

# **APA KHABAR**

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

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



**74th EDITION  
APRIL 2023**



**Judy Balcombe (left) and Arlene Bennett (right)  
with members of the Timah Museum and local Muntok community  
beside the new plaque in the Peace Garden at the Sudirman Homestay**



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**CAMPAIGN TO SAVE SQN. LDR. A.S.K. ('Pongo') SCARF'S VC.  
MEMBERS ATTEND SERVICES IN PERTH WA AND MUNTOK  
TO COMMEMORATE THE VYNER BROOKE SINKING.  
SEARCH FOR A NEW ARCHIVIST AND INTRODUCING A NEW  
NEWSLETTER EDITOR IN JULY.**

WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY EASTER

## Introducing our new Newsletter Editor

We are delighted to announce that **Sally Jennings** is to take over as editor of Apa Khabar in July, and we wish her every success. I feel very privileged to have been at the helm for so long, but it is time for new ideas and updates to keep up with the digital age. Please would you continue to send in articles and reports in the usual way to **Sally** – without which there would be no newsletter! We would much rather have too many than too few, and if your article is not included in the next newsletter it will be kept for a future edition.

Sally can be contacted as follows:

e-mail: [sallyjennings42@gmail.com](mailto:sallyjennings42@gmail.com)

As you will note from the members' list, which was sent out with the January newsletter, **Sally** lives in Canada but the distribution of printed copies of the newsletter will continue in the usual way.

## Search for New Archivist

**Jonathan** as our Group archivist has dealt with enquiries for nearly 20 years and is looking for someone else, preferably younger and with a couple of hours a week to spare, to take on this job later this year. Presently he deals with two or three enquiries a week, mostly from relatives of Malayan Volunteers; some from authors, fellow researchers and the Media. Some enquiries come direct to the MVG website and Facebook; others to **Jonathan** personally or picked up by him on FEPOW related Facebooks and websites. As the information is largely online it need not be a UK member. Jonathan says that answering these enquiries is 'interesting to say the least and a rewarding exercise'. It also leads to the recruitment of new members. Jonathan would pass on a simple methodology for answering queries and a data base of short biographies of Malayan Volunteers and other British Malaysians, Directory and nominal roll entries, articles, photos etc. An interest in our shared History and helping others discover theirs is all that is required. So please do step up if you are interested.

**[Editor: Without Jonathan's expertise, database and knowledge, the MVG would not have become the worldwide group it is today. We all owe him a very big thank you and a debt of gratitude for his untiring commitment to and work for the MVG.]**

## Important Notice – how to contact MVG's new Secretary and Subscriptions Secretary from April 2023

Please will all members note that we now have two new e-mail addresses for the MVG Secretary and the MVG Subscriptions Secretary.

Please use these e-mail addresses in future, as they will remain constant, regardless of who is the Secretary or Subscriptions Secretary both now and in the future:

Hon. Secretary (currently **Colin Hygate**) [secretary@mvq.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mvq.org.uk)

Subscriptions Secretary (currently **Roger Willbourn**) [membersubs@mvq.org.uk](mailto:membersubs@mvq.org.uk)

## Campaign to Save Sqn. Ldr. Arthur S.K. Scarf's VC

Thank you to everyone who has made a contribution to this Campaign, either through the **Go-Fund-Me** page online or by cheque to the RAF Museum at Hendon. At the time of writing, it is still not clear whether the full amount has been raised. **The Campaign runs until the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, and there is still time to make a contribution to the fund, if you can, please.** We are very grateful to our secretary in Canada, **Sallie Hammond**, who is the Goddaughter of and named after the late **Sallie Scarf** (later **Sallie Gunn**), widow of **Arthur Scarf**, for contacting **Lord Ashcroft** and asking for his help with the Campaign. The Lord Ashcroft Gallery at the Imperial War Museum houses the VCs which he has bought to save for the nation. **Sallie** has also given interviews to the Daily Mail and to the RAF Museum. We will let members know the outcome of the Campaign in due course. The posters sent by the RAF Club are included with the newsletter. There are factual inaccuracies in the text



which we have pointed out to the team running the Campaign. In particular the poster states that **Sqn. Ldr. A.S.K. Scarf's** final bombing raid was to Burma – in fact it was to bomb the airfield at Singora on the east coast of Thailand, north of Kota Bahru where the main Japanese landings were taking place. This airfield was being used by the Japanese as a base from where they could bomb British held airfields in northern Malaya and give aerial support for the invasion.

#### **Services held at Point Walter Reserve, Bicton in WA and in Muntok on Banka Island**

On Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> February, the Australian RSL held their annual service of commemoration for the sinking of the **Vyner Brooke** by the Japanese on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942. See Report on P.20 by **Robert Gray**.

The MVG was represented on 16<sup>th</sup> February at the service on Radji Beach outside Muntok on Banka Island by **Judy Balcombe** and former MVG member **Carol Rowe**. As usual there was the now traditional "Walk for Humanity" after the ceremony, during which those at the service walk into the sea, representing the sacrifice of the Army Nurses, and scatter flowers. In recognition of **Judy's** close ties with the local community, we are delighted that the garden at the former house of the wartime Japanese Commandant, **Captain Seiki Kazue** has been upgraded and a plaque installed next to the pink rose which was planted in 2020. The photograph on the front of the newsletter shows a group around the plaque (and rose bush) including **Judy Campbell** and **Arlene Bennett** from the Nurses Centre in Melbourne. The plaque is a very well deserved thank you by the Muntok community to **Judy** for her untiring work and contribution to the people of Muntok in so many ways. Not only has she almost single handedly raised money to build the Peace Museum, but also donated plaques to commemorate both the military POWs and civilian internees, and raised money to buy an ambulance during the covid crisis and a bench in Jakarta's war cemetery. We also recognize the invaluable work **Judy** has done to support Muntok Red Cross and thank her for fostering such happy and fulfilling relationships with the community. The MVG will continue to support the Peace Museum by making donations towards the cost of electricity to run the air conditioning unit. [See report Ps. 23- 27]

#### **Acknowledgement to Graham Lee for his article**

Please note that the author of the article in the January edition of *Apa Khabar* [Edition 73] entitled, "Man of Peace – Shidehara Kijuro (pages 16-21) was **Graham Lee**. We thank him for his interesting article, which gives the background to Japanese diplomacy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century leading up to WW2, and apologize for failing to acknowledge him as the author.

#### **Our Wartime Legacy – Military Emblems at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Singapore**

This interesting article, written by **Patrick Lau** of the **SAC Heritage Committee**, with input from fellow committee members **Nathene Chua** and **Sharon Lim**, gives a wonderful insight into the wartime history of the Cathedral. We are grateful to **Jonathan Moffatt** for his contact with **Patrick Lau** and for seeking permission for the MVG to include the article in 'Apa Khabar.' [See Pages 28-33]

#### **"The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945" – by John Tulloch**

We are delighted to hear from **John** that he was, at last, able to visit Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, with his wife **Victoria** for the launch of his far reaching and extensively researched book about the Japanese occupation of Borneo in WW2. The launch took place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Guest of Honour, who launched **John's** book, was **YB Datuk Christina Liew**, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment. There were 70 in the audience, plus 10 members of the press and a crew from TV3. The launch was widely reported in the local papers including the Daily Express, the Borneo Post and 2 Chinese papers. A short video of part of the event can be seen on the following TV3 coverage:

<https://fb.watch/iZPfrlxjA6/?mibextid=RUBz1f>

**John** was interviewed by the Daily Express, about the video and documentary they are making of important events in Sabah.

#### **Update from Terry Manttan at the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre**

We are pleased to include an update from the Thailand-Burma Railway Centre on P. 11 from **Terry Manttan**, Manager of the Centre, about their fortunate revival following the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in the almost total loss of visitors. It is also a time to thank members again for their fantastic support for the Museum during which the MVG sent over £25,000 donated from members and various other interested Far East Organizations.

#### **Remembrance Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – Cenotaph Parade**

We have already been contacted by the Royal British Legion about ticket numbers for the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday - 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023. If anyone would like a ticket for the Parade, please let **Colin Hygate** know at [secretary@mvg.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mvg.org.uk) giving your title and full name as on your photographic ID (Passport or Driving Licence); address & post code; telephone number & e-mail address; date and place of birth. This does NOT put you under any obligation to attend, and we would much rather apply for more tickets than we subsequently require and then return those not needed. On previous Parades, we have had 12 marchers, but only 5 last year. The Parade does entail an early start, a lot of waiting around and quite a long march after the short service. However, the pride one feels when marching past the Cenotaph, and hearing the appreciation of the crowds watching and clapping cannot be put into words.

**The deadline for ticket application is FRIDAY, 5<sup>th</sup> May, so please let Colin know ASAP.**

#### **A message of thanks from the Editor on her retirement**

The very first edition of "Apa Khabar" was produced in January 2005. A one page letter, it contained a report about the purchase of 2 teak benches, dedicated to the Malayan Volunteer Forces, for the National Memorial Arboretum. These benches were placed in the FEPOW Grove during ceremonies in 2004. Also mentioned in that first newsletter was my article about the Malayan Volunteer Forces which had been put on the COFEPOW website; the annual lunchtime "get-together" of Volunteer Children in London, thanks to **Sandy Lincoln**; and to contact **Jonathan Moffatt** about the Volunteers & Argyls. Eighteen years later, this Edition No. 74 is my last as Editor. I am delighted to be handing over to **Sally Jennings** in July, and I wish her every success. **Please would you send her lots of interesting articles for our future newsletters.**

**It has been a great privilege to have been the editor of "Apa Khabar" over the past 18 years. I am very grateful to MVG members for your wonderful support, and to Jonathan without whom the Group would not have succeeded.**

**Thank you all very much - Rosemary Fell**



**"THREE STAYED THERE" – the wartime diary of Dorothy Potter**

**By kind permission of her daughter-in-law Ann Potter**

**Part 2**

We were conducted to our room which was one in a row of six formerly housing a couple of Chinese students. The overall size was twelve by eight and a half feet. For three of us it was rather a tight squeeze but we managed in the time we spent there to find a modicum of comfort in the space at our disposal. The room was absolutely empty, of course, and as our beds had not arrived, our first effort was to procure, if possible, some sort of bedding. Two travelling rugs, a deck chair in dubious state of repair and some odd bits of straw matting made up our final collection. It was straining the resources of our friends to provide even this. We managed this way for a fortnight until our beds arrived. We welcomed them with open arms. The floor was wet with snow and we were aching in every bone as we arose after those fitful nights.

The camp was planned in rows of these small rooms, whilst the larger buildings in the campus were for lecture and administrative purposes. There were three large kitchens and dining halls, the kitchens being equipped solely with large cauldrons for the cooking of the usual type of Chinese coolie food. This was the only means provided for cooking for the internees.

Sanitary arrangements bordered on the primitive. In the main, they consisted of cubicles fitted with oblong porcelain bowls sunk into the cement floor. In theory, they were supposed to flush but never did. The cess-pool as periodically emptied by coolies but the rest of the cleaning had to be performed by the internees, a job we all loathed and detested. A roster was kept of the under 60s who had the odious duty to perform for a week in rotation. Marvellous inducements in the way of precious tins of coffee were handed out by individuals to those less finicky who were willing to "stand-in" for the detested job.

It was very amusing during the first week or so to see folks furtively creeping out of their rooms in the early morning to empty chamber pots without being observed, but later on, the requisite duty fell into perspective and nobody bothered at all about it.

There were a number of different nationalities in the camp, American, British, Dutch, Belgian, Greeks, Norwegian and White Russian. The latter mentioned were employees of the former British Municipal Council and were in possession of British protective passports. Later on when Italy turned over to the Allies, a number of Italians were housed on the far side of the camp, but it was a very long time before any contact with them was permitted.

Life was very chaotic in the first few days. The cooking arrangements and the meals were horrible. We seemed to live on bread porridge for the early meal and a thin watery fluid called leek soup for the midday and evening meal. This so called soup consisted of a few chopped leeks floating around in water.

This situation was mercifully relieved by the Catholic fathers. Incidentally there were over five hundred of them in camp, including five bishops. In the various Catholic institutions they had been used to this sort of bulk cooking in primitive style and they nobly stepped into the breach. They organized and trained teams of cooks who were therefore able to make the best of the very poor and meagre food the Japanese doled out to us. By the time the fathers left the camp about sixteen months later, the trained kitchen staffs were turning out quite credible meals and were able to adequately disguise such doubtful comestibles as buffalo, camel, horse and mule meat. Not that it was donated in quantity. The amounts were pitifully slim for the numbers to cater for. The difficulties they had to cope with were stupendous. No proper utensils, flies by the million, no refrigeration and the poorest and most miserable vegetables the Japs could gouge out of the local peasantry without payment at all. Improvisation with all sorts of materials was really wonderful.

We had a veterinary surgeon among the internees who examined the meat ration daily when it arrived. Coming from Tsingtao in ordinary rail cars without refrigeration, it was never more than what can be described as doubtful. The "very doubtful" was cut away and buried and the "possible" put on to cook immediately. Fish was always buried at once. It had to be accepted as rations but it went quickly underground. Usually it brooked no delay.

Vegetable usually consisted of those not particularly alluring to the occidental palate such as sweet potatoes,



which most of us grew to loathe, squash, field cucumber, egg plant, huge Chinese winter radishes coarse and tough as a boot, water reeds and some weird and wonderful weeds including clover, which they gave us when other greens were not available. The missionary body discussed the vitamin content of those "funnies" but we remained unimpressed.

Fat of any kind had practically disappeared from our diet, and sugar a commodity we seemed to remember vaguely some years ago. We were able periodically to purchase at the canteen a form of syrupy maltose which went under the Chinese name of "Tong Shih." It was a wonderful experience to get a taste of this providing, of course, one had enough "comfort money" to pay for it.

There was one blessing we were always devoutly thankful for, our bread. The supply, if not particularly generous to hungry youngsters, was adequate. We saved any spare and turned it into rusks and stored them in a pillow case hung on the wall. Periodically they would be gone over and re-toasted. We felt that we had a reserve of food if things somehow went wrong.

It was soon realized that some sort of camp organization would have to be inaugurated and a system was arranged which I think reflected great credit on those concerned. Nine chairmen were chosen with their committees. They went under the names of General Affairs, Discipline, Quarters, Education, Hospital Management etc. These chairmen, besides heading their respective committees, were in contact with the Japanese Commandant and the Chief of Police who, of course, was a member of the gendarmerie. This police head, likewise his top sergeant, was an obnoxious official. They were known respectively as "**King-kong**" and "**P'iu-Shing-T'ai**" [Note: ?spelling faded], the latter being roughly translated from the Chinese as "No can do." The sergeant's Chinese vocabulary was limited to this one expression which he rode, literally, to death. There was no wholesale brutality in the camp. Mainly, I think, for the simple reason that it was well run by our own people and the Japs were content to leave well alone and were out to run it this way without recourse to undue pressure. One or two faces were smacked and usually for a definite and deserved reason. Had the position been reversed, I do not think for one moment that we would have stood for half the amount the Japs did. We did, however, have rather a tough time when two men escaped over the wall and got away on ponies already waiting for them. The committee had, of course, to eventually break the news to the Chief of Police, not before a few hours had elapsed to give the fugitives good and sufficient time to show a clean pair of heels. The Chief all but had an apoplectic seizure when they told him. His face went scarlet and he raved and stormed and regarded it as a personal affront. In consequence, regulations were tightened up in every way and roll calls and more roll calls were our affliction for months to come. It was no unusual thing to hold a roll call in the middle of the night. Everyone had to go out or be carried out to be counted. Even small babies and old people had to be produced for the head count and it often meant hours standing in the bitterly cold weather until the Japs were satisfied that no further escapes had taken place.

We had a team of British and American doctors, fellow internees in the camp, and the work they did during our long stay was a marvellous example of courage, initiative and unselfishness.

The hospital, which could later accommodate twenty-six bed patients, when it was first taken over by the internees was a bare shell. To the eternal discredit of the Japanese, they contributed nothing at all either in drugs or equipment to what was eventually an excellent hospital with very creditably appointed surgical, medical, dental and eye clinics, besides operating theatre, laboratories, diet kitchen and other offices and wards.

