

# APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

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



81st EDITION  
January 2025

Remembrance by two of our Senior Honorary Life Members



Bert Warne



Vilma Howe

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**15th August 2025** - MVG V-J Day Service, National Memorial Arboretum. 12.00 noon. This is a significant service as we are advised that the Royal British Legion will be organising a major event on that day, and we have booked the Chapel. Although all will be welcome we need to know who of our members wish to attend so that we can reserve seats. We have now received the following from the Royal British Legion:

*The Royal British Legion will take a leading role to mark the 80th anniversaries of V-E Day and V-J Day, and we look forward to announcing our nationwide and local community events being planned in partnership with the Government early in 2025.*

*We are asking Second World War veterans, or their families or carers on their behalf, to visit the RBL website where they can register their interest to be a part of our V-E Day and V-J Day commemorations, which are likely to include national events and the National Memorial Arboretum. Visit [Remembering the end of the Second World War](#) for further information.*

I will work with RBL and NMA to ensure that we provide the main V-J Day Service. *Colin Hygate*

## WISHING YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR

### **80th Anniversary of V-J Day**

As we start this New Year, we are reminded that in eight months' time it will be the 80th anniversary of Japan's unconditional surrender on 15th August 1945, after 3½ years of incarceration for both military POWs and civilian internees. But even after surrender, for several reasons, many prisoners were not released from captivity until much later in September of that year, as they waited for repatriation home.

On 15th August 2025, we look forward to marking this important milestone at the NMA with a service of thanksgiving for those who returned and remembrance of those who did not. With very few former FEPOWs still alive to remember those tragic days, we can, however, celebrate and commemorate the day remembering our wonderful former child internees, **Jane Elgey, Olga Henderson, Vilma Howe** in Canada (with her two brothers **Reg** and **Nelson**, and sister **Maria**), and **Bob Paterson** in Australia, who all survived the traumas and deprivations of their childhood lives in internment camps in Sumatra and Singapore. We salute your fortitude.

### **The Church of Our Lady and St. Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham**

For me personally, Christmas is always a difficult time, as I remember the death of my father on 23rd December 1943, in Chungkai POW camp hospital in Thailand on the banks of the River Kwai. He died in pain, squalor and alone of dysentery, beriberi, pellagra and an amputated limb. This year, in particular, after undergoing a hip replacement operation in pain-free, sterilised, clean surroundings, with friendly faces looking in every hour, I think about his suffering all those years ago in that dysentery hut. There was no clean bedding; no medicines to reduce the pain; no emetine to stop the dysentery and no-one with him as he died. I reflect on how lucky I am that his suffering has enabled me to have an operation today with care and in comfort.

In the words of **Father M. L. Cowin**, who built the FEPOW Church of Our Lady and St. Thomas of Canterbury in Wymondham as a Living Memorial to all POWs who died in the prison and internment camps in the Far East under Japanese control: *"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."* For more information, visit the National FEPOW Memorial Church website: [www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk](http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk) and follow the link to FEPOW.

We hope this year's service will be well attended by MVG members to witness our wreath being laid in the FEPOW chapel in the Church. A wonderful buffet lunch is always provided afterwards, where one can meet members of other FEPOW groups, and relatives of those who returned or died as POWs. **Sunday, 11th May 2025, at 12.30 p.m.**

### **Events and Services over the Remembrance Sunday weekend, 7th-11th November 2024**

In London, various ceremonies take place in the week leading to Remembrance Sunday. These are usually reported in our newsletters. However, in addition to the Cross Planting Ceremony, I would like to mention another ceremony which has not previously been reported.

Firstly, we thank **Richard** and **Susan Brown** for representing the MVG at the FEPOW Plot for the Cross Planting Ceremony in Westminster's Field of Remembrance on Thursday, 7th November. Due to illness, the Queen was unable to attend as usual, but she was represented by Her Royal Highness, The Duchess of Gloucester. Two eight-inch crosses had been planted in the Plot – one with the MVG's logo and the second with Singapore Volunteer Forces badge and board commemorating the Federated & Unfederated Volunteer Forces.

Secondly, we also thank the Browns for attending the Remembrance Ceremony on Friday 8th November at Lloyds of London, in the City. Organised annually by the Royal British Legion's Branch of Lloyds, the wreath-laying ceremony takes place in the Lloyds building in Lime Street, in front of the Lutine Bell, followed by a service in the wonderful Guild Church of St. Katherine Cree. The Guild Church of St. Katherine Cree was first constructed in 1280 for workers in the City of London. The present building was built in 1628 and designed by the famous architect Inigo Jones. It is one of the oldest churches in London.

At the service, **June Elkington-Housego** said the FEPOW Prayer and **Dee Larcombe** (a six-year-old child civilian internee in Singapore) read the Kohima Epitaph.

The Lutine Bell hangs in the rostrum of the underwriting room at Lloyds. It was recovered from **HMS Lutine**, a cargo vessel which sank off the Dutch coast in 1799 carrying gold and silver bullion. Only the bell was recovered and returned to Lloyds who had underwritten the ship's cargo. The bell used to be tolled when a ship foundered, but today it is only rung on special occasions: Armistice Day, the death or coronation of a monarch.

**In Canada. Remembrance Sunday – 10th November 2024:** We were delighted to learn that **Vilma Howe**, one of our few former child internees who was captured with her mother and brother on the *Mata Hari* and interned in Muntok and Palembang before being taken back to Singapore, was given special permission by the Royal Canadian Legion to lay a wreath at the Cenotaph in the Laurel Hill Cemetery in her local town of Bolton, Ontario, on Remembrance Sunday. Earlier, the Royal Canadian Legion had decided that it would not be arranging its usual Service of Remembrance in Bolton, deciding instead to hold it in the nearby town of Caledon, some 45 minutes' drive away from Bolton.

However, Vilma was not keen to travel to Caledon and, together with Sallie Hammond, MVG's secretary in Canada and the USA, they decided not to take "No" for an answer, and managed to persuade the Royal Canadian Legion to organise, at very short notice, a Service of Remembrance in Bolton attended by a parade of Boy Scouts, Sea Scouts and Local Veterans from Bolton's Firehall. This is an edited report in the Caledon newspaper on Vilma's story:

*"At the Bolton ceremony, a wreath was laid by 96-year-old former child prisoner-of-war, **Vilma Howe**. Vilma was 12 and living in Singapore during World War II. At the same time as the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese invaded Malaya, and later Singapore. Amid intense bombing, Howe and her family attempted to evacuate by boat but their ship was hit in Sumatran waters. She and others on board were taken captive and brought to internment camps at Muntok and Palembang in Sumatra – many other evacuating ships were sunk along with all on board. Later in the war, the Howe family was transferred by sea to Singapore and (eventually) sent to Changi Gaol. She spent time as a captive there and at Sime Road Camp until the camps were finally liberated in August 1945. "There are not many survivors left alive and not very many talk about it," she said. "All you had were the clothes on your back when you got captured. I had an 88-year-old grandmother. I don't know how she made it; she was tough." Howe said conditions in the camps were very bad, with Changi Gaol being an especially horrible place. She believes strongly in the importance of Remembrance Day and participates in ceremonies and lays a wreath each year. Previously, she's laid wreaths at Queens Park in Toronto and in Singapore."*

**The official Royal Canadian Legion Service took place in Queen's Park, Toronto, Ontario**, on Armistice Day itself – Monday, 11th November 2024 – and the MVG wreath commemorating the Malayan Volunteer Forces and Civilian internees was laid by MVG member **Kathy Halliday**.

**A Tribute to Sallie Hammond:** We are very sad to announce that Sallie, our wonderful secretary in Canada and the USA, retired at the end of December. Sallie has worked tirelessly to bring together all the MVG members in those countries who had hitherto been without anyone to organise events and keep them informed of MVG matters. We thank her for everything she has done to raise the profile of the MVG, especially in Canada, by taking part in official

Services on Armistice Day and by generously donating a wreath to be laid on behalf of the MVG. I first met Sallie at a reunion weekend organised by the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association and learned of her remarkable story. In September 1940, her father, **Grp. Capt. Harley Boxall** was given command of the RAF station in Alor Star where 62 Squadron was based. He met and married her mother, **Patricia Davies**, a member of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service, in May 1941. Also stationed at Alor Star was **Flt. Lt. "Pongo" Scarf**, who soon after married another QA nurse, **Elizabeth Lunn**, who was known as 'Sallie'. The couples were good friends. On 9th December 1941, 'Pongo' Scarf was mortally wounded returning from a raid on Singora. He was taken to Alor Star hospital where both Pat and his wife 'Sallie' treated him, but he died. Sallie Hammond was born later in the war and named after her mother Pat's good friend and fellow QA nurse, 'Sallie' Scarf. On learning about the MVG, Sallie offered to take on the role of secretary to our members in Canada and the USA and has carried out her duties with great interest and encouragement. We shall miss her kind words and thank her for all she has done.



#### **CONGRATULATIONS TO BERT WARNE ON HIS 105th BIRTHDAY.**

We send huge congratulations to our oldest MVG member Bert Warne who reached the remarkable age of 105 on 10th December 2024. Bert joined the MVG after meeting members at the dedication service in Southampton following the unveiling of the Memorial to the Repatriation Ships which returned FEPOWs and Civilian Internees to Southampton at the end of WWII.

Bert was born in Cowes on the Isle of Wight in 1919. When he was nine, he moved to Southampton to make his father's journey to work on the transatlantic liners easier. The 105-year-old has lived in the city ever since, being awarded the title of Freeman of the City of Southampton in 2022 for his work ensuring the legacy of those who sacrificed their life for the city are remembered.

Bert's son-in-law Patrick Hayward said that Bert was delighted to receive a surprise birthday card from the King and Queen, saying that nobody in the family had even applied for it. "We had to sign for it, but it was an amazing

present that we weren't expecting," Patrick said. Bert grew up in Woolston and joined the army in 1938, eventually being stationed across the UK with the Royal Engineers. He then worked on an American ship headed towards the Middle East.

The Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor shortly after Bert jumped on board, so as America entered World War Two, the English engineer was dropped off in India. From here, he made his way to Singapore with other British soldiers, but his boat was bombed by Japan and caught fire. "Bert was in the sick bay, and when they evacuated the boat, they forgot everyone in the sick bay," his son-in-law Patrick Hayward said. "He escaped the fire by jumping out of a porthole and was picked up by a row boat from New Zealand who took him to Singapore." It only got worse for Bert though. He was one of 60,000 taken prisoner to work on the Burma and Thailand railway once Japan invaded Singapore. His weight dropped to six and a half stone after being forced to eat a diet Patrick described as 'just brown rice and whatever could be foraged from the jungle.' Around 16,000 British and Commonwealth troops died while building the railway. Bert was freed in August 1945, weeks after the war had finished everywhere else in the world. For his birthday party on December 10th, Bert went round to his daughter's house and spent the day with his wider family. They had a glass of wine, and although Bert has not been to watch live football for about 15 years, the former Saints regular spent the evening watching Liverpool take on Girona. Photographed on Remembrance Day, Monday, 11th November 2024, in the Churchyard at his local Church in Bitterne, in front of the display of poppy wreaths, Bert reported that the service included a two minute's silence and that many people had attended the ceremony.



**JANE ELGEY - 9th June 1929 to 15th December 2024**

It was with great sadness that on 16th December 2024 we heard of the death of Jane Elgey (née Reid), one of our former wonderful Child Internees, mentioned at the beginning of this column. We send her daughter, Glynis, and her son, Vincent, our sincere and heartfelt sympathies for their loss. Her funeral will take place at 2.00pm on 15th January at All Saints Church, Market Weighton, Yorkshire.

