



Thank you very much to everyone who has contributed so generously to the Malayan Volunteers Group funds. We are in the fortunate position to have covered all our expenses to date, and we have some funds left over. These will be put towards other proposed projects in the future. Details of these will be circulated in due course.

Our 60th Anniversary plans are progressing well. The form of the Dedication Service for our Stone Tablet on 15th August has been finalized, and we hope it will be a memorable day for all of you who are able to come.

THE SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER CORPS STANDARD.

It has taken months of painstaking research into the exact details of the intricate design around the central badge. This needed to be accurate before the standard could be embroidered. Not only was this imperative, but the colours had to be carefully researched too. Several kind people have been involved in this research at the PRO in London, especially John Brown. Despite exhaustive efforts, we had failed to identify accurately, some of the elaborate leaf structures around the central badge, and all seemed to be lost. Then, out of the blue, Herman, the editor of the website on Military and Paramilitary Flags and Ranks of Singapore came to our rescue with a wonderfully detailed coloured image of the central badge, and the surrounding floral details. We are very grateful to all those involved in this research, and for the time they have freely given to this extraordinary piece of detective work. In particular, we would like to give a special vote of thanks to Audrey Holmes McCormick, who first suggested we should commission the Standard, and whose drive, determination and sheer stamina has seen the project through all its ups and downs. What appeared to be a simple matter when we started, became more and more difficult, because as we resolved each problem, we uncovered yet more. Thank you very much to everyone, especially Audrey.

There are some of you who have queried why we have chosen the SVC Standard, and not the FMSVF Standard. One reason for choosing the SVC Standard was from an historical aspect, in that the 1st SVC flag was for the 1st Volunteer Body, founded in Singapore in 1854, with their proud motto "In Oriente Primus." The present SVC colours, which we have chosen to commission as our Standard, were re-designed and cover the period 1911-1942. Following the Volunteer movement in the Crown Colonies of the Straits Settlements, volunteering started in the Federated Malay States in 1902.

In WW2 the FMSVF fought their way down the peninsula, with considerable distinction, particularly the Armoured Car Regiment. However, once the battle for the Malay peninsula was lost, and all military forces had retreated into Singapore Island, the FMSVF were disbanded and joined the SVC and regular forces in Singapore for the final stand against the Japanese. Therefore, it seems relevant to use the SVC Colours as a symbol to represent ALL the Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore. Perhaps we can commission the FMSVF Colours at some stage in the future, so that both Colours can be paraded at other commemoration services at Alrewas and elsewhere.

DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL STONE TABLET — ALREWAS, 15TH AUGUST.

The details for the dedication of the stone have already been sent to you, but you may wish to refresh your memories about the event. The timetable is as follows:-

- 10.30 – 10.45 Assemble at the Changi Lych gate, at the entrance to the FEPOW Plot.
- 10.50 a.m. Scottish Piper to lead the way to the NMBVA Plot, followed by the Standards, Rev. Geoffrey Mowat and congregation.
- 11.00 a.m. 2 minutes silence.
- 11.02 – 11.10 Dedication and unveiling of the Stone, followed by Prayers.
- 11.10 a.m. Piper to end the ceremony by playing a lament.

If you are attending the Service, it would be advisable to arrive in good time, because the VIPs who are attending the opening of the FEPOW MUSEUM on that day, are due to arrive at about 10.45 a.m. The entrance to the Visitor Centre is rather small, and can get very congested, especially if there are a lot of people milling around. Unless the layout is changed for the day, the only way to get to the Lych gate is to go through the Visitor Centre, and out towards the Chapel. Then follow the main avenue to the left of the Chapel down to the FEPOW Plot and the new Museum. I am sure it will be signposted, but it is easy to find, and there will be plenty of Arboretum Staff on hand to help you.

It has been suggested that all MVG members should wear a badge, with MVG and your name on it, so that we can identify each other more easily. It seems a very good idea, and I will send out the badges to all those of you who have written to say that you are attending the Dedication Service.

OPENING OF FEPOW MUSEUM — ALREWAS, 15TH AUGUST.