The Japanese were very quick to seize the opportunity, which was never denied them, of using the clinics for their own sick.

Our supply of drugs, instruments and dressings was due to the foresight of these doctors who, when the internees were packing to go to camp, were given two parcels to carry with them to form the nucleus of our supplies. Later on our supplies were augmented by purchase through the Swiss Consul, but throughout the camp, the Japanese contributed nothing at all. They were also very ready to seize the opportunity to show off the hospital to visiting big-wigs. We took these occasions very philosophically but nevertheless there was an itching desire to kick them when they did so.

No water was laid on in the hospital. Our supplies of water had to be hand pumped from shallow surface wells



into a main tank above. This was the system throughout the camp. Water for the hospital had, therefore, to be carried a good distance from the outside. An engineer internee set out to rectify this difficulty. Using old pipes found around the camp and old bedstead rails, he piped water not only to the ground kitchen but to the operating theatre and offices on the floor above.

Another difficulty he surmounted was the heating of the theatre in the winter. It was not possible, of course, to have any naked form of flame with the ether fumes during the operation. He devised a very satisfactory hot-air appliance worked from the basement below. It was a great success. Undoubtedly it saved quite a number of lives.

The general health of the camp was maintained on a high level in spite of the conditions under which we existed. Our death rate kept time with births, a happy sort of balance to charm our statisticians but the advent of a new arrival always provided a fillip of excitement. Everyone had to view the baby as soon as the child was out of hospital and friends rallied round to hand out from their hoards such precious items as an ounce or two of sugar, etc. for the christening cake.

Weddings were of course the great events. Permission had to be obtained from the Japs before they could be solemnized. It was really wonderful how a few strips of mosquito netting plus a silk nightie could be converted into a ravishing wedding dress! Honeymoons had, of course, to be spent in camp, but there was always some kind hearted married couple who were willing to separate and go into the dormitory for a few days so the new couple could have their room.

We were allowed the use of the church as an assembly hall during the week and many and varied were the activities held there. Meetings, Plays, Concerts, Piano Recitals, Orchestral Concerts and Exhibitions were given in the hall. It was always possible to gauge how things were going with the Japanese by their reactions following bad news. The hall lighting used to be their spite target. Invariably they would wait until the audience were nicely settled and the players ready, when the lights would suddenly fail.

Our camp electricians would be running around in circles in their efforts to locate the fault, but the main switch room it would be noted, was invariably locked and not open to inspection.

One Good Friday the choral society of eighty members were singing the "Crucifixion" to a large and appreciative audience when without warning, out went the lights. Somehow or other it must have been generally suspected that the Japs intended to be awkward, for without much ado, each singer produced a tiny home-made peanut oil lamp and the programme continued without a further hitch. As a matter of fact, we all agreed that it was far more impressive this way and lost nothing by the Japs' stupidity.

We all possessed one of these "home spun" oil lamps. They were so useful when the Japs pulled off stunts like this or for use in the night when the camp lights were extinguished. We begrudged, however, the oil being used this way as it often meant going without a piece of fried bread for breakfast, a very real denial. We were allowed to purchase the oil now and again in the canteen. It was not a ration.

One source of worry to us was the presence of the Chinese 8<sup>th</sup> Route, Communist Army in the vicinity. The Japs never succeeded in eliminating them in spite of the several serious attempts to do so. A favourite habit of these guerrillas was to catch the Jap sentries standing asleep against the trees in the camp. They would then noiselessly climb down from the camp wall where they had been watching in the darkness and cut the sentry's throat. It was a terrifying sound at first to those living near the outer wall but we grew hardened and callous in time. On hearing this frozen scream we would slide out of bed and prop a trunk against the door lest the guerrilla, being chased, seek safety in our room and the Japs shoot it out with him, with ourselves inside. Not a pleasant thing to contemplate. We were rather afraid that the Japs would implicate us in these killings but fortunately, they never did.

Our Amateur Dramatic Society was most ambitious in the plays they produced. The scenic effects and the costumes were a marvel of ingenuity. The Japs always attended, whether they understood the piece or otherwise, but were always puzzled to know where we obtained the materials. Bernard Shaw's "Androcles and the Lion" was staged with the lion outfit being produced from a moth eaten fur coat and pipe cleaners for whiskers. The armour for the Roman soldiers was made from "Spam" tins gathered from our American friends. We were also fortunate in having two very talented pianists, one being an Indian girl and the other an American



gentleman. They gave us many very delightful recitals. Altogether, the entertainment side of camp life was very well catered for and was very much appreciated by all of us, particularly when it was remembered that every able bodied member of the camp had so many hours of community work to do and all practices had to be done in spare time

My own job in camp was Captain of the Sewing Room. This high sounding title was the result of an effort made by one or two of us, when we first arrived, to help the unattached men with their mending problem. It ended up as one of the most patronized efforts in the camp. We had a large room allocated to us. From various places we "scrounged" chairs, a table for cutting, odd pairs of scissors and a small heating stove. Our staff grew from the modest beginnings to over twenty. Our job book at the end of camp showed a total of thirty thousand odd jobs that had been done. We had the assistance of one of the best British cutters in North China who came in the afternoons to cut shorts, trousers, overalls, etc. from such strange sources of material as chair covers, curtains, bedspreads and similar articles. We also kept the hospital stocked with sheets, O.P. towels, tea towels etc.

Occasionally, the Japs allowed us to have cheap materials and this was sold on a sort of lottery system. Sometimes, the Jap guards came in for small jobs to be done. We hated doing anything for them but we had to weigh up the possibilities of repercussions on the camp if we refused. The committee were consulted and they were of this opinion, so now and again, when asked, we did so. I shall always remember one particular day when a fierce looking guard marched into the sewing room and by pantomime efforts indicated that he had a hole in the seat of his trousers. I tried to make him understand that we would mend them if he brought them in. He promptly took them off and handed them to me. There were six workers in the room who were almost hysterical with suppressed laughter. He looked screamingly funny. The top half with his navy blue uniform coat with gold braid and long sword, the bottom half, long pink cotton pants. He marched solemnly backwards and forwards trailing his long sword until the job was completed. He then calmly put on his pants, bowed from the waist and went out. Ten minutes later he returned bearing a huge watermelon which he presented to me. As it was the first fruit we had tasted for many a month, we stifled any compunction we may have had and enjoyed it thoroughly.

After about eight months the Jap commandant notified the committee that a number of American and Canadian internees were to be repatriated in exchange for Japanese prisoners of war. When the day of departure came we all congregated near the main gateway and gave them a wonderful send off but felt rather sad at being left behind.

By this time, the quantity and quality of the food supplied to us had begun to deteriorate badly and many were the attempts made to purchase food over the wall from the Chinese villagers. These activities passed under the name of black marketing but our activities in this direction hardly agreed with the accepted meaning of the term. We were merely out to supplement a semi-starvation diet by means of purchase, whether it was considered illegal or otherwise. Needless to remark, these activities were severely frowned on by the Japs who confiscated any goods found and gaoled the offender. In spite of these deterrents, the trade carried on briskly. Prices, of course, were extortionate but money has little meaning when empty stomachs dictate. The Jap guards themselves fostered the business by the secret purchase of internees' jewellery and watches. My own rings, brooches, watch, plus my husband's studs, links and watch were disposed of for this purchase of very necessary food. It goes without saying that we received a mere fraction of what the things were worth. For instance, half a bottle of peanut oil was bought with the proceeds of a heavy 22 carat topaz ring.

One of our most successful "merchants" was a Trappist father. By all accounts, he had a special dispensation permitting him to speak and he surely used his tongue in a great service, especially for the children. He managed to get eggs, rice, sugar, peanut oil etc. and just charged the bare cost of the goods. Helpers were organised and guilefully decoyed the guards on "wild goose chases" with empty baskets while the goods were slipped over the wall at a different spot. It was said that later on, the father, whose room abutted the outer wall, had an opening through the wall under his bed, the bricks being replaced when the goods were pushed through. He came under suspicion but managed to evade arrest for a long period but was eventually "gathered in" and was sentenced to two weeks solitary confinement in a cell adjoining the guards' quarters. He arrived



back in the camp kitchen five days after his arrest. When questioned concerning his early release he said he thought the guards didn't like his voice when he chanted through the night! However, he was given a room in the centre of the camp with another priest. The outer wall of the camp was then fitted with wire and electrified. In consequence we all tightened out belts. This was something we couldn't cope with.

Our food supplies were very thin. Small hoards had long since been expended and the bread, less plentiful and of much poorer quality. Yeast was hard to come by and we experimented in growing our own cultures but it was very difficult to get a pure culture and in consequence, the bread was sour and we began to get upset tummies. Tea, we heard, was on sale on the canteen and those of us with any cash in reserve, bought some and thereby succumbed to a very mean swindle. It was proved to be nothing more than roasted willow leaves. The brew was a salty, brackish liquid too nauseous for drinking.

After two and a half years of this life, we began to feel that it was our lot to go on living this life for ever. And then, we would momentarily free ourselves from the depression and hate ourselves for giving way to an impulse of disloyalty to those who were giving their all in the service of freedom. At times, it was terribly hard to cling to our faith but somehow, we did.

The camp abounded in rumour. One story chased another and some, we found later, were surprisingly true. At this time there were more rumours than usual and there began a feeling of optimism that somehow one couldn't shake off. We certainly were allowed an English language newspaper, printed in Tientsin, but as it contained nothing more than Japanese and pro-Axis propaganda, it left us cold. It was possible, however, to dissect the reporting and arrive at some pretty sound deductions that pointed to the opposite direction of the so called printed news.

It was not revealed until much later that there was a way in which authentic news reached the camp. The messages were sealed in old condensed milk cans and dropped in the open cess-pool by a coolie in the pay of the Nationalist Government. Outgoing messages went the same way. The Japs are usually mortally afraid of infection and this was the last spot they would dream of hanging around. There were only three men in the secret. It was far too dangerous to let it be known generally. The Japs were always making surprise raids in the hope of finding concealed radio sets. One can readily understand why.

The news of the first landings in Caen was obligingly told us by the Japs themselves. They were enquiring in the camp for maps of the place! As it was a serious offence to possess a map, the response, of course, was nil, but as they seemed genuinely interested in getting an idea of the location of this place and no "strings" appeared to be attached to the request, quite a number of maps saw daylight for the first time for years.

One morning on the way to the sewing room a large plane flew over the camp and I was almost positive it bore American markings. I hurried back to spread the news but found that I was not alone in my discovery and all agreed as to the identity. As we stood there a heavy roar fell on our ears and there, sure enough, was the welcome plane. In a few moments it was joined by another and this time hundreds of wildly excited internees were gazing skywards. Suddenly from out the plane parachutes descended with what appeared to be packages and men.

This was the signal for a mad rush of the whole camp out of the main gateway into the countryside. The Japanese guards with their machine guns and rifles were absolutely ignored. Nothing, I'm sure, could have stemmed that frenzied rush. The Japs bowed to the inevitable and the mad crowds streamed past them and out of the gate that for over two and a half years had been barred against them. This was freedom and we drank it in wild, heady gulps. We raced on through the small village and the less hardy met the returning crowd with our deliverers, an American major, lieutenant and five other ranks. They had volunteered to come to the camp as contact had been broken with us for over ten days and the authorities feared the worst. They were equipped with explosives to blast open the gate if the necessity arose.

Their action in coming as they did, landing in remote, hostile territory with the odds so heavily stacked against them, is an epic in itself. There were forty five well armed Japs and further detachments in the immediate vicinity should they choose to call them and yet those seven men arrived in the camp as cool as cucumbers. They were borne into the camp shoulder high, the Salvation Army leading the show with their band. We choked back our emotions as best we could but a number were openly in tears. It was a day to remember for the rest of our lives.



An American flag miraculously appeared from nowhere and hung from the tower of the compound buildings. It was almost too good to be true.

The Japs, thinking that an American force had arrived by air, retired to their quarters, so the Major took possession of their administrative block, had a radio transmitter set up, and contacted his base in a matter of minutes.

The camp crowds milled around the main compound, laughing and singing, unwilling to let our visitors out of their sight. The amount of handshaking they had to go through must have been an ordeal in itself. The children clung to them and followed them everywhere so that it was difficult for them to do any work at all. We were told that planes would arrive the following day bringing food, clothing and other comforts.

I received a message asking me to go to the office where I was asked to collect the sewing room staff to make letters out of white material to read "O.K. to Land." They were to be forty feet long and were intended for the nearby airfield as a guide to incoming planes. They were to be finished by 6 a.m. the following morning.

There were plenty of volunteers but, of course, no material. That difficulty was overcome by using parachute material and some blackout material found in the Jap offices. It hurt us very much having to cut up this nice material, having so few clothes ourselves, but all in a good cause and the work was finished in time to be taken to the airfield in the morning.

The next day was a wonderful one for the children who were allowed to climb on the wall, now that the electrified wire had been removed, to watch for the planes. They commenced to arrive about 11 a.m. led by a silver coloured one known as the "Flying Angel." To us, that name seemed so appropriate. It circled the camp, its silvery wings flashing in the sunlight when, suddenly, out of the bottom dropped a dozen coloured parachutes, each with a container attached. When the last container had landed they were fetched in from the outlying fields and carried into the Assembly Hall to await sorting and distribution of the contents.

One or two of the containers had burst on landing and what a wonderful time the children had collecting treasures. They arrived back in camp with their face smeared with chocolate and sticky with fruit juice. It was a marvel that they were not ill being without luxuries like this for so long. Chewing gum was the greatest find of all, they revelled in it. A number of children born in camp had never tasted any of these things before.

The committee worked hard arranging the distribution of food and other things to the camp. It was a happy band of people who sat down to their first good meal that day and for many days to come. We were indeed thankful for Uncle Sam's generosity.

The following Sunday we had more visitors by air. From Okinawa they radioed that they intended dropping clothing and shoes. They nearly killed us with kindness, the packages dropping all over the camp. One container fell through the kitchen roof, another on the roof of a room, whilst a few landed in the tall trees. We took cover until they had departed but it was a marvellous sight to see the stacks of clothing when all the containers had been emptied. The shoes were a godsend as a number of people had been walking bare foot for months, the children likewise. We dreaded the thought of the cold winter coming without shoes.

American troops had arrived by this time and the Colonel in charge of the force had organised the Jap guards to assist in guarding the camp. It was thought possible that the communist troops in the vicinity might be tempted to use the camp inmates as political hostages in their feud with the Nationalist Government. There were ample grounds for this belief.

In the meantime, the sick in the hospital were evacuated by air and five hundred from the camp sent by train to Tsingtao to await transport to their various destinations. The rest were promised a fortnight for recuperation at Tsingtao before being sent back to Tientsin and Peking.

The night before we were due to leave we held a round of farewell parties. Our beds had been sent off in advance and we found the floor nothing at all to worry about as far as sleeping was concerned, with the prospect of such a to-morrow.

We were up and seated in the trucks which were there to take us to the station, at 4 a.m. Our truck was near the end and it seemed ages before it came for us to start. We were almost in sight of the station when the convoy came to a halt and we wondered what had happened. It wasn't long before we found out. The Colonel arrived and broke the sad news that the communists had blown up a number of railway culverts and a long stretch of the



railway line. It was impossible for the train to start. We were disappointed to say the least if it, more so for the children, as we talked of the sea, sands and holiday.

It was a very dejected procession that returned to camp. We opened up our room and started again the dull old routine of queuing up for water and food and doing the same deadly chores we had known for three years. We had been rescued from the Japanese on 17<sup>th</sup> August, and here we were in the month of October. When would we get free? Our spirits were at low ebb.

About a week later there was a whisper in camp that we were to be flown out. A discreet enquiry and I verified the story.

This time the American Army intended no hitch in their plans. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> we piled into waiting trucks and drove off to the airfield. One by one the Dakotas touched down on the field, filled up and bore us off to Tientsin. So ended our interlude.

In retrospect, what had we lost by our experiences and what was our gain? In loss, our personal liberty for three years and all our possessions. In gain, what? We had learned the great lesson of denial and found virtue in the same street. Grew to respect tolerance and realise what it means. Found the pleasure of giving far richer than of receiving. Grew to accept privation and be thankful for small mercies. We are richer by far by our experience, what more is there to say?