Jane was evacuated from Singapore with her mother, sister and three brothers on the *Mata Hari* just before Singapore fell to the Japanese. It was sheer luck that the family was switched to the *Mata Hari* after being told to board the *Vyner Brooke* which was subsequently bombed and sunk. Instead the *Mata Hari* was captured by the Japanese Navy together with her crew and passengers, who were taken into custody in Muntok on Bangka Island. Later the internees were taken to Palembang on the mainland of Sumatra, returned to Muntok, then Palembang again before finally being taken via Loebok Linggau to Belalau Camp right in the heart of the jungle, surrounded by rubber plantations. Jane's remarkable family (Reid) story can be read in the following link: [https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page\\_id=2344](https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page_id=2344)

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**REMEMBRANCE DAY CEREMONIES**

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**CALEDON, ONTARIO**



Vilma Howe



Kathy Halliday

Caledon residents took time over the last week to remember those who served our country in time of war. Remembrance Day services were held across Caledon on and around Remembrance Day, November 11th. On November 10th, the Alton Legion hosted its annual ceremony and on the same day another ceremony was held in Bolton at the cenotaph in Laurel Hill Cemetery. On November 11th, a ceremony was held at the Town Hall in Caledon East. Local politicians, volunteers, cadets, Legion members, religious leaders, the Caledon Fire and Emergency Services, the Honour Guard and school communities all participated in these important ceremonies. At the Bolton ceremony, a wreath was laid by 96-year-old former prisoner of war, Vilma Howe, who lives in Caledon.

Vilma Howe was twelve and living in Singapore during World War II. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbour (7th December 1941), the Japanese invaded Singapore (8th February 1942). Amid intense bombing, she and her family attempted to evacuate by sea but their ship was bombed in Sumatran waters.

Vilma and others on board were taken captive and brought to internment camps at Muntok and Palembang in Sumatra. Many other evacuating ships were sunk, however, with all on board. Later in the war, Vilma was transferred to Singapore's Changi Gaol. She spent time as a captive both there and at the Sime Road camp until Singapore was finally liberated in August 1945. "There are not many survivors left alive and not very many who talk about it," she said. "All you had were the clothes on your back when you were captured. I had an 88-year-old grandmother. I don't know how she made it. She was tough." Vilma said conditions in the camps were very bad, with Changi Gaol being an especially horrible place. She believes strongly in the importance of Remembrance Day and participates in ceremonies and lays a wreath at the cenotaph every year. She has previously laid wreaths at Queen's Park in Toronto and in Singapore. *Caledon Newspaper*

## **KL TUGU NEGARA AND PENANG REMEMBRANCE CEREMONIES**

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Richard Parry

Dawn over Kuala Lumpur on Sunday 10th November, the morning of the annual Remembrance Ceremony at the Tugu Negara, was a gloomy beginning to the day with rain clouds threatening ominously from the first hint of daylight. As this was the first Remembrance Ceremony to be held in KL for two years, it was an inauspicious start. Not to be deterred though, attendees began arriving at the Tugu Negara from 7 a.m. onwards. As the rain began to fall steadily, Major Crispin Coates (British Army) began proceedings precisely on time at 7:30 a.m. with a Piper-led march past comprised largely of Scouts and other young people's organizations, a Welcome Address from the Acting British High Commissioner, Mr David Wallace, followed by a performance of songs from the choir of the International School @Park City. Two readings, 'In Flanders Fields' and 'The Soldier', then followed, at the end of which a 14-year-old schoolboy bugler from the International School at Park City gave a highly polished performance of the Last Post, all the time standing unsheltered at the Cenotaph in the by now very heavy rain. At the completion of the two minutes' silence, the wreath laying by VIPs, Military representatives and other guests began with umbrellas much in evidence but providing little shelter. At the conclusion of the Ceremony a breakfast had been arranged at the residence of the High Commissioner, but with most active participants by now very wet indeed, I fear attendance was rather depleted.

## **TUGU NEGARA REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY, KUALA LUMPUR**

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## **PENANG REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY**

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In marked contrast, in Penang one week later, on Sunday 17th November, the weather could not have been better, with a red-golden dawn over the mainland giving way to almost clear blue skies above the Esplanade. Attendees having arrived around 7 a.m., the Ceremony, organized by the Penang Veterans Association, began with the arrival of the Penang Chief Minister, YAB Chow Kon Yow, accompanied by Pipers from St Xavier's Institution. The

Catafalque Party from the RAAF at Butterworth then positioned around the Cenotaph, and following a performance of the National and Penang State Anthems, addresses were given by the President of the Penang Veterans Association, the representative of the British High Commission in KL, and YAB The Chief Minister. The Ceremony then followed the well-established and familiar sequence of readings, the playing of the Last Post and two minutes' silence. The wreath laying process was then completed, and participants proceeded to an excellent marquee breakfast on the Esplanade. As a postscript and general observation, it is good to note that attendance at the Penang Ceremony seems to be increasing every year, comprising a large number of Malaysian Veterans, Diplomats, serving Military personnel from Malaysia, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and others, and a wide variety of civilian organisations and individuals.



## REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY CENOTAPH PARADE

Roger Willbourn

In London on Remembrance Sunday, 10th November, MVG Members along with relatives gathered on Horse Guards Parade as the MVG Contingent for the annual Cenotaph Parade. We were fourteen in number. Sadly, Rosemary Fell was unable to be with us, as she was recovering from her hip operation, but Sandy Lincoln was there as our long-standing (long-marching ?) member from many previous years' parades. Although it was overcast with a little fine drizzle early on, it was essentially a dry day, although rather cold which was especially felt as there was a considerable period of waiting around before assembling and marching got under way. The atmosphere created by all the thousands of veterans congregating and re-meeting one another is most uplifting. While waiting in our columns in Whitehall, we were too far back up towards Trafalgar Square to see or hear the prayers and wreath-laying ceremonies at the Cenotaph, but we could view proceedings on a super-sized screen which had been erected on top of a large pillar in the middle of Whitehall right next to our waiting position. Coincidentally, this was right outside the London Raffles Hotel, which we all thought was most appropriate. The contingent in front of us included men from the Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association and those directly behind us were from the Aden Veterans Association; we felt geographically well-positioned. Once we were on the march, past the Cenotaph and then into Parliament Square and back to Horse Guards, we all warmed up and enjoyed the experience. It is, of course a great honour to be part of this Veterans Parade in remembrance of our ancestors, their courage, forbearance and



sacrifice. On our return to Horse Guards Parade, the salute was taken by the Prince of Wales. Before dispersal, we took the photograph of our little band, Sandy Lincoln in the middle with her splendid poppy scarf! Half of us then repaired to the Crypt café under St Martin-in-the-Fields for a restorative lunch with hot soup and time for reflection on a memorable morning.

L to R: Timothy Dunnell, Caroline Willbourn, Chloe Martin, Caroline Dunnell, Anthony Cooper, Debbie Harris

Kneeling: Amanda Royde-Smith; Anna Cooper, Sandy Lincoln, Roger Willbourn

Seated: Margaret Gardener; Chris Robb, Tim Stubbs, Peter Innes-Ker



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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND REUNION LUNCHEON

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Held at the Royal Air Force Club, Piccadilly, London, 19th October 2024

Colin Hygate

This was likely to be a somewhat different event this year, with Rosemary being unable to attend as she recovered from her hip operation. Fortunately, she is making good progress with her continuing recuperation. After the usual flurry of last-minute changes, Sue and I set off with some 'additional items' on board. Our journey to London was uneventful other than the usual pouring rain! On arrival we unloaded the 'additional items' (the newly made replacement Kuala Selangor Memorial Plaques) which Sue took charge of in the Club while I parked the car. When I arrived I was greeted by a cheery Liz Moggie who, in Rosemary's absence, had taken the trouble to acquire the table flowers. The Hall Porters had most kindly already taken the Plaques to The Sovereign's Room.

The tables were laid and numbered with all the correct seating for each table but, a little like Eric Morecambe's piano playing (and just as Rosemary had warned) not in the right order! Having alerted the staff to the simple fact that the sequence of tables should reflect the Table Plan previously provided, the tables were quickly rearranged.

Guests started arriving and delivering their raffle prizes, chatting with fellow members and looking at the maps and information that our speaker, John Tulloch, had brought with him. Final table arrangements were made, the bar opened, and the room buzzed with many conversations as Liz Moggie and Imogen Holmes sold the raffle tickets. With everyone assembled at their tables I mentioned the unavoidable absence of both our President and our Patron, everyone wishing a full and speedy recovery for Rosemary, and reminded everyone of the joy we shared last year at the presentation of the Silver Salver. I also asked members to remember those who are no longer with us: Barbara Coombes, Michael Kennedy, Bea Mitchell and Yvonne Wurtzburg.

Briefly explaining the necessity of holding an AGM I gave my **brief resumé of the Group's year**. It has been exciting in many ways, particularly as our membership has increased with a net gain of two. After sadly losing the four members previously mentioned plus eight not renewing, we had the pleasure of welcoming fourteen new members, some of whom were with us. We thank them and hope they find their membership beneficial in discovering more details of family members associated with the Malayan Volunteer Forces and their experiences at the hands of the Japanese, from which many did not survive.

On behalf of all members I thanked **Roger Willbourn** for all the work entailed in managing the MVG membership; **Jonathan Moffatt** for the immense amount of work and amazing depth of knowledge that enables so many members to discover details of their relatives' service as Volunteers; **Sally Jennings** for editing our quarterly Apa Khabar newsletter; **Sallie Hammond** for all the sterling work that she has done over the years for our North American members as she hands this task over to Kathy Halliday; **Richard Parry** for his work on behalf of our Malaysian and Singaporean members; **Elizabeth Adamson** for her work for our members in Australia and New Zealand.

I thanked the indomitable **Liz Moggie** for all her work over almost eight years in negotiating the replacement of the **two plaques taken from the Kuala Selangor War Memorial**. The plaques were in the room carefully wrapped to enable Liz to take them back to Kuala Lumpur. I thanked all the members who had generously responded to our appeal for funds which Jonathan described: *This will be the first fundraiser in support of a Malayan Volunteers Memorial in the former Federated Malay States of WW1/WW2*. I then invited Liz to say a few words about her quest to reach this point in their replacement.

I commented on the progress being made on the proposed **Dahan Poak Memorial in Sarawak** which Edward Mansell is organising on our behalf with the District Officer in Bau.

Our representation at the 2023 **Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday** had only been two of us as I was accompanied by Sandy Lincoln. However I was pleased to note that this year we would have fourteen members marching, led by Roger Willbourn, who also laid a wreath on our behalf at Wymondham FEPOW Service in May. In August we had a better representation at our V-J Day Service in the Chapel at the **National Memorial Garden** and were delighted that others joined our service, some of whom have since become members. The new seat was in place although the other seat has required a temporary repair to keep it serviceable. Our Memorial Garden was in much better condition with plaques cleaned and paving repointed and generally looking trim. The bamboo however remains overgrown, and the individual plaques associated with the bamboo were hidden until Sandy took out her nail scissors to reveal her father's. The NMA Maintenance Staff have since discovered all of them, some of which will require refurbishment, and the bamboo trimmed.

All members have received a copy of the **annual accounts** and will have seen that our available funds have reduced over the year. This has been as a result of some one-off costs, including a contribution to replace the roof of the Muntok Peace Museum building; upgrading the editions of Apa Khabar on our website so that they can be searched; and the refurbishment of our Memorial Garden at the NMA. Our Income was enhanced by the wonderfully generous donation of the Windsor Castle visit by John and Annie Moody, which was auctioned to add £530 to our funds in addition to the Raffle proceeds. The increased use of standing orders to make subscription payments has greatly helped the administration of membership fees.

I noted that for Remembrance Day in November we would have a party of 14 marching at the Cenotaph Parade led by Roger Willbourn, and we shall also have a number of other wreath-laying events around the world, including Richard Parry at Kuala Lumpur and Penang; Martin Foakes at Kranji; Vilma Howe at Bolton, Ontario; Kathy Halliday at Toronto.

