Roy McKay**.] The account of his torture is written up officially in the book, “The Double Tenth” the official account of the trial of the Japanese ‘war criminals’ which took place in Singapore after the surrender.

This is my story.

When **Len** and I said goodbye to each other on the wharf that morning, neither of us realised what was in store for us, or how long it would be before we saw each other again. I thought the worst would be over in a few months, perhaps 6 months, the British could not possibly be defeated by a horrible little yellow race like the Japs, and all would be well. I don’t know what went through **L’s** mind, but neither of us could have possibly foreseen the unspeakable horrors that he was to face, or our hearts would have failed us for fear. [To be continued in October.]

[Editor: With thanks to James Wilson for his permission to print his mother’s diary.]

BARRY'S STORY

NORMAN BARRY FLETCHER 1908-1999

"Prisoners cannot complain as they are lucky not to have been dead before."

Singapore was the meeting place for Barry and his future wife Ruth Mabin. The wedding photograph is one of the few mementos of that era as they lost all their possessions in the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in 1942.

Barry grew up through the great depression in Manchester, England. He attended Manchester Grammar School where he won scholarships enabling him to study at university. He obtained his Masters' Degree with First Class Honours in Electrical Engineering. Barry spent three years with the Iraq Petroleum Company working on communication systems in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. He then joined the Colonial Service in Malaya and Singapore.



Barry and Ruth - 1939

In New Zealand, it appears that Ruth's uncle, Edward Day (Nunki), brother of 'Granny Mabin' had visited whilst on leave from Malaya. Un-married, Edward had the notion that Ruth, would be ideal for the position 'consort' (associate) for his position in the Malay States where he was a Resident Commissioner. So it came to pass that Ruth arrived in Singapore and in time met Barry. They were married at the Singapore Cathedral in 1939. Granny Mabin attended the wedding. David, their first of three children, was borne in Kuala Lumpur in 1941.

In the latter half of 1941, Barry went on six months leave taking Ruth and David to New Zealand via Australia. It was during this time that the Japanese entered the war, invading Malaya and beginning their drive down the Malay Peninsula toward Singapore.

Barry volunteered to return to Malaya. Ruth's youngest sister Cynthia remembers looking out along the boulder bank from the Mabin home in Cleveland Terrace, Nelson, watching the ship carrying Barry to Wellington on the first leg of his return to Malaya. Ruth and David remained in Nelson for what transpired to be the duration of the war.

Barry returned in time for the defence of Singapore where he became the Captain of the 'Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces Signals Battalion'. Barry would have arrived just in time for the Japanese assault on Singapore where little preparation had been made for defence of the island's 'back door'. Using light tanks and even bicycles as troop transport, the Japanese had advanced rapidly down the Malay Peninsula since their landing in northern Malaya and southern Thailand on 8th December, 1941. By 31st January, 1942, Singapore was isolated from mainland Malaya, the joining causeway having been destroyed. Within two weeks the Japanese had landed troops on the island of Singapore and took control of the island's water supply on 13th February. By this time, no Allied air cover remained and

Singapore was being bombed relentlessly. With a critical food shortage and lack of ammunition available to the defenders, the British surrendered to the Japanese on 15th February, 1942. This was the greatest defeat ever suffered by the British, more so since the British had the upper hand in troop numbers. More detail of this disaster is included in Vic's story.

Later an Australian commander wrote: *"The whole operation seems incredible: 550 miles in 55 days – (we were) forced back by a small Japanese army of only two divisions, riding stolen bicycles and without artillery support."*

From Winston Churchill's records: *"There must be no thought of sparing the troops or population; commanders and senior officers should die with their troops. The honour of the British Empire and the British Army is at stake."*

Some 130,000 prisoners were initially assembled at military barracks at Changi. From there, groups of prisoners would be despatched to Japan and Japanese-occupied locations to serve as slave labour in mines, unloading ships and in Barry's case, building a railroad in Thailand.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 收容所 Camp | 泰 II | 番 號 No. | 7713 6777 |
| 姓 名 Name | FLETCHER, NORMAN BARON | 生 年 月 日 Date of Birth | 29th September 1908 |
| 國 籍 Nationality | 英 | 所 屬 部 隊 Unit | No. Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. |
| 階 級 身 分 Rank | CAPTAIN. 陸軍大尉 | 捕 獲 年 月 日 Date of Capture | 昭和 17 年 2 月 15 日 |
| 捕 獲 場 所 Place of Capture | 昭南 | 母 之 名 Mother's Name | Kate. |
| 父 之 名 Father's Name | John Francis | 職 業 Occupation | 郵便局長 POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS |
| 本 籍 地 Place of Origin | Urmston, Manchester, ENGLAND. | 通 報 先 Destination of Report | Ruth Fletcher, 24 Cleveland Road, Nelson, NEW ZEALAND. |
| | | 特 記 事 項 Remarks | |

Barry's Prisoner of War record upon capture

Prisoners would have quickly come to terms with the Japanese philosophy that it was dishonourable to be captured, consequently, they, the prisoners were considered as sub-human beings by the Japanese. Already there had been a massacre of patients and medical

staff at a Singapore hospital. Thousands upon thousands of Chinese were being executed; for Japan was at war with China.

Barry, along with his brother-in-law Vic, were destined for the 'Burma Railway' in north east Thailand where, for three and a half years they would be part of the slave labour force building, then maintaining the rail link between Thailand and Burma. It is estimated that one life was lost for every sleeper laid on this 415km stretch of railway previously considered by experts to be impossible, due to the harsh conditions and terrain taking a huge toll on life that would accompany such a venture. The death toll has been estimated around 100,000 lives inclusive of native conscripted labour. 12,621 Allied Prisoners of War, died.



The cruelty meted out by the Japanese has to be seen in context. The order from on high was that the railroad to Burma had to be completed in 18 months. 'The Emperors will decrees it'. The chain of command filtered down with severe consequences for failure in any link in the chain, including the Japanese and Korean guards down to the prisoners carrying out the work. Beating was the normal method of showing displeasure. Also, the ruthless Kempeitai, a form of military police, had sway over camp commanders, swooping on camps to carry out inspections. Korcan Guards were subservient to the Japanese and as such were subjected to regular beatings which were then passed on to the prisoners with extras! Fear was ever the motivator.

I recall Barry commenting on the senseless beatings when something minor went wrong that would take but a minute to remedy. Instead a guard would beat the daylights out of whoever appeared to be the cause of the problem. Barry was the chain man on the day a log being towed by an elephant was caught on a tree root. Everything came to a halt. All that was needed was to lever the butt of the log over the tree root. Instead a guard went berserk with the beating routine which took a lot longer than fixing the problem.

Nephew Tim Cook recalls Barry telling him an elephant story. In Tim's words:

The elephant was trying to pull a heavy load up an embankment but simply wasn't



strong enough. A Japanese guard was watching the proceeding causing the mahout (the rider) to be terrified for his own life so his urging of the elephant turned into beating the elephant with his ankus (a rod with a hook and spike on the end) until blood was pouring from the elephants head. Barry couldn't remember if the elephant made it up the embankment or not – his memory was the hierarchy of barbarity.

Tim also recalls about hiding the radio. In many camps, prisoners had made simple receiving radio sets, so were often more informed about what was going on in the outside world than the Japanese. In Tim's words:

'I don't think Barry was responsible for operating the wireless, but its storage place was moved around on a regular basis trying to stay a step ahead of the Japanese searches. At one point it was buried under Barry's bed/sleeping mat, and he said he was "terrified" that it would be found and he would be punished (i.e. beaten to death').

Then there were tropical jungle ulcers - infections that resulted in weeping pussy ulcers down to and exposing bones, probably feared more by prisoners than the Japanese.

Medics had to improvise for much of their needs. Hand saws and razors being used for amputations, a piece of wood to bite on in lieu of anaesthetic. Old clothing had to be recycled for bandages, used again and again, boiled to sterilize.



'Hospital' ward - a prisoners sketch

As the war progressed, the Allied forces began long distance bombing raids along the railway. Prison camps were often close to the railway and initially not recognised as such by the bomber pilots, with some prisoners being killed. Successful bombing runs resulted in more work for prisoners, repairing the tracks and bridges. Driven by the urgency of repairs was prisoners were often killed whilst forced to work in hazardous situations.

Another 'Tim' memory was Barry telling him about a Liberator bomber flying over their camp, a crew member dropped his flying glove into the camp where it was treasured as a form of connection with the 'outside world.

I recall on several occasions reference to 'The Raft Incident' passed down the family line. 'Sick prisoners were sent down river on rafts to 'hospital' camps'. Vic, (probably in his capacity as a medical orderly) recognised Barry's voice amongst the sick down by the river to find him on a raft from which he was taken and nursed back to 'health'.



Unloading the sick from a raft

Another incident, from Gloria, (Vic's wife) is that Vic was walking past the camp latrines and saw a body in the mess associated with such places. Vic realised that it was Barry and dragged him out of the mess and revived him, undoubtedly saving Barry's life.
Unloading the sick from rafts

CONFIDENTIAL M.I. 9/JAP/ No. BLOCK
No 195
A746 A

WRITE IN BLOCK CAPITAL LETTERS IN PENCIL

No. _____ Rank SERGEANT Surname FIRSTMAN
 Christian Names NORMAN BARRETT Decorations _____
 Ship (R.N., U.S.N. or Merchant Navy) _____ Unit & Div. (Army) FM 5th SIG Hqs
 Squadron and Command (R.A.F., A.A.F.) _____
 Date of Birth 22 JUL 1908 Date of Enlistment MARCH 1937
 Private Address and Telephone No. % MALAYAN POSTS & TELEGRAPH DEPT
CROWN AGENTS FOR COLONIES, LONDON
 Place and Date of Original Capture SINGAPORE, FEB 15th 1942
 (Aircrew R.A.F. to give place and date of a/c crash).