### **LAST STAND ON SMILING HILL**

**Extracts from an article in the Straits Times in 1986**

**With thanks to Jonathan Moffatt**

*[See Websites [P.20] for this article about an eccentric old planter, Bertie 'Perky' Perkins, living at Port Dickson in the 1970s. He was a pre-war planter in Johore and in the Johore Volunteers. Late on in the Malayan Campaign he was given a commission in the Malay Regiment and became a POW in Singapore and Thailand. He died in 1994.]*

**Ronald B. Perkins** is the last of his kind. Almost 60 years ago he left England (c.1926) to make his fortune planting rubber in Malaya. While one by one his compatriots have died, **Perkins** remains, upholding the style of the colonial rubber planter.

The house on Smiling Hill (**Bukit Tersen**) is a period piece to Britain's colonial past. So is the man who laid it out and who now whiles away his ageing bachelorhood under its expansive roof. From the water tower on a clear day, you can see Sumatra across the jade green Malacca Strait. When his memory clears, he scans back half a century, recalling the day he abandoned the Swansea coalmines to seek adventure and fortune in Malaya.

'**Perky**' is the last stand. He lives as fully as his 83<sup>rd</sup> year can take, the role of **Somerset Maugham's** 'whisky-swilling' rubber planter in the Far East. Contemporaries have gone but his mind plays tricks. There are times he is convinced the chaps are here sharing his slightly peeling grandeur. The veranda reverberates again to their marathon drinking parties. With the doors flung open to night breezes and the imagined revelry in full swing, this splendid villa becomes more than one last planter's keepsake, more than a museum guarding heirlooms of the Perkins family down 300 years from South Wales to Port Dickson.

They are a matching pair, **Perkins** and his white colonial manor; proud, reserved, as quintessentially British as the Jaguar car in the drive.

He waits on the porch steps, not a tall figure but erect as a guardsman. The off-white safari suit is rumpled. A carved walking stick rests on his arm, a brown trilby high on the forehead, brown socks down at the ankles.

**Ah-Liang** – his housekeeper – and her husband, the cook **Al Heng**, cater for his comforts; **Xavier Edison**, a trusted Indian secretary, tends business affairs; a Malay Syce and Kebun complete the staff. They preserve a cameo of the old empire in which Brits were lord and paymaster and the rest served. But the bonds have melted over decades; **Edison** has been with **Perkins** for 38 years; **Ah Liang** and **Al Heng** for 20, and out of dependency and loyalty has grown unquestioned affection.

**Ah Liang** knows his needs intuitively and so do his two Alsatian dogs **Whisky** and **Soda** who wait on Persian rugs in the great hall to accompany their master to the beach – a private beach of red sand.

**Perkins** swims daily – a habit of 34 years when he bought **Bukit Tersen, Smiling Hill**.

The house he based on Clovelly, another estate manor, adding a servants' wing and water tower. He



even engaged a Chinese geomancer to ensure no ill spirits should bedevil his property. He suggested the layout be moved 15 degrees to the right – thus allowing nature's 4 winds to be drawn into the hall creating cool breezes. The hall is central. It fans out through polished teak archways to the dining room, book-lined study and majestic staircase. The four main bedrooms have balconies extending round the building overlooking the Straits to the West and a Malay Regiment Parade Ground to the East. In the study are glass bookcases and wood panelling inlaid with Dutch marquetry three centuries old. In the dining room are water colours of Lake Windermere and Loch Ness and a sepia signed portrait of Queen Adelaide, wife of William IV. In the hall is an oil of **Perkins'** great, great, great grandmother dressed in pink. Also on display are muskets, a miner's lamp, a bust of Sir Stamford Raffles and a monkey carved out of a coconut shell.

At the top of the stairs are the coat of arms of Bromsgrove School and the family crest together with his commission into the Malay Regiment and his father's Boer War Commission. There is a photo of his mother receiving an OBE for Red Cross work in France in WW1.

His decision to become a rubber planter happened by chance when he met his friend **Archie Hill's** father in Swansea at Christmas 1928. "Where's **Archie?**" he asked. "Gone to Malaya rubber planting," was the answer.

**Perkins** turned out to be the type of chap Dunlop was keen to recruit in Malaya. Public school, rugby player (essential if Dunlop were to beat rival planter Guthrie) and unattached. An added bonus being experienced in land surveying and mine engineering.

Things moved fast after his interview at St. James' Square and he sailed for Malaya in a fortnight's time. As a junior field assistant (planter) on Dunlop's Bahau Estate, he and his other 5 junior planters would be up pre-dawn to conduct a roll-call among the 1200 mainly Tamil labourers. At weekends after muster, they played rugby or golf and later visited the Sungei Ujong Club – sometimes returning to the Estate in the early hours – but ready for Sunday morning muster. Sundays were days for a "curry tiffin" hosted in turn.

War came in December 1941 and he was commissioned as a Lieutenant into the Malay Regiment, POW in Singapore and then Thailand. In Changi, he planted spinach to fight vitamin deficiency, led university and drama groups. Then he was rail-roaded to Thailand to build the Burma-Siam Railway. In Chungkai Camp he was anti-malarial officer, supervised crop growing, drains and grave digging. One week after war ended, he returned to camp to tidy the graves and found they had been vandalized by the Thais who had extracted bottles, tin boxes and compasses from the graves. However, he had to retrieve a box from a grave containing vital information on a beri-beri cure. He said, "I dug down to the very bones of the poor corpse. I could find no tin. Then a friend had a go and he got it."

By the end of the war **Perkins** was 42. He had lost 3 planter friends and **Archie Hill**. After returning home via Liverpool to recover, he went back to the Far East in 3 months. But before he took up his planting career he wrote a letter to the War Crimes Court in Singapore seeking the acquittal for one **Lt.**

**Col. Yanagita**. He said, "I was in a group under **Col. Yanagita** from November 1942 until he handed over command in about November 1944..... In my definite opinion, he was always kind and humane to the prisoners in his charge and that he did all in his power to ameliorate their lot." Not all would agree with him. But – alone among Jap commanders **Yanagita** escaped the death penalty. After the trial,

**Perkins** and another witness for **Yanagita** went to Raffles. "I didn't expect to be beaten up," he said, "but I knew I would be abused. We were called bloody fools for standing up for those bloody Nips."

Post-war, **Perkins** managed to avoid CTs and Indonesian Konfrontasi by keeping a handy .45 revolver, 2 Malay marksmen and a stiff upper lip as he did his rounds as general manager to 9 Estates.

However, with the help of Dewar's Whisky and a heavy right foot he did manage to right off an MG under a Singapore bus, a BMW which plunged into the Straits and a Bentley which he crashed into Port Dickson Yacht Club through the outer wall of the new billiard hall. As the regional King, expecting to officially open the new wing, wrote, "I understand, old boy, you opened the club yourself."

**Perkins** never married. He became a Malaysian citizen, a JP, fellow of local charities, yacht club commodore and a not-quite-retired planter owning an 88-hectare plantation in partnership with the acting King, chief justice and regional bus operator.

Rubber is drying up and the plantation is rented to a Chinese who owns holiday villas. **Edison** still lives on the plantation and looks after **Perkins'** affairs. The erosion of British influence has been a personal thing. His friends have died one by one and he misses them. He talks about moving to the Cameron Highlands but his roots and chattels are fixed in Smiling Hill and he couldn't break the bonds which were fixed 30 years ago. He died in 1994.



# Thailand - Burma Railway Centre

Tax No. 0715545000201

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73 ถนนเจ้าขุนเณร

ตำบลบ้านเหนือ อำเภอเมือง

จังหวัดกาญจนบุรี 71000



1st March 2023

## Update from Thailand-Burma Railway Centre (TBRC) following impact of Covid-19

As previously reported, TBRC, like many others in the world, was substantially impacted by serious repercussions brought on by the reactions of various Governments of the world to the Covid-19 pandemic. It's probably fair to say the world, as we knew it, was brought to its knees.

During 2021 as Covid continued to extend way beyond any previously imagined time-frame and TBRC's future was looking uncertain, there were some very proactive steps taken by a number of good friends/supporters around the world, who understand and strongly support the valuable research work TBRC has done for 20 years and continues to do for the benefit of PoW related families. Their wonderful initiatives rallied support for funding assistance which progressively gathered momentum to include all similarly devoted organisations in the UK as well as other countries and of course a number of individuals also got behind the cause.

With much of the world re-opening to international travel progressively from mid-2022, it is time to give an UPDATE to our wonderful friends and supporters on how we are progressing.

With this greatly valued assistance when we needed it most, we are pleased and proud to say we have managed to keep our experienced and dedicated Team allowing us to respond very quickly to the recovery of international travel as it continues to gain momentum. Recovery has been quicker than we might have hoped and we are now back to around 75 to 80% of our visitor level prior to the world shut-down in early 2020. We are back in full swing!!!

On behalf of our TBRC Team we would like to offer our sincere and heartfelt "THANK YOU" to all who have helped us survive these unprecedented times and it's very IMPORTANT TO ADD that we have not only survived to continue our valuable work but our Team have worked tirelessly on extensive recording and research projects during the enforced "quiet times" that has seen our records grow substantially over the last couple of years – projects that we may never have had the time to complete.

So we are better equipped than ever at helping PoW related families and, while ongoing donations to assist with our research costs will always be very welcome and put to very good use, we look forward with great optimism to what we hope will be a complete recovery by 2024 and especially to continuing our work for future generations. **THANK YOU!!**

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General Manager



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**THE ARTHUR STEWART KING SCARF VC STORY**  
**BY SALLIE HAMMOND (MVG Secretary in Canada and the USA)**  
**with assistance from the late David Croft MA (RAFBPA)**

**EXTRACTS FROM A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL REUNIONS**  
**OF THE RAF BUTTERWORTH & PENANG ASSOCIATION IN 2014 & 2016 & in Canada in 2028**

**Biography of Arthur Stewart King Scarf**

Born 13<sup>th</sup> June 1913 Wimbledon.

Educated at Kings College School, Wimbledon.

According to Headmaster **Dixon** “**Scarf** was an average student; pleasant chap; mad about planes.”

Joined RAF 1936. Nicknamed “**Pongo**” for his gregarious personality & sense of humour.

Posted to Singapore with 62 Squadron 1939.

Married **Sallie Lunn** in Alor Star, May 1941.

Died in Alor Star Hospital 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941 as a result of his wounds sustained in air combat against the Japanese.

Awarded VC posthumously June 1946.

**Friendship & 62 Squadron**

**Arthur Scarf** and **Harley Boxall** (**Sallie’s** father) met at RAF Thornaby Flight Training School 1936.

They met again with the newly formed 62 Bomber Squadron at Cranfield 1937.

They served with RAF 62 Squadron in Malaya until 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

**62 Squadron Crest**

Members of the newly formed 62 Squadron were invited to submit draft for a crest.

**Harley Boxall’s** crest was chosen: “A Comet” with the motto “*Inesperato*” i.e. “Unexpectedly”; an unexpected attack.

**Epic Journey: From RAD Cranfield to RAF Tengah, Singapore 1939**

During the summer of 1939, a decision was taken by the air ministry to reinforce the RAF in the Far East with 2 squadrons of Bristol Blenheim Bombers.

Then urgency of the situation required that the aircraft from 34 & 62 Squadrons be flown to their final destination at RAF Tengah, Singapore. The journey took a total of 50 flying hours (12 days) because of refuelling stops, crew illness and mechanical problems en route.

**RAF Alor Star 1940**

From RAF Tengah in Singapore, 62 Squadron moved to Alor Star in North West Malaya.

Aircraft and crew detachments were also sent to Alor Star where there was an airfield with an advanced, emergency landing ground built in preparation for possible war.

As the “Jap situation” worsened, 62 Squadron moved permanently to Alor Star in early 1941.

**Desert Island: Lost at Sea**

On 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1941, RAF Alor Star was ordered to check enemy shipping in Sabang Harbour, Sumatra, 450 miles west of Alor Star across the Strait of Malacca. 5 Blenheims were airborne. It was **Harley Boxall’s** first operational flight as a pilot. Pictures were taken of Sabang Harbour but heavy cloud obscured visual contact with the rest of the Squadron and wireless contact was lost. **Harley’s** Blenheim had disappeared from view, but the other 4 Blenheims returned to Alor Star safely.

While trying to find his way back to Alor Star with his navigator and wireless operator, his Bristol Blenheim lost an engine and crashed into the sea near a tiny island, Pulo Rawi.

**Lost at Sea continued**

A May Day distress signal was sent to RAF Alor Star from the Blenheim but the flight co-ordinates were incorrect due to the instability of the aircraft. The Blenheim was way off course.

A search and rescue flight was initiated by **F/O Frank Griffiths** involving a Sunderland aircraft from 230 Squadron based at Seletar, Singapore, but the Bristol Blenheim was never found.

**Rescue at last**

**Harley Boxall** & his 2 crew, **LAC W.W. Martin** and **Sgt. L Podger** managed to survive for a week on the remote uninhabited island with very little fresh water and few provisions from the ditched aircraft. They were rescued by Thai fishermen. It was a miracle they were saved because those waters were fished infrequently by Thais.

**A love story**

**Elizabeth B Norah Lunn** (“**Sallie**”) and **Arthur Scarf** (“**Pongo**”) married in May 1941.

After a whirlwind romance, **Sister Sallie Lunn**, with Queen Alexandra’s Nursing Service at Alor Star General Hospital married **Squadron Leader A.S.K. Scarf**. Both were from Wimbledon, England.



### Another love story

This was followed by the wedding in the same month, on 19<sup>th</sup> May 1941, of **Sister Pat Davies** of Perth, Western Australia, also with Queen Alexandra's Nursing Service at Alor Star General Hospital, and **Squadron Leader Harley Boxall** (**Sallie Hammond's** parents) of Birmingham, England.

**Sister Alethea Gentles** was bridesmaid and **Sqn. Ldr. Norman Irving** (who later wrote the recommendation for the posthumous VC award to **Arthur Scarf** on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1946) was best man.

**Dr. Lupprian**, Medical Superintendent at Alor Star Hospital gave the bride away.

### Japanese invasion of Malaya – 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941

In a quote from **John Burton's** book, *"A Fortnight of Infamy,"* ... *"Blenheims from 62 Squadron were the last British planes to attempt a bombing of the Japanese landing zone at Kota Bahru on 8<sup>th</sup> December 1941. Led by Sqn. Ldr. Boxall the raid had the distinction of being the first to attack the Japanese landing armada at Kra Isthmus on the east coast of Siam/Thailand on the first day of war declared by Japan."*

### 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941

**John Burton** went on to say, *"Within a few hours a mammoth strike by Japanese aircraft occurred at RAF Butterworth Base destroying many Bristol Blenheim aircraft on the ground and wounding ground crew who were trying to ready the aircraft for take off."*

### Burton continued

*"By late afternoon on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941, 2 intact Blenheims managed to get off the ground before another fierce raid. One turned back to the airfield because of heavy fire, Sqn. Ldr. Arthur Scarf and his crew, Ritchie and Calder, continued alone to Singora on the east coast of Thailand."*

*"Sqn. Ldr. Scarf dropped all his bombs before turning back towards Butterworth. His aircraft met with heavy fighter opposition and he was grievously wounded."*

**Sqn. Ldr. Scarf** managed to get his severely damaged bomber and crew back in the direction of Alor Star where he knew **Sallie** (his wife) would be at the hospital. He made a forced landing in a padi field near the Alor Star airfield. The crew members, **Ritchie** and **Calder**, who were not injured, removed **Scarf** from the wreckage of the Blenheim and carried him as quickly as possible to the emergency room of the hospital. **Dr. Nowell Peach** assessed him and ordered a blood transfusion as he was bleeding profusely from his left brachial artery as well as a wound on his back. **Dr.**

**Peach** sedated him and treated him for shock.

### Emergency Room – Alor Star General Hospital

**Sister Pat Boxall** (**Sallie Hammond's** mother) was on duty in the emergency room and called **Sallie Scarf** to come urgently from the staff residence.