Looking forward I noted that with the **80th Anniversary of the ending of the Second World War** there would be a number of significant events. As we have already reserved the Chapel at the National Memorial Arboretum for our V-J Day Service we hope that many of our members will join us on that day. We are advised that the Royal British Legion are organising an event on that day and hope that this will attract a large number of people, many of whom may well join our service. I intend to ask for early indications so that we can reserve seats for our members. We anticipate a number of other important activities during the year, particularly visits to Singapore, Thailand and Borneo to mark the 80th Anniversary.

I then asked if there was Any Other Business for which there was none, and I then asked Michael Mowat to say Grace. I had asked him to prepare a Grace that we could consider an **MVG Grace** to be used at any formal meal held by MVG around the world:

*We pause, in quiet, and hold in memory those countless lives taken, some held dear to us, through conflict and war. We honour and grieve for those lost to us personally or who, surviving, struggled with what they had endured. And we give thanks for the lives rebuilt and the families and friendships that bring all of us together today. For the food laid before us, and the peace we enjoy in our daily lives, may we be truly thankful.*

We then enjoyed an excellent meal of melon, chicken breast and raspberry crème brûlée while we shared many interesting and amusing conversations. As the coffee was being served, I introduced **John Tulloch** who gave us a most interesting, if at times harrowing, talk based on the research he had done in writing his book "*The Borneo Graveyard 1942–1945*". He invited questions and after some further details I asked Mary Harris to give a vote of thanks on behalf of us all. Mary not only had a very close connection with Borneo, as her husband John had been interned in Batu Lintang, Kuching but had witnessed at first hand the trauma resulting from the treatment suffered by that internment that John Tulloch so eloquently described.

**Roger Willbourn** then took to the stand to hold the auction of the visit and luncheon at Windsor Castle, so generously donated yet again by **Lt. Col. John and Annie Moody**. After some most amusing and lively bidding, the auction was won by Becca Kenneison, raising £310. We then continued with the Raffle with an amazing and very serious collection of prizes brought by members. This raised a further £290 making a most welcome total of £600 addition to our funds. This brought our most enjoyable Annual Reunion Luncheon to a close and, as members made their various journeys home, the staff at the RAF Club helped Liz to carry the Kuala Selangor Memorial Plaques to a waiting taxi.

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## **TALK TO THE MALAYAN VOLUNTEER GROUP**

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### **The Japanese Occupation of Borneo 1941-1945**

**John Tulloch**

Colin asked me whether I would give a talk on the Japanese Occupation of Borneo based on my book *'The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945'*. It was an honour to have been asked and a privilege to be standing here in the RAF Club giving this talk to MVG members.

I feel I should give a bit of my background and my interest in South East Asia. I had the excitement of following my parents around the world due to my father's military postings, which included India during Partition, Pakistan and in 1957 for three years in Malaya. We lived in KL and then Seremban. I was taught how to use a Webley revolver (I hated it), a Sten/Stirling submachine gun (great fun) and a jungle carbine. My father said, *'Just in case Johnny, just in case!'* I went to the Bourne (Army) School for one term and then to board at Uplands School up on Penang Hill for five terms. Uplands is now Uplands International School in Georgetown. I was not the most studious of pupils, especially as I spent most of my time playing in the jungle surrounding the school. On being asked by my father what I wanted to do when I was older, I replied 'Tarzan'. That sealed my fate, and I was sent to England to prep school and then Victoria College, Jersey. Little did I or my parents know that in 10 years' time, 1968/69, I would be on a 12-month Tour of Duty in the jungles of South Vietnam as a New Zealand Forward Observation Officer supporting Australian Infantry.

In 1973 I transferred to the Royal Artillery. Postings followed in Germany, UK, The Netherlands; I was seconded to the Sultan of Oman's Artillery (1978/80); and TODs in Northern Ireland (1973, 1975) and the Falklands (1982). In 1994, on posting to HQ Infantry Warminster, I started my 21 years of attending every Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course in Brunei, at times three times a year, as a visiting instructor in jungle operations. In 1999, on one of my trips, Victoria and our two children Rowena, who is here today, and John joined me for a week in Brunei. We then went on leave in Sabah 'wild lifeing', jungle trekking, climbing Mt Kinabalu and other activities. When we were in Sandakan I learnt there had been a POW Camp there. I had never heard of it, which embarrassed me as I am a lover and avid reader of history. We visited the site and the newly opened Memorial Hall. I was shocked when I learnt that 99.75% of the POWs had perished and there were no British POW survivors only six Australians who successfully escaped. I later discovered that half the British POWs were either members of my regiment the Royal Artillery, or the RAF and RAF VR. I decided there and then I had to research and do something to remember the British POWs at the very least.

My talk, based on my 12 years of research and my book *'The 'Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945'*, covers the terrible years of the Japanese Occupation of Borneo. It was an island of vital strategic importance for the Japanese, with oil, rubber and iron wood and airstrips and aerodromes which would later be used to attack Australia. The oil from Borneo alone could support the Japanese homeland and all military requirements. But Borneo was ignored by the Allies. Thousands of Australian, British, Dutch and Indian POWs, internees, locals of Borneo and Javanese 'romusha' (paid, conscripted labourers) 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 and internees.

This is not an easy history, as most of the narrative ends with the finality of death, of wanton executions, massacres, cannibalism, crucifixion and death marches, 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. It is the story of Borneo.

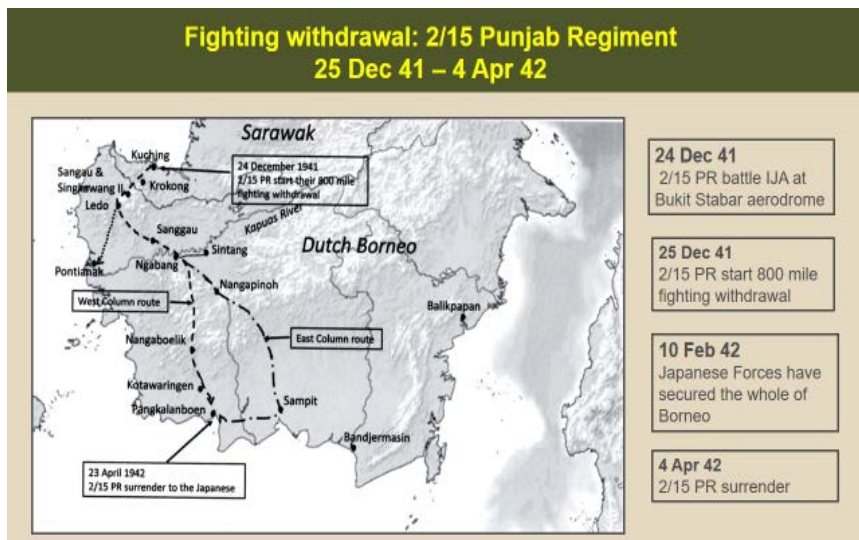
### The Japanese Invasions

On 7th December 1941 the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. On the following day, Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) forces landed in North East Malaya and started their invasion of Malaya. On 16th December 1941, IJA forces started their invasion of Borneo. They landed at Miri in Sarawak and Kuala Belait and Seria in Brunei. Their amphibious landing was conducted in appalling weather conditions and many men drowned in the process.

### Kuching and the 2/15 Punjab Regiment (2/15 PR)

On 13th May 1941, the 2/15 PR were deployed to Kuching, Sarawak. Their task: to destroy the Miri oil fields and the oil refinery at Lutong and defend Kuching and the airstrip at Bukit Stabar. The Miri Demolition Party carried out their task until 13th December 1941, whereupon they were ordered to withdraw rapidly to Kuching. Their efforts at demolition were partly successful but infuriated the IJA.

On the 24th December 1941, an IJA Force of 6,000 landed in Kuching. Kuching was declared a 'free city' and the fighting occurred along the Kuching River and the final stand at Bukit Stabar airstrip. In the early hours of Christmas Day, a lull in the fighting occurred as the IJA were recovering from their losses of 384 killed and over 1,100 wounded in their fighting at Bukit Stabar. The 2/15 PR started their epic 800-mile fighting withdrawal through the Borneo jungle. Ahead of the withdrawing force were the wives and children (many wives with their children refused to leave Sarawak) and wounded from the hospital, were escorted by a small party of Punjabis. They arrived at Pontianak, Dutch Borneo, where there was a vessel waiting for them. Three days later the Japanese captured Pontianak. The 2/15 PR left behind half a company rear guard to provide a 'false front' to the IJA. On realising what had happened, the IJA renewed their attack at Bukit Stabar. They started their pursuit of the 2/15 PR after the rear guard were eventually overwhelmed.



During their withdrawal, the 2/15 PR inflicted heavy casualties on the pursuing IJA. On arrival at Pangkalaboen, Dutch Borneo, on 4th April 1942, expecting to be picked up by an allied vessel, they were met by the IJ Marines (IJM). The 2/15 PR were out of ammunition, out of rations, suffering from jungle diseases with many wounded, the battalion had lost over half its strength of 1,000 men. The CO of 2/15 PR was reminded by the IJM commander that Singapore had surrendered on 15th February 1942 and the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) had capitulated on 8th March 1942. And if the 2/15 PR carried on fighting, they would be treated

as terrorists and when captured, executed. Lane had little choice but to surrender. The 2/15 PR had kept on fighting to the end. Their captivity was in Java, Batu Lintang, and the Indian Labour Camps (Japanese euphemism for POW Camp) in Miri, Lutong, Kuala Belait and Seria. Many were to perish in these camps.

### In the Meantime

On 30th January 1942, majority of the RAF in Singapore were moved to Palembang, Sumatra and Java, as the airfields in Singapore had become untenable. Six Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regt RA (6 HAA Regt Regt) deployed to

Palembang to provide air defence for the two airfields and the oil refineries at Palembang. On 14th February the Japanese mounted a parachute and amphibious assault on Palembang. The Dutch had withdrawn leaving the six HAA Regt and RAF ground crew to defend P1 airfield and the oil installations. As a matter of interest, British air defence regiments had only a single rifle for a gun detachment of 15, as the War Office deemed the anti-aircraft gun was their personal weapon! They had little choice but to withdraw 300 miles, by whatever means, to Oosthaven, where they were able to cross over to Java. The six HAA Regt had to destroy all their guns.

On 15th February 1942, Singapore surrendered. On 1st March 1942, the IJA invaded Java at three landings. The fighting in Java was chaotic with British/Dutch historical ill-feelings surfacing. At 10:30 hours, the IJA attacked Kalidjati aerodrome, a critical aerodrome which was defended by two British air-defence batteries, one of which was in the infantry role. It also housed RAF, RAAF and Dutch aircraft and personnel. At the time of the attack the Dutch had already withdrawn. What then occurred, was I believe, the bloodiest battle fought by British air-defence gunners defending a single location. 103 gunners, 29 RAF ground crew and 43 RAAF airmen were either killed fighting or executed after the battle. The IJA suffered heavy casualties.

On 8th March 1942 the NEI capitulated; the signing of capitulation was at Kalidjati where the detritus of the bloody fighting and aftermath was evident. The following day British forces in NEI surrendered and became POWs. Japanese excesses of barbarity and sadism became apparent.

Some 200 British and Dutch soldiers escaped into the mountains of Java to carry on fighting. They were quickly rounded up by April, put into pig baskets and paraded around on trucks for three days, then placed on fishing boats and taken out into the shark infested sea off Surabaya. They either drowned, were killed by machine gun fire or eaten by sharks. This was witnessed by a Dutch woman. It became known as the 'pig basket massacre'.

In late July, a Japanese submarine sailed out of Cheribon, north Java, into the Sunda Straits with a group of more than 90 Dutch women and children standing on its deck. After an hour's sailing on the surface and without warning, it suddenly dived. The women and children either drowned or were taken by sharks. There was one survivor who was picked up a local fisherman in a sampan. The incident was witnessed by the fisherman.