1. What camps, detachments or hospitals were you in? Give dates and names of the British Camp Leaders, Detachment (or Block) Leaders or, in the case of hospitals, the Senior British Medical Officers.

| Camp or Hospital. | Dates. | Camp Leader. | Detachment or Block Leader (if any). |
|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| <u>CHANGI</u> | <u>FEB - OCT 42</u> | | |
| <u>NEW LUNG LAM</u> | <u>OCT - FEB 43</u> | | |
| <u>THE LAKE</u> | <u>FEB - APRIL 43</u> | | |
| <u>SEAN PANG</u> | <u>APRIL - MAY 43</u> | | |
| <u>SEAN PANG</u> | <u>MAY - AUG 43</u> | | |
| <u>SEAN PANG</u> | <u>AUG - OCT 43</u> | | |
| <u>SEAN PANG</u> | <u>OCT - FEB 44</u> | | |

2. ESCAPES OR ATTEMPTED ESCAPES. (Additional paper will be supplied on request if required).

Barry's imprisonment locations on the Burma Railway

Sadly, the Japanese did not distribute Red Cross food and medical supplies sent to prisoners. Upon liberation, it was found that most of what had been sent was stored in huts at the camps. The very things that could have made for healthier, more useful prisoners were denied them. Why? In the words of one Japanese Officer being interrogated by a British Officer who had parachuted into a camp after the surrender: *"The prisoners would have been better fed than us if we had distributed the relief packages."*

In another recorded instance, when a British Officer requested more food and medical supplies for the prisoners, the response was: *"Prisoners cannot complain as they are lucky not to have been dead before."*

It seems the Japanese lacked any sense of logic in approaching issues or problems. Recorded in the book 'The Prisoner List' is the matter of gangs being assembled to carry logs on their shoulders. The gangs were not allowed to assemble themselves into a row in descending height so that each person could bear part of the load. "Speedo, Speedo" was the Japanese mentality resulting in mixed heights with short prisoners often unable to bear some load, leaving the tall ones to struggle with extra load. All would be beaten if they were not going fast enough or collapsed!

With the Japanese capitulation came the logistics of repatriating prisoners from the railway camps. It would take many months for those from New Zealand to get back home as most transportation was heading to the northern hemisphere. Barry's son David says that Barry stayed at the Orient Hotel in Bangkok before returning to New Zealand. No doubt this 'hotel' was not some holiday experience, rather, a requisitioned building for repatriating prisoners and for officer accommodation.



A bridge under construction

David recalls some memories of the post war year. In his words:

'My mother Rut, and I went to Wellington to meet him, (my mother and I had spent the war in Nelson with my grandparents). After some time in Nelson my parents and I went to England by cargo ship. The ship had accommodation for a few passengers. The ship went around the bottom of South America through the Straits of Magellan. The sea was very rough. In England we stayed with my grandparents in Manchester. My Dad's father had been an Air Raid Warden in the war'.

'After visiting England, we sailed back to Malaya through the Suez canal. In 1947 we returned to New Zealand (Dad was on leave) and I was put into St Andrews College in Christchurch where I was a boarder for 3 years'.

Brother-in-Law Max recalls that during the war, he had a fairly close bond with 'young David' and he (Max) made a conscious decision upon Barry's return, to 'stand back' to allow Barry to get to know his son. Max remembers one time, sitting on Tahunanui beach with Barry who appeared to be in a trance for a long time before saying "Is this real? Is this real?"

One can only wonder what changes were perceived in Barry's character before and after war. As one former Japanese prisoner of war wrote: *'The Allies rebuilt Japan and Germany. Nobody rebuilt our lives. The tears and nightmares will remain until death'.*

Another Max recollection was of Ruth at the news of the war being over. Ruth was forever listening to radio news for snippets of information on the progress of the war. She probably

heard the first broadcast that 'it was over' and ran out onto Waimea Road in Nelson waving and shouting to passers-by "It's over, it's over". No doubt the next thought must have been, 'is he alive'?

As already intimated in David's childhood recollections, Barry and Ruth returned to Malaysia shortly after the war. Barry was again involved in telecommunications surviving another war when the Malay Communists endeavoured to take over the country. Several of Barry's friends were killed during this period.

In 1961 Barry retired as Deputy Director General of Telecommunications for Malaya and Singapore. He returned to New Zealand and took up teaching mathematics at Christ's College in Christchurch for 13 years. He and Ruth bought a house at Para Para in Golden Bay where they would stay whenever possible, finally retiring there. Surf casting was one of Barry's favourite past times, often spending a day out on Farewell Spit fishing for snapper.

In 2012 David, his Canadian wife Joanne and daughter Julia visited England where they visited the National Memorial Arboretum near Lichfield where their son Steven had a plaque in memory of:

Norman Barry Fletcher (1908-1999)

Captain FMSVF Signals Battalion

Captured in Singapore 1942



Barry and Ruth are survived by their sons David who lives in Winnipeg Canada, Peter who lives in New Plymouth and daughter Patricia who lives in Wellington.

With thanks to Steven John Fletcher, grandson of Barry Fletcher, for this article.

MRS. N.B. FLETCHER,
1 MRS. E.E.B. MABIN,
24 CLEVELAND ROAD,
NELSON, N.Z.

545965

Christmas Greetings 1943

to Ruth and little Dave from me.

SENDER'S NAME
AND ADDRESS: D.B. MABIN, 21 MESS. "DUMBAIR" IS THE SHIP I GUESS.

DEAR RUTH, HERE ARE SOME WORDS IN RHYME.

FOR ALL THE BEST AT CHRISTMASTIME

TO YOU AND DAVE, AND BARRY TOO,

ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT THERE WITH YOU.

BUT TRUSTING MUCH THAT 'FORTY-FOUR

WILL HAVE HIM HOME WITH YOU ONCE MORE.

SO GIVE YOURSELF A GREAT BIG HUG,

WITH LOVE AND KISSES—BROTHER DOUG.



ESCAPE FROM JAVA
SEEKING A SAFE HAVEN 1942 – Part 1
With thanks to Dave Croft MA

On the evening of the 8th March 1942, the 'emergency' radio station of the Dutch East Indies Radio Broadcasting Corporation – NIROM – formerly closed down with the broadcasting of the Dutch National Anthem. Three NIROM employees were arrested by the Field Kempeitai and executed on the 7th April 1942 as punishment for playing the National Anthem which the Japanese aggressors considered to be an anti-Japan act.
Dutch Surrender of Java 1942

Escaping Java 1942

The following are five short stories of attempts to escape from Java by Allied airmen. Not all were successful but it took courage and initiative.

1. Finders Keepers. 2nd March 1942. A damaged United States Navy Catalina flying boat from US Navy Patrol Squadron 101 was intentionally 'wrecked' before being abandoned at Tjilatjap. It was to be partly repaired over a period of several days with the intention of flying (allocated a temporary serial Y-3) to Australia by two Dutch Naval Aviation Service teams. One team was already in Tjilatjap working on another Catalina (Y-65) and the second team, led by **Lieutenant George Frederick Rijnders** *1 arrived on the 2nd March to try to repair the other aircraft (Y-3) to an 'airworthy' state. The first team soon abandoned working on Y-65 and joined forces with the Y-3 team. A Dutch Naval Aviation Catalina (Y-62) arrived sometime prior to the 6th March to be the navigation aircraft for the flight, as the compass on Y-3 was reading 'off course' and the navigation charts had been removed by the previous owners! That wasn't the end of the problems, the wiring for the starboard engine generator burned out when an engine start up was attempted. With an overload of passengers to be conveyed to Australia on each aircraft, and Y-3 unable to get airborne on one engine, Y-62 didn't hang around. The next step to try to start the failed engine was to use the starboard hand starter. Except it was missing! The port starter was tried ... and (surprisingly) worked!

On 6th March the aircraft took off from Tjilatjap for Broome NW Australia with half a tank of fuel and a defective compass, no radio and taking a course suggested by Y-62's navigator, that of navigating along the Australian coastline with the aid of an Australian Railways poster! Y-3 arrived at Broome on the morning of 7th March and, missing both anchor and map, the crew obtained both from the wrecked aircraft littering the Broome shoreline after the 3rd March raid by Japanese aircraft.

With all passengers disembarked, and now having obtained a proper navigational map, the aircraft and crew set off for Port Headland for repairs and refuelling before proceeding to Perth WA, arriving 8th March. The next journey for the aircraft, still with the Dutch crew on board, was to fly across southern Australia to the operational Training Unit for Catalina crews at RAAF Base Rathmines, NSW, where, on the 30th May 1942, the aircraft was handed over to the RAAF for training purposes only ... the aircraft's operational services being downgraded due to the damages received over Java. At Rathmines, Consolidated Catalina Y-3 was taken on the RAAF inventory as A24-28.

*1 Later **Lieutenant Commander G.F. Rijnders** joined 321 (Dutch) Squadron RAF based in Ceylon flying Catalinas. He played a prominent role for British Intelligence flying Catalina Y-57 on special duties flights to Sumatra (Operation Minerva) on 20th December 1941; 24th February 1943 and 21st March 1943.

2. VIPs escape to safety. On the evening of 7th March, three Lockheed Model 18 Lodestars of the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force and a KNILM (Royal Dutch Indies Airways) DC3 landed on a road near Bandoeng in order to fly VIP personnel*2 to a place of safety – namely Australia.

Apart from 15 senior Dutch officials and their families (including the **Lt. General-Governor** of the East Indies), Hurricane pilots of the RAF were allocated eight seats on one of the Lodestars – the passengers being **Wing Commander Maguire** OC 266 (F) Wing-Hurricanes; and **Squadron Leader Brooker** (AHQ and 232/243 squadrons – Hurricanes) both being officially ordered to leave by air. Also prioritized were Hurricane pilots, **Pilot Officer**

Tom Watson (RCAF), who had been in hospital following an accident and **Sergeant Pilots Sandeman Allen** (RAF); **Fairburn** (RAAF); **King** (RAF); **Hardie** (RAF); and **Young** (RAAF)*3. Any seats, should they become available, were to be allocated by drawing lots for three other pilots. This didn't happen when passengers **Sgts Fairburn and Young** (both RAAF) went off to have a meal (and a beer!) and missed the flight. It seems their seats were held for them to the very end! Also missing the flight was **Wg. Cdr. Maguire** who, on realising the aircraft hold was being loaded with VIP's luggage, left the aircraft in a vain attempt to have the luggage removed to make room for three other pilots. Whilst this was going on, the fuselage door was closed and, with the engine running, the aircraft taxied out and took off, leaving **Wg. Cdr. Maguire** eventually to become a POW and Senior British Officer at Cycle Camp. An attempt by **Sgt. Sandeman Allen** to persuade the pilot to stop and allow the wing commander to come back on board failed: *On realising the wing commander was being left behind, I drew my revolver and ordered the pilot to stop. But it was too late and the aircraft was already gathering speed and couldn't or wouldn't stop.*" It would appear the Dutch Lodestar left with three empty seats that night!

*2 Some further details on the evacuation of high ranking personnel are to be found in the article 'Last Flight to Java' by **Mykeljon Winkel** from the Booklet of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Canberra) - Western Australian Museum. In 'Last Flight' mention is made of the flight of a Lockheed Lodestar from Perth to Java, piloted by **First Lieutenant G. Winkel** of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force. On what seems to be the last VIP evacuation flight from Java. On arrival the aircraft landed on the Bandoeng Boea Batoe Road aided with the headlights of jeeps. The aircraft was guarded by armed soldiers whilst the high ranking passengers were enplaning and the aircraft being refuelled for the return flight to Australia.