**Sallie Scarf** said in a letter to **Pat Boxall**, *"I remember I was off duty but when I came over to the hospital, Dr. Peach was there with Ritchie and Calder. Dr. Peach told me about Pongo's arm. I felt very depressed when I heard as Pongo was left-handed. When Pongo was moved from the stretcher, the severe wound in his back started bleeding as well."*

### Death of Sqn. Ldr. A. Scarf – 9<sup>th</sup> December 1941

**Sallie** also said in her letter, *"You put up a subcutaneous saline drip in his chest and I gave 2 units of blood as my blood group was compatible with Pongo's. What cheered me up was when I heard him say to you, 'Now Pat, don't get fresh with my mammary glands!' Then Dr. Peach came and wheeled Pongo into the operating room. Pongo called out, 'Don't worry, chin up!'"*

**Sister Boxall** accompanied **Dr. Peach** to the operating room. **Sallie Scarf** waited outside. **Pongo** slipped into unconsciousness before the anaesthetic commenced. He died as a result of extreme haemorrhage and shock. He was 28 years old and had been married for 7 months.

### Sallie Scarf widowed

**Pat Boxall** came out of the operating room with **Dr. Peach**. They shared the tragic news with **Sallie** who was very upset because she had hoped the blood transfusion would have saved her husband's life.

**Arthur Scarf** was later buried in the grounds of the hospital by **Sister Phyllis Briggs** who obtained a coffin from the hospital chaplain. **Sallie** and other service personnel were evacuated from Alor Star to Singapore on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

### The story continues

The evacuation journey from Alor Star to Singapore down the Grik road was a nightmare. Roads were crammed with civilians, vehicles, British Army and Australian soldiers retreating from the advancing Japanese.

On 13<sup>th</sup> December, **Sqn. Ldr. Boxall**, **Ft. Lt. Lancaster** and **Sgt. Stafford** travelled by road from Taiping to Butterworth to 'rescue' 3 repaired Brewster Buffalo fighters and fly them to RAAF 21 Squadron in Ipoh. The aircraft were safely delivered to RAAF 21 Squadron and RAAF 453 Squadron on the morning of 14<sup>th</sup> December 1941.



During the (subsequent) retreat to Singapore, **Boxall** was given command of 3 Lanchester Armoured Fighting Vehicles (AFVs – Armoured Cars) to help fight a rearguard action from 17<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> December 1941.

### **The Lanchester Armoured Fighting Vehicles Story**

**Sqn. Ldr. Boxall** and other members of 62 Squadron had now effectively become part of the British Army as there were no aircraft left to fly. They were ordered to participate in a vital rearguard action protecting British and Australian forces down the Grik road to Singapore. They manned the 3 AFVs. **Harley Boxall's** AVF came across a section of the Argyll and Sutherland Highland Regiment being closely pursued by Japanese soldiers. **Boxall** was vehicle commander and gunner. His air gunner fed the guns and the bomb aimer became the driver. Around a bend in the road, Japanese troops appeared on bicycles. They were machine gunned down by the Lanchester AFVs. Those not killed outright abandoned their bikes and leapt into the jungle, the AFVs giving covering fire to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. They retreated with the Regiment to the Causeway at Johore, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders crossed on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1942, led by their pipers, before the Causeway was blown up by Indian Sappers. In the painting by **Peter Archer** (1984) commissioned by the Argyll and Sutherland Highland Regiment and on display in the WW2 Museum at Stirling Castle, Royal Navy personnel in their white uniforms can be seen waiting to assist any stragglers crossing the Causeway. Also in the painting is a Lanchester AFV similar to the one in which **Sqn. Ldr. Harley Boxall** was both commander and gunner for 2 days.

The Japanese started repairs to the causeway on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1942, and the invasion of Singapore took place on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1942.

### **What happened to the others in the story**

**The Boxalls** survived the war. They emigrated to Southern Rhodesia in 1948 having spent 3 years in India after evacuating Malaya. **Pat Boxall** died in 1990 in London, Ontario (Canada) and **Harley Boxall** died in 1994 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

**Sister Sallie Scarf** was evacuated from Singapore to India in January 1942. She met and married **Major Stuart Gunn**. They returned to England after the war. **Sallie** had 4 daughters. She died in 1986.

**Sister Alethea Gentles**, **Pat Boxall's** bridesmaid, was listed as killed by Japanese aircraft strafing survivors in the water after the S.S. Kuala was bombed off Pom Pong Island in February 1942.

**Sister Phyllis Briggs** was captured in Singapore by the Japanese and became a civilian internee for the duration of the war. She returned to England, married a **Mr. Thom** and had 2 daughters. She lived to be 100 and died in 2012. Her Malayan experiences appeared in the book, *“Women Beyond the Wire.”*

**Grp. Capt. Frank Griffiths** left Malaya before the Japanese invaded and returned to England. He was involved with air radar calibration and testing from 1940-43. He was instrumental in the development of the automatic blind landing system for aircraft during 1944-45. The system is still used today. He died in 2011.

**Dr. Nowell Peach** planned to become a surgeon in England. He became M/O with RAF Volunteer Reserve Far East in 1941. He escaped from Alor Star to Singapore in December 1941 but was captured by the Japanese in March 1942. He served as a POW doctor. He studied *“Gray's Anatomy”* in POW Camp - given to him by **Dr. 'Weary' Dunlop** the famous Australian Army surgeon. He returned to England after the war and studied to become a surgeon. He married a nurse and had 5 children. He died in 2012.

### **The Victoria Cross**

In June 1946, **Sallie Gunn (Scarf nee Lunn)** received the VC for her late husband at an Investiture, at Buckingham Palace, from King George VI. **Sallie** recalled the King's kind words, *“Your late husband did a wonderful act for which this country will be eternally grateful.”*

### **Arthur Stewart King Scarf VC Memorials**

Taiping Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery, Malaya. The grave is marked with a white headstone engraved with a Victoria Cross.

A plaque is located at Kings College School, Wimbledon.

RAF Brize Norton maintained the VC10 “Arthur Scarf” used to transport RAF personnel and supplies to other bases. This aircraft is now out of service.

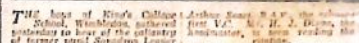
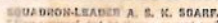
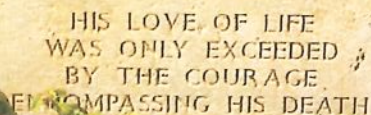
National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire has a tree planted in memory of A.S.K. Scarf VC

Far East websites for POW Organisations.

**2006 - Alex and Sallie Hammond** were invited by the Keeper of Medals at the RAF Museum at Hendon to view **Sqn. Ldr. Arthur Scarf's** original Victoria Cross and medal collection. **Sallie** said, *“It was an emotional moment holding the Victoria Cross in my hand.”*

This humble, unadorned bronze medal with the words, **“For Valour”** was made from the guns of Sevastopol during the Crimean War. **Queen Victoria** requested a simple medal be made as the highest award for Valour because there is no price for Valour.





By Daily Mail Reporter

**T**HEY were talking yesterday about Arthur Stewart King Scaff, who was born in Wimbledon 33 years ago this month . . . who died in Malaya on December 9, 1941, after his lone plane had gone up from a blitzed airfield to raid the Jap target that his comrades could not

For yesterday, nearly five years after his hopeless battle, it was announced that he had been awarded the V.C.

Perhaps the last V.C. of the war. "A pleasant boy, maybe no highly gifted, but a first ordinary chap"—that was how a study at King's College School, Wimbledon, summed up the young hero who attended their lessons.

"And he was read about our places."

★  
ANOTHER who talked of him yesterday was Haily, the policeman who married him in 1931.  
She has married again, and is now Mrs. S. D. Gurn, wife of an Army officer.  
Now, too, lived in Winchester when married Arthur Pearce and in Arlington Road.  
But they had never met until the day of the trial—the in a Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, he a second leader in the R.A.F., which he joined in 1933.  
When Pearl bought his empty place back from the last she was at the Singapore hospital  
the gave two pints of blood to a transfusion—while day nurse were overhauled—but Pearl was

At her home in Grangeville, Idaho, Mrs. O'Connell said yesterday: "I am happy to offer all these years his gallantry rewarded. I knew all along that he deserved it."

AND this was the story of December 9, 1941, told in yesterday's edition.

In the desperate attempt to check the Jap advance, the 1st Squadron was ordered to take from Butterworth and attack on base.

The Japs thrust first. His plane, less than a mile above the ground—off but still over the water, which had just died off.

"It would have been suicide," the colonel said, "had I abandoned the projected approach. He decided, however, to press alone, appreciating the moral of which his action would have been a reminder of the squadron."

He made his attack. He brought back a crippled Blenheim, downed enemy fighters, made 600 feet at Alor Star—his crew blasted.

★

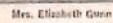
IN the playing field of R. College School yesterday afternoon 350 boys stood silently behind their headmaster, story of Squadron Leader, Air Stewart King Smith, of No. Squadron.

The girl who married him, girl who tried to save his life, go to Buckingham Palace to see them the King and V.C.

When Captain E. H. Gann, wife of Captain S. B. Gann, of the Mail, Grange Road, Otara, received official intimation that her first husband, Captain Leonard A. Gann, had been killed in action, she accepted the V.C. which was, as she put it, the "Mail," "tactfully" mailed.

"One reason why I am pleased," she says, "is because it is rather a vindication of the part the R.A.F. played in Malaya when the Japanese attacked the peninsula."

It is recalled, however, that, on that all the military demands could not be met, and there was serious criticism of the R.A.F. at that time.



When Singapore fell, Mrs. Ganesa escaped to Java on a hospital ship, and then went to India, where she met her present husband, who was then an Army Sergeant.

She is a nurse in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service in Malaya when she met tonight's Lord, said to be 31. Each day, she discovered that her husband was in the same place as the Wrecked, and Mrs. Ganesa told the "Mad" "I passed him home every day, but I never knew until we met in Singapore. We were married seven months before his death."

Mrs. Ganesa will attend an investigation at Raffles Hotel to revive the search.

### Wife Gave Her Blood in Vain

[illegible]



**MALAYAN TALES OF A GRANDFATHER – 1939-1942. By C.H. Lee – pre-war contd.**

**By kind permission of his son Graham Lee**

I have remarked that the political scene in Malaya was placid; there was none of the agitation as in India for self rule. No doubt there were aspirations, especially amongst the Malays and to some extent the Chinese, but it was not overt. There was some talk of trades unions, and labour trouble, but no unions existed. I recall a Chinese talking of our policy of "divide and rule."

I have, however, sought the impressions of an immigrant Indian on what it was like to be working under white masters. My old Indian clerk and colleague, and faithful friend, now retired in Tamil Nadu, has written, at my request, his recollection of the attitude of Asian employees to their European masters; covering a period from 1922 to the war and after:-

*"I joined the firm (Harrisons & Barker, Kuala Lumpur) in 1922 at a fabulous salary of \$50 (about £6) per month, and was engaged by a stern looking gentleman, who had in addition a short temper – for that matter all European executives looked stern and serious, seldom smiled and tried to be rigid even if, as normally they happened to have a soft heart. We were, in short, kept at a distance. They considered themselves the repositories of everything that was wise and right. The office appeared to be well regimented and had a sombre atmosphere, the last place a young man, fresh from school, would like to be it. Any insubordination on the part of the clerical staff was ruthlessly dealt with.*

*The mood of the executive underwent a tremendous change usually on Saturdays, when planters called on them to discuss estate problems. In the course of their discussions they exhibited all the humour they were capable of and one could hear occasionally loud peals of laughter. After their discussions they headed for the Selangor Club (then the preserve of the Europeans) for a sumptuous lunch. The executive returned to the office just before closing time in good humour and went home well pleased. We, the subordinates, who witnessed a welcome change in our bosses on Saturday fully expected them to return on Monday in the same frame of mind, but there was no change.*

*Soon after my appointment I had an apprehension I would not last long under my stern chief. I trudged along as best I could with the nagging fear of losing my job, precious as it provided the wherewithal with which to support my ageing parents. Sleep did not come easily at night. I was staying at the Y.M.C.A. in Kuala Lumpur, and my brother, who was working at Muar, happened to visit me at this time. He found me very lonely and miserable, and he thought that marriage would perhaps bring a welcome change in me. I got married at the age of 31, by when I thought I had turned the corner on the strength of my experience I had gained in this difficult period I had passed through.*

*At this stage I thought I had stabilized by birth with better knowledge of English, wider knowledge of the office routine and the plantation industry and, above all, an insight into the whims and fancies of the European executives. I received, however, a rude shock when I was asked to work under a tough senior assistant who found fault with every bit of my work, although I tried as hard as ever to please him. Why he adopted this posture I was quite unable to explain, except that I thought he was anti-Indian and anti-Chinese. The situation went from bad to worse and a stage was reached when I could no longer tolerate the humiliation – he used the abusive word "damn" frequently to point out every trivial slip. I spent sleepless nights worrying about the future. Finally I decided to quit with the full backing of my wife. When I handed in my letter of resignation, he was very surprised and never expected I would take such a drastic step. He explained that though at times he was pretty hard on me, he had nothing against my performance. He asked me to withdraw my resignation which I did after consulting my wife. In the meantime he recommended to the firm that I be granted three months leave in India with a first class return passage. So, off I went to India with a vow to forget all about my firm in Old Market Square, and I returned from leave feeling refreshed and relaxed, I was assigned to the same boss who seems to have mellowed considerably in my absence. Gone were the harassment and irritation and it was apparent he wanted to make me feel at home.*

*So ended a morbid experience and the beginning of a new era in which I had the privilege and pleasure of being associated with three or four gentlemen who, it is no exaggeration to say, treated me as a friend and not as a subordinate, and gave me all the encouragement I needed.*

*I, on my part, put my heart and soul into my work, and my efforts resulted in due course, after the war, in my being elevated to the status of an Assistant, a province hitherto reserved for expatriates.*

*From now on until my retirement in 1965 I never looked back, and at a farewell function the firm handed me an inscribed gold wrist watch in appreciation of my 44 years' service."*

I remember taking **Mr. J. William** with me to visit and stay on an Estate in Pahang, and the kind Scot and his wife were most hospitable, and he felt quite at home, as we talked and listened to music in the evening but then he is one of nature's gentlemen.

The South Indian was a faithful fellow, and the planter had a soft spot for his "Narlakis" as he called the Tamils. They were sent in droves to the Japanese Railway in 1942 or so, where we met them, brothers in misfortune, and it was touching to see



how they greeted their old masters, giving them little gifts. We met and talked during the rest period (Yasume), and spoke of "the good old days" in Tamil or Malay. The same applied to some Malays and Chinese, though the bulk were Indian, and they suffered grievously.

I feel that **Kipling's**:-

*"East is East, and West is West*

*And ne'er shall they meet in twain"* requires some revision after that experience.

When I returned to Malaya in 1946, one of my first visits, a sentimental journey, was to **C. B. Colson's** Lunderston Estate at Banting on the Coast. It now no longer had a resident manager, and **Coley's** bungalow was empty and deserted, and all the lovely ferns and pot plants were no more, but whilst looking around his old Tamil *kebun* (gardener) appeared. He remembered me all right, for his eyes lit up, and he kissed the ground at my feet, raising himself on his hands and lifting his legs in the air.

I am reminded, if the analogy is not too sacrilegious and presumptuous, of **Anatole France's** juggler, who could only express his obeisance to the Almighty by likewise raising himself on his hands, and juggling with his feet before the altar.

I have kept in touch with **William** ever since on his retirement to Tamil Nadu in India, and we correspond frequently discussing the political scene in India and in England, in which he takes a lively interest. We are both getting old, and unlikely to see each other again, but the fidelity of my former clerk is one happy aspect of my work and sojourn in Malaya. I rather feel that he has even become a bit of an old Tory!