All MVG members are welcome to attend these events, which follow on from our own stone dedication. The timetable for the opening of the Museum is as follows:-

- 1.30 — Parade commences. Band and Standard Bearers.
- 1.45 — Service. The Commemoration and Dedication.
- 2.35 — Speeches. John Barkshire — Chairman N.M.A.
- 2.45 — Carol Cooper — Chairman COFEPOW.
- 2.50 — Air Marshal Sir John Baird — Opening Speech.
- .0 — Official Opening of FEPOW Museum.
Air Marshal Sir John Baird
Surgeon Vice Admiral I.L. Jenkins
Lt. Col. C.G. Stallard
- .05 — RAF Fly Past.
Followed by Dedication of Java Window
- .15 — Museum open to the public
Band to entertain in the Marquee
Lunch.
- .45 — All wishing to join the Grand Parade — collect between the Chapel and Main Building — to parade from the Chapel to the FEPOW Museum.
- .0 — GRAND PARADE
Band, Standard Bearers, FEPOWs, COFEPOWs, MVG members (If you wish to) and family members.
- .15 — Hand over ceremony from FEPOWs to COFEPOW.
- .0 — Arboretum closes.

The National Federation of FEPOWs is providing a marquee and a sit down lunch for its members, their wives and FEPOW widows. Details may be obtained from David Wilson, Hon. Sec. Tel No. 01206 210227 or write to:- "Hartree" 54, London Road, Copford, Colchester, Essex CO6 1BJ.

COFEPOW will have its own marquee. COFEPOW Members may apply for a complimentary lunch voucher, which can be used at any of the food outlets in the Arboretum, plus a drink of tea or a cold drink, available in the marquee. To receive your voucher, send a S.A.E. stating on the top left hand corner how many vouchers you need (1 per member) to:- Pauline Simpson, White Rose Cottage, King Street, Neatishead, Norwich, NR12 8BW.

Those who do not fall into any of these categories, will find plenty of food vendors and drinks stalls in the Arboretum, and a Hog Roast. I don't think you will be unable to find some lunch!

THE LONDON PARADE — WHITEHALL, 21ST AUGUST.

The Remembrance Service this year is being organized by The Burma Star Association. Our newly commissioned Standard will be paraded at this service, and a wreath will be laid on behalf of the MVG, dedicated to all Malayan Volunteers, both Military and Civilian. There will be the traditional sounding of the Last Post and Reveille, with a piper to play "Flowers of the Forest." MVG members who requested to take part in this Parade, will shortly receive their tickets, details of where to go, and the timings. For those not going, you may be interested to read the details on the tickets:-

Viscount Slim OBE DL and
The Council of the Burma Star Association
Request the pleasure of the company of

on 21st August 2005 at 12.00 Hours
for

A Service of Commemoration
To mark the end of World War Two
To be held at
The Cenotaph, Whitehall, London
Followed by a
Reception in Westminster Hall
13.45 — 14.30 hours.

If anyone else would like to attend the Service, I may be able to get you tickets, but the numbers are restricted, and applications have to be made by 10th July. Or you can watch the Service from the side with other spectators.

/-J DAY COMMEMORATIONS IN THAILAND.

Several MVG members are going to Thailand to join in the 60th Anniversary Celebrations there. Wreaths will be laid, on behalf of the MVG, at Hellfire Pass, and the cemeteries at Kanchanaburi and Chungkai. It has been decided to ask Rod Beattie, founder and managing director of The Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, to order locally made wreaths for us, using traditional Thai flowers. They will be much more appropriate, and more in keeping with the Volunteer spirit, than the more formal and essentially European wreaths of red poppies.

It has been suggested that we also ask Rod about placing a memorial, made in local material, to the Volunteers and all the conscripted Asian Labourers, who worked on the Railway.

OMISSION FROM IWM LIST OF VOLUNTEER MEMOIRS AND DIARIES.

Jonathan Moffat apologizes for omitting to list R.J. Godber in his article on "Research at the PRO and IWM," which was printed in the last Newsletter.

R.J. Godber was in the Armoured Cars Regiment, FMSVF, and his papers are in the IWM.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

Susan Whitley writes:-

"My father, Mark Kennaway, was a Volunteer in the Local Defence Corps in Tanjong Malim in WW1, because, as a planter, he was refused permission to return to England to enlist – rubber being so important. When WW2 started, he was told he was too old to join the Selangor Volunteers, but managed to join the British Army instead.

My sister Pippa and I (aged 14 and 13) were evacuated from Singapore. This is the story of our escape:-

We had just come home from the Convent School in Cameron Highlands for Christmas when the war started. We left our bungalow on Christmas Eve with our mother arriving in Singapore at the beginning of January.