*3 On reaching Australia, after 'disembarkation' leave, **Sqn. Ldr. Brooker** (RAF); **Plt. Off. Watson** (RCAF) and **Sgts. Sandeman Allen, King and Hardie** (all RAF) were seconded to 77 RAAF Squadron, with **Sqn. Ldr. Brooker** later flying to New Zealand to assist with forming 14 RNZAF Squadron.

Note: 232 Squadron (RAF) was comprised of RAF; RCAF; RNZAF and two SAAF pilots. 258 Squadron (RAF) was comprised of RAF; RAAF; RCAF; and two RAFVR American pilots.

3. Escape to Sumatra. This 'escape' was outlined in Apa Khabar Issue 65, and is repeated again with more detail added. At around midnight of the 7th/8th March 1942, two remaining RAF Vickers Vildebeest torpedo bombers, with mixed squadron crews, set off from Tasikmalaja airfield with the intention of eventually making it to Ceylon. The escape was planned following the daily visit to Air HQ by **Flight Lieutenant J.H. Hutchinson RNZAF** (488 Squadron) on 7th March, who had been informed that the two surviving Vildebeest biplane torpedo bombers K6405 and K 6393 were to be destroyed on the airfield. The remaining Vildebeest crews were not happy with the news and acting on a proposal by **Flt. Lt. Allanson** of 36 Squadron that, instead of setting fire to the aircraft, each aircraft should attempt to escape Java (at night) manned with a crew of four instead of the normal compliment of three. The fourth man being 'stowed away' within the fuselage. The selected (by ballot) crews would leave by night, the time of departure being calculated for when the fuel would run out around dawn. It was intended that each would, hopefully, be able to ditch alongside a small native craft, take over the crew and sail the boat to safety. With this in mind, **Pilot Officer James McEwan** (RAFVR, Intelligence Officer for 36/100 Squadrons) obtained an out of date Dutch map. Not much use for navigation but handy for working out the distances involved for a fully loaded Vildebeest.... A ditching in the sea as near as possible to Padang was reckoned the best bet for success!

The proposal, when submitted to AHQ, was passed with the proviso that each aircraft would carry two 250 pound bombs for use on a suitable target along the route. Carrying an extra crewman on board made the suggestion a non-starter and nothing else was said ... the names, drawn from an RAF cap, to go were:-

From 36 Squadron – **Flt.Lt. R.J. Allanson**; **Fg. Off. B. Callick** (44977); **Warrant Officer G.B. Peck** (564350)

From 100 Squadron – **Fg.Off. R.R. Lamb** (44974); **Fg.Off. T. Lamb**; **Fg. Off G.G. Taylor**; **Fg. Off. B Gotto** (88207); **Flt. Sg. P. Melville**.

Aircraft K 6393 crew were: **Allanson R.J**; **Lamb T**; **Gotto B** and **Taylor G.G**.

Aircraft K 6405 crew were: **Lamb R.R**; **Callick B**; **Peck G.B** and **Melville S.P**.

Neither aircraft reached Padang. **Flt. Lt. Allanson** ditched his aircraft south of Bencoolen and all the crew survived both the ditching and imprisonment as FEPOWs. The other aircraft, piloted by **Fg. Off. Lamb**, also ditched in the sea, but some miles off shore. All the crew survived the ditching but seemingly three of the crew succumbed to exposure, with only **Flt. Sg. Melville** surviving the long hours of drifting in the sea, supported by his Mae West life jacket. He was later reunited with the crew of K 6393 at Palembang POW Camp. All survived the war.

4. Escape by air to Ceylon. This escape over this period was undertaken by five pilots who put together a 'flyable' Lockheed training aircraft from parts taken from other wrecked aircraft. The whole venture was such an achievement that it caught the attention, and imagination, of the newspapers, with one story appearing to be a bit extreme in that spare fuel was carried in wine casks on board the aircraft (*Melbourne Argus* 1943), but it made exciting reading ... it still does! However, the event, if described by the pilots involved in the venture, would be seemingly more truthful, and such an account was found in the form of a letter written in 1943 by **Sergeant Pilot Doug Jones RVZAF** to the parents of **Pilot Officer Rodolfo Mendizabal** (who died in an air accident in India in 1943) that was published in 2015 by the Sarnia Historical Society of Canada.

With amendments and other details added from **Sgt. Martin's** (RAAF) recall of the events, the story starts:

"In early March **P O Mendizabal** (J/15049 RCAF), two Australians (**Sgt. Alan Martin** [AUS 402245 RAAF] and **Sgt. Stuart Munroe** [AUS 402963 RAAF]), and **Sgt. Doug Jones** (NZ 404875), all Hurricane pilots and a Dutch Brewster B-339 pilot, **Ensign Frits Pelder** of the Netherlands East Indies Army Air Force, made a daring escape from Java. The escape, from Pameungpeuk airfield on 9th March was in a makeshift Lockheed training aircraft that was patched together from two parts of other wrecks into a single airplane that was flyable! They then flew in stages from Java across Sumatra, across the Bay of Bengal to Ceylon, alighting at the few pockets of territory still in friendly hands in Sumatra before heading towards Ceylon.

In order to make the getaway aircraft at Pameungpeuk a possibility, the team searched the wrecked airfield and found a twin-engined Lockheed 10 Electra (aircraft serial L-201) with its tail severely damaged, but with its engine in running order. A further searching found another two Lockheed Electras that might be salvageable, one having the nose and wings smashed but with a sound tail. With a few available tools, plus a 6d (old sixpence coin) to be used as a screwdriver, they set about making the aircraft flyable again using parts from the other aircraft. The tail unit from the wrecked aircraft was found to be out of alignment when fitted and finished up with being tied in with rope. The team also had a couple of machine guns and various other weapons salvaged from an abandoned aerodrome, one machine gun was fitted in the turret and another in the nose of the aircraft. There was also plenty of fuel lying around in drums, and a couple of salvaged fighter aircraft 40 gallon wing tanks were secured behind the pilot's seat. These 'reserve' tanks were filled with fuel recovered from the drums. Inside the fuselage pieces of fuel bowser-hose were pushed through holes made either side of the fuselage and jammed into the Electra wing tanks, the idea being to feed fuel separately from the internal 40 gallon tanks to each wing tank when nearly empty via a hand pump. The aircraft was now 'ready' for the adventure, but without a navigation map and radio communication!"

9 March – Pameungpeuk airfield, along with their aircraft, had also been destroyed, leaving a straight take-off run impossible. "We found the only clear patch ran in a zigzag fashion barely the width of the undercarriage ... the Dutchman had flown Lockheeds before, so he took the controls. At the end of the field the engines were revved up until they were about to shake themselves to pieces, he let off the brakes and away we went. We zigzagged down the field with craters whistling by under our wingtips. We cleared the end fence by inches, got over the beach and out to sea." The aircraft then travelled 800 miles up the coast of Sumatra before turning inland to find (hopefully) Medan airport. When they did, it was found to be cluttered with obstructions and looked deserted. Thinking Medan had responded to an air raid alarm, the aircraft wings were waggled and wheels lowered ... both soldiers and Dutch citizens from the city arrived and quickly cleared the airfield ready for landing.

10 March – The aircraft was serviced and prepared for the long journey to Ceylon, whilst the crew enjoyed the hospitality of the Dutch people during their stay.

11 March – **Sgt. Jones** again: "The next day, we returned to our plane to make an early start, determined to try to get to Ceylon that day. The governor had given us codes which we were to deliver to the Admiralty, if we got

there, so as to re-establish contact with Sumatra. The final set down in Sumatra was at Lho'nga, for a refuelling top up, on the northern tip of Sumatra. We had the same trouble in landing as at Medan but eventually got down OK. On landing, the Dutch immediately grabbed our machine, pushed it under cover and threw camouflaging over it, as they said the (regular) Jap reconnaissance plane was due over in five minutes. At exactly 0900 over she came ... she circled us twice and then made off in a devil of a hurry. We guessed we had been spotted so started filling up as quickly as we could. We had just about finished when a lookout reported nine Jap bombers heading our way. We finished the filling up in double quick time while the Dutch soldiers were pulling off the camouflage and our Dutch pilot, **Ensign Pelder**, was revving up the engines. Right in front of us was a whopping big hill, behind which we could see the Jap bombers heading towards us. The only thing we could do was to turn as soon as we were in the air. We did it! We must have missed the trees on that hill by mere inches. We turned out to sea as fast as we could go as two of the Jap bombers dived down. We just managed to keep out of range, and in the end gradually drew away from them – the old bus had a marvellous turn of speed when pushed.

We set what we thought was a course for Ceylon, but the map we had was one of the world torn from a magazine (probably picked up in Medan?). We also had a job transferring petrol from the cabin to the wing tanks, but in the end found that by banking the plane over, we could gravity feed it in.

It was well into the afternoon when we did sight land. I was at the controls at the time (all the pilots took turns at flying the aircraft on all the stages), and didn't know whether it was Ceylon or India. Knowing Colombo was on the other side of the island, I headed inland and eventually hit the coast and followed it down. Very soon we saw a large town and seaport ahead – Colombo. We had an uncanny bit of luck as there was a large number of warships in the harbour, and on sighting us challenged us with signal lamps. The response on being challenged is to fire off the 'colours of the day' with the aircraft Verrey (signal) pistol. We had a Verrey pistol and cartridges aboard, but there are dozens of colour combinations to choose from and they change the colour combination every day. We had to shoot something off, so I picked up a two-star red cartridge, fired it and waited. We expected every gun in the harbour to open up on us, but nothing happened. We found the landing field (Ratmalana) and landed ... we found out later that the colours of the day were a two-star red!*

The trip from Java to Medan took seven hours and ten minutes and we landed with ten minutes petrol supply left. The flight from Lho'nga took eight hours and we ended with 15 minutes supply left."

Another reference source states that as the aircraft approached Ceylon, they were unable to find an airfield, but a Hurricane was seen cruising by and this was followed to Colombo where a safe landing was made at Ratmalana airfield.

* 2-star reds are recognized distress colours.

Note: The escape aircraft L-201 was eventually taken into RAF (India) service.