I should mention at this juncture a diversion on which I embarked in 1938 – the Hash House Harriers, which have now spread throughout the world, and has even won mention in the Times! I had moved to the Selangor Club Chambers, near the "Spotted Dog" Club (Selangor Club) in Kuala Lumpur after a row in the Mess with a colleague, with whom I later became a great friend, and here I met "**G**" **Gispert**, an accountant, and he suggested we form a Harrier Group, which he named HASH HOUSE in a jocular and alliterative reference to the place where we lived. He was a splendid fellow. To the superficial he might be thought a typical example of the European socialite of the Far East pre-war, and indeed he had a great enjoyment of life, full of fun and wit, but underneath a serious strain, an able accountant, an efficient company commander in the Volunteers, with a sense of humour. He was a roly poly of a fellow, cherubic and a dear friend. He had a stern sense of duty, and being on leave when the Japanese War broke out he exerted himself to get back from Australia, arriving in Singapore after the evacuation of Kuala Lumpur, and disbandment of the Volunteers there, so he joined the Argylls as a platoon officer, and when the day after the Japanese landed on Singapore Island this much depleted battalion was sent up towards the Causeway to stem the rot, poor "**G**" was killed that night in an ambush.

I regard the expansion and name of the H.H.H. as a memorial to a very fine Englishman. We ran every Friday evening a sort of paper chase. We were then wholly European, but now it is good to know the Hash includes all races and flourishes in a manner that would gladden his heart.

It will have been noted that my social contacts were exclusively European. I record this as a fact, neither defending nor condemning it.

I wish now, however, it had not been so, and after the war it was different. One good friend I made was a young Chinese doctor, **Dr. Tan Chee Koon**, a wealthy, socialist, humane, who was a member of the Kuala Lumpur Book Club Committee as I was. We found we had a joint interest in military history, strange as this may seem, and he told me that during the Japanese occupation he had read through all the volumes of the official history of World War 1 by the British military historian, **Major-General Edmonds**. He later became an M.P. and was the scourge of the corrupt, sending me in England when I left Malaya copies of his valiant speeches against corruption in public life. He was much respected and not molested, but alas, has since had a stroke. I found a place on one of our Estates for his nephew, **Tan Kee Boo**, as a trainee, and he is now a Manager. He visited us not long ago when on leave in U.K. with his wife and we had lunch. He seemed much affected on parting and I was touched by his gratitude for the little I had been able to do for him, not always a quality generally displayed.

We had an excellent and wide range of books in the Book Club, and I used to broadcast book reviews on Kuala Lumpur's amateur run radio. An amusing Lancashire engineer was in charge, and was a sort of disc jockey for music, generally classical, though he said he "*had no time for this Opus 56 Stooft*." I was prompted to this by a friend, **Gerald Hawkins, M.C.S.**, who was in the Co-operative Department, and lived for a time at the Club Chambers. He used to take us for trips into the jungle at Kuang near K.L. and visit the primitive hill-men (*Sakai*) taking them quinine, Tiger Balm and other useful medicinal aids. They lived in attap huts and cultivated tapioca and sweet potatoes (yams) shifting their cultivation. We took photos and later showed them a photo which included a rather uncomely Sakai girl, they smiled and said "*Kurang chanti*" (Not so beautiful).

**Hawkins** was an earnest do-gooder but with a sense of humour; he had come to Malaya after service in World War 1, but had been side-tracked. Everyone liked him, and his happiest days were probably as District Officer, Tampin, near Malacca. He got me on to these book reviews and rigorously corrected my drafts. I have some still and they don't seem too



immature, though they were generally critical of the books reviewed, which led one member of the Book Club committee to point out the purpose of the broadcast was to recommend the books!

Small events occupied our local newspaper with the overseas news, mainly **Hitler** and **Mussolini**. Prominent would be the row in the Selangor Club over the sacking of the bandmaster already alluded to, or a slander in a music shop involving a lawsuit in which the wife of a member of Government service proclaimed that the public violin playing of the planter's wife was not so hot, provided a good story. When the Golf Club built a swimming pool and decided to charge extra to all members this provided this provoked acrimonious debate at the Annual General Meeting. A Yorkshire man delivered himself of this declaration: *"I don't mind paying extra so as my wife can have a swim, but I don't see why the bachelors should have to pay extra in order to give amusement to other men's wives."*

Something which did not get into the newspapers was a purge, about 1937, of perverts and homosexuals in the Government service. This was done with some ruthlessness. The victim was informed that he either faced an enquiry or accepted banishment home. Certain scabrous jokes abounded, such that a Blue Funnel steamer taking some of them home entered Penang Harbour stern first, or that in the Ipoh Volunteers, which was one centre of such suspicion, no Volunteer wanted to form up in the front rank.

Later, just before the war out East, there was a clean out of corruption, and the respected head of the Mines Department, well-known socially, an M.C. of World War 1, was jailed for taking bribes from Chinese tin miners. There had been a particularly bad case in Singapore in connection with the building of defences in which an Army Officer connected with building works was also jailed for some particularly heinous crimes of corruption in regard to contracts.

It should be said that this concerned certain fringe areas of government. The Malayan Civil Service's integrity was beyond reproach, and no breath of suspicion has since assailed our otherwise retrospectively criticized colonial service. They may have been called *"The Heaven Born"* or accused of superiority or whatever, though much of that was in my experience exaggerated, but on the whole they were a collection of very human and able personalities, some quite outstanding by any standards. I was glad to be at the service in Westminster Abbey after the war when *"the men who served Malaya"* were commemorated by a plaque, unveiled by the Queen Mother."

My children, reared in the post colonial era, pose the question to me, if not in so many words, in the unspoken query, *"what were you doing lording over these subject people. Were they really so placid under British Rule?"*

I refer to outward manifestations but, of course, as in India, education was doing its work. That English education which **Macaulay** introduced 100 years earlier.

In a remarkable book, *"Asia and Western Dominance"*, published after Indian Independence by **K.K. Panikkar**, some time Indian Ambassador in Egypt and China, had this to say about **Macaulay's** great initiative and its consequences: *"Indeed it may be argued that the essential contradiction of British Rule in India lay in this: the constituted government upheld the validity of customs, maintained and administered laws which denied the principles of social justice, refused to legislate for changes called for by society, watched with suspicion the movement of liberal ideas, while the officially sponsored and subsidised educational system was undermining everything that the government sought to uphold. The schools and colleges taught young men the idea of liberty while the government did everything to suppress it. In the educational system the Government created and maintained an opposition to itself on a plane where its own methods were ineffective."*

I would only add to this that there were many intelligent members of the colonial service who were quite aware of this contradiction, and saw it was inevitable. The recent memoirs of **Lord Trevelyan**, descendant of **Macaulay**, who went to India in 1923, illustrates this attitude in the liberal minded young men who came East in the post 1914-1918 period.

A favourite passage of mine amongst **Macaulay's** House of Commons speeches on India applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to all our Colonial Empire. I quote the prophetic words with which he concluded his speech on the *"Better Government of India"* Bill on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1833:-

*"The destinies of our Indian Empire are covered with thick darkness. It is difficult to form any conjecture as to the fate reserved for a state which resembles no other in history, and which forms by itself a separate class of political phenomena. The laws which regulate its growth and its decay are still unknown to us. It may be that the public mind of India may expand under our system till it has outgrown that system; that by good government we may educate our subjects into a capacity for better government; that, having become instructed in European knowledge, they may, in some future age, demand European institutions. Whether such a day will come I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history. To have found a great people sunk in the lowest depths of slavery and superstition, to have ruled them as to have made them desirous and capable of all the privileges of citizens, would indeed be a title to glory all our own. The sceptre may pass away from us. Unforeseen accidents may derange our most profound schemes of policy. Victory may be inconstant to our arms. But there are triumphs that are followed by no reverse. There is an empire exempt from all natural causes of decay. Those triumphs are the pacific triumphs of reason over barbarism; that empire is the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws."*



I know enough of the thoughts of my son and daughter to feel sure that the final words of this speech will have their approval. I first read these noble words before I went East, and have remembered them since, and so I commend them to my children and grandchildren!

It gives me some idea of the diet in which the giants of debate in those days indulged that this speech, one of many, occupies forty three quarto pages of print!

I do not know whether **Macaulay** is in the fashion nowadays, and certainly he has his critics, and perhaps we derived little glory in the process of de-colonisation but it may be history will endorse **Macaulay's** words, and I would like to live to know what my grandchildren would have to say, trusting that they would not be uninterested in such memories.

Although I did not perhaps mix as much as I should socially with the people of Malaya, I did endeavour, as far as my work permitted, to see as much of the country and its people.

My first trip was, however, to Sumatra, taking advantage of the firm's offer of two weeks local leave in their holiday bungalow at the hill station, Brastagi. This was in 1935.

I travelled over from Penang to Belawan on the local steamer, **M.V. Perak**, and it was exciting to sit in the evening and listen to the talk of two Somerset Maugham characters, the Captain and an Irish Government doctor, who admitted he was doing a period of dry dock after an attack of D.Ts. He was as delightful and entertaining as Irishmen can be, and told a tale of a high Government servant who, during a spell in his hospital in Kedah, seized the pretty Chinese nurse attending him and kissed her. She fled to the doctor's room in tears, and after hearing her story, he went in to the culprit and demanded an apology. He tried to pull rank but to no avail, and so lying there and to the nurse, as our doctor related in his inimitable Irish style, he uttered what he called a love poem in apology. When it was over and he had returned to his room, the doctor told us the nurse came running in, streaming with tears, and saying, "*Oh! what a beast I have been.*"

I travelled from Belawan to Medan and had a real Dutch Reichstaffel (a King Curry) in the Hotel Boer, and then by car up the winding road to the hill station, and I remember that poinsettias abounded along the roadside.

From Brastagi, I went up the silent volcano of Mount Sibajak, recently the subject of one of David Attenborough's television series, Mount Sinboewang, down to Lake Toba at Herrengoll, a lovely evening at Siohan Bungalow on the lake, and then to Prapat. I visited our tea plantations at Permatang Siantor, now gone, ravaged during the war.

Since my jungle journeys much has changed. War and the guerrilla emergency have made the jungle commonplace to thousands of servicemen, and much has happened to disturb the silence of those days.

I record a week-end trip by collapsible canoe, fairly new in those days, from Kuala Klawang down the Kenaboi River, and up the Triang, shooting rapids, with **John Kennedy**, later an airman who once took me up in his little Tiger Moth airplane and looped the loop. We followed a similar course in a week's Volunteer training jungle trek in the embodiment of 1940, accompanied by **O. Shebbeare**, the Chief Game Warden, an old Everest hand.

With a colleague, in 1936, we travelled over the main range to Kuantan, down to Pekan, then, it seemed, a remote Malay town with mostly Malay citizens in picturesque gab, and embarked on a little steamboat "**Teo Ann**" with the intention of going up river to Temerloh where the car would meet us. Progress was, however, so slow, and the mosquitoes so vicious, that we disembarked at Lubok Paku, and were able to telephone the D.O. at Temerloh to send the car down to us at Jerantut whence we arrived by the old "mosquito" bus, to find the faithful syce waiting patiently for us to return home. In those unregenerate days one could do such things. I remember that we seemed to stop every few hundred yards at some kampong on the river to unload cargo, and the Malay Captain was a very independent Pahang Malay and really did not want us. My colleague as enraged to hear the following colloquy as the captain unloaded at one kampong, "**Ada lagi**" (Anything more). "**Ja, ada, dua orang puteh, mau?**" (Yes, two white men do you want them?) Reply: "**T' mau**" (Don't want). He was a dour Scot and sulked for the rest of the journey, although he saw the funny side later. [Ed: I did laugh!] Eating our hard rations of pork sausages on this Malay boat was, however, tactless.

Whilst relating these stories of strenuous exercise and a searching for nature and the divine, I must confess that our normal evening recreation was dancing with the abundant and attractive local talent, ever increasing as fathers brought out eligible daughters, and many found their husbands amongst my friends. We danced to the tunes of the thirties, and today my nostalgia is aroused when I hear the melodies of **Fred Astaire** and **Ginger Rogers**, and see again their incomparable dancing. It was the golden age of Hollywood, and the local cinemas were much frequented. There was one main European cinema when I arrived, with cane seats, but before long two modern cinemas were opened in Kuala Lumpur. The Coliseum catered for Indian and Chinese films.

I have alluded to the placidity of the political scene. I do recall, however, that we had one "agitator" of a kind in those days. He was **John Hands**, a blunt Yorkshire engineer, who espoused the cause of the unemployed in Selangor, and pestered the Resident so much a Salvation Army Commander was appointed to enquire into the question. He found that there were indeed few unemployed, but **John Hands** established a fund to help the distressed and indigent, and I made a modest donation. He was the sort to be inclined to be "*akin the government.*"



It happened that the Chinese "boys" quarters behind the Selangor Club collapsed, being on wooden stilts. Luckily most were out, but one was killed, and there was an enquiry.

At a subsequent Annual Meeting of the Club over which **Adams**, the Resident, presided, **John Hands** came armed with a formidable dossier, and when "**Any other business**" arrived, the Resident called for points to be raised. **Hands** opened his campaign by asking whether in the forthcoming enquiry the interests of the Chinese "boys" would be properly safeguarded. The Resident paused, enquired whether there were any other questions, and then said, "**I can give Mr. Hands the assurance for which he asks, and there being no other business, I declare the meeting closed.**" **Hands'** mouth fell, and the Resident was out of the room in no time!

He subsequently got up against the next Resident, **S.W. Jones**, and I recall some rough passages at Club meetings on some matters which I have now forgotten, but I met him later in the year in the Club after he had been to a Resident's tea party, and he wryly remarked he must be in favour again. He was given a local honour, Malay Civil Honour (M.C.H.)

In Europe war clouds were gathering and the strident, raucous voice of **Hitler** on film reminded us, if reminder was needed, of the perils ahead. Now that I come to think of it I do not recall that we heeded these portents much, or seriously thought of the future. It was a case of "**sufficient unto the day was the evil thereof.**" Life was somewhat carefree. Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow.....

[To be concluded in July]

### COMMEMORATING THE VYNER BROOKE TRAGEDY Report by Robert Gray

On Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2023, at Point Walter, Western Australia, the stirring sound of pipes and drums heralded the start of the annual service to commemorate and honour the estimated 250 on board the small coastal steamer, **Vyner Brooke**, which departed Singapore with evacuees on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1942, three days before the fall of the city to Japanese invaders. Evacuees on board were 65 nurses of the Australian Army Nursing Service, 20 males (mostly elderly civilians, plus a few military), 90 civilian women and 40 children. [Source: "**On Radji Beach**" by Ian Shaw. Macmillan, 2010]

The day after it departed, the vessel was attacked by Japanese bombers and struck by several bombs, one of which went down the funnel and destroyed the entire engine room. The **Vyner Brooke** sank rapidly, giving scant time for passengers and crew to abandon ship. Fortunately, the two redoubtable Army Matrons had discussed this possibility with the ship's officers. Their nurses knew exactly what they had to do and bravely supervised the first aid and escape of all living civilian evacuees. The nurses were the last, along with the ship's captain, to leave the ship.

Forty to fifty of those on board died during the attack, or were lost at sea, including 12 Army Nurses. A further 21 nurses, who drifted ashore at Radji Beach on nearby Bangka Island, were massacred on the beach by a patrol of Japanese troops. Several of the Vyner Brooke's officers and crew met the same fate at this site. The remaining 32 nurses, and the rest of the Vyner Brooke's passengers, who drifted ashore at other points on the island, bravely endured the rest of the war in harsh POW camps at which many, including 8 Australian Army Nurses, died from disease, deprivation and starvation.

The sad fate of the **Vyner Brooke**, and those it carried, was commemorated at this year's annual memorial service. The Presbyterian Ladies College pipes and drums marched flag bearers into the memorial precinct where a flag was placed, and names read out, for each of the total of 41 Army Nurses who lost their lives. The Commemoration was attended by a large congregation of relatives and friends and by representatives of the armed services and local government.

Many others present volunteered their services in various ways, including the *Born to Sing* community choir, a bugler, a platoon of 703 Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets, student contingents from St. Hilda's, St. Mary's and Mercedes colleges, and members of the Applecross Sub-branch of the RSLWA ex-services association which organised the commemoration, sponsored by the local City of Melville. Other MVG Australia members attending included Secretary Elizabeth Adamson, Janet Zanetti, Ian Johnson and Glenice McConville.