At the Malang POW Camp, on 4th May 1942, four RAF POWs accused of trying to escape were brought back to the camp and were horribly beaten for a week by the Japanese. They were executed in front of all the POWs. It took several shots to kill them. Witnessed by an RAF POW.

At another camp, the POWs were paraded to watch a group rape of 10 to 15 Dutch women by Japanese guards. It was sickening, appalling. AC Sydney Lawrence RAF wrote, *'I stood there weeping and I wet myself and I am not ashamed of that. I think these very brave Dutch women had tried to help us and so this was Japanese retribution. I don't know what happened to the women'*.

The above small samples of atrocities after capitulation were the harbinger of what was going to occur in the NEI and Borneo.

### **Movement of POWs to Borneo**

On 18th July 1942, 1,500 Australians (B Force) arrived at Sandakan POW Camp and started building an aerodrome. On 23rd September 1942, Java 2 Party comprised of 1,200 members of the RA and RAF sailed for Singapore. Three died on the voyage and a gunner died from exhaustion after walking the 17 miles from Keppel Harbour to Changi. Java 2 were greeted by senior officers of Malaya Command who described their turnout, bearing and marching as disgraceful, and they were a mob. Unbeknown, Malaya Command had given them a nickname, 'The Java Mob'. Furthermore, the Java Mob described Changi as a holiday camp compared to what they had suffered and seen in Java, which further infuriated Malaya Command. After a fortnight in Changi, the Java 2 Party with Russell Party sailed for Kuching arriving on the 9th October 1942. Nine POWs died on the voyage. A further 30 POWs were taken to a small island in the Kuching River reaches and executed on the beach. I can only assume that the senior Japanese officer on board the 'hell ship' had decided these 30 'white coolies' were too ill or frail and of no practical use to the Japanese as a work force.

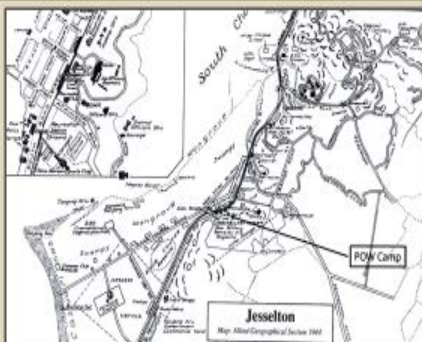
Lt Col Russell and Sqn Ldr Hardy tossed a coin to decide which party would disembark at Kuching and go to Batu Lintang POW and Internment Camp. Russell won and his Party disembarked on the 13th October 1942 and marched to Batu Lintang. The camp was constructed in early 1941 for the 2/15 PR. The Java 2 Party then sailed for Jesselton arriving on 19th October 1942, followed by a three-mile walk to Batu Tiga POW Camp. They were there to build Jesselton aerodrome.

### Batu Tiga POW Camp, Jesselton

Batu Tiga POW Camp, an acre in size, had been the local jail for 40 prisoners. Four attap huts had been built for the POWs, but there was only enough accommodation for half of the 836 POWs; the remainder had to sleep in the open, under the attap huts. The camp was on a slope and the latrines, built for 40 prisoners, was at the top of the slope. Quickly the latrines filled up and a slow-moving avalanche of raw sewage moved down the slope. Dysentery broke out and at its height, over 450 POWs went down with dysentery. The dysentery cases had to sleep outside, under the attap huts, for obvious reasons. The camp could be smelt from over 300 yards away and the guards wore masks. By 8th April 1943, 51 POWs had died from dysentery and other diseases, a death rate higher than the Australians in Sandakan.

Across from the camp was a Sikh Temple, one of only three buildings to survive the war. The watercolour of the Sikh Temple was painted by Lt Stanley Bagnall RA in April 1943. When the POW work party came back from working on the aerodrome, an extraordinary act of bravery was shown by the Sikh priest Bhai Kahan Singh Balwala. The POWs would hear the Shabads (Sikh hymns) and religious music being played on the harmonium (organ) by the priest-cum-organist. Interspersed in the Shabads, Bhai would subtly insert 'God Save the King'. On hearing this, the British POWs, wherever they were, whatever they were doing, facing in any direction, would stand to attention. On cessation, they would then carry on whatever they were doing. The guards looked on with astonishment and undisguised bemusement, witnessing an unusual British POW daily late afternoon occurrence. They may have put it down to Noel Coward's immortal song, 'Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun'!, not being aware of the second line (The Japanese don't care to). The Japanese never discovered what was happening, while a very brave Sikh was giving the Japanese and the Emperor a 'Harvey Smith' – two fingers up! If they had, Bhai Kahan Singh Balwala would undoubtedly have been executed. He carried on with this singular act of bravery for six months.

### Batu Tiga POW Camp, Jesselton



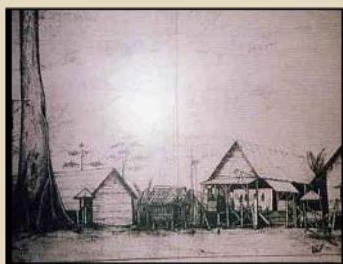
- Camp size: one acre, on a slope
- 836 British POWs
- Accommodation for 500 POWs
- Apr 43. Transfer to Sandakan
- 51 POWs died in six months



The Japanese became very concerned about the number of dysentery sick and were worried cholera would break out. On 8th April 1943, 200 of the fittest British POWs arrived at Sandakan. They marched the eight miles to their POW Camp. The Australian POWs were shocked at the physical condition of the British POWs and as they marched past, they saluted each other; respect for each other's military, an act of respect between those that belong to what John Keegan called 'the Warrior Club'. On 18th April 1943, the remaining 576 British POWs arrived at Sandakan. Many were in such poor condition that they had to be carried or supported by the British POW advance party.

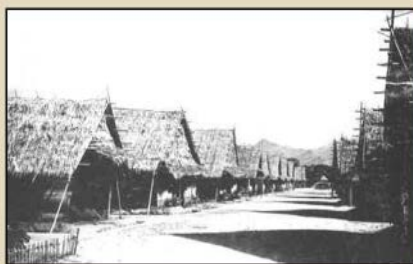
## Sandakan POW Camp

### Sandakan POW Camps



Australian POW Camp

Oct 43 - 140 officers transfer to Batu Lintang including two RAF ORs



British POW Camp

Aug 43 - 31 officers transfer to Batu Lintang

Jun 44 - 100 POWs transfer to Labuan

There were two camps at Sandakan. The Australian camp was three miles from the aerodrome and initially housed 1,500 B Force Australians. In June 1943 the Australian E Force, 500 men, joined the B Force POWs.

The British POW camp was located on top of a hill and near the aerodrome, where it collected the on- and off-shore breezes. The camp covered eight acres and accommodation consisted of ten long attap huts, raised six feet above ground in the normal Borneo fashion. The camp had been part of the Forestry Research Centre. The conditions in the attap huts were very crowded with 75 men to

a hut. There was no water, no sanitary arrangements and no electricity. The first job on arrival was constructing proper latrines for the 200-men Advance Party and digging three wells where brackish water was found at 16 feet. Apart from the wells, water was collected off the attap hut roofs during a downpour and from the polluted swamp outside the camp where the Javanese 'romusha' (paid, conscripted, non-Japanese labourer) who had vacated the camp the day before, washed and used as a latrine. All water had to be boiled. However, the conditions at Sandakan were far better than Batu Tiga. The death rate dropped dramatically.

The Australian and British POWs worked on building the aerodrome, but they were kept separate and not allowed to fraternise. Dead-letter drops and hand signals were used to communicate. Any attempt of fraternisation was rewarded by immediate punishment. Japanese or Formosan guard assaults on POWs were an everyday occurrence. On 16th August 1943, 31 British officers were transferred to Batu Lintang, leaving 10 officers behind. On 16th October 1943, 143 Australian officers, minus eight officers, and two RAF LACs were likewise transferred to Batu Lintang.

In June 1944, 100 British POWs were transferred to Labuan where they were joined by 200 British POWs from Batu Lintang. They became known as the Labuan 300.

## Batu Lintang POW and Internment Camp

### Batu Lintang POW & Internment Camp



Over 4,000 POWs and internees (men, women & children)



Aug 44 - 200 UK POWs transfer to Labuan

Batu Lintang had been the barracks built for the 2/15 PR. It had structure to it. However at its height, it held over 4,000 Australian, British, Dutch and Indian POWs plus internees, men, women and children of different nationalities in seven different compounds. The greatest number were the British POWs and held in the smallest compound. The POWs were there to build an aerodrome at the site of the Bukit Stabar airstrip; the site of the bloody battle between the IJA and 2/15 PR on Christmas Eve 1941. The conditions and treatment of POWs and internees was no different from that of any other Japanese POW Camp.

## Maltreatment and The Cage – Batu Tiga, Sandakan and Batu Lintang

The sadism shown by the guards towards the prisoners was horrific. The Formosans were generally the worst, as they wanted to impress their Japanese superiors. There are two forms of punishment I want to highlight.

**Slapping.** We have seen on films how the Japanese seem to love slapping POWs on the face. It was a stinging occurrence which would knock the prisoner to the ground which in turn would excite the guard(s) to give him a vicious kicking. However, a slap across the ear generally resulted in a burst ear drum and permanent deafness. Lt Col 'Weary' Dunlop AAMC, an iconic Australian doctor, recorded in Java 32 burst ear drums in a single month. Another delightful method of bursting the ear drum was the use of a sharpened slice of bamboo being hammered into the ear.

### Maltreatment & The Cage – Sandakan & Batu Lintang



- Rattan whipping
- Clubbing
- Swarm beating
- Slapping
- Flying lessons
- The Cage



**The cage.** The cage in Sandakan was made of bamboo. A prisoner could not lie down or stand but only sit. It was open to the elements. A prisoner would be taken out once a day for exercise which in essence was an excuse for the guards to beat him up. A large cage was built for up to 15 men. Pte Annear, an Australian, was sentenced to 20, 40 and 43 days in the cage. He died in the cage before release. The Batu Lintang cage had a bamboo frame, but the floor, sides and roof was barbed wire. The 60-year-old Bishop Hollis, who was defrocked by the Japanese, spent five days in the cage and suffered more beatings than any POW or internee during internment. He was never broken.

## Diseases and Illness

The POWs and internees suffered all forms of diseases and illnesses: malaria, dysentery, beriberi, tropical ulcers and pellagra the 3Ds (dementia, diarrhoea, dermatitis) being the most common. When I spoke to military audiences or schools I described beriberi as akin to wearing a pair of wellington boots full of water. Then try walking in them. The POWs suffering from beriberi had to work. All this could have been prevented if the prisoners had Marmite rich in Vitamin B3. The marmite or vegemite was in the Red Cross parcels which they never or seldom received as they were purloined by the Japanese.

### Disease & Illnesses

- Beriberi
- Dysentery
- Dengue Fever
- Malaria
- Oedema
- Pellagra – the 3 Ds
- Tropical Ulcers
- 'Happy feet'
- 'Java Balls'
- 'Camp Ear'
- Depression
- Vitamin deficiency



The POW doctors were outstanding, making use of anything available. However, possibly the greatest indication of imminent death was the mental state of individuals. Col King RAMC at Batu Lintang was a character, a fire-eater, with a huge moustache and a brusque manner. He showed little sympathy unless he could actually help the individual, but he was highly respected by all ranks.

An officer went to him with persistent ringworm. King looked at him and said '*Hr-r-rm, burn all your clothes and get out of the tropics!*'

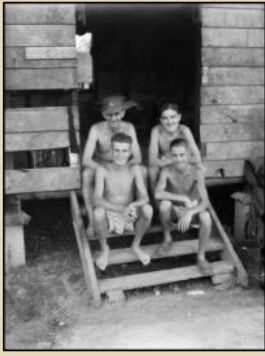
A gunner went to him complaining of beriberi swellings in one leg. '*Hr-r-rm, exercise it! Exercise it!*' said King. The gunner then produced his other leg with an ulcer on it. '*Hr-r-rm, rest it! Rest it! That's all! Next man!*'

It was known as being 'Kinged'! But King saved many lives at Batu Lintang with his matter-of-fact approach.