A few references:

1. **Escape from Java** in a US Navy Catalina Online-Java Gold's Blog
 2. **VIPs Escape to Safety.** Book: Hurricanes Over Singapore
 3. **Escape to Sumatra.** Book: The Remorseless Road
 4. **Escape by Air to Ceylon.** Book: Hurricanes Over Singapore
- Ft. Lt. Basil Gotto preparing for the last flight to Colombo**



VIP Evacuation Flight from Bandung on a Lockheed Lodestar



The Assassination of H.E. Sir Henry Gurney

Statement of A.S.P. Mr. Brodie

Recorded by C.K. Kemp at 14.30 hours 8th October 1951

On Friday, 5th October at about midday, I was shown a copy of a Secret and Confidential letter by P/Lt. Lewis, Escorts Officer, Campbell Road. The letter was to the effect that H.E. would leave Kuala Lumpur at 10.45 hours on 6.10.51 for Fraser's Hill. Mr. Lewis told me that on this occasion I should take a Scout car instead of a G.M.C. and that the O.C.P.D. knew of this fact. The escort for H.E. usually consisted of one Land Rover, one Wireless Van and one G.M.C. I checked the order with the O.C.P.D. and he confirmed it and referred me to Mr. Graham, Staff Officer to C.P.O. I went and saw Mr. Graham in his office and he confirmed that a Scout Car would be taken.

On 5th October, before lunch, I informed the orderly Sergeant at High Street Police Station, that I required my Escort Section ready, with three days rations, at High Street Police Station at 10.00 hours on 6.10.51. I did not tell him the nature of the duty.

On the afternoon of 5.10.51 I took the Scout car Bren-Gunner, rested the fittings on the car, and we fired a magazine on Pantai Range.

At 10 a.m. on 6.10.51 I picked up my Escort Section and vehicles at High Street Police Station. I inspected the Sections, checked all weapons and ammunition, and then briefed the Section on what the nature of our duty was, and whom we were escorting. I ran through the ambush drill with them on the ground. The Section was well versed already in ambush drill. We then moved off to Sentul Police Station, arriving there at 10.45 hours. I placed the vehicles in order of convoy and waited for H.E.

At about 11.05 hours, a Naval Officer with a military escort of 2 Scout cars, passed me moving towards Rawang. H.E. arrived at about 11.15 a.m. and we started. The order of convoy was: one Land Rover, followed by H.E.'s Rolls Royce, Wireless Van, Mr. Hogan's car, and lastly the Scout car.

The Wireless van gave trouble at about Mile 25. The bonnet blew up and the van had to stop. The driver stopped to adjust it, Mr. Hogan's car also stopped as did the Scout car. I was in the Wireless van. As I thought there might be further trouble with the Wireless van, I transferred to the Scout car. The order of convoy on our restarting remained the same, except that I had lost sight of H.E.'s car.

The Wireless van drew ahead and I did not catch up with it till just before Kuala Kubu Bahru. I overtook Mr. Hogan before reaching K.K.B. and passed him. I still had not sighted H.E.'s car and the Land Rover ahead of him.

On starting up the hill road, I noticed that the Wireless van did not appear to be running as well as it should, as the Scout car had no difficulty in keeping up with it. At Mile 48 the Wireless van slowed down and stopped at the side of the road. The Scout car did not stop. As we passed I understood the driver of the Wireless van to say the vehicle had broken down. Mr. Hogan was up with the Scout car up to this time, but then appears to have dropped back, and I lost touch with his car.

Up to this point I had not sighted H.E.'s car. The driver of the Scout car had been ordered by me to drive as rapidly as possible to catch up on H.E. and we were making good time up the hill.

At about Mile 56 I caught a glimpse of a Land Rover across the valley about 600 yards away. I pointed it out to the Bren-Gunner and we both thought we had caught up with the Escort and H.E. We lost sight of it almost at once and we carried on.

Shortly after - 3 to 5 minutes - we were rounding a very acute right hand bend. I was seated on the top of the Scout car next to the turret. A shot was fired and hit the ground about a foot in front of the front off side wheel. I fired a carbine into the bank, three or four shots, at the place I thought the shot had come from. A burst was then fired, I think from a Sten. Some of the shots hit the Scout car. I climbed into the car through the driver's hatch and ordered him to stop.

We had rounded the bend by then, and through the driver's hatch I saw H.E.'s car stopped in front of me, with a man lying on the ground, on the off side, alongside the car. We were almost on top of H.E.'s car, in fact bumped into it

gently while stopping. I ordered the Bren-Gunner to fire at the bandits who were firing at us, which he immediately did. Prior to being fired at I had heard no firing.

The Bren-Gunner fired about a magazine into the bank and I could hear no bandit return fire. I therefore got out of the vehicle and went to the off side (inside) ditch. As I was taking cover, I was fired at by either an automatic burst or three or four persons firing. I fired back with my carbine and the Bren-Gunner opened up again at the bank where the shots had come from. I asked him if he could see the bandits, and he replied that he could. Firing from the bank stopped. I took a look round and saw the Land Rover ahead for the first time. It was stopped. There appeared to be nobody in it, and there was no firing from that direction. From my position I fired about half a magazine into the bank above and beyond the Land Rover. I then ordered the Bren-Gunner to give me covering fire, and I moved forward. I had some difficulty in explaining this to him.

I then moved forward to the man lying alongside H.E.'s car. I recognised him as H.E.'s driver. He appeared to be praying. He was wounded in the head and leg but neither appeared to be dangerous. I spoke to him and asked him where the bandits were. He said he didn't know. I asked him where the **Mem** and the other man were, I had already seen H.E.'s body lying in the drain on the off side (inside) of the road. The driver said "*Sudah Lari.*" I took this to mean they had run away. I moved across the road to H.E.'s body, which was lying face downwards in the ditch. He had severe head wounds and was dead. I then moved forward along the drain to the Land Rover. I found the crew of the Land Rover taking cover on both sides of the road. I asked how they were. They were all wounded and in a badly shaken state. I asked where the bandits were and the number of them. They replied that there were many of them and they had gone. I went across the road and found the driver of the Land Rover lying under his vehicle, he was conscious and coherent but severely wounded in the back.

I brought the men up the bank to the edge of the road and told them to lie down. They all had their weapons, but only one of them was in a fit state to use a weapon. The others were all severely wounded.

During this time, my Scout car Bren-Gunner was firing but there was no reply from the bandits. I walked back along the road to H.E.'s car. The driver by this time had moved into the drain on the side of the road.

I climbed back into the Scout car and ordered the driver to push H.E.'s car to the near side to clear the road, which he did. We then went forward past the Land Rover and round the next bend. After turning the bend a couple of single shots were fired at us. The Bren-Gunner replied and the firing was not repeated. We then rounded the next bend and crashed into a civilian lorry which was coming down from the Gap. The mudguard of the Scout car was badly bent, and the car was unable to proceed. I got out of the car and ordered the Bren-Gunner to take the gun off its mountings. At that moment another lorry came down the road from the Gap. I stopped it and had it turned and told the driver of the Scout car and the Bren-Gunner to get on to it, and we drove up to the Gap Police Station. On arrival there I phoned the Asst. O.C.P.D. Kuala Kubu Bahru, and told him the facts. He said he knew about it, and that a military party was on its way up.

I then collected five Malay P.Cs from the Gap Police Station and returned to the scene of the ambush in a private car. The Bren-Gunner and the Scout car driver accompanied me.

I arrived back and placed the five new P.Cs along the edge of the road in defensive positions. I went back to H.E.'s car and found **Lady Gurney** and the Private Secretary sheltering under the bank near H.E.'s body. I told the Private Secretary that it was all over but kept the party under cover.

I returned to my own wounded P.Cs and sent four of them down to Kuala Kubu Bahru in the private car. I then checked that there were no weapons missing, and in fact found none missing.

The military party from Kuala Kubu Bahru arrived at the scene about 15 minutes after my return to the scene from the Gap with reinforcements.

Lady Gurney and the Private Secretary had been sitting on the near side of the car. I did not see either of them till my return from the Gap Police Station. I examined H.E.'s car but did not open the doors or examine the inside. I presumed **Lady Gurney** and the Private Secretary had got out and gone down the steep bank on the near side as my Malay P.Cs had done.

I have no idea at all as to the time between H.E.'s car being brought to a standstill and my arrival on the scene. The Scout car Bren-Gunner was wounded slightly by fragments when bullets came through the slit. I noticed this when I came back and got into the Scout car, prior to going up to the Gap Police Station. The Malay Sergeant in charge of the Escort Party in the Land Rover was not wounded. There was no firing by the Police in the Land Rover, and I saw none from the bandits, if there were any, in the vicinity of the Land Rover, after I arrived on the scene. The Malay Sergeant in charge of the Land Rover was first seen by me after the military party had arrived. I do not know where he had gone, he was not with the wounded escort. I was away from the scene about 15 minutes in all when I went up to the Gap Police Station. From the time the first shot was fired till I left the scene to go to the Gap Police Station, was probably not more than 15 minutes. I was under fire from the bandits for not more than 5 of these fifteen minutes. The distance between H.E.'s car and the Land Rover after they had stopped was about 150 yards.

20th Century Naturalists of British Malaya

With thanks to Dave Croft MA

“ ‘British Malaya’, or more simply ‘Malaya’, is a term that has come into general use for part of the British Empire in Asia and is generally understood to refer to the Straits Settlements and all that part of the Malay Peninsula which is under British influence.” *Handbook to British Malaya 1937.*

Part 1. The King George V National Park.

Theodore Rathbone Hubback. The second of three brothers*1, **T.R. Hubback** (born 1872) was the driving force behind the establishing of the King George V National Park in Malaya (1938/39)*. Trained as a civil engineer, and also played cricket for Lancashire, 1892-1893, he moved to Malaya in 1895 to work as an engineer on the Federated Malay States Railways, and also played cricket for the Straits Settlements 1897-1909. Later he became a plantation owner and also a big game hunter where he developed the concept of a national game reserve in 1925 (as Gunung Tahan Game Reserve) which was finally designated as a National Park in 1938. The first game warden to be appointed was **T.R. Hubback** who later was credited with the naming of a Malayan Gaur, or Malayan Seladang (Indian bison) as *Bos gaurus hubbecki*.

- Renamed as the **Taman Negara National Park** after independence in 1957.

World War 2: a war that was to sweep away the old Malaya. From British Civilians in Malaya: ‘As a pattern for living free from Japanese control, jungle life was fraught with many challenges and dangers and some of the best British cases of staying behind in the jungle concerned men who already had some familiarity with its character through their previous work. They included an anthropologist (**ILD. Noone**), a game warden (**T.R. Hubback**) and a District Officer (**John K. Creer MCS**) from an east coast state.