#### WEBSITES TO VISIT

[https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19860406-](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19860406-1.2.66.3.1?ST=1&AT=search&k=ronald%20perkins%20port%20dickson&QT=ronald.perkins,port,dickson&oref=article)

[1.2.66.3.1?ST=1&AT=search&k=ronald%20perkins%20port%20dickson&QT=ronald.perkins,port,dickson&oref=article](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19860406-1.2.66.3.1?ST=1&AT=search&k=ronald%20perkins%20port%20dickson&QT=ronald.perkins,port,dickson&oref=article)

See Article on Ps. 9 & 10 "Last Stand on Smiling Hill" about 'Perky' Perkins, a pre-war planter in Johore and in the Johore Volunteer Engineers. Late on in the Malayan Campaign he was given a commission in the Malay Regiment and was a POW in Singapore and Thailand. He died in 1994 in Malaysia.

<https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/02/12/wheres-the-respect-for-fallen-heroes-of-battle-of-kampar/> Report in a Malaysian news website about the plans to build on land where the battle of Kampar took place.

[Coloured Sergeant 90 Adnan Saidi on Parade 1938 Malaya – YouTube](#) - Video about CSM Adnan Saidi, Malay Regt. Hero



## MALAYAN VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN THE 1930s

With thanks to Michael Landon

### Introduction

My father, **Frederic Henry Landon** ("Fred"), first went to Malaya in September 1932 to join the Malayan Forest Service. He joined the Volunteers soon after his arrival and below are four extracts from letters written to his mother during the 1930s which describe the training he undertook.

### Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1933

*I don't remember if I told you that I joined the M.S.V.R. (Malay States Volunteer Reserve) lately – the gunners section. The training season starts this month and I attended the first parade yesterday at which a gun (Howitzer) was taken to pieces and put together again twice. There are two parades a week for the next eight months or so, but it is not necessary to attend them all.*

### Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 1938

*I have spent the week-end at a Volunteer Camp at Port Dickson, driving down there on Friday evening and returning yesterday. It was primarily an infantry camp and we had only 1 section of machine-gunners with 2 guns. I was section commander and had to give the fire orders. On Saturday we had a scheme in conjunction with an infantry battalion and fired blank ammunition.... On Sunday, we fired live ammunition at targets out at sea. The Ruler (**Yang di-pertuan besar**) of Negri Sembilan came and watched for a bit and was entertained to lunch afterwards in the Mess.*

### Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 1938

*Many thanks for your letter of 27<sup>th</sup> Sept., written during the crisis.(1) I have just been reading a book called "A.R.P." by **J.B.S. Haldane**, which I think everyone should read. If the Government can be persuaded to give people protection against high explosive as well as gas bombs an enemy would be much less likely to carry out bombings at all, because they would know that comparatively ineffective bombings would merely stiffen the determination of the people to fight to a finish. In fact, if we are well enough prepared there will probably be no more war at all.*

*..... Yesterday afternoon, I went in to K.L. to fire my annual Machine-Gun Classification course. I did well enough to qualify as a marksman.*

### Monday 17<sup>th</sup> October 1938 from Fred to his mother from Kepong

*..... Yesterday the G.O.C's inspection of the Selangor & Negri Sembilan Volunteers took place, in the form of a battle with blank ammunition between the Selangor & N.S. contingents. I had to get up at 5.15 in order to arrive at Head Quarters in time for the parade. We were taken in lorries to the scene of the operations. Once off the road we had hard work moving our guns across country into position. The battle lasted until after 2 p.m. It was followed by a talk by the General and then at last lunch – stew and vegetables were served to all in the field. It was nearly 6 o'clock before we got back to K.L. after quite a tiring day.*

### Postscript

At the time of the Japanese invasion of Malaya, in December 1941, **Fred** was a sergeant on "A" Coy, 2nd Selangor Battalion F.M.S.V.F. The October 2022 edition of *Apa Khabar* included an account which he wrote of his escape from Singapore in February 1942. **Fred** (by then a regular army Major) was among the first of the British to return to Singapore and Malaya in September 1945.

(1) **Fred** would have been referring to the crisis caused by the German occupation of Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia. It was temporarily resolved by the Munich Agreement, signed on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1938.

## AN AMUSING EXTRACT FROM "THREE WIVES FOR THE PLANTER" BY PAMELA ROPER-CALDBECK

With thanks to Liz Moggie

Singapore was still reeling from the impact of **Noel Coward** who had just spent a month there. The friend he was travelling with was taken ill with amoebic dysentery. During the enforced stay, he looked around for something to do. Evidently life in the town was NOT his idea of fun. He found a group of English actors, members of a troupe of strolling players called, "The Quaints" whose strolls took them all over the Far East in the late twenties and early thirties. They were then playing at the Victoria Theatre in Singapore, with a company that included **Betty Hare** and twenty-two year-old **John Mills**. Their repertoire included **R.C. Sheriff's** war play "*Journey's End*." They persuaded **Noel** to take over the part of **Stanhope** (having temporarily lost one of their leading men). **Coward**, having nothing better to do while his friend was in hospital, agreed to play for three performances. To the audience (which included the Governor **Sir Cecil** and **Lady Clementi**), who seldom had the opportunity to see an actor of **Coward's** distinction in their corner of the world, **Coward's** intense, undisciplined, neurotic performance as **Captain Stanhope**, was received with respect by all except the critic of the *Straits Times*, who found the nerve to point out that **Noel** was an unlikely casting for the gallant tight-lipped officer, and that his portrayal of **Stanhope** as a 'whimpering neurotic prig' was NOT what the author or *he* had in mind. Apparently **Coward** had the decency to admit he agreed with the criticism, but had blotted his copy-book further by writing, after spending a few days as guest of the **Clementis** at Government House, a witty, though cruel, ditty, about his hostess, which upset the older generation who considered it in very bad taste. I cannot remember it all, but some of it went roughly like this:

*Whoops, Lady Clementi, You must have been inhibited at twenty, Rather dull at thirty-four, At forty-four a bore, You really are the fountain-head, Of fun in Singapore. Whoops, Lady Clementi, You must have read a lot of G.H. Henry, You've not read Bertram Russell, And you've not read Dr. Freud, So maybe that's the reason Why you look so unenjoyed.*

I must say I thought it very amusing, although I did not agree with his verdict, though I could see what he meant when I later attended a Garden Party and Ball at Government House.



## OBITUARIES

We are sad to report the death of **Wally Close** last November. We send our heartfelt sympathies to his widow **Ruth**, daughter of rubber planter **Pat (Percival) Daintry** and **Babs Daintry**. **Wally** and **Ruth** were regular attendees at the MVG's annual reunion and lunch, and we look forward to welcoming **Ruth** to this event later this year.

**Ruth** was evacuated with her mother, aunt **Nola Hudson** and cousin **Michael Hudson** from Singapore to South Africa via Colombo on the **USS West Point**. They stayed in South Africa for the duration of the war and were joined by her father **Pat** and uncle **Jack Hudson** after their release from POW Camps.

The death of **His Honour Judge Robin Rowland** was announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023. He joined the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, 2nd Punjab Regiment (7/2 Punjab) and in 1943, despite having done no jungle training, were ordered to the Arakan to join the 14<sup>th</sup> Army. The battalion first encountered the Japanese in the February 1944 offensive "Ha-Go" (Operation Z) which was in preparation for their main offensive on Kohima and Imphal. For 4½ months these towns were subjected to continual and increasingly desperate attacks as the Japanese tried to break into India. **Robin Rowland** was one of the last British survivors of the battle and described it as "*the nearest I've come to hell.*" The final 3 weeks was of intense combat, some of it literally hand to hand, and frequently at night. There was continual rain which filled the bottom of their trenches; it was impossible to wash and hot food was only distributed at night.

After the war he studied law and was called to the Northern Ireland Bar in 1949 becoming a QC in 1969. For all his faith and humanity, however, **Rowland** always said he could never forgive the Japanese, "They were a terribly cruel enemy."

**Sqn.Ldr. Bill Stevens**, who died on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2022 aged 104, was a helicopter pilot with 194 Squadron during Operation Firedog in the Malayan Emergency, for which he was twice decorated. In 2½ years he flew over 900 hours in support of ground forces engaged in the guerrilla war against the Communist Terrorists. He returned to Malaya in 1959 after his first tour of duty and re-joined 194 Squadron (later re-numbered 119 Squadron). His primary job was to train new pilots in jungle operations, but he continued to carry out casualty evacuation flights, including recovering the body of a Malay policeman from a very difficult jungle clearing for which he was awarded the AFC.

During the Indonesian Confrontation he served in the air operations centre at Air Headquarters Borneo base at Labuan, where he co-ordinated air support for the ground forces operating in the Borneo jungle. He was mentioned in despatches. On his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday he flew in a Tiger Moth and took over the controls, later saying "the flight wasn't long enough!"

**Tom Stacey**, who died on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2022, had a distinguished and varied career as a reporter, author, publisher and campaigner. Born in 1930, he was educated at Eton before joining the Scots Guards. Commissioned as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. he saw action in the Malayan Emergency. While on leave, he journeyed in search of the last survivors of the Temiar, an aboriginal people faced with the dilemma of remaining in the jungle at the mercy of the Communist Terrorists or adopting a sort of alien urban existence. He wrote up his trip as his first book, ***The Hostile Sun*** which won him the 1954 John Llewellyn Rhys Prize.

**Lieutenant Jim Booth** was believed to be the last surviving member of the Combined Operations Pilotage Parties, a secret navy formed to reconnoitre enemy beaches. A submariner, he trained on midget submarines which took part in the D-Day landings. After D-Day he prepared for operations in the Channel Islands but was sent to Ceylon to train for the British landings in Burma and Malaya. Working behind enemy lines, his party was fired on by a group of Japanese soldiers. But having discovered their base, **Booth** and party sneaked up on them overnight and killed them, although not authorized to do so. Later in August 1945 he broke an ankle during parachute training in India – the only injury he sustained during the war which ended by the dropping of the atomic bomb. He died in December 2022 aged 101.

**Colonel Ian Cartwright** had an outstanding record of command on active service with the SAS, the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and the security services. In 1957 he joined 22 SAS in Malaya where it was engaged in operations against Communist Terrorists. He commanded a troop of D Squadron SAS in the deep jungle in very challenging conditions, and was mentioned in dispatches for "*leadership, skill and personal courage over a sustained period of operations.*" In late 1958 the Regiment was withdrawn in great secrecy and **Cartwright** with four other SAS NCOs, with sealed orders, went by ship from Singapore to Aden, and then flown to Sharjah in the UAE. From there they were taken overland by truck to the Oman where the SAS was engaged in the fight against the rebels who were challenging the Sultan of Oman's authority from an elevated plateau known as the Green Mountain. The rebels were duly dispatched during a night time assault on the plateau, and the success of the operation secured the future of the SAS which had been threatened with disbandment. Aged 89, **Cartwright** died in December 2022.

**Fred Bailey** who died in January this year, aged 99, was believed to be the last veteran of the Jedburgh teams living in Britain. The Operation Jedburgh 3-man teams were trained by the SOE to be dropped by parachute into enemy-occupied territory to support the Resistance in guerrilla warfare. After training as a wireless operator and in weaponry, sabotage and unarmed combat, he was dropped in France to work with the French Resistance. He returned to England in January 1945 and debriefed at SOE HQ where he was told that volunteers were needed to serve with Force 136 in the Far East. He signed up to join the Jedburgh Teams fighting in Burma. After jungle training, his team was dropped in the Karen Hills north of Moulmein, with the task of harassing the retreating Japanese. As they were close to the main escape routes used by the Japanese, their reports resulted in allied air strikes on the Japanese positions which caused havoc. So much so that the Japanese formed a special force to hunt them down, and they were on the run for 6 weeks with very little food. Luckily a local guide took them to a camp with another Jedburgh team and an airstrip, and they requested to be rescued and were flown to Rangoon.



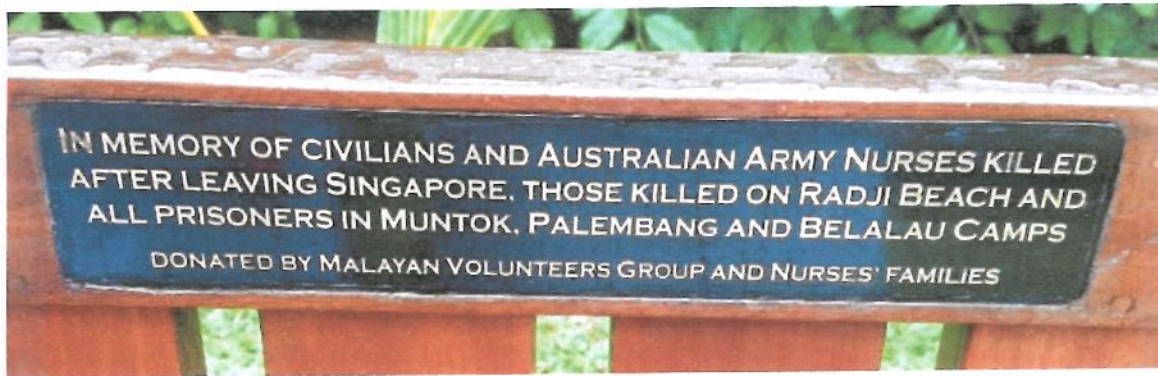
## Our Return to Bangka Island, February 2023 Report by Judy Balcombe (Campbell)

After 3 years of isolating from Covid, it seemed time to return to Indonesia for the in-person Bangka Island Memorial Service, to be held on 16<sup>th</sup> February, the anniversary of the Radji Beach massacre in 1942. The Service remembers the 21 Australian Army Nurses, civilians and up to 60 servicemen killed by Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach, the 4,000 to 5,000 people killed in the bombing of evacuating ships from Singapore, the people of Muntok town who suffered severely during the War and all who suffered in the harsh prison camps. In 2021 and 2022, this Service had been attended by the Australian Embassy to Jakarta, with others joining on Zoom.

I feel a commendation is due to Garuda Airlines, which requires masks to be worn at all times on board the plane, frequent sanitizing and social distancing while entering and exiting. This did a lot to allay some of our concerns about Covid risk from flying.

I travelled with **Arlene Bennett**, past president of the Australian Nurses' Memorial Centre in Melbourne and now fellow member of the Centre's History and Heritage Committee, and **Carol Rowe**, whose father had been a Prisoner of War in Bandung, Java, and in Japan.

In Jakarta, we met with **Mrs. Eveline de Vink**, the Director of the Netherlands War Graves Foundation in Indonesia, which cares for 25,000 Dutch War Graves in 7 Indonesian cemeteries, of whom 75% were civilians, and helps to maintain the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries. In Jakarta's Menteng Pulo Cemetery, we saw the memorial bench which The Malayan Volunteers Group and Nurses' families had placed in memory of Civilians and Australian Army Nurses killed after leaving Singapore, those killed on Radji Beach, Bangka Island and all prisoners in the Muntok, Palembang and Belalau Camps, Sumatra.



**Mrs. de Vink** explained that the craftsman making this bench had incorporated curved sections to represent the waves of the South China Sea and Bangka Strait where the many boats carrying evacuees from Singapore – now estimated by **Michael Pether** to be up to 140 vessels – had been bombed and sunk by Japanese planes & warships. The Menteng Pulo cemetery is adjacent to the CWG cemetery and we next walked slowly there, finding graves of the 8 Australian Army Nurses who had died in the Muntok and Belalau Camps, and graves of some civilians who had died in Muntok and whose remains included employees of Cable and Wireless and crew of the Empress of Asia, whose employers took responsibility for their remains. Several other graves had been moved from Muntok by the Dutch, when the ranks of the Volunteer Forces had been mistaken for those of enlisted servicemen.





Dutch authorities moved all their military and civilian War Graves to Java in the 1960s and offered to move the Muntok British and Australian graves, however British and Australian civilian graves did not fall under the charter of CWGC. Very sadly, as know, most people who died in Muntok's Men's and Women's Camps still lie buried in the town cemetery in unnamed graves, under houses and a petrol station (Men) and in a mass grave (Women). They are remembered now with a Memorial Headstone placed by the MVG in Muntok's Catholic Cemetery. On 13<sup>th</sup> February, we flew from Jakarta to Pangkalpinang, the capital of Bangka Island. We were met by **Mr. Deddy** from Muntok's Yasmin Hotel and made the 3-hour drive along excellent roads. Our spirits raised at the thought of meeting our many old friends as we passed through familiar kampongs and finally the 'Selamat Datang ke Muntok' archway. We were overcome with emotion as hotel manager **Mr. Henri Portman** welcomed us by saying "Welcome Home!"