My sister and I were put on board the "Aorangi" in the care of a Mrs. Violet Payne who was traveling with her small baby. She was very kind to us. My mother had met her a few days before and she had offered to look after us and see us across to Australia, my mother hoping to follow later. When we got on board the "Aorangi" I remember the piles of dirty roasting tins in the galleys. The army had left the ship a few hours before and there was no time to clean it. I don't remember much about the voyage. I think we stayed in the cabin with the baby most of the time.

We had to get off the ship in Adelaide. The evacuation committee sent some of us to a place called Balaklava about 30 miles outside Adelaide. It was an old sheep town, one very wide street, one hotel, one bank and a film shown once a week on Saturday nights in a hall. We were billeted with the elderly nurse in her plain wooden bungalow type house with a verandah. All very strange and remote and a far cry from our old home on a rubber estate. There was no news of my father and mother or two other sisters and we came out in boils! Singapore fell and we had no idea where anyone was.

Eventually we moved to Adelaide to wait for a ship going to an aunt in (then) Rhodesia. The people we stayed with in Adelaide, a Dr. Betts and his wife, could not have been kinder. It was supposed to be for just a night or two, but the ship was held up somewhere and we were there for two months! We sailed on the "Nesta" to Durban."

Editor's Note:- My mother (Kathleen Reeve) and I, together with Ann Scott and her mother, Aline, were also evacuated on the "Aorangi." We got off the ship at Fremantle, but Ann and her mother went on to Adelaide. My mother remembers how crowded the ship was. We had no cabin, but slept under the grand piano in the saloon area, with Ann and her mother. Both our fathers were in the Malacca Volunteers – Ann's father was the C.O. and mine in charge of signals.

Mason Nelson writes:-

My father was David Nelson – Capt. in the SSVF 1928 – 48 in Singapore. My mother's name was Alice, both are now deceased. Several names on your list are familiar.

I have only recently been in touch with Roderick Suddaby (IWM) to whom I handed papers of my father years ago and who says "annotated Malayan Directory continuing to prove an invaluable research tool, and we are increasingly careful to ask researchers to use the photo copy that we have made, in order to prevent further wear and tear on the original!"

Geoffrey Barnes writes:-

Malaya, my parents had friends who were Volunteers; but my father, who was 50-ish at the time, had to be content with Air aid duties in Malacca and, at the end, in Singapore, before he ended up in Changi as a Civilian Internee.

After repatriation to the UK in November 1945 he returned to Malacca in June 1946 and finally retired in 1950. He died in 1978. I have inherited, inter alia, a very tatty (falling to bits!) soft covered little book entitled "The New Comprehensive Guide to Malacca" by K.T. Joseph, FRGS, originally published in 1936 and revised and expanded in 1949 to include something about Malacca during the Japanese occupation. These additions included a list of those appearing on the Roll of Honour in which you will note that the name of Lieut. E.W. Reeve appears, and also Lieut. B.B. Atherton (who with his wife Dorothy were friends of my parents). I also remember a neighbour called Alf Allen (wife Ethel) who I think was in the Malacca Volunteers – I remember him waving his pistol about when we were having tea in their garden with him and his wife.

Other possible Volunteers: a youngish chap surnamed Rennie who was a bachelor in 1940/41. Then there was a Mrs. McCausland (and her two children Alison and Jimmy) with whom we were fellow refugees in Australia whose husband Colonel McCausland was killed. I think that another casualty was a man surnamed Bruce-Cross whose wife and young son, Anthony, returned to England with us in 1943 on the S.S. Sarpedon.

Philip Baddeley writes:-

My grandfather worked for The Steamship Company in Singapore and was captured whilst escaping on one of their ships.

Peter Gray writes:-

I find myself in a somewhat "odd" situation in so far as yes my father joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers but I, having been born 6-7-41, have absolutely no memories either of him, Malaya or the somewhat hair-raising journey that saw me and my mother back in the UK by 1944. I am, however, very interested in genealogy and do therefore think that as much information as possible should be available to anyone to whom it may be of interest. I am therefore giving below the detail about myself and parents as I know it and if this proves of interest in any way to others then I would be happy to hear from them.

My father was John Lindsay Gray, born 1900 in Scotland, who went to Malaya to work with Guthries. He met my mother Rosalind F.M. Croft, born 1911, on board ship on his way home for a home leave, and they were married in Singapore Cathedral on 14-12-1939. At that time, he was working at the Ulu Remis Estate, Lyang Lyang, Johore. I was subsequently born in the general hospital Johore Bahru 6-7-41. My father was killed in Singapore on 14-2-42 and my mother and I had earlier left for Australia on the Narkunda where we landed in Perth Jan. 42. We later moved to Bowral not far from Sydney for a time before taking ship to stay with friends in South Africa. After some months we sailed on the Nestor as part of a convoy returning to England.