Mr. Creer is said to have been the only former Malayan Civil Servant officer to have remained at large throughout the Japanese war period. At first, he had been engaged in organizing Malay patrols against the advancing Japanese (in the Jelai Valley, north of Kuala Lipis) before obtaining permission to stay behind in the jungle. Here he made contact with **T.R. Hubback**, who was then living with the Sakai (Senoi people from near Raub in Pahang). Two months later he was in touch with **Pat Noone** and camped in the Cameron Highlands.

Of **Theodore Hubback**, some reference sources say he died in 1942, others in 1944. In February 1946, the Straits Times reported that his adopted son, **Wah Teh bin Wan Salim** was charged with his murder. However, **Wan Teh** was acquitted and discharged (March 1946) without the defence being called.

Edward Oswald Shebbeare was appointed Chief Game Warden in 1938 and established the National Park along the lines proposed by **Hubback** in 1925. He also became the founding president of the Malayan Nature Society in 1940 and remained in post until internment by the Japanese for the duration of the war. **Shebbeare** was also a member of the FMSVF Border Patrol, a secret reconnaissance unit operating on the Malaya-Thailand border prior to the Japanese invasion of Malaya. Later, after the Border Patrol has been disbanded, he was captured and interned by the Japanese in Singapore. There he was reunited with other MNS members, including future presidents – **A.T. Edgar** (1948-49); **Dr. B.D. Molesworth** (1950-51); **G.C. Madoc** (1950) and committee member

Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill. On release from captivity in 1945, **Shebbeare** returned to his previous post, retiring in 1949 and then returning to England via Bengal – in order to meet **Lord Casey**, President of Bengal.

James 'Jim' Hislop MC., arrived in Malaya in 1937 as a trainee rubber planter and then gradually started immersing himself into the jungle environment, which stood him well in his following years in Malaya*2. In the immediate pre-Japanese invasion period he was a member of the FMSVF Border Patrol and following the disbandment of the Border Patrol he joined Dalforce, later escaping to India and becoming a member of Force 136 (SOE), eventually returning to Japanese occupied Malaya. He emerged from the northern Kedah jungle in August 1945! With the war over, 'Jim' took home leave to Scotland before returning back to Malaya and his pre-war rubber estate. He joined the Malayan Game Department in 1949 as Game Warden for the State of Pahang and Superintendent of the National Park. In 1957 he was appointed as Chief Game Warden of the National Park (Perak) and retired in 1959, eventually returning to Scotland in 1967.

***1 Arthur Benison Hubback CMG., DSO., FRIBA.** English architect and soldier (born 1871). Arrived in Malaya 1895 (as did his brother **Theodore**) and was appointed Chief Government Architect for the Federated Malay States. He designed several notable buildings in British Malaya and was also appointed to the rank of Major in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Rifle Force (MSVR) in 1907, rising to Colonel in 1912. At the outbreak of WW1 he left Malaya (for good) and followed a military career with the British Army, rising to the rank of Brigadier General.

George Clay Hubback. The youngest brother of the three, he began his career as a civil engineer before being ordained in 1910. He became Bishop of Assam (India) in 1924, later moving across to take the post of Bishop of Calcutta. He retired in 1950.

***2 Jim Hislop** built up a notable butterfly collection ... three times during his time spent in Malaya; the first being 'lost' during the time of the Japanese occupation, the second through a Communist attack in 1949 but the third time the collection remained intact. Of the 1180 species found in Peninsular Malaysia, his collection accounted for 80% of them. He also had a butterfly named after him, *Ethope diademoides hislopi* by the British Museum (Natural History), as it was officially known at the time.

References:

1. Apa Khabar Edition 50 Pgs.10-11
2. British Civilians and the Japanese War in Malaysia and Singapore 1941-45 ... Staying Behind, The Jungle.
3. Curiosities from the Malay Realm - Jim Hislop, an unconventional soldier and the last white game warden of Malaya 2018.
4. Handbook to British Malaya 1937.
5. National Park (Taman Negara) of Peninsular Malaya 2014.
6. Noone of the Ulu 1949.



Part 2. Conserving the cultural and scientific heritage of Singapore 1942-45.

General Hideki Tojo, the Japanese Prime Minister has issued a direct order to all high commands that the contents of museums and libraries, and all scientific collections, were to be held and maintained in the countries where they belonged for the benefit of the people... *Whales and Dinosaurs – the story of Singapore's National History Museum.*

From *Shenton of Singapore*: When **Dr. Cecily Williams** was returned to Changi Gaol in August (after being hospitalised), **Mr. Asahi**, the new Japanese Custodian of Enemy Aliens, approached her with a proposition as follows: "Asahi was a very decent man who had lived in England, and he now wanted six men to leave prison and go to work in his office, with one male and one female doctor to write and report on the food situation in Changi...we were driven to Singapore in a lorry and taken to a house in Maxwell Road where all the Europeans lived who were still looking after the essential services in the town, except for **Bishop Wilson** and two other padres who had a house to themselves.

All the libraries, with their invaluable cultural records (public and private), had been swept up by the Nipponese into Raffles Museum. There, two Englishmen, **John Corner** and **[William] Birtwistle**^{*1}, the former Director of Fisheries, assisted by **Quan Ah Gun**, the Chief Clerk of the Botanical Gardens, were trying to rescue from destruction, or removal to Japan, everything they could^{*2}. **Birtwistle** had been ordered by **Sir Shenton Thomas** to remain at his post in Singapore because of his unrivalled knowledge of the (mainly Japanese) fishermen who provided so much food for the city's population."

Dr. Williams adds that she "found it impossible to gain access to the Museum without personal permission from the Japanese **Professor Tanakadate**...he was prepared to do quite a lot for us and substantial advantages flowed; we were able to work in Raffles Museum and Library, sorting the looted books and readings on our own account. We persuaded the Professor to send a large number of books to the civilian and military prison camps..."

Missing from the collection 'recovery' work conducted at the Singapore Botanical Garden by the two 'Englishmen' (**Corner** and **Birtwistle**), as mentioned in *Shenton of Singapore*, is **Richard Eric Holttum**, Director of the SBG (except for the Japanese occupation years) 1925 to 1949. He was appointed as Assistant Director in 1922. During the occupation he was a civil internee, along with **Corner** and **Birtwistle**, in the SBG and removed from administrative duties when **Kwan Koriba** (from Kyoto University) was appointed Director in December 1942, leaving him to work alongside the others and to continue with his research and writing. His main subjects were Malayan ferns and hybrid orchid cultivation. All three colonial officers and **Quan Ah Gun**, along with the supportive Japanese Director of the Museum and Library, **Professor Hideo Tanakadate**, helped to save much of the valuable scientific archives of the Museum, Gardens and Library for the future.

Note 1: Apa Khabar Editions 36 & 37. *Singapore Capitulation Parts 1 & 2* - **Audrey Holmes McCormick** covers the recovery of lost manuscripts and valuable archives etc. in detail.

Note 2: Of the local indoor and outdoor staff employed during the occupation years, 49 (including Indian and Malay employees) were sent to work on the Siam-Burma Railway, 22 died. Of the remaining left at the Gardens, some were taken to work on the planting of experimental crops and food production in Singapore.

^{*1} **William Birtwistle**. Whilst there is a fair amount of information available relating to **Corner** and **Holttum**, there is comparatively little on **Birtwistle** (1890-1953), who was Assistant Naturalist, University of Liverpool 1919 - 1925, Fisheries Economist SS & FMS 1925 and Director of Fisheries 1929 - 1942. During the 1930s, in order to meet growing demands for fish there was a need to 'modernise' the Malayan fishing industry. To help achieve this the Fisheries Department under **Birtwistle's** direction carried out studies into different means of fish preservation and storage, and also the cultivation of imported grass carp, catfish and tilapia for the Singapore fish ponds. A high percentage of the Singapore fish market catches in the 1930s was landed by Japanese fishermen who used a variety of methods to provide fish for the market, one being the *Pukat Payang*, a form of non destructive seine net fishing where a 'fish listener' submerges his body into the sea and by the noise made by a shoal of fish he was able to identify the species and direction of the moving shoal before the net was used. Eventually a device for detecting fish underwater (fish finder) was the first to be developed in 1948 at Nagasaki.

^{*2} A letter from **E.J.H. Corner** to the author (**Brian Montgomery**) of *Shenton of Singapore* states, "I cannot recall the exact words of **Sir Shenton's** note ... it was not addressed to me but to the Japanese Authority. It instructed **E.J. H. Corner**, of the Botanical Gardens (Singapore) 'To hand over to the Japanese Authority the historical, scientific and cultural records and libraries in Singapore, especially at Raffles Museum and Library, the Botanical Gardens, Raffles College and the King Edward VII College of Medicine. Later on **Professor Tanakadate**, **Professor Koriba** and the **Marquis Tokugawa** (the latter was appointed Supreme Adviser to the Japanese Military Administration and Civil Governor of Malaya) jointly asked me to stay with them and 'help' in the purpose of **Sir Shenton's** note, rather than be interned.' The only Englishman, other than myself, who foresaw to preserve records and libraries, cultural and scientific archives and specimens was **Sir Shenton Thomas**."

References.

1. Apa Khabar Edition 43 P24 E.J.H. Corner and printing science manuals by the Japanese.
2. Apa Khabar Edition 44 P18 W. Birtwistle – Director of Fisheries SS & FMS.
3. **Edred John Henry Corner** CBE 12th January 1906 – 14th September 1996 (2000)PDF.
4. Handbook to British Malaya 1937.
5. Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy (1946) PDF.
6. Shenton of Singapore – Governor and Prisoner of War (1984).
7. The Singapore Botanic Gardens during 1941-46. PDF (1947).

Additional: **Frank Kingdon Ward.**

In Apa Khabar 41, January 2015, **John Corner (Junior)** wrote that he was seeking information on **Captain Kingdon Ward** (1885-1958) who was a climber and botanist who stayed with his father 'in Singapore pre-war when en-route to Burma and China.* In early 1942 he was 'passing through' when he received a phone call requiring him to leave at once. He left his diaries behind ... I am sure he went to Burma in an undercover role.'

In 1939, **Frank Kingdon Ward** went to the USA on invitation. He returned to England before the declaration of war and spent a short time at the British Museum (Natural History). When war was declared he offered his 'expertise' to the authorities and eventually after working in a 'not wanted' role, he was given a post as Government botanist in Burma. But before being sent to Burma he went to Scotland for specialist training (SOE?). How he found himself in Singapore late 1941/early 1942 is probably due to the worsening situation in the Far East necessitating him making the journey, possibly by a Short Empire flying-boat of Imperial Airways, which still operated a route to Singapore until virtually the last minute. FKW was known to E.J. H. Corner having visited him in 1937.