Families of the Radji Beach Australian Army Nurses had travelled to Muntok from Australia. The Australian Embassy to Indonesia was in attendance and the New Zealand Embassy as booked to attend until prevented by a crisis in Papua. **Mrs. Eveline de Vink** was engaged in Jakarta preparing for the Commemoration of the Battle of the Java Sea and so was unable to join us, however, provided a statement for me to read on behalf of the NWGF regarding the tragedy of War and the vital importance of learning from the past and of nations and individuals working together for World Peace today.

This theme of Peace was very evident during our visit. A welcome dinner was held by the PT Timah Company, with beautiful Indonesian dancing and scattering of golden rice. Speeches were made with Indonesian authorities emphasizing the importance of teaching the younger generation about the lessons of War and working for future Peace.

On Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February, we first gathered at the Muntok Peace Museum to remember the civilian internees.

**Carol Rowe** read the words of 'The Captives' Hymn' and I spoke the words of the Anglican prayer:

*"On this day, we especially hold forever in our minds all who have suffered during war, those who died, those who returned scarred by warfare, those who waited anxiously at home, those who mourned, and those communities that were diminished and suffered loss. We remember too those who acted with kindly compassion, those who bravely risked their own lives for their comrades, and those who in the aftermath of war, worked tirelessly for a more peaceful world."*

This was followed by readings from the poems of internee **Margery Jennings**, from the diary of internee **Gordon Reis** and from the sole postcard sent home by my grandfather.

I then spoke of the suffering of the people of Muntok during the War. The town had been bombed on 9<sup>th</sup> February 1942, with people killed and houses burnt down. The townspeople had fled to the large cave at Batu Balai, where they remained for 40 days. Women had been assaulted and there were food shortages throughout the War.

I recalled how in 2012, the Bupati (Regent of West Bangka Province) spoke to the people who live near the Peace Museum, on the site of the former Women's Camp. The Bupati explained that their ancestors and our ancestors were all living in Muntok at the same time, meaning that we are forever a part of the same family now.

I expressed our gratitude to the people of Muntok for their friendship and for helping us to remember our families and indicated our ongoing commitment to help the Muntok Red Cross, the school, the orphanage, and the prisoners in the Muntok jail, which was the former Men's prison camp, in memory of our families and to help our current day Muntok family.





From the Peace Museum, we drove to the Memorial at the headland which remembers those who lost their lives at sea and at the Radji Beach massacre on landing and all who suffered in this area. Families of the Australian Army Nurses killed in the massacre read letters the Nurses had sent home before leaving Singapore. The Australian Assistant Defence Attache to Indonesia and Australian personnel read prayers and the poem **"The Heroes"** to remember the many vessels of the Merchant Navy sunk during the War.

**Georgina Banks**, great niece of murdered Australian Army Nurse **Dorothy Bud Elmes**, then read words from our friend Japanese academic **Dr. Yuki Tanaka** in Melbourne, who works to educate the Japanese public about Japanese War Crimes. **Dr. Tanaka** wrote the following:

*"To all attendees,*

*As the son of an officer in the Japanese Army during the Asian-Pacific War, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to send a message to the Memorial Service at Radji Beach on Bangka Island. Further, as a Japanese citizen and as a human being, I would like to express my deepest condolences to all the victims of Japanese military atrocities and their relatives.*

*It is my strong belief that, in order to understand the physical and psychological pain of the victims of the atrocities committed by the people of our nation, we Japanese must try to re-experience and internalize your pain as our own. In this way, the harrowing memories of war can be shared and preserved through interaction between different groups from different nations, in particular, between victims and perpetrators, using moral imagination to build a better society together.*

*The sharing of memories by people of different nations seems to be one of the most effective ways to invalidate the official historical memory, which always justifies the war conduct of a state power. As **Bernard Shaw** said, our recollections should have a sense of responsibility for our future.*

*In this sense I am truly grateful for your continuing efforts to keep your memories alive and for allowing me to share the experience.*

*With best wishes, **Yuki Tanaka***

This was followed by The Radji Beach Oration by the great nephew of **Matron Irene Drummond** who had called to her young nurses before they were shot *"Chin up Girls, I love you all"* and then the Radji Beach Ode which states that violence will not be condoned on this beach or in our lives.



Our large group then made our way down rocks and steps to the beach for the Walk For Humanity. In this action, all present hold hands and walk into the water, as the Australian Army Nurses were reported to have done before they were killed, now hoping and praying for Peace in the World. Flowers and wreaths were placed in the water. In the afternoon, we all gathered at the Nurses' Memorial at the Tanjong Kelian Lighthouse. A tribute was given in memory of **Mr. Vivian Bowden**, Australia's Official Representative to Singapore who was executed in Muntok on 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1942, after remonstrating in fluent Japanese with guards in the Muntok cinema, seeking proper treatment for the detainees and defending British

soldier **Frank Brewer**. The words of **Mr. Bowden's** poem were read, written by him in 1900 when he was leaving his beloved childhood home in Japan for boarding school in Australia:

### HOME

1

*There is a land that I call "Home", far off in old Japan:  
The land of lotus blossoms, the maple and the fan;  
The land of cryptomeria pines, beneath whose fragrant shade  
The old red lacquer temples doze, while generations fade.*

2

*A land of lakes and rippling streams, where rainbow colours blend.  
Where snow-clad Fuji sits and waits until the world shall end.  
Would that I might return once more, ere my life's sand are run:  
Land of the Gold Chrysanthemum! Land of the Rising Sun!*

3

*To hear the old familiar sounds – the ceaseless temple drum  
The clatter, clatter of the clogs as people go and come.  
To wander once again about the temple's sacred grounds,  
And hear once more the old bronze bell, as fledged hours it sounds.*

4

*But 'tis too late – my day is past; Japan I'll see no more;  
I can but dream of what I called my home in days of yore.  
The mind must now replace the eyes, their visions it must see  
For though I am now far from home, my thoughts lie o'er the sea.*



Victims of Covid in Muntok were remembered, also our friends associated with Bangka Island who have since died – **Salim Malik** from Lombok, **Bill Podmore**, **Sarah McCarthy**, granddaughter of Radji Beach massacre survivor **Stoker Ernest Lloyd**, and former Australian Naval Defence Attache to Singapore **Lieutenant Commander Bruce Bird**. A portion of **Bruce Bird's** ashes were then scattered in the sea adjacent to the wreck of the *SS Siang Wo*.



Throughout our several days in Muntok, we were made so very welcome. We visited the Junior High School, an orphanage and the Red Cross Office, which worked so hard during the Covid pandemic and continues to do important humanitarian work. The Covid ambulance, donated by Friends of Bangka Island, had been put to very good use transporting Covid patients to medical care in the capital Pangkalpinang and helped to save many lives. We continue to help support the Muntok Red Cross, the Junior High School and the orphanage and during our visit, purchased shampoo and soap for the prisoners in the Muntok Jail, the former Men's prison camp. We will also help to contribute to a music programme to help the rehabilitation of current day prisoners in memory of our families.



During our stay, we were very privileged to be driven to the small town of Jebus, 60km north of Muntok. Here, the people from one of the bombed *Giang Bee* lifeboats, including my grandfather, had been sheltered by Chinese people and given food and sacks to protect their bare feet, until the Japanese Army came and took them in trucks to the Muntok Jail. An elderly Chinese man, **Grandpa Malik**, had been 5 years old in 1942 and remembered meeting the lifeboat people. Internee **Joan McIntyre (nee Sinclair)**, had written of this experience and her internment in **The Australian Women's Weekly** magazine (1933-1982) on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1969 entitled, **GIRLHOOD IN A PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP.** This can be read on the Australian digitized newspaper site **Trove**. We saw an old cannon guarding the main street and entered the shop which had provided supplies to the prisoners.

One unexpected event during our visit to Muntok was the dedication of a new plaque at the Sudirman Homestay opposite the Timah Museum, the site of the Tree for Peace which was planted by the Embassies of Australia, New

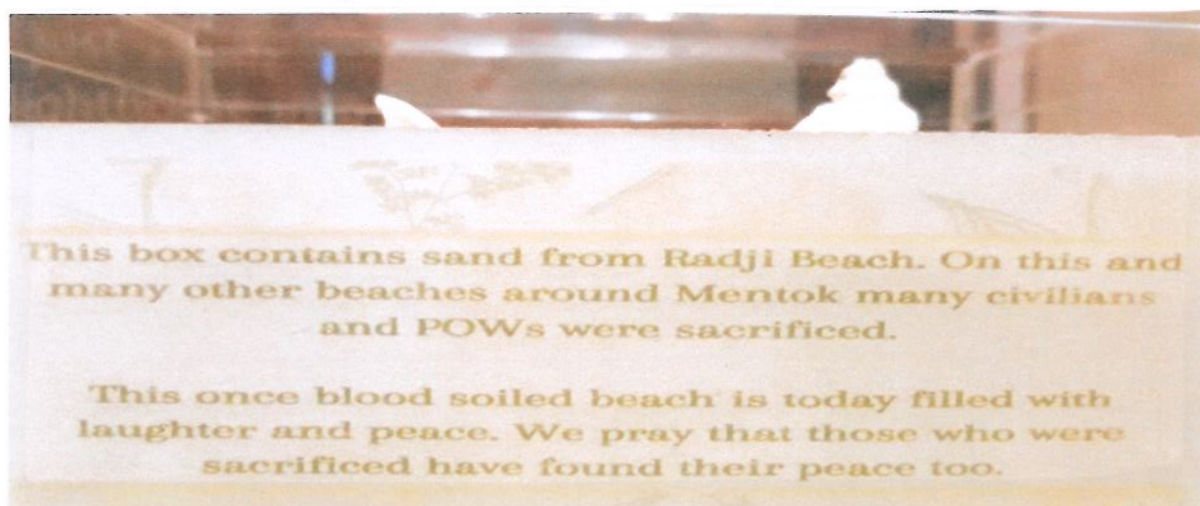


Zealand, Britain and Japan in February 2020. This area has now been made into a beautiful Peace Garden, one further example of something positive which has been created in Muntok following the period of such intense tragedy during the War. Once again, at this ceremony, words were spoken about the importance of people and nations working together to create a world of Peace.



Our visit to Muntok ended with a walk to the site believed by local historians to be the original Radji Beach, to scatter further ashes of **Lt. Commander Bruce Bird**, according to his wishes. The tide was in and the journey was not easy, necessitating clambering up and down tall rocks, walking through the edge of the jungle and wading through deep water. We were helped and guided on each step by the many young friends who accompanied us from the Timah Museum, the Yasmin Hotel and the Tourism Department and without whom the walk would not have been possible. In our minds, we could see the difficulties of the wartime shipwreck victims who had reached shore and struggled along this coastline. We were very mindful of the commitment of the younger generation in Muntok, who understand and value wartime history and will continue to preserve it. Muntok is a small town which holds the remains, memories and the life stories of many people. It is a living example of the importance of developing and teaching beauty, education and Peace in the world.

**[Editor: How sad that no-one was available at the British Embassy in Jakarta to attend this service.]**





# OUR WARTIME LEGACY

## MILITARY EMBLEMS AT ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL

by Patrick Lau, SAC Heritage Committee  
with input from Nathene Chua and Sharon Lim, SAC Heritage Committee

When one enters the Cathedral building through the Graham White Library at the North Transept Hall, one may not notice the faded military emblems outside on the balcony and the walls. These emblems are in fact, a reminder of the War Memorial Hall, which was officially opened in September 1952 to commemorate those who had died during the Battle of Malaya (8th Dec 1941 – 31st Jan 1942) and Battle of Singapore (8th to 15th Feb 1942) during World War II. These military emblems are the commemorative plaques of military forces which had fought in the 2 mentioned military campaigns and the other emblems are those commemorating allies who had fought during World War II.

As we mark the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, the St Andrew's Cathedral Heritage Committee has decided to take a closer look at these emblems. The Heritage Committee could not locate the actual records on why these particular emblems were chosen, although some records from the Australian Archives revealed that there were much discussions on these emblems which involved the War Office in the United Kingdom. Archival records reveal the involvement of General A. G. O'Carroll Scott's (General Officer Commanding of the Singapore Base District), whose staff was in contact with the War Office concerning the military units which had fought in the two mentioned military Campaigns in World War II. General O'Carroll Scott stated that many military service units would be keen to have their names associated with the Memorial Hall for posterity.

The Heritage Committee had done much research on these emblems and found that many of them were those of the Volunteer

Corps in Singapore and Malaya. Many of the Singapore Volunteer Corp members, including the Engineer and Artillery units, and together with their families were congregational members of St Andrew's Cathedral. They would have come together in corporate worship, to hear God's Word, celebrate Holy Communion, prayed and fellowship together with other congregational members in the Memorial Hall and elsewhere. The Cathedral was for them, a sanctuary of God's Love, Hope, Peace and Joy.

Through this essay, the Heritage Committee hopes to shed more light on the historical background of these emblems and to invite members of the public who have background information to come forward and share them with us.

This would further enhance the knowledge about the Cathedral building and its links with the history of Singapore.

### FOR THE FALLEN

*They shall grow not old,  
as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor  
the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning  
We will remember them*

Laurence Binyon



## Historical Background of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore

As mentioned earlier, the emblems on the East and West Balconies of the North Transept were the badges of the various Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore. This essay will begin with some background information on the mentioned Volunteer forces.

- 1854** The first Volunteer Force in Malaya and Singapore, was the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps (SVRC) which was established due to the escalating violence from the Chinese secret societies and the outbreak of the Crimean War. It was disbanded in 1887 due to dwindling numbers.
- 1888** Singapore Volunteer Artillery Corps (SVA) was established.
- 1901** SVA name was changed to Singapore Volunteer Corp (SVC - motto "In Oriente Primus" - "First in the East") to better reflect the diverse composition of the force with the addition of other sub units i.e., infantry, engineers.
- 1914** The outbreak of World War I led to a further increase in the enrolment of SVC
- 1915** SVC took part in the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore.
- 1922** SVC was absorbed into the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (SSVF), forming the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the SSVF. Other units of the SSVF were from the Penang and Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps (3rd Bn SSVF) and Malacca Volunteer Corp (4th Bn SSVF).
- 1930s** With war imminent in Europe, many men from various nationalities joined the SSVF. They remained in their civilian employment and received military training at night and on weekends.
- 1942** The SSVF were involved in the defence of Singapore during World War II and most of its members were captured by the Japanese Army in February 1942.
- 1949** The SSVF resumed operations after the Japanese Occupation
- 1954** The SSVF was disbanded and was absorbed into the Singapore Military Forces (SMF)
- 1951** SMF was renamed as the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)
- 1965** The People's Defence Force (PDF) was formed as a volunteer reserve combat unit to supplement the regular Singapore Army in the defence of Singapore.
- 1984** Due to dwindling numbers, the last Volunteer battalion was disbanded. The volunteer forces had been in existence for 130 years, though in different names from colonial to post-independent Singapore.
- 2015** Singapore Armed Forces Volunteer Corps (SAFVC) was formed to enhance the security of Singapore by having Volunteers to serve alongside SAF Regulars and NS men in such areas as security surveillance operations, medical, engineering, legal, communications, supply chain and others.



As seen above, the emblem of the SAF Volunteer Corps has retained many features of the rich heritage of the Singapore Volunteer Corps.



## Identification of Emblems in the North Transept

### North wall

When the North Transept was completed and officially opened in September 1952, Singapore was still a British Colony.



*The Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom*

The lion and unicorn supporting the shield represent England and Scotland respectively. The shield is quartered, depicting in the first and fourth quarters the three guardant lions of England; in the second, the rampant lion of Scotland; and in the third, a harp representing Ireland. The compartment at the base of the shield is the motto of English monarchs – “Dieu et mon Droit” (God and my Right)

### East Balcony of North Transept



### 1 - Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) Light Battery

The badge consists of a muzzle loading cannon and surmounted by a crown and a scroll bearing the words “FMSVF Light Battery” with letter “V” at the centre of the loading gun. A light artillery battery is equipped with 105mm howitzers and is equivalent to an infantry company of 3 platoons with 100 to 200 men.