My only other related memory is of a "Lally" Phillips and her son John, who came to live with us in Kingswood, Surrey, I think, in the early 50's for a while. I believe that they had been imprisoned in Malaya.

David Wingate writes:-

I am trying to find out more information about my grandmother's connection to the Malayan Medical Aux Service. She was an active member of the Selangor Branch, driving ambulances, and then in Singapore, working first aid posts. The only information I can find is a newspaper obituary, and in letters from her describing her uniform and work. She survived the sinking of the Kuala, but died in the sinking of the Tanjong Pinang 17th Feb. 1942. Her name does not show up on the Malayan MAS rolls, so she must have joined near the end. Her name was Penelope Landon, married to James M.P. Landon, manager of the Cluny Estate, Slim River, Malaya.

Peter Gibson writes:-

I have recently had some old (some very old) 16mm films of Malaya transferred to DVD by the East Anglian Film Archives. At the same time they transferred some frames of a film taken at the Riding School at Cameron Highlands circa 1947/48. Does anyone recognize the children, or themselves, in the photos? Presumably they were all pupils at the Tanglin School. (See over)

VERY OLD CHINESE PROVERB — on the wall in my mother's house — Kathleen Reeve.

If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.

If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.

If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.

When there is order in each nation, there will be peace in the world.

How very wise and true! (Editor's note.)





Rutland Railway Museum

The MoD are to establish a temporary museum site in St. James's Park in central London as part of the national commemorations to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of WW2. The museum will be open to the public between 4th-10th July 2005.

The volunteer run Rutland Railway Museum is to place on public display at the event the 20 ton SINGAPORE steam shunting locomotive. The locomotive was used in the Royal Navy Dockyard in Singapore from 1936 and fell into Japanese hands on the Fall of Singapore in February 1942, a fate it shared with many thousands of allied servicemen. Also put to work by the Japanese the loco still bears bullet and shrapnel damage from that time.

The locomotive is now maintained by the museum as a working memorial to its fellow FEPOWs and carries memorial plates to that effect. To supplement the locomotive the museum is also to display historic photographs and text relating to Singapore, the Burma Death railway and Changi Gaol to illustrate the plight of FEPOWs.

The museum volunteers will extend a warm welcome to FEPOWS and their relatives during the event.

Regards
David Atkinson
Chairman of Rutland Railway Museum

ARMENIANS IN SINGAPORE AND MALAYA.

This is the moving story of IAN AVIET, who was born into a comfortable family in Batu Pahat, in Johore, before the Japanese invaded Malaya, and changed the old way of life for ever. His father was an Armenian doctor, and his mother was Eurasian, but they called themselves Eurasians.

His mother died just before the war, when Ian was 10 years old. When war broke out, Ian was taken by his father to the Ulu Tiram Estate in Johore, where other Eurasian families had gathered for security. Luckily for Ian and his brothers and sisters, his father decided to take the family to Singapore instead, and they avoided being massacred by the Japanese. A horrifying account of the massacre was reported in the Sunday Times on 13th January 1946 in Singapore, from an eye-witness called Krishna Nair, a 47-year old mandore.

Ian and his family lived in Singapore during the first part of the war, but they were interned by the Japanese towards the end of 1942. His account of life in internment camp follows.

"BAHAU"

I was 13 years old when I went to BAHAU. The camp was made up of around 1,000 EURASIANS, both Catholic and Protestant, and around 500 Neutrals, including Irish, Swiss, Spanish and Russians. The camp was about 3 miles deep in the jungle on the borders of Negri Sembilan and the State of Pahang. Every family was allocated a plot of land, where they were supposed to build their own homes, and farm the land. The Japanese promised rations for 6 months till the crops flourished, but after 3 months all food was stopped so the "settlers" had to fend for themselves. The soil was poor and hilly, and of course most of the inhabitants had no experience of farming, so malnutrition was rife and diseases such as Malaria, Beri-Beri, Dysentery and Blackwater Fever began to take their toll. Of course there was no medicine at all!

I was lucky as I was struck by both Malaria and Beri-Beri while my Dad was still alive, and I survived. To get food, we mostly bartered with the Chinese traders, who came to the gates. For instance, for one shirt, you could get a live chicken but you could exchange anything for food — watches, rings, fountain pens etc. Most of the time we were too ill or weak to work. About 400 people, including my dad died, out of 1500 inhabitants!