The phone call FKW received in early 1942 'requiring him to leave at once' is most likely explained in the book, *"Our Man in Malaya"* where towards the end of December 1941, or the very beginning of January 1942, 'an order had gone out withdrawing secret service agents from Malaya.' If this is the case then FKW would have most likely sailed to India.

His initial role in northern Burma was to establish safe military corridors that avoided Japanese areas and to advise agents of Detachment 101 (Office of Strategic Services) of the operating conditions they would encounter – many of the men would only have learnt about Burma from the pages of the National Geographic magazine. He wrote a training booklet *'Notes on Hill Jungles for Guerrillas'* for the Detachment. Later he trained aircrew on acquiring jungle skills at Poona (India) 1943-1944. Following the Japanese surrender in 1945, FKW was employed by the USAAF to search for aircraft brought down by the mountain weather conditions experienced over the India-China wartime air corridor.

* **Frank Kingdon Ward** intended to spend his 1937 Asia expedition in the mountains of western Yunnan, crossing on the 1st April from Burma. His entry into China resulted in his being detained by the Chinese authorities and after several weeks of detention, delay and denial of a permit, he left, travelling on foot and by lorry, rail and boat to Singapore to seek official permission (for entry into China) from the Chinese. Whilst in Singapore he accompanied R.E. Holttum and E.J.H. Corner on their plant collecting visits using *Merah* a trained Pig-tailed Macaque monkey to bring down botanical items of interest from the tree-tops.

Main References

1. Adventurous Empires – Empire Flying Boats
2. The Little Lost Dogwood of Frank Kingdon Ward
3. The Organisational Evolution of OSS Detachment 101
4. Our Man in Malaya – John Davis SOE Force 136
5. Papers of Francis Kingdon Ward – Explorer and Botanist: The National Archives

[To be continued in October]

Singapore Botanic Gardens – Corner, Holttum & Birtwistle with the Japanese Scientists overseeing their work



INTRODUCTION TO LULU'S WAR
PHOTO ACCOUNT OF CAPTAIN LOUISE MOWAT WAC
With thanks to her daughter Alison Brierley

[Editor: Alison Brierley, Geoffrey Mowat's daughter has now added an Introduction, Contents and Key page references for "Lulu's War" to the Picture Gallery
Please look at our website – www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk for the full story.]

This photographic record of a 'war career' in the Far East conflict of WW2 from 1942-45 captures the mood and movements of the U.S. Army and Airforce HQ in the Southwest Pacific area to which General Douglas MacArthur was assigned as Commander-in-Chief. For this significant era in the history of WW2, the album is a useful source of names, places and faces associated with the victory of the Pacific forces leading to the defeat of Japan. The album is vibrant with photos of the last two years of the war. It illustrates military protocols around the formal surrender arrangements – the delegations of Japanese generals, the laying down of arms, the meetings to draw up documents. It warmly illustrates the social activities of ranks and officers – the swimming, the dinners, the accommodation, in work mode and in relaxation. It is very well annotated by Louise, on her manual typewriter, some of which are photographed and enlarged in this digital album.

Louise Mowat, the wife of Malayan Civil Service volunteer Geoffrey Scott Mowat, went to work as a steno-secretary in the GHQ in Singapore in February 1942. The administration moved to Java, ahead of the invading Japanese, and under General Wavell became an allied representation of American, British, Australian and Dutch forces known as ABDACOM. Within six weeks it was forced to relocate to Australia.

Louise's boss in Java, General G. Brett, arranged for her and colleagues to be flown to Melbourne where she was assigned to become confidential secretary to General Richard J. Marshall, the chief of staff responsible for supplies and provisions. In March 1944 Louise was commissioned in the Women's Army Corps along with two Australian secretaries to Generals Kenney and Sutherland, to accompany the military administration as they prepared to retake the Philippines.

The HQ moved from Brisbane to Hollandia, New Guinea from October '44 in a temporary jungle camp above Lake Sentani. Landing on Leyte, P.I. in November 1944, the Americans recaptured the Philippines and freed Manila from the Japanese occupiers. The war was brought to an end in August 1945 with the dropping of the atom bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

It is the personal story of a young married English woman thrust into a war situation with bosses who were top generals, in a complex situation when Australia accommodated the American army in Brisbane. It is a story of moving with the army via jungle camp in New Guinea to Manila with the risks of sniper fire. Separated from her husband for four years and with scant knowledge of his survival of captivity, it is the miracle of their reunion despite everything.

Highlights, including a meeting with the musical impresario Irving Berlin, are noted in Key Page References.

Link to Lulu's War Album 1942-45 which can also be viewed on the website:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IZtdkQvTthCWGU8jIB9xogr8eNH1qma/view?usp=sharing>

Alison's father, G.S. Mowat, tells of his wartime experiences in his book, "The Rainbow Through the Rain." Cost £7.99 plus P & P. This is available from Alison Brierley –

albrierley@btinternet.com or on Amazon.

JUDY BALCOMBE'S PRESENTATION TO THE WEBINAR MEETING OF THE JAPANESE POW RECONCILIATION GROUP – Part 1

[Editor: Judy reminds us that this Presentation was given to a mainly Japanese audience whose understanding and knowledge of English may not have been very fluent. It is therefore written in simple language with this in mind.]

When we think of wars, we think of soldiers fighting one another. We do not always think of the innocent bystanders, civilians, who are injured or killed during the actions of war. Civilians are ordinary people who live and work in an area or find themselves there before being captured. They are caught up in war by accident.

There are wars taking place today and we see the effects of this in the newspapers and on television. War is always a tragedy, with many soldiers and also civilians dying. But it is also important to think about and understand wars in the past, hopefully to help prevent them from happening again. Not only do people suffer and die in wars but the effects can continue for many generations. For the survivors and their families, life then has many traumatic memories which can prevent people living a normal, happy life.

My grandfather died in a Japanese civilian internment camp in Muntok, on Bangka Island, Indonesia, in August 1944, during WW2. I would like to tell his story. This represents the stories of many 1,000s of civilians who suffered and died in the Far East in Japanese prison camps during World War Two and whose families continue to suffer with these memories today.

I wanted to understand what had happened to my grandfather. Over many years, I have read a lot about his particular prison camps in books and diaries written by the prisoners. I have also met 3 men who were young children in the camps and who told me a lot about the conditions in camp. We have seen a lot of drawings made by people who were prisoners there.

My main interest in these camps is because of the effect the war had on my family. In February 1942, when my grandfather left Singapore on a boat called the *Giang Bee*, it was bombed, he was captured and sent to a prison camp. My father was a 16-year-old schoolboy in Australia. My grandfather was allowed to send one postcard home from Palembang prison camp in 1943. Before receiving this card, his family thought he had drowned. They were happy to receive the card but, of course, at the end of the war, they were told he had died in 1944.

My father never recovered from the effects of losing his own father and suffered from very severe depression all of his life. I was born in 1956, not long after the end of the war. At this time, and still now, most people did not understand depression. Other relatives did not want to visit us and so my life growing up was quite isolated.

My grandmother left Singapore in January 1942. She was only allowed to take one small suitcase with her. All the family's other possessions were left behind. She lost her hearing after bombs fell around the boat. She reached Australia safely but was an angry and sad person for the rest of her life, especially after learning her husband had died. I have met many families whose relatives were in the camps who have suffered in this way, well into later generations.

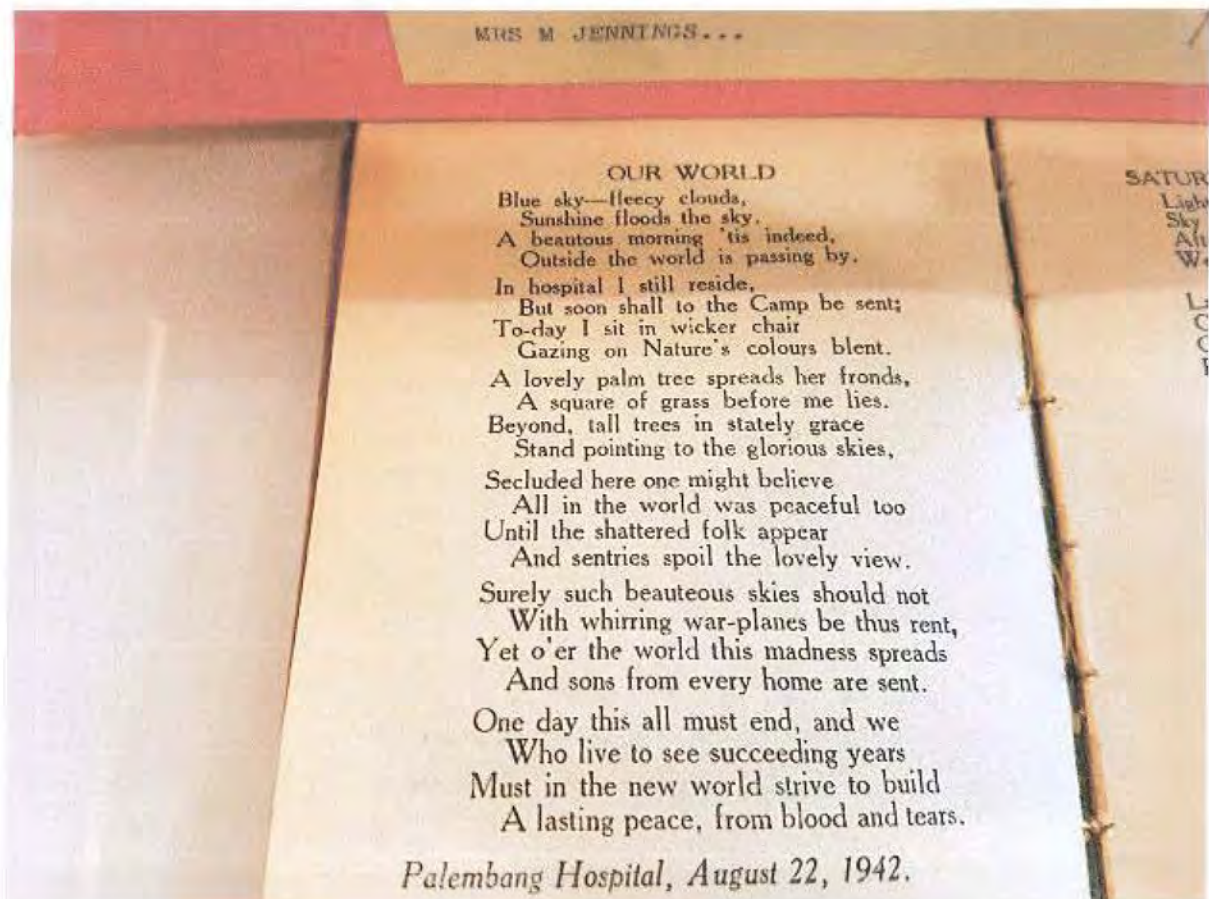
In Malaya and Singapore before and during WW2, the civil defence was formed by Volunteer Forces. There is now an historical group in the UK and Australia made up of families who lived in the Far East. This group is called The Malayan Volunteers Group. Through this group, I have met families who shared the same wartime experiences as mine, losing their relatives in bombing or in prison camps. People share their families' experiences and offer one another support. It has become like having a large family who all understand one another's collective past.