### 2 - Kedah Volunteer Force (KVF)

The badge has a sheaf of rice (as Kedah is known as the rice bowl of Malaya) and the words, Kedah Volunteer Force. There is also a shield at the top and a scroll at the base of the badge containing some words in the Jawi script. Kedah was part of the 5 Unfederated Malay States and which also included Johore, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis.



### 3 - Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF)

The badge consists of a shield with 4 quarters representing the 4 states of the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) and with a crown at the top and a surrounding scroll containing the words “Federated Malay States VF.”



### 4 - Johore Volunteer Engineers (JVE)

The badge consists of the head of a Rhinoceros, which used to be roaming in the Johore jungle, and a scroll at the base with the words “Johore Volunteer Engineers”. Sadly, the wild Rhinoceros is now extinct in Malaysia.

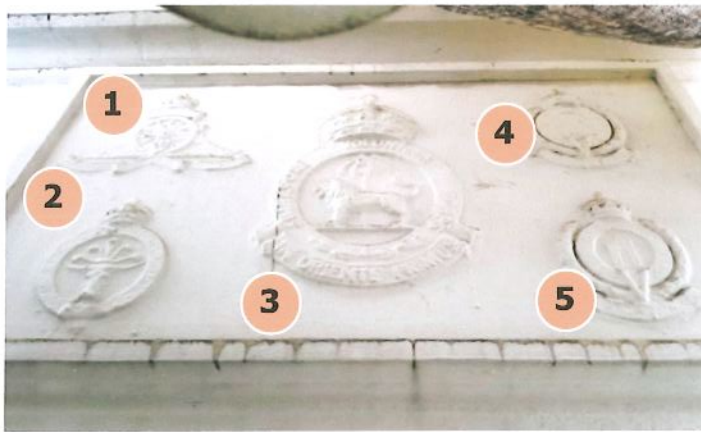


### 5 - Kelantan Volunteer Force (KVF)

The badge consists of the head of a water buffalo with the words “Kelantan Volunteer Force” and with the year 1914 at the base, probably the year when it was formed. The water buffalo is a common draft animal in Kelantan.



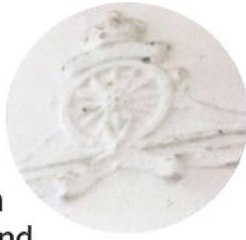




### West balcony of North Transept

#### 1 - Singapore Royal Artillery (Volunteers) SRA(V)

The badge consists of a muzzle loading cannon with the words "Singapore Royal Artillery" with a letter "V" in the centre of the cannon and the words "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) below the crown.



#### 2 - Penang and Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps (P & PWVC) (3rd Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of the head of a water buffalo with the Prince of Wales feathers with the German motto "Ich Dien" (I serve) above the buffalo's head. It is surrounded by the words "Penang & Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps" with a crown on top. Penang was formerly known as the Prince of Wales Island. Rice growing is an important part of Province Wellesley's (mainland Penang) economy and the water buffalo is an important part of the rice growing process ("living tractor").



#### 3 - Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC) (1st and 2nd Battalions, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of a lion next to a palm tree with the words, Singapore Volunteer Corps surrounding it and with a crown at the top and the motto "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) at the base of the lion. Singapore is known as the Lion city (Singapura).



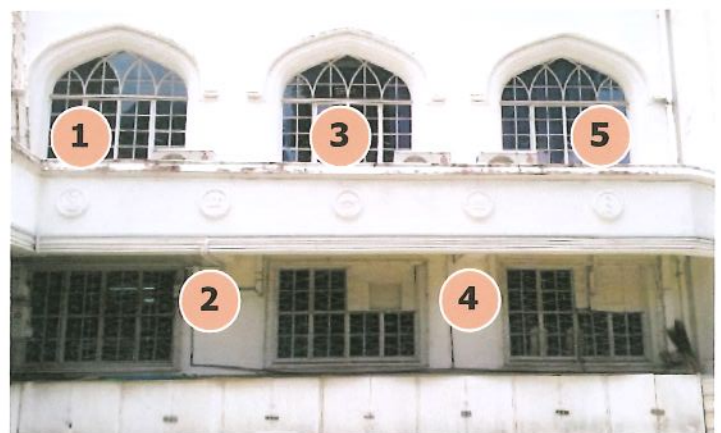
#### 4 - Singapore Royal Engineers (Volunteer) SRE (V)

The badge consists of a crown at the top with the Royal Cypher GRI (Georgius Rex Imperator King George VI) in the centre and surrounded by a wreath with the words "Singapore Royal Engineers" and a letter "V" in the base. There is also the motto "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) at the base, below the letter "V".



#### 5 - Malacca Volunteer Corps (MVC) (4th Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of the Porta de Santiago gate of the A Formosa fort in Malacca and surrounded by the words "Malacca Volunteer Corps" in a scroll, a wreath and with a crown at the top. There is a letter "V" at the base of the fort with the motto "Firm though Few". The fort was originally a Portuguese fort, which was built in 1512 and is an icon of Malacca.



### Other emblems in the East wall of North Transept

#### 1 - Anchor

As far as we know, there is no military unit in the Malayan and Singapore Theatre during World War II with just an anchor symbol.



Based on this anchor emblem, we believe that it is associated with the Navy.



## 2 - Mural crown

It is a mural crown, which is a crown representing city walls and it was an ancient Roman military decoration which later became a symbol of heraldry. Based on the mural crown emblem, we believe that it is associated with the Land Forces (Army).



## 3 - Naval crown

It is a Naval crown, which was a crown surmounted with prows of ships and it was also a Roman military award relating to the Navy. A crown represents power, glory and sovereignty. Another possibility could be that this emblem represents the Malayan Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (MRNVR).



## 4 - Astral crown

It is an Astral crown, which has stars and wings from some of the points in the crown. It is likely that this emblem represents some Air Force, possibly the Malayan Volunteer Air Force (MVAf).



## 5 - Rod of Asclepius

A serpent-entwined rod, which normally represents healing and medicine.



The Royal Army Medical Corps emblem (left) is more elaborate and besides the rod of Asclepius, includes a crown, a wreath and the Latin motto "In Ardis Fidelis" (faithful in adversity). Hence, it is likely that this emblem is associated with some Medical Corps unit.

## 1 - Coat of Arms of Australia

It consists of a shield, depicting symbols of Australia's six states, and is held up by the native Australian animals, the kangaroo, on the left and the emu on the right.



The Australian 8th Division and some Australian Force elements were very much involved in the Battle of Singapore and Malaya and this Coat of Arms could have commemorated the contribution and sacrifices of the Australian Army and some Air Force elements (RAAF).

## 2 - Coat of Arms of the United States

It consists of an American bald eagle supporting a shield with 13 stripes of red and white representing the original 13 States with a blue bar uniting the shield and representing Congress. The motto "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of many, one), refers to this union. The olive branch and 13 arrows grasped by the eagle allude to peace and war, and the constellation of stars symbolizes the new Nation. While the Americans were not involved in the Singapore and Malayan campaigns, they were heavily involved in the Pacific Theatre (e.g., Iwo Jima, Tarawa, Guadalcanal, Midway, Papua New Guinea, Solomons etc and the Philippines.)



However, we believe that the American seal was included as they were an important ally during the Second World War.

## 3 - Chinese dragon

It is a Chinese dragon, but the National emblem of the Republic of China during World War II was not this emblem – it was the Blue Sky and White Sun of the Kuomintang. Thus, it is unlikely that this dragon is intended to represent China, as no Chinese army was involved in the Singapore or Malayan campaigns. It is likely that this emblem commemorates the Singapore Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Volunteer Army or Dalforce, which is named after their commander, Lieutenant Col John Dalley of the Federated Malay States Police Force. It was created on 25th Dec 1941



## Other emblems in the West wall of North Transept



1

2

3

4

5



and members, both men and women, were recruited from the different socio-economic groups of Chinese in Singapore and this irregular force, which had no uniforms, emblems or flags was part of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force during World War II. It was estimated that the Force suffered 300 casualties and many of them were captured and subsequently tortured and executed during the Sook Ching ("Purge") massacre. The Dalforce was considered to be among the most motivated force to fight against the Japanese in the Singapore and Malayan campaigns.

#### 4 - Coat of Arms of the Netherlands

It consists of a shield with a lion within grasping a sword and some arrows and which in turn is supported by two lions with the words "Je Maintiendrai" (I shall maintain) at the base.



Above the shield there is a mantle and pavilion and topped by a crown.

The Netherlands fell to Nazi Germany on 15th May 1940 and the nation was thereafter under German control for about 5 years during World War II. However, there was some Dutch Airforce elements that was involved in the Malayan Campaign. On 8th December 1941, the Dutch government in exile in London, declared war on Japan and some Dutch soldiers were involved in fighting against the invading Japanese Army in the Dutch East Indies (now known as Indonesia).

#### 5 - Star of India

This is the Order of the Star of India, which was an order of chivalry founded by Queen Victoria in 1861. This Order had 3 classes – Knight Grand Commander, Knight Commander and Companion and it became dormant after the partition of India in 1947. The motto was "Heaven's Light our Guide" and was often used as an informal emblem of British India.



They comprised more than 50% of the Allied infantry forces, which totalled about 80,000, in the Malaya/Singapore campaigns. Many of them were young, inexperienced and poorly trained as the more experienced Indian officers and NCOs were sent to the Mediterranean campaign. The Indian forces in Malaya/Singapore included the 9th Indian Infantry Division, 11th Indian Infantry Division, 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, 44th and 45th Indian Infantry Brigade and 28th Gurkha Infantry Brigade.

*Lest we forget.*

It is likely that this emblem was to commemorate the contributions and sacrifices of the Indian soldiers in the Malayan and Singapore Campaigns.



## DATES FOR YOUR DIARIES

### WYMONDHAM – Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2023. 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Relief of Rangoon Service, FEPOW Church at 12.30

The service takes place in the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury in the Norfolk town of Wymondham. The wreaths are laid in the small side Chapel, dedicated to the FEPOWs, where the Books of Remembrance, listing the names of all FEPOWs who died or returned, are housed in a glass topped cabinet below an inscribed glass triptych. The Service is ecumenical, although this is a Roman Catholic Church, built by **Father Malcolm Cowan** (an army chaplain) after the war, in memory of all those who suffered and died as Far East Prisoners of War. **Father Cowan** was himself a FEPOW and on his return promised that "we must never forget the 'debt of honour' we owe."

In his words – *They died in misery, often in agony, upon no bed with nothing but a sack to cover them in squalor unbelievable. Here is the symbol of things they never knew in their last days – peace, quiet, cleanliness and the cool, soft air of prayer – a living memorial – God's house built in their memory.*

We are very grateful to **Richard Brown** who has agreed to lay the wreath on behalf of the Volunteer Forces, and who will be attending with **Susan Brown** and **Olga Henderson** as part of the NFFWRA Group organised by **Revd. Pauline Simpson**. If other MVG members would like to attend, please let **Rosemary Fell** know, so that your name can be given to **Peter Wiseman**, Church Archivist, who organizes the wreaths. A delicious, light buffet lunch is served after the service in the Parish Hall. It is also a good opportunity for meeting other FEPOW relatives.

### LIVERPOOL RFH CONFERENCE – Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June-Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

At the time of writing some of the Speakers have been announced by e-mail to those who have booked to attend the Conference. Please note that final payment should be made to **Mike Parkes** either by Bank transfer or by Cheque made out to Researching FEPOW History by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. A discounted B&B rate has been offered to Delegates by The Liner Hotel using the Reference Code given in the booking form. There is a welcome get together drinks in the bar at the Liner on Friday night (9<sup>th</sup> June) and a Conference buffet supper on the Saturday evening (10<sup>th</sup> June).

### MALAYSIA - Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023 – Annual Service in God's Little Acre, Batu Gajah, Perak.

MPOA (Malaysian Palm Oil Association) will be holding the annual Commemorative Ceremony in the old Christian Cemetery in Batu Gajah. The ceremony commemorates the Planters, Colonial Police Officers, Miners and Civilians as well as British and Commonwealth troops who lost their lives during the Malayan Emergency. The Communist Terrorists had a particularly strong base in Perak and this is where the Emergency started and where many lives were lost.

We thank **Richard and Terry Parry** for attending this ceremony and for laying a wreath on behalf of the MVG to commemorate those lost during the Emergency.

### NMA – ALREWAS – Tuesday, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2023. V-J Day Service in the Chapel and MVG's Plot at 12 noon.

Further details will be given in the July newsletter. We hope this service will be well attended this year. It is a good day out – the Arboretum has many interesting memorials as well as our own Memorial Garden. Please let **Colin Hygate** know if you wish to attend at [secretary@mvg.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mvg.org.uk) and if you are willing to do one of the readings.

### LONDON – Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2023. Annual Reunion & Luncheon – RAF Club, Piccadilly - 12 noon - 5p.m.

Our speaker this year is **Michael Yardley** whose father, **Richard Yardley, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. FMSVF** was attached to the Royal Corps of Signals due to his expertise and work in wireless and telecommunications as Assistant Controller Post &

Telecommunications KL. As a FEPOW he endured working on the Burma-Thailand Railway before suffering the appalling agony of shipment to Japan on the hellship **Asaka Maru**. He wrote the book, *"The Amonohasidate or The Gate of Heaven,"* in which he describes his extraordinary life as a prisoner of war under the Japanese. **Michael's** talk is entitled, *"The Amonohasidate"* and will focus on some of his father's more personal experiences.

We do not have any details of cost or the chosen menu at present. These will be given in July.

### LONDON – Cross Planting Ceremony and Cenotaph Parade – 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

We hope that the MVG will be represented at both these events. Please contact **Colin Hygate** on [secretary@mvg.org.uk](mailto:secretary@mvg.org.uk) if you wish to attend.

### ARMISTICE DAY AND REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY – in Canada and Malaysia.

Please contact **Sallie Hammond** in Canada & **Richard Parry** in Malaysia for details.

### NMA – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2023. Service of commemoration for the sinking of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales.

We thank **Bob Hall** for representing the MVG at this service – but please contact him if you wish to go.

## Dates for your Diaries 2024

### LONDON - Annual Reunion and Lunch October 2024 – RAF Club, Piccadilly.

Our speaker is **John Tulloch** who will give a talk about WW2 in Borneo, entitled, *"The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945."*

The talk is based on his 12 years of research and book of the same title, and covers the terrible years of the Japanese Occupation of Borneo. Thousands of Australian, British, Dutch and Indian POWs, internees, locals of Borneo and Javanese 'romusha' perished in Borneo at the hands of the Japanese. Hundreds of Australian troops lost their lives liberating Borneo, as did many locals who assisted them. And then came repatriation and the appalling sound of silence experienced by the returning FEPOWs.

This is not an easy history, as most of the narrative ends with the finality of death, of wanton massacres, of Japanese depravity, of disease, malnutrition and starvation. It is a history hardly known that has to be told, even repeated, so that it is remembered and never forgotten.

## JUST RECEIVED

### BATAAN DEATH MARCH – 81<sup>st</sup> ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION

This will take place on **SATURDAY 15th APRIL** at 10 a.m. in the San Francisco National Cemetery, 1, Lincoln Blvd, San Francisco, CA. We remember their Legacy and suffering under the Japanese.



## WW 11- era pillboxes withstand the test of time



Solid piece of history: Norhidayat (right) showing a tourist one of the British pillboxes built in World War II that can still be found along Sungai Johor in Kota Tinggi, Johor. – THOMAS YONG/The Star

Seven pillboxes built by the British in World War 11 can be found along the Sungai Johor. They have all stood the test of time, including natural disasters such as the major flood which hit the district in 2007. They were built by the British Army as part of its defence strategy in facing the Japanese in WW2 on the assumption that they would enter Kota Tinggi using boats through Sungai Johor. However, as we know, they invaded Malaya via land routes and the British Army never used the pillboxes they had built. They were left intact after the war ended.

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