## Malnutrition, Starvation and Rations

### Malnutrition & Starvation Rice Rations



Guards – 800 gm  
POWs – 250 gm  
125 gm  
70 gm  
50 gm  
31 Dec 44 0 gm

The slide best shows the quantity of rice that was issued for daily consumption. In the early days, the prisoners saved rice and hid it. They were aware there would come the time that rice rations would be reduced. The guards were always looking for these rice caches. To supplement the rice, the prisoners were issued a dubious piece of meat the size of an OXO cube once week. Rotting fish heads or tails were also supplied periodically. Snails, rats, stray cats or dogs supplemented the rations. Local edible vegetation would be used as vegetables.

Whenever there was an incident or the aerodrome was bombed, the rice ration would be reduced. On 1st January 1945 the issue of 50gm per prisoner ceased as Japanese HQ Tokyo issued the order 'Kill the Prisoners'.

### 'KILL THE PRISONERS!'

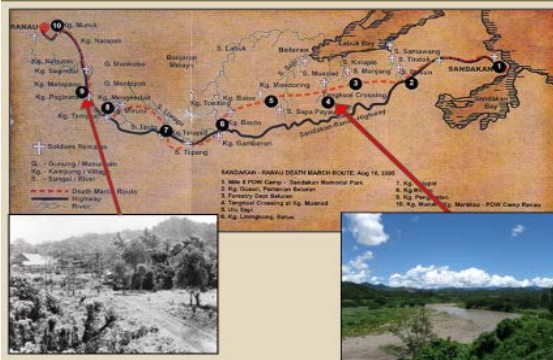
'Whether they are destroyed individually or in groups, or however it is done, with mass bombing, poisonous smoke, poisons, drowning, decapitations, or what, dispose of the prisoners as the situation dictates'.

*Japanese High Command Tokyo military policy issued on 1 January 1945*

Several years ago I spoke to a senior Gunner officer who as an 11-year-old child was interned in the Philippines with his mother. He said the Americans arrived 'just in time'. On arrival, they discovered the Japanese were going to massacre everyone at the camp the following day.

## The Sandakan to Ranau Death Marches January – June 1945

### Sandakan to Ranau Death March Route



Local tribesmen were ordered by the Japanese to cut a path from Sandakan to Ranau. The total length was 164 miles. The path to Bauto was flat and swampy and in places bamboo walkways had to be constructed. [It is now all oil palm plantations.] After the Bauto, the path started climbing and crossed and re-crossed 34 rivers and five-metre-wide streams all with stony bottoms. The banks were steep sided with large boulders at the bottom. The tribal headmen, believing they were cutting a path for the Japanese, had decided to cut the most difficult and demanding

route for the Japanese, little realising the POWs would be using it as well. As an example, as opposed to contouring a hill, the path went directly over it. I walked from Bauto to Ranau, about 80 miles, and crossed streams and rivers and I was always climbing. It left me marvelling and in total awe of the POWs, who in loin cloths, many with no footwear, carrying Japanese stores, the majority suffering from all types of illness were ever able to walk the Death March route of 164 miles in their condition on pitiful rations. But they did. I fell down a 10-foot bank on my walk, hit a boulder and heavily bruised and cracked a couple of ribs – and I wore the latest of jungle trekking clothing and walking gear.

## The Death Marches



1<sup>st</sup> Group of 455 POWs departed on 28 January 1945.

- 309 POWs arrive 19 February 1945
- **29% mortality rate**

2<sup>nd</sup> Group of 536 POWs departed on 29 May 1945.

- 183 POWs arrive 26 June 1945
- **66% mortality rate**

3<sup>rd</sup> Group of 75 POWs departed on 15 June 1945.

- **100% mortality by Mile 30**

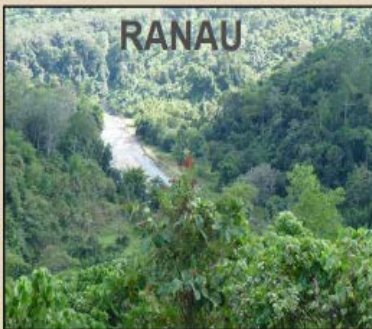
213 POWs too sick to walk were left behind in Sandakan & were to die, executed or massacred

There were three Death Marches. Following behind each Death March group were the killing squads. Any POWs who were flagging were killed; bayoneted, shot, strangled, beaten to death or drowned in the swampy area. On the second march at the Tangkual Crossing, 33 POWs were massacred and at Paginantan two POWs were selected by the Kempei-tai, killed and butchered for 'fresh meat'. Some guards cut strips from thighs, for it to be used in their rice ration for taste. Cannibalism was also practised on the locals in the interior. Japanese troops were authorised by High Command Tokyo, if starving, they could eat human flesh, but not Japanese.

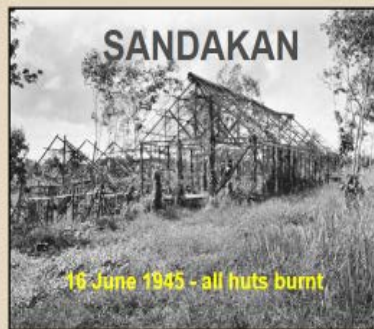
The first group was composed of the fittest 455 Australian and British POWs. Some 309 POWs arrived at Ranau. The mortality rate was 29%. The second group of 536 POWs, 'a march of death', suffered a 66% mortality rate with 183 arriving at Ranau. They were greeted at Ranau by six POWs from the first group. 'Where are the others?' they were asked. 'They are exterminating us' was the reply. During the second march, two Australian POWs successfully escaped. There were other attempts by both Australian and British POWs, but they failed. The third group of 75 British POWs, 'a march to death', left on 15th June 1945. They all perished by Mile 30. The 213 Australian and British POWs too sick to walk remained in Sandakan. On 16th June 1945, all the POW attap huts were burnt down, leaving the POWs to survive in the open. Four Australians escaped from Ranau in the final days, having been warned by a Japanese guard there was going to be 'buku mati mati'. Plenty of killings.

## POW Executions or Massacres in Sandakan and Ranau

### POW Executions & Massacres in Ranau & Sandakan



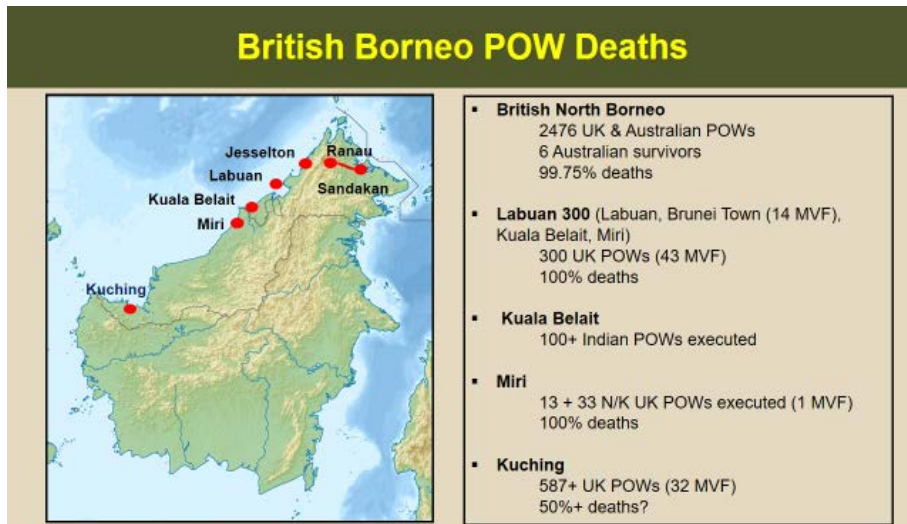
- 10 Jun 45 – 8 sick POWs massacred
- 1 Aug 45 – 17 sick POWs massacred
- 27 Aug 45 – last 15 POWs executed 12 days after the Japanese surrender



- 2 Jul 45 – RA officer crucified
- 15 Jul 45 – 23 sick POWs massacred
- 15 Aug 45 – last POW executed

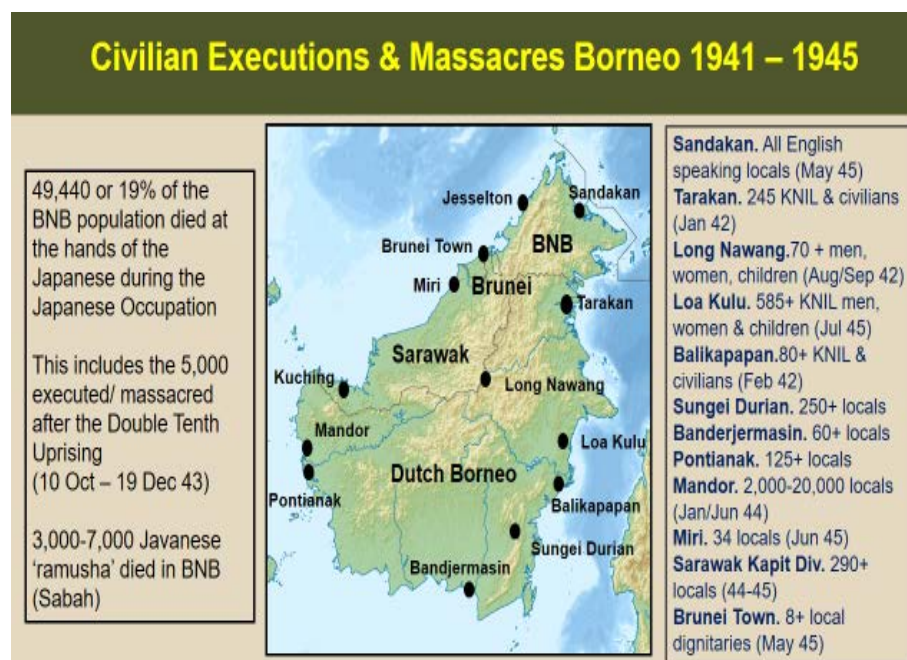
I visited the Ranau POW camp on several occasions with my guides. It's a very sad place and, like Hohn-Belsen, there was a lack of birds. On my last visit I tried to see whether I could create an echo. I eventually found the spot using the antipodean call of 'coooo-eee'! I got my echo. The guides looked at me quizzically. I then shouted, 'You're going home, you're going home'! The echo came back, 'going home, going home'! My skin crawled and the guides said they wanted to leave. They had heard and felt it too. As we walked up the steep slope out of the POW Camp, I hoped that the spirits were going home, and the birds would fly again.

## British Borneo POW Deaths



The POW percentage of deaths in British Borneo (Sarawak, Brunei, Labuan and British North Borneo (Sabah) was a horrific 99.75%. The percentage of deaths of POWs under the Germans was 4%. The percentage of deaths of those POWs who died on the Burma Railway was 20.4% of the POW workforce. The POW death figures for British Borneo are salutary. Even Batu Lintang was over 50%.

## Civilian Executions and Massacres Borneo 1941-1945



The deaths by execution, massacre and starvation of the locals of Borneo during the Japanese occupation was truly horrendous. The figures below are a brief summary of selected massacres. The number that perished in the interior of Borneo is unknown.