With the help of the Malayan Volunteers Group, we have built a small memorial Museum in the town of Muntok on Bangka Island. We have taken markers to identify the sites of the camps and donated another plaque with the names of the prisoners who died in Muntok and whose remains now lie under a petrol station and in a group grave. We also help the community of Muntok, both to assist our friends there and in memory of our families. We have sent money to build a new well for the village, to provide equipment and repairs for the local school buildings and recently to buy an ambulance for Covid work in this town.

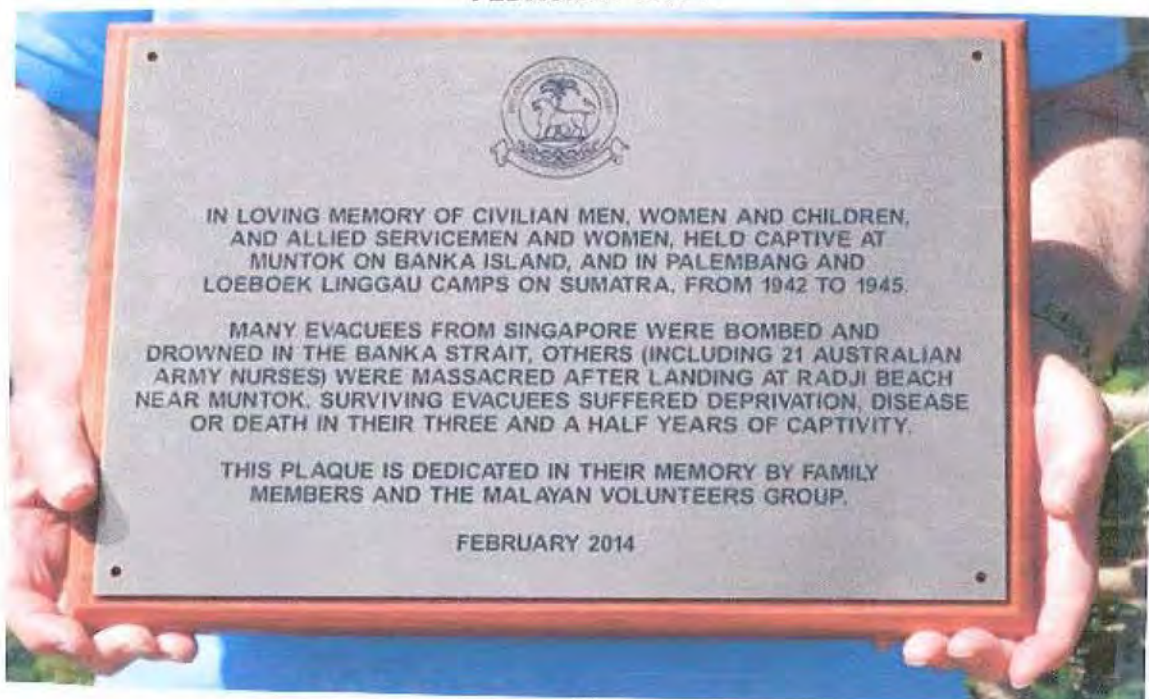
In Palembang prison camp, the women formed a vocal orchestra, singing classical music with sounds rather than words. In 2013, a concert with this music was organised in England by the Malayan Volunteers Group. Four former child civilian prisoners attended and many families whose relatives had been military prisoners of war. The money raised was sent to Muntok to help with putting up plaques of remembrance and community projects.

In these ways, the memory of the prisoners is perpetuated and some good can come despite their deaths.

**POEM WRITTEN BY MRS. MARGERY JENNINGS
IN HER BIBLE IN PALEMBANG.
SHE DIED IN BELALAU CAMP, LOEBOEK LINGGAU, SUMATRA IN 1945**



**PLAQUE PRESENTED TO CHANGI MUSEUM
IN MEMORY OF THOSE IMPRISONED IN SUMATRA
FEBRUARY 2014**



WEBSITES TO VISIT

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/jean-marshall-social-work-pioneer-and-wife-of-former-chief-minister-david-marshall-dies> - Obituary in the Straits Times about the death of Jean Marshall

https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/changi-chapel-museum-reopening-on-may-19?fbclid=IwAR3MVFAA3sPX-WyXMrgBWE8xIXki7j4YXBX5E7SXwRBG_ahQ2Z0v9VF4N0 - Reopening of the Changi Chapel & Museum

<https://thelongwindingroad.wordpress.com/2018/02/16/a-glimpse-into-singapore-in-1941-the-year-before-the-darkness-fell/> - Some old pre-war photos of Singapore from 1941

More links about the opening of the Changi Museum

https://thelongwindingroad.wordpress.com/2021/05/12/the-refreshingly-revamped-changi-chapel-and-museum/?fbclid=IwAR3hyRoUKpOU2mnr1p5WlcwT0Z7n95adNXEkI_LBtQDDZTcunwUTV5UyYM

https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/everyday-items-tell-stories-of-pows-at-changi-museum?fbclid=IwAR0RndbUhdQGfY7QfYmAAWjSGaOYn3Rr8tgRvhVAr-vlSoB_FaGjVLJ7BA

Also a TBRC link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFvTx0kQOUM>

Further ST article re. Changi Museum:

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/it-doesnt-need-to-be-sitting-in-a-box-donors-to-changi-chapel-and-museum-thrilled-to-share?fbclid=IwAR0Zjgdu0v0sqr8VawP2hny7YCxKEYzfDtdK8dlcY0IV40U7k4ESPNG6wI>

Two part TV programme showing early footage of Singapore filmed in 1900 by the Pathe Brothers – ‘Coolie Boys’ and ‘Ananas.’

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/video-on-demand/singapore-on-film>

Jan Bras Obituary:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/26/nagasaki-man-who-walked-through-hell-jan-bras>

Disturbance of S.E. Asia Maritime War Graves sites:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/cnainsider/heartbreak-salvage-loot-southeast-asia-wwii-shipwreck-war-graves-14931100>

Changi cartoons by Ronald Searle and Captain Harry Witheford:

<https://dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9684161/British-captains-secret-sketches-depict-plight-PoWs-forced-build-Burmas-death-railway.html>

Captain Harry Witheford served with one of the Indian Army Brigades:

https://lq-cofepow.org/products/witheford-harry-edward?_pos=1&_sid=3e682e30b&_ss=r

OBITUARIES

Furdoon ‘Duck’ Mehta – born 3rd March 1920, died 3rd March 2021.

Brigadier Furdoon Mehta, who died on his 101st birthday, was believed to be the only Indian officer to fly with a British Air Observation Post Squadron (AOP) in WW2. In March 1944, he was on a mission to locate Japanese gun positions in the Shan Hills in the Burma jungle. While descending he was fired on by the Japanese and his Auster aircraft was hit. A bullet also came through the cockpit, hit the first aid kit and went through his cap taking with it some of his hair. Always known as ‘Duck’ because he was born in Bombay, he was commissioned into the Royal Indian Artillery and served in various regimental units including 656 AOP. He served in India, Burma and Malaya as a captain, flying artillery observation and control missions in support of the 14th Army. Post-war, he helped the development of Indian Army Aviation, especially in the introduction of helicopters. He took command of 9 Parachute Field Regiment, Royal Indian Artillery & was the unit’s first CO and the youngest officer to command a Royal Indian Artillery Regiment as a Lieutenant-Colonel. He commanded 26 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment as a full colonel and attended the Long Gunnery Staff Course at Larkhill. In 1962 he went over the Indo-Burmese border to gather information about the Chinese Army under the guise of doing some duck shooting. His last appointment was as military and naval attaché to America and Canada at the Indian Embassy in Washington DC. He was an Anglophile and visited London every year for reunions with his old comrades.

John Hutchin – born 10th February 1924, died 18th March 2021

John Hutchin served with the 1st Bn. the South Staffordshire Regiment – part of 77th Indian Infantry Brigade - in Operation Thursday the second Chindit campaign in Burma behind Japanese lines, under the command of **Brigadier Mike Calvert**. They built a fortified area (the White City) which was attacked constantly by the Japanese, and later fought to relieve the town of Mogaung sustaining huge casualties. **Hutchin** was wounded in the neck and suffering from malaria was left by the track when he couldn't march any further. He lay there for 4 days unconscious and was saved by an American-led Chinese force which he joined until he was evacuated to an Indian hospital. After the Chindits were disbanded, he underwent parachute training but was posted to "D" Force at Batavia where the unit, trained in psychological warfare, had the task of persuading the Japanese to accept that the war was over. His last duty in 1947 was to escort Nazi war criminals for trial at Nuremberg. He found solace in later life meeting up with fellow Chindits and attending reunions. He took every opportunity to recount his experiences in Burma.

Air Marshal Sir Roy Austen-Smith – born 28th June 1924, died 27th March 2021

AM Sir Roy Austen-Smith trained as a pilot in Canada, and in 1945 joined 41 Squadron in Eindhoven, flying reconnaissance sorties every day into Germany. The Squadron moved frequently, and were near Hanover when the war ended. In 1950 he joined 33 Squadron as a flight commander at Butterworth, where he was engaged in the Malayan Emergency mounting ground attack sorties against the communist terrorists. Flying the twin-engined Hornet he led many sorties armed with bombs, rockets and canons. Infantry regiments called up the Hornets to flush out the terrorists from their jungle camps so that the Army could ambush them. He left the Squadron in June 1953 with the following comment in the Squadron record book: "During his extended and noteworthy tour, **Flt. Lt. R.D. A-Smith** obtained a wife, a son and a Distinguished Flying Cross." The latter was for "gallant and distinguished service in Malaya." He remained in the RAF after Malaya serving as squadron commander at Cranwell, then commanded 73 Squadron in Cyprus, followed by taking command of the Victor bomber squadron No. 57 in Suffolk. He led a detachment to Tengah in Singapore during the Indonesian Confrontation and ended his distinguished Air Force career as Defence Attache in Washington and head of the British Defence Staff. He was appointed CB in 1975 and KBE in 1979. In 1994 he was made Gentleman Usher to the Queen – a post he held for 12 years, after which he was appointed CVO.