After my father's death, I left my plot and went to live in a communal hut which housed about a dozen teen aged boys who were orphaned, having lost their parents. We called our hut "Boys Town" after the Mickey Rooney film. Just after Xmas 1944, the Japanese came to Bahau to conscript Labour to build an airfield at a place called LADANG GEDES and all of us from "Boys Town" were forced to go. LADANG GEDDES was run by Japanese and Korean soldiers, so it was really tough, whereas in BAHAU, we really ran the place ourselves, as the Japanese officer and Malayan Police didn't bother us much, except for one public flogging which everyone had to witness.

LADANG GEDDES AIR FIELD

This was a terrible place. There were hundreds of forced labourers — Tamils, Chinese and Indonesians. All the work was by hand and they had elephants as well. You worked from dawn till dusk and all you had to eat was a mug of uncooked rice and vegetables which you had to cook yourself. Also, you used to get beatings if you slackened. However, after a month, I was lucky in a way, as I was transferred to the Japanese compound where the troops were housed. My job, with another two Eurasian brothers, was as a "dogsbody," sweeping the barracks compound etc. and fetching the food from the cookhouse. Of course, we got the usual slaps and kicks from the cookhouse sergeants, but at least we had food — all the leftovers from the 3 meals, so that made up for the beatings. Here I witnessed prisoners being tortured for stealing food or other offences. There was one Japanese Officer who was a decent Jap. He always gave me cigarettes or some clothing etc. for cleaning his boots etc. Unfortunately, he was sent to Burma before the war ended and I heard he was killed there. When the "Atomic Bomb" exploded we made our way back to BAHAU.

BACK TO BAHAU.

Here we got a shock! The camp was taken over by the communist guerrillas called the Malayan Anti-Japanese Army. (They were later the same people who turned against the British.) We called them "TIGA BINTANG" as they had 3 stars on their caps and on their Flag. However, they only stayed about a week as 3 soldiers from Force 136, a Major, and two sergeants, one of whom was a Chinese Canadian, told the Communists to back off. They pulled the 3 Star Flag down and hoisted the Union Flag. They took over the camp, and signalled Mountbatten in Colombo. The next day, Liberator planes parachuted food and medicines and these were followed by more drops. Then a doctor and four orderlies parachuted down too. As there were no allied troops yet, there was a crisis, as the Japanese were still armed as well as the Communists, but they were all confined to barracks. There were only seven British soldiers in our camp, so we boys were given a crash course in how to handle sten guns, rifles and

revolvers. So at the age of 15 years, I carried a gun, but fortunately I didn't have to kill anyone. After about a month, Indian troops arrived and the evacuation of everyone began. There were a lot of sick people left, so the lads of "Boys Town" were the last to leave and when everyone was O.K. we closed the place down.

The dozen of us orphans were moved to KUALA PILLA town where we were housed in bungalows recently vacated by Japanese officers. The army and Red Cross showered us with food and clothing. We used to get a whole crate of "Compo Rations" every week for each of us, plus American K Rations. So we dabbled in the Black Market as we had so much, and with the money we bought fresh local food instead.

About this time there were a lot of Tamil children who had lost their parents and were always calling and begging for food. So, without the authorities knowing, I adopted a young Tamil girl and her brother and gave them a room in which to stay, in return for cooking and chores. The girl was about 14 years old, and her brother was about 10 years old. There was no funny business at all. I just felt so sorry for them, as we had so much and they had nothing, and got no help from anyone. When we left KUALA PILLA after about 3 months, I even smuggled them on to the train to Singapore and on our arrival there, gave them all the money I had, and wished them luck as they had a better chance of survival in Singapore than in the small town in which they lived. The army sent us to "SIME ROAD" camp in Singapore, which was a refugee and displaced persons camp, run by the British Military Administration.

SIME ROAD CAMP.

SIME ROAD Camp was run by the Red Cross and the St. John Ambulance people and was like a holiday camp. We had 3 good meals a day; cinema shows etc. but as I was 15 years old, I was bussed to school in Singapore Town to St. Anthony's Institute. After 3 years of no schooling and all the traumas I had experienced, it was a real struggle to adjust as a student. After about 8 months in Sime Road, they were going to close the camp down. There were 2 families who wanted to adopt me. One was a Eurasian family