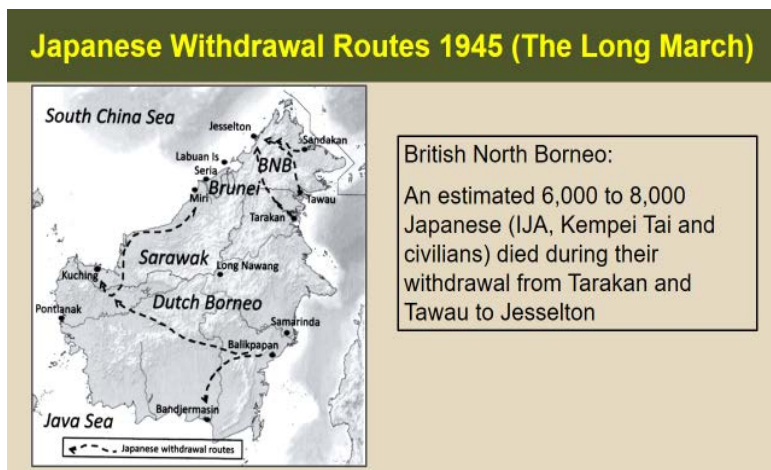
I would draw attention to BNB (British North Borneo); 49,440 or 19% of the population died due to Japanese excesses during their occupation. This includes the 5,000 plus that were executed or massacred after the Double Tenth Uprising in 1943. There are three other incidents I would draw your attention to:

- Sandakan.** On 27th May 1945, all English-speaking locals (Chinese) were rounded up

and executed. Shortly afterwards two US fast patrol boats beat up the Japanese Naval Suicide Squadron on Berhala Island off Sandakan, sinking a couple of suicide boats. The following day, the Japanese sailors crossed over to Sandakan and ran amok, killing anyone they could find, men, women, children and babies, and then torched Sandakan.

- Loa Kulu (Dutch Borneo).** In July 1945, 585+ KNIL (Dutch military) men, Dutch women, children and babies were massacred by throwing them down a 600-foot mine shaft. Children and babies first, followed by the women and finally the men.
- Mandor (Dutch Borneo).** Between January and June 1944, 2,000-20,000 locals were massacred at Mandor. In 1987, Barbara Crossette of the New York Times reported that around 20,000 had been massacred. The Japanese claimed about 1,500. In my research I came across the statement by a Japanese Warrant Officer who stated one night he transported 800 locals to Mandor, but knew there were many convoys. He adamantly claimed he never took part in executions. Interestingly, the Indonesian Government are very wary about questions or research into Mandor.

## Japanese Withdrawal Routes 1945 (The Long March)



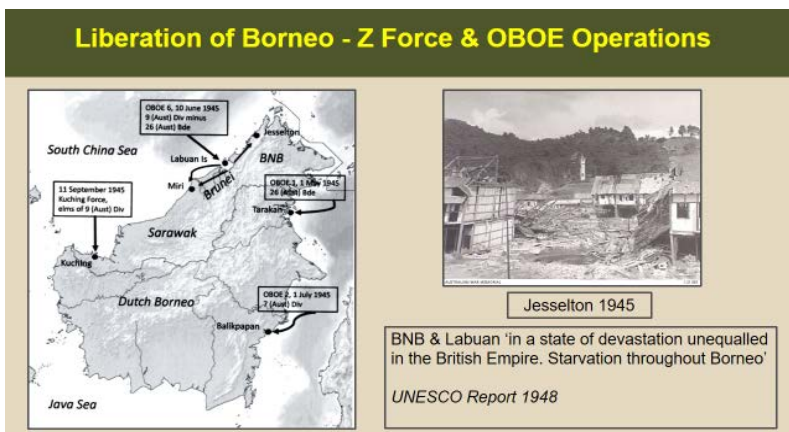
**British North Borneo:**  
An estimated 6,000 to 8,000 Japanese (IJA, Kempei Tai and civilians) died during their withdrawal from Tarakan and Tawau to Jesselton

In BNB, the IJA and Japanese civilians started their withdrawal along the Death March route to Jesselton. The IJA intended to make a final stand at the Sapong Estate near Tenom. Local tribes took their revenge on the Japanese. I visited kampongs during my research where I was told how they killed 200 starving IJA soldiers by giving them raw tapioca to eat and plenty of water to drink. They sat around and watched them die a terrible agonising death as their stomachs extended and eventually ruptured. At another kampong, they used poison which put the soldiers to sleep. The locals then practised the art of Borneo: taking heads. And there was the silent blowpipe

ambush, the poisonous darts ensuring a ghastly, painful 20-minute death. There is no accurate figure, but it is estimated between 6,000 to 8,000 Japanese perished on their Long March.

During my research I discovered Gen McArthur's briefing pack for the invasion of Borneo online which showed the Japanese withdrawal routes but there are no estimated death figures for the Dutch Borneo withdrawal. Interestingly, when I tried to go back onto the website, it had gone! Maybe I had unintentionally trespassed into an area I was not meant to have visited!

## Liberation of Borneo



**Z Force.** It would be impossible for me in the time allocated to talk at any length about Z Force and their exploits. It was a part of the Australian Special Reconnaissance Department (SRD) based in Perth. There were two groups in British Borneo, the AGAS Group Commanded by Major 'Gort' Chester who knew BNB intimately. He despised HQ SRD and thought them incompetent. The SEMUT Group operated in east Sarawak and Brunei. It was commanded by the maverick and very unpleasant Major Tom Harrison. Like Chester, he disliked HQ

SRD. Both groups were there to collect intelligence, form local guerrilla groups and in AGAS's case, they created two jungle hospitals in the interior.

I believe AGAS's greatest achievement was ensuring the local people along the north-eastern coastline of BNB withdrew into the interior ahead of Op OBOE 6. It also confused the Japanese military who thought the Australian assault would be around the Jesselton area. SEMUT accounted for over 1,500 IJA.

**OBOE Operations.** There were three OBOE operations. OBOE 1 and 2 were in Dutch Borneo but I am only focusing on OBOE 6, 10th June 1945. The amphibious assault 9th (Aust) Div was on Labuan and in Brunei Bay. After hard fighting, Kuching (K) Force a part of 9 (Aust) Div, were sent to liberate Kuching and the Batu Lintang. They arrived just in time.

*NOTE: The last part of John's talk will be included in the next edition of Apa Khabar in April.*

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## THE LIFE OF AUDREY HOLMES-McCORMICK 1931-2024

Jonathan Moffatt

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Audrey was born Audrey Barbara Trotter in Singapore in 1931, the daughter of Robert John Trotter and his wife Isabelle (Mabel). Robert had come out to Singapore as an electrical engineer in the early 1920s.

Audrey had an elder brother, Robert who served as an RAF Bomber Command Pathfinder in WW2, was awarded the DFC and later served with the RAF in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency.

By the late 1930s Audrey's father was senior electrical engineer at Straits Trading Company Smelting Works, Pulau Brani, a small island just off Keppel Harbour, Singapore. The family lived comfortably in a large STC (Straits Trading Company) bungalow in the Bushey Park area.

As a child, Audrey was educated at King's School, Singapore (Mr. Donald Honeywell, principal) and attended classes at the Fay Hamilton Dance School run by the wife of a Naval officer. In 1940-1941 she participated in dance performances

at the Adelphi Hotel and other venues in aid of the War Fund. In August 1941 Audrey's father, very aware of the Japanese threat, wisely decided on the early evacuation of his wife and daughter who left Singapore for Western Australia aboard MV *Centaur*. Audrey attended the Presbyterian Ladies College, Peppermint Hill for some months until sailing to South Africa aboard the Queen Elizabeth. Here she and her mother lived at 'Lofty', Firdale Avenue Gardens, Cape Town. Her father was at this time reported missing presumed killed. According to some official accounts he was lost aboard SS *Kuala* though the ship's skipper, Captain Franklin Caithness, who was wounded and last man off the ship, wrote to Mrs. Trotter that he had not seen Mr. Trotter, whom he knew well, aboard ship. It seems more likely that Robert snr was killed in the bombing of the dockside with two other senior Straits Trading men on February 14th, 1942. The question of what happened to her father and his place of burial was on Audrey's mind for many years and led to her visiting Singapore in 1992 to try to establish the facts. Audrey concluded that he was buried in a communal grave on Pearl's Hill. By that time Audrey had made a career as a newspaper journalist, sheep farmer, freelance journalist, documentary film producer (*The Kilt in Warfare*); then financial consultant. She wanted to write about Colonial Malaya and had developed an interest in the Malayan Volunteer Forces which took her in 1992 from Singapore to Malaysia then New Zealand. In New Zealand she interviewed Malayan Volunteers FEPOWs John Mackie and Pat Garden. Her obituary in 1998 of Pat Garden (SOE Stay Behind Party) appeared in the Daily Telegraph. **Photo: Audrey with Captain Caithness in Cape Town.**

In 1997 when teaching in Singapore I first heard from Audrey who was interested in my research and writing on the Argylls in Malaya. She offered to find Argyll veterans and interview them, both the veterans I had encountered and other very interesting ones she was to find in Scotland. The rest is history, and it became a successful co-authored book about the Argylls and Royal Marines in the Malayan Campaign. *'Moon over Malaya'* ran to four editions. Today, I'm considerably more sceptical of oral history but find veterans' stories fascinating and still hear from families appreciative of the book.

I did not meet Audrey and her husband Donald until April 1999 by which time the book was complete and near to publication. Audrey lived in Kincardine-on-Forth. When I lived in Singapore we had communicated entirely by fax machine and airmail letters. I found Audrey bright and energetic, very hospitable and with a great love of children. She was a great, very much in charge, tour guide of the Western Highlands too. Scottish history was her thing. We made several visits together to Stirling Castle both socially and for research purposes. If you watch the movie *'To End All Wars'* to the bitter end you will see Audrey's and my name in the credits. We were both consulted but could

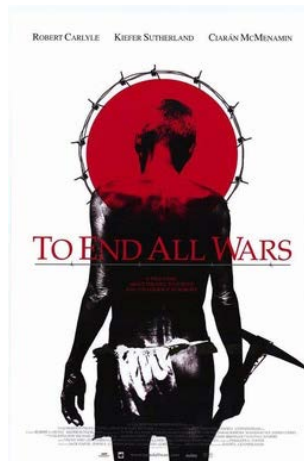
see little evidence that any of our advice had been taken. Even using the Argylls' Pipes and Drums for free in the opening march out of Stirling Castle was turned down in favour of a Canadian band flown in at great expense.



Audrey was a member of the Malayan Volunteers Group for over 10 years and visited the National Memorial Arboretum several times including for the dedication of our first MVG memorial bench. In 2005 she visited Thailand for the first time and met Rod Beattie at Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, Kanchanaburi. **Photo: Audrey with John Hedley and Jonathan Moffatt at NMA Chapel**

Audrey died in a Stirling Care Home shortly before Christmas Day. Our condolences to her son Martin and family.

*To End All Wars: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bm-LLeDy61s>*



## A Visit to Windsor Castle by Hugh Chaplin and Family, April 2024



Following a successful auction bid at the MVG luncheon last Saturday, 14th October 2023, Hugh and Lucy, together with our two youngest children, Daniel and Catriona, visited Windsor Castle on Sunday 28th April 2024 to be entertained for the day to lunch and tea, as well as to a private visit around Windsor Castle, by Lt. Col. John Moody OBE (MKW) and his wife Annie.



After an initial hiccup involving an accident on the M40, in which we were held up for 40 minutes, we somehow managed to arrive promptly at 10:00 a.m. for a much-needed coffee. Shortly after, we were escorted to the cloisters at St George's Windsor for a chat with several other Military Knights of Windsor ("MKW") dressed up in their full regalia before processing into the Sunday chapel service, which we had much looked forward to. We noticed that four new Garter Knights were to be appointed. On our departure from the chapel, we noticed a statue of Field Marshall William Earl Harcourt (1742-1830), a previous Lieutenant Governor of Windsor

Castle, whose ancestral home is in our village of Stanton Harcourt, West Oxfordshire. Our village church of St Michaels Church has a plaster copy.

We were then entertained to drinks with several MKWs, including the Governor of the Military Knights, Lt. General Peter Pearson. One MKW, who was an army doctor (aviation specialty) had mutual medical acquaintances with Lucy, who was an RAF doctor. He kindly gave us a signed copy of his book "Men-At-Arms", a history of the MKW since 1348 (King Edward III).