Ivan Mower – born 21st February 1924, died 27th April 2021

Ivan Mower was one of the last survivors of the highly secret wartime Auxiliary Units trained to leave their homes in the event of an invasion and move to specially prepared Operational Bases (OBs) underground. He was one of 9 men who formed the Stradbroke Patrol with an OB near Eye in Suffolk. Their task was to remain hidden and to hinder the Germans by laying mines and booby traps, blowing up petrol & ammunition dumps, railway lines and occupied airfields. In 1944, after the threat of invasion diminished, he was conscripted and retrained to fight the Japanese in Burma. After the Japanese surrender he spent several months in Rangoon clearing up the detritus of war.

Jan Bras – born 21st December 1922, died 12th May 2021

Jan Bras was born into a colonial family in Java where his father was a rubber planter. He enjoyed a free and happy childhood, and later served in the Dutch Army in the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). When the Japanese invaded Indonesia they took his father captive and murdered him by torturing him to death – something which **Jan** could never get over. He was captured in March 1942 when Java surrendered and was sent to Changi with his older brother **Gerit**. From there they were sent to work on the Thailand-Burma Railway, where he was forced to carry back-breaking railway sleepers and witnessed his friends being executed. Later he and his brother were shipped to Fukuoka on the Island of Kyushu where the POWs had to work in the coal mines. Many died in the tunnels which collapsed. His brother – a camp doctor – appointed him medical orderly so that he didn't have to work underground. After being freed by Allied troops, he travelled through Nagasaki a few weeks after the atom bomb was dropped, and as he surveyed the rubble he thought, "good for the Americans." Later he returned to the Dutch East Indies where the Dutch were fighting Indonesian nationalists. He was able to join the army medical corps, and after the Indonesians gained their independence in 1949, he and his family had to emigrate to the Netherlands where he completed his medical training. He then emigrated to Jamaica with his brother where he met and married a Scottish doctor. Two years later they returned to the UK where he became an Ophthalmic Surgeon.

BOOKS

"**John Leonard Wilson. Confessor for the Faith.**" By Roy McKay. Published by Hodder & Stoughton Ltd. ISBN 0-340-15488-8

Leonard Wilson when Bishop of Singapore, was interned in Changi Prison. On 17th October 1943, the day before he was to have held a Confirmation service in the camp he was taken away by the Japanese Military Police. He was questioned under torture on that evening and during most of the next two days. When he was returned to his cell on the third evening, he was

in a semi-conscious state, in which he remained for three weeks. This book tells of how this experience became one of the most significant moments of his own Christian experience and a lasting proof of the reality of the Christian faith. In 1953 he became Bishop of Birmingham, and had a love-hate relationship with the Establishment. *Crockford* said of him, "He was one of the most remarkable men to occupy an English see in recent years." **Canon Roy McKay** said of him, "His religion and his humanity went hand in hand, each deriving strength and depth from the other. Both were simple in character and quality, rich and spontaneous in feeling, vivid and warm in expression. He knew in his own experience the strengths and the weaknesses of human nature, and he saw both as falling within the circle of the Divine Grace."

"The Sea Devils. Operation Struggle and the Last Great Raid of World War Two." By Mark Felton. Published by Iconbooks. ISBN 978-1-78578-049-3 Paperback.

July 1945. Eighteen young British, Australian and New Zealand special forces from a top-secret underwater warfare unit prepared to undertake three audacious missions against the Japanese. Using XE-craft midget submarines, the raiders went deep behind Japanese lines to sink two huge warships off Singapore and sever two vitally important undersea communication cables. Their success would hasten ultimate victory over Japan – but if captured they would expect a gruesome execution. This is the story of how the *Sea Devils* overcame Japanese defences, mechanical failures, oxygen poisoning and submarine disasters to fulfil their mission. It tells the story of a band of young men who lived on raw courage, nerves and adrenalin as they pulled off what was the last great raid of WW2.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

NMA – Sunday 15th August 2021. Annual V-J Day Service in the Chapel at 12 noon & wreath laying in the Garden Plot

The Events and Functions Supervisor at the NMA, Rachael Brereton has sent the current regulations which are in place at the NMA at the time of writing this newsletter. They are as follows:- **"We are still required to collect the test and trace information from all visitors, so we would need each of your guests to book online before their visit, or to provide their full contact details on the day. [Book Tickets](#) | [Plan Your Visit](#) | [National Memorial Arboretum \(thenma.org.uk\)](#). Please note these spaces are only released two weeks in advance. The tickets for your event date will be released on the 29th July 2021. N.B. PLEASE LET ROSEMARY KNOW IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND SO THAT FURTHER INFORMATION CAN BE SENT TO YOU IF IT CHANGES.**

LONDON – Saturday 16th October 2021. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club – 12 noon to 5p.m.

At the time of writing, we are expecting the RAF Club to be open and for the Annual Reunion and Luncheon to take place as normal. **Please let Rosemary know by 30th September if you are planning to attend, with your payment. This is the last notice for this event.** The menu arranged by the Club is:- a Mushroom Pate starter; followed by Chicken & Leek Pie with sautéed potatoes and seasonal vegetables; and the dessert is Bailey's Creme Brulee with Petit Fours and Coffee or Tea. We have been able to keep the cost at **£45 per person**. There is a vegetarian option of Vegetable Pie. Please let

Rosemary know of any other dietary requirements at the time of booking. We are pleased that **Colin Hygate** is able to give his now long overdue talk about his father's wartime experiences, entitled, **"Len Hygate, Accountant, Cricketer and Soldier, A Far East Adventure."** **Len Hygate** served with the 1st Battalion SSVF and was sent with "E" Force to Batu Lintang Camp in Kuching, Sarawak, where he worked on building the road from Kuching to Pontianak. He was transferred to Poak Camp for this work – and the exact location of this camp has been researched by **Colin**.

As usual, we plan to hold a draw, and ask you, please, to bring a draw prize with you.

LONDON – November 2021. Cross Planting and Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past in Whitehall.

To date we have not had any information from the Royal British Legion which organises these events. Please let **Rosemary** know if you would like to attend the Cross Planting or Remembrance Sunday Service in Whitehall, if these do go ahead.

CANADA – Armistice Day service – tba

MALAYSIA – Remembrance Sunday Services in Kuala Lumpur and Penang – tba

NMA – 10th December 2021 – 80th anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse – tba

Other services in Australia – please ask **Elizabeth Adamson** for information.

Future events in 2022:-

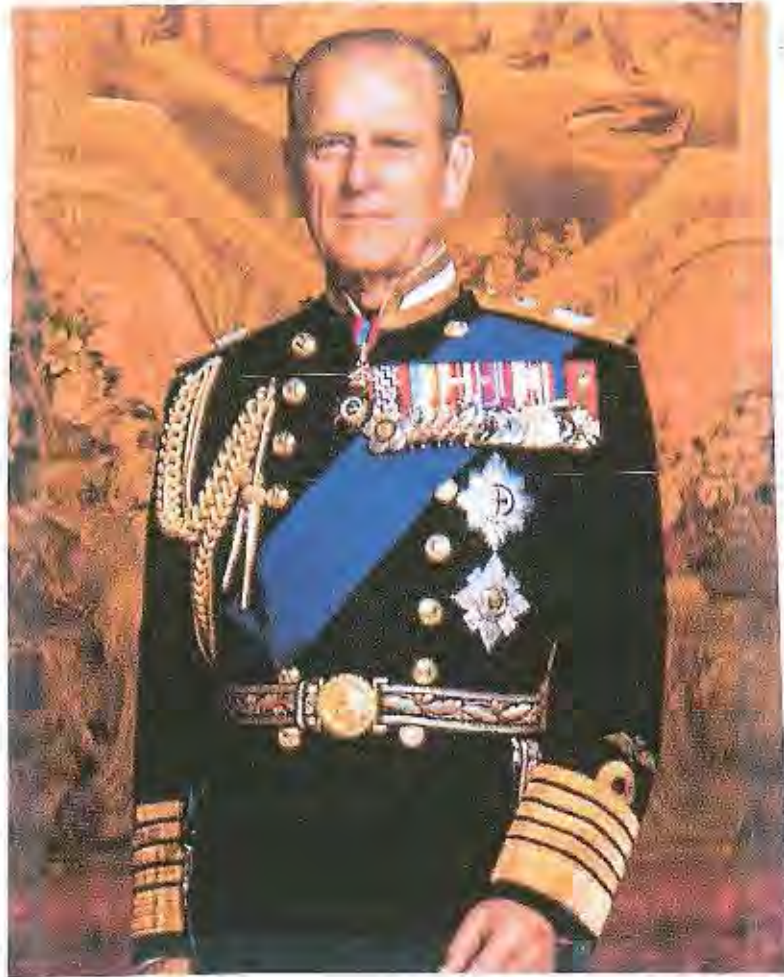
Singapore – February 2022 – 80th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

We hope to review the situation about visiting Singapore in 2022 and attending a commemoration service, in October.

London – Saturday 15th October 2022 – Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club.

Other events in 2022 will be reviewed in October.

**HRH PRINCE PHILIP
THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH
1921-2021**



A Tribute from Rod Beattie:

"With the passing of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, I couldn't help but reflect on his memorable visit to Kanchanaburi, Thailand in 1966 when I was Manager (Thailand) for the CWGC and its two WW11 War Cemeteries there. His obvious genuine interest in the former POWs, whose final resting places he visited, and my work on researching their experiences and work locations for the benefit of their families was clearly displayed during his visit some 25 years ago. I recall that during that visit he attended Memorial Services at both the Kanchanaburi and Chungkai War Cemeteries and in particular came to meet Rosemary Fell (MVG's long standing, dedicated and active Committee Member) as she, together with husband Donald, paid a visit to her father's grave in Chungkai (Plot 3, Row J, Grave 1). It is many such moments like these that reflect Prince Philip's genuine human touch which, together with his own distinguished military career during WW11, gave him a deep understanding of the sacrifices of war and its direct impact on families. Another very telling example of this was as he was being escorted, by the British Defence Attache and myself, from the Cross of Sacrifice in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery to meet my staff close to the Memorial Building he turned to the DA and snapped, "Colonel F*****g, why aren't we walking along that row of graves (pointing to the first row of Dutch graves in Plot 7)." "Because they are Dutch graves, Sir." "I don't care Colonel I want to walk along that row of graves." "Yes, Sir," was the reply, and we did.

[Editor: We are delighted Rod has added his own tribute to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh, & thank him for his comments]

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