Following a delicious lunch, Annie showed us around various parts of Windsor Castle, including the Waterloo Room and the restored Garter Room. Later, John showed us around a now empty St Georges 'Chapel, including the George VI memorial chapel where the late Queen and Prince Philip are buried.

John also showed us where King Henry VIII allegedly first caught sight of Anne Boleyn at a window overlooking a small courtyard (not open to the public).



We then adjourned for a much-appreciated cup of tea to send us on our way after a very interesting and enjoyable day.

### Military Personnel

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**Lt. Cmdr. Tony Fane**, who died on 1st September 2024 aged 96, saw action on the battleship *Queen Elizabeth* in 1945 against the Japanese in Sumatra and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. He was part of the covering force when the Japanese cruiser, *Haguro*, was sunk in the Battle of the Malacca Strait. He witnessed the preparations for *Operation Zipper*, the intended British landings in Malaya, and was in Singapore when Lord Mountbatten accepted the Japanese surrender.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/11/09/lieutenant-commander-tony-fane-sea-fury-korean-war-navy/>

The deaths of other notable military personnel who took part in the post-war Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Konfrontasi include:



**Robert Atkins**, who, as Acting Captain, was awarded an MC while serving with the Gurkha Rifles (1/6 GR). Ordered to locate a particular CT (Communist Terrorist) jungle camp near Lenggong in central Perak, he located the camp and drew up plans to attack it by forming a cordon around it. With a determined charge, the camp was overrun and captured, leaving six CTs dead, including one of the local Communist leaders who was directing terrorist operations in the area. Their weapons, ammunition and documents were captured intact. He died

on 27th July 2024, aged 97. <https://www.thetimes.com/uk/obituaries/article/robert-atkins-obituary-gurkha-awarded-mc-in-malay-emergency-29f3lbbn7>



**Col. David Hanson** served with the 1st Battalion The Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire and commanded a platoon while stationed in Batu Gajah and later in the Cameron Highlands tracking CTs, with the help of trackers from Sarawak. Aged 92, he died on 18th September 2024.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/11/11/colonel-david-hanson-malaya-belfast-aden-obituary/>



**Col. Johnny Lawes** who died on 30th September 2024 aged 97, won an MC while serving with 2/2 GR. His citation paid tribute to "his courage, leadership and tenacity over several months of continuous jungle operation." In May 1956, he was in command of Support Company 2nd Battalion 2nd King Edward's Own Gurkha Rifles (2/2 GR) serving in Negri Sembilan.

He was tasked with destroying the Bahau Armed Work Force (BAWF) a group of CTs in the Bahau Police District. It involved liaising with the Police and planters and carrying out reconnaissance in dangerous areas sometimes wearing civilian clothes. On receipt of intelligence that the CTs were to meet on a rubber estate, Lawes and his men lay in wait but were too far away to attack. With two of his best riflemen, he stalked the group through the rubber estate and attacked under close fire from the CTs, killing three and



wounding one. Over the next five months, eight more were killed , four were captured and seven surrendered and the BAWF was eliminated. In 1964, Col. Lawes commanded 2/2 GR on operations in Sarawak during the Indonesian Confrontation.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/10/28/johnny-lawes-gurkha-mc-bravery-malayan-emergency-obituary/>



**Lt. Col. Peter Cameron**, a Royal Marine pilot, was awarded an MC during the Falklands War, but before that he was deployed to the Far East in command of a rifle troop during the Konfrontasi. He was landed in Kuching by helicopter from the carrier *Albion* to secure a landing for the commandos, using the small, light Sioux reconnaissance helicopter. Later they were used in Sarawak in action against the Indonesian guerrillas along the 150-mile border. He died aged 83 on 28th October 2024.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/11/10/peter-cameron-falklands-marines-obituary/>



**Leslie Needham**. Although not in the military, at 102 years old, Leslie Needham deserves a special mention as one of the last surviving members of the wartime Special Operations Executive (SOE) set up by Churchill, acting initially as a cipher operator based in Algiers. After V-E Day, he volunteered to go to the Far East to help with the fight against the Japanese, but the war ended with the dropping of the atomic bombs. He died on 28th September 2024.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/11/10/leslie-needham-soe-second-world-war-obituary/>



**Masamitsu Yoshioka**. There was an interesting obituary in the Telegraph on 29th September 2024. Japanese Masamitsu Yoshioka, aged 106, died on 29th August 2024. He is thought to be the last survivor of those who attacked Pearl Harbor on 7th December 1941. He was the navigator and bombardier on one of the torpedo-carrying aircraft, nicknamed “Kate” by the Americans. Taking off from the aircraft carrier *Soryu*, they flew for two hours across the Pacific before reaching Pearl Harbor just before 8 a.m. to find the surprise attack well underway. After releasing his torpedo, and seeing a direct hit on the

battleship USS *Utah*, he watched the ship tilt and sink with the loss of 58 lives. However, it was later revealed that this was only a training ship and Japanese aircrew had been told not to waste time on bombing this vessel.

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2024/09/25/masamitsu-yoshioka-last-pearl-harbor-attacker-died-obituary/>

## MVG Members

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It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of **Janet Leeson**. We send her brother and sisters and their families our very sincere sympathy. Janet’s mother, **Drina Leeson** (née Boswell), and other members of the Boswell family were shipwrecked on the *Giang Bee* or captured on the *Mata Hari*. Those who survived were subsequently interned in various camps in Sumatra, and returned to Singapore when the war ended, where Janet and her siblings were born. Their father was in the Army, both during and after the war.





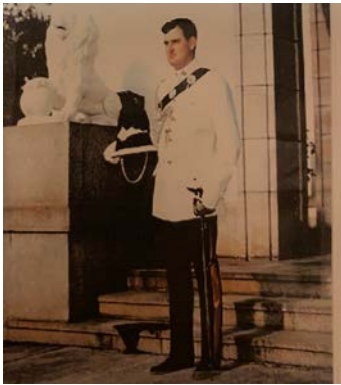
### David Edward Fletcher

(19th February 1941 – 19th October 2024)

We send our sincere condolences to David's children and grandchildren, and their families. Born in Kuala Lumpur in 1941, he was evacuated with his mother, Ruth, to New Zealand when the Japanese invaded northern Malaya. His father, Barry, was captured and spent 3½ years as a FEPOW. David was educated in New Zealand and studied electrical engineering there before moving to England and then to Canada, where he met his wife, **Joanne**, who survives him.

He travelled the world working on major electrical projects, including the Three Gorges hydro projects in China. He was a keen canoeist and sportsman playing tennis into his 80s, and a lover of outdoor pursuits. Their children **Steven, Gordon** and **Julia** all graduated in engineering to carry on the family tradition.

**Photo: David with his father Barry's Plaque.** He was proud to dedicate a plaque for his father, Barry, in the MVG's Memorial Garden at the NMA, which can be seen planted beside one of the bamboo shrubs.



### Richard Courtney Smallshaw\_1937 – 2024

We send our heartfelt sympathies to **Jill** and her family on learning of the death of her husband Richard. Both were founder members of the MVG and regular attendees at the annual lunch. Richard was born in Epsom and educated at the College, where he excelled in sport. Aged 18, he joined the British South Africa Police (BSAP) in Southern Rhodesia and served for three years. After leave, he transferred to the Nyasaland Police for five years until Independence in 1964. He then moved to Hong Kong where he underwent six months training before being selected as Aide-de-Camp to the Governor, Sir David Trench, before being promoted to Superintendent. He met and married Jill in 1971 and they brought up their children **Andrew, Graham** and **Joanna** in Hong Kong where they lived for 26 years. Richard continued his career

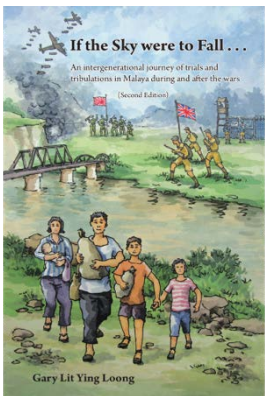
in the Royal Hong Kong Police Force, receiving the Queen's Police Medal for distinguished service, the Colonial Place Medal for meritorious service and the Colonial Police Long Service Medal.

**Photo: Aide-de-Camp on the steps of Government House.**

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## BOOKS

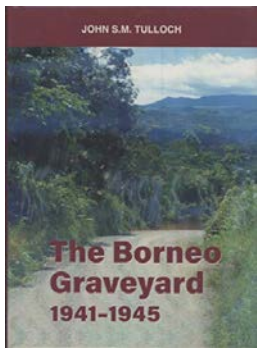
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**"If the Sky were to Fall... Unveiling hidden facts and forgotten history" by Dr. Gary Lit Ying Loong.** In a talk about his book, Gary Lit retraced and rediscovered the untold stories and hidden facts about Malaysia's national narrative. In his retelling of history, he interrogated the official narrative and exposed the myths and mysteries involved in that dark period of history. He shared his research on the under-estimated and under-appreciated role of the Fifth Column during the war and the secret base and details of Lim Bo Seng and his Force 136 agents. He also explained how geography shaped history and vice-versa, especially in the Kinta Valley, a hotbed of guerrilla activities both during WWII and the post-war Emergency. Dr Gary Lit was born in Kampar, Perak and studied at the National University of Singapore. He obtained a master's degree in the UK and completed his PhD at the University of Melbourne, Australia. His talk took place at Badan Warisan Heritage Centre on 23rd

November 2024 at 10.30 a.m.

<https://www.nst.com.my/lifestyle/sunday-vibes/2022/04/791311/gary-lit-shares-late-fathers-story-if-sky-were-fall>



### **“The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945” by John Tulloch.**

John reports that his podcast, based on his book, went out on 1st November 2024. It can be found on the Angus Wallace WWII website; on Facebook; on iTunes and on Spotify.

*“The Death Railway. The Personal Account of Lieutenant Colonel Charles Kappe on the Thai-Burma Railroad.”* A detailed testimony by Australian officer Lt. Col. Kappe on the experiences of Allied servicemen on the Thailand-Burma Railroad, including forced marches through jungle monsoons to a grim Thailand camp from where they laboured on building Japan’s railway.

Malaysian Newspaper Reports:

On 16th August 2024, both the New Straits Times and The Star newspapers reported that three senior cabinet ministers in Prime Minister Fumio Kishida’s government visited the controversial Yasukuni Shrine to mark the 79th anniversary of Japan’s defeat in WWII, despite the prime minister’s vow to defend a rules-based international order in a peace pledge, saying, *“We will never again repeat the tragedy of war and will stick to the country’s post-war pacifist resolve.”* However, Defence Minister, Minoru Kihara said at the Shrine, *“I would like to express my heartfelt condolences today to all those who sacrificed their precious lives and pay my deepest respect.”* Honoured at the Shrine, which other Asian countries see as a symbol of Japan’s wartime aggression, are 14 convicted war criminals including wartime Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. These visits have caused controversy from South Korea, whose Foreign Minister said, *“Our government urges responsible Japanese leaders to face history and demonstrate humble reflection and genuine introspection.”*

**The Star newspaper of 1st October 2024 reports another wartime story.** The discovery of the wreckage of a wartime carrier-based long-range fighter aircraft, the dreaded **“Zero” fighter**, on the Sabah-Sarawak border. Dating back to 1945, when it is believed to have crash-landed, the plane was moved to its present position. Residents of Kampung Pa Puti, where it now lies, hope it will be preserved by the Sarawak Museum and exhibited as a tourist attraction, as it is in a fairly good state of preservation. Sabah Tourism Minister, Datuk Christina Liew, is sending officers to assess the wreckage should Sarawak not wish to be part of any restoration project.

On a lighter note, The Star ran a report on **Singapore’s Haw Par Villa** attraction which is now managed by Journeys, the tourist company which has organised MVG’s visits to Singapore on various milestone dates over the past 20 years. Despite the gory grottos depicting scenes from Hell on Earth taken from Chinese folklore, legend and mythology, the park complex remains a popular visitor attraction. Built in 1937 by entrepreneur Aw Boon Haw and his brother, the attraction provides a different experience from the luxury shops and other well-known Singapore landmarks.

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## **BANKA ISLAND NEWSLETTER**

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Rosemary Fell

Selamat Pagi: The Bangka Island and Sumatra Newsletter

[https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page\\_id=4631A](https://muntokpeacemuseum.org/?page_id=4631A) NEW Newsletter that discusses the events surrounding the internments of civilians at Muntok, Padang, and Bangkinang called SELAMAT PAGI: THE BANGKA ISLAND & SUMATRA NEWSLETTER has begun publication. The FIRST edition can be viewed [HERE](#), the SECOND edition can be viewed [HERE](#), and the THIRD edition can be found [HERE](#).

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## **MVG MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: DECEMBER 2024**

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We have had a total of fifteen new members join the MVG during this past year, of whom two are 'Rejoiners' – welcome back! It is pleasing to note that this has kept pace with those who have left us, either through resignation or the inescapable effects of mortality. The full updated Membership List will be circulated to members in January, which will include details of our new members and their connections to Malaya, Singapore and the Pacific War.

My thanks, as ever, to those of you who have paid your 2024 subscriptions on schedule and without the necessity of a reminder. I repeat my exhortation to those of you who have not yet done so, to **set up a Standing Order** for your subscription payment, with an annual payment date of mid/late April. If you wish to continue paying by cheque, this is, of course, not a problem but **please put a reminder in your diary** to make that cheque payment before the end of April. To assist those who may have mislaid the relevant info, the MVG bank account details at HSBC are :

**Malayan Volunteers Group**  
**Sort Code: 40-22-09**  
**Account Number: 42728532**

For those paying their subs into the MVG's HSBC account from overseas, please note the following relevant details for effecting payment:

**IBAN Number**                      **GB85HBUK40220942728532**  
**SWIFT Branch Identifier Code**      **HBUKGB4104H**

Thank you and best wishes to all for 2025,  
**Roger Willbourn**, *Membership & Subscriptions Secretary*

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## 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF V-J DAY EVENTS

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A number of significant events will take place this year to celebrate and commemorate the anniversary of events that ended WWII. We have received some detailed notifications already and will attempt to keep these updated for you by email, on our website and in the editions of Apa Khabar. A brief schedule follows:

**22nd March - 21st September** Surviving the Railway: Memories of Far East Prisoners on War Exhibition, Kings Lynn Town Hall, Norfolk.

**11th May 2025** - FEPOW Memorial Service, The Church of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury, Wymondham Norfolk 12.30 p.m.

**13th June** - Liverpool Repatriation Memorial Rededication Service Liverpool Parish Church 2.30 p.m.

**14-15th June** - RFHG Conference, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

**15th August 2025** - MVG V-J Day Service, National Memorial Arboretum. 12.00 noon. This is a significant service as we are advised that the Royal British Legion will be organising a major event on that day, and we have booked the Chapel. Although all will be welcome we need to know who of our members wish to attend so that we can reserve seats. We have now received the following from the Royal British Legion:

*The Royal British Legion will take a leading role to mark the 80th anniversaries of V-E Day and V-J Day, and we look forward to announcing our nationwide and local community events being planned in partnership with the Government early in 2025.*

*We are asking Second World War veterans, or their families or carers on their behalf, to visit the RBL website where they can register their interest to be a part of our V-E Day and V-J Day commemorations, which are likely to include national events and the National Memorial Arboretum. Visit Remembering the end of the Second World War for further information.*

I will work with RBL and NMA to ensure that we provide the main V-J Service.

**15th August 2025** - Norwich Cathedral 11.00 a.m. The National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare/Remembrance Association V-J 80 Service.

**August and September - 2025** There will be a number of visits to Far East locations to mark the 80th Anniversary of the actual liberation of prisoners subsequent to the Japanese surrender. It is expected that these will include Singapore, Thailand and Borneo. Details of these are currently being developed.

**18th October 2025** - MVG Annual Reunion Luncheon and Annual General Meeting Royal Air Force Club Piccadilly, London, 12.00 noon. Our speaker this year is one of our most recent members, **Lucy Alexander**, who will describe her research into her grandfather's experiences at Batu Lintang in Kuching which inspired her to write a book about the camp.

**9th November 2025** - Remembrance Sunday Cenotaph Parade, Whitehall, London. We anticipate a strong demand for places at this 80th Anniversary Parade and members are encouraged to confirm their intention to attend. We had 15 tickets for the 2024 Parade, and I anticipate that we will be requesting at least the same again this year.

**SURVIVING THE RAILWAY: MEMORIES OF FAR EAST PRISONERS OF WAR EXHIBITION**  
**22nd March – 21st September 2025**

**Stories of Lynn Museum, King's Lynn Town Hall, Norfolk:** With the 80th anniversary of V-J Day on the horizon and the hub of celebrations in Norfolk set to be Norwich Cathedral, the time seemed right to discuss an oft overlooked part of Second World War history that left an indelible mark on the collective East Anglian memory from halfway across the world.



The ill-fated 18th Infantry Division was a territorial formation of East Anglian battalions including the 4th, 5th and 6th Royal Norfolks. Although originally heading for the Middle East, Japan's declaration of war and subsequent rapid march down the Malayan Peninsula saw them divert for the island 'fortress' of Singapore. Despite its reputation, the Battle for Singapore was a brief one, and the British Army surrendered on the 15th of February 1942.

The men captured in Singapore would go on to suffer three and a half years of brutal treatment at the hands of the Japanese, with many being sent up country to build the Thai-Burma railway, otherwise known as the 'Railway of Death'. Around a quarter of these men would die from starvation, brutal treatment and disease, but their stories stand as testament to the enduring nature of the human spirit in the face of seemingly hopeless circumstances.

**Surviving the Railway:** Memories of Far East Prisoners of War looks to tell these stories through the objects and accounts held by the Royal Norfolk Regimental Museum alongside an archival film exploring the realities of internment, rarely made available to the public. We hope to strengthen East Anglia's ties to these events by creating an honour roll, commemorating all who served in the 4th, 5th and 6th battalions of the Royal Norfolk Regiment, which will be available to view alongside a community folder of Far East Prisoner of War stories shared with us during the exhibition. If you would like to submit information about your relatives, please email us at [regimental.museum@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:regimental.museum@norfolk.gov.uk)

**National Memorial Church of Far East Prisoners Of War (FEPOW)**

FEPOW Memorial Service 2025

Arrangements are in place for the ecumenical FEPOW Memorial service on Sunday 11th May 2025 @ 12:30 p.m. No invitation needed. ALL are welcome. Tea and coffee are available in the Meeting Room beforehand. Light refreshments are available in the Hall opposite, afterwards.

All enquiries about the memorial service contact Peter Wiseman via email on [fepow@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk](mailto:fepow@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk) or telephone 01953604144

<http://www.wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk/fepow>

**Liverpool Repatriation Memorial Rededication Service**

The Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) is organising a Service of Re-dedication for the new bronze Repatriation Memorial installed on Liverpool's Pier Head. It will be held at:

Liverpool Parish Church (The Church of Our Lady and St Nicholas) on the 13 June 2025 at 2.30 p.m.

We will be notifying all donors to the fund-raising appeal and will post details of how to reserve a place etc., early in the New Year.

NOTE: **RFHG's V---J80 Conference** starts in Liverpool on the evening of 13th June. Those booked to attend may like to arrive in time for the service. For details email: [researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com](mailto:researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com)



The Researching FEPOW History Group (RFHG) is pleased to confirm the V-J80 conference, 14-15th June 2025, is on! As veterans of our conferences know, we are self-financing and rely on sufficient registrations to cover the costs of the conference. Once again, the conference is hosted by the world-renowned Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM). As well

as marking the 80th anniversary of the ending of the war and the release of military and civilian survivors of Far-East captivity, it is also 80 years since the start of LSTM's link with FEPOW patients. Clinical work began in late 1945 with the first of many sick FEPOWs seeking help from doctors at the LSTM. This had a pivotal role to play in the work of generations of LSTM doctors and scientists over the decades, encompassing tropical medicine, scientific and diagnostic research, as well as a wide range of medical specialties from psychiatry to ENT. Latterly, LSTM's focus has shifted to recording the medical history of what has been a unique collaboration between doctors, scientists and patients, and to supporting the families of FEPOW wishing to understand this history. In 2025 it will be 20 years since the RFHG conferences were inaugurated.

We are proud that, over the years, we have brought together almost 1,000 delegates and speakers from around the world to share the history of Far-East captivity during WWII. The majority of delegates are personally related to this history and, as well as seeking to understand, have so much to share with the academics, curators, archivists, researchers and authors who attend each conference.

Over the years, RFHG has highlighted many of the themes of captivity and its aftermath, inviting both UK-based and international experts in FEPOW research to share this still little-known aspect of WWII history. This year's conference is looking at aspects of trans-generational trauma, forgotten experiences, medicine, creativity in captivity and remembrance and reconciliation, and speakers include one of our members, GAUTAM HAZARIKA, a history enthusiast who is researching aspects of World War II in the Far East and the life of civilians interned in Singapore. He is currently researching Indian FEPOWs in Singapore and his book on this matter is scheduled to be published in the summer of 2025. His sources include under-utilised interrogation reports, trial transcripts and interviews with family members of over 30 veterans.

*TO BOOK YOUR PLACE:*

<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/researchingfepowhistory/1313289>

*Please copy the link above to go to our Ticket Tailor site, where you can register for the conference. There are two ticket options to choose from:*

*Conference Admission at a cost of £180 per person includes:*

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- 1. Optional welcome reception at The Liner Hotel Friday evening.*
- 2. Entrance to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine for our main conference programme on Saturday and Sunday.*
- 3. Access to the Saturday evening talks only at The Liner Hotel.*

*Conference Admission plus Saturday Buffet at a cost of £200 per person includes:*

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- 1. Optional welcome reception at The Liner Hotel Friday evening.*
- 2. Entrance to the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine for our main conference programme on Saturday and Sunday.*
- 3. Access to the Saturday evening talks at The Liner Hotel, buffet meal included.*

For further information, contact the team by email at:  
[researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com](mailto:researchingfepowhistory@gmail.com) or visit our website at [fepowhistory.com](http://fepowhistory.com)  
Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, Pembroke Place, Liverpool L3 5QA.



**J DAY**  
**11.00 a.m.**

**80th Anniversary Commemorations**

**15th August 2025**

**NORWICH CATHEDRAL**

**By kind permission of the Dean: The Very Revd Dr Andrew Braddock**

**NFFWRA – The National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare/Remembrance Association invites you to attend their V-J 80 commemorations**

This event is being supported by the Regiments (Royal Norfolks, Suffolks, Cambs, Beds and Herts) now part of the Royal Anglian Regiment to the infantry battalions in the 18th Division in 1942. Norwich being central and at the very heart of these regiments they are therefore very proud to host this event in 2025.

The nearest accommodation to the Cathedral is the Premier Inn (0333 321) in Duke Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR3 3AP. Sat Nav Directions NR3 3AT and at The Maids Head Hotel, (01603 209955) 20 Tombland NR3 1LB.



Size: 20mm\*15.7mm



Size: 20mm\*20mm

*Commemorative items are available in a presentation box as follows:*

*A V-J80 pin badge @ £5, Necklace @ £7.50, Both items £10 together – all prices inclusive of postage.*

*Please contact Pauline - Chaplain to all FEPOW related organisations and secretary/welfare officer for NFFWRA.*

For further information re the event or to order memorabilia contact: [pauline761@btinternet.com](mailto:pauline761@btinternet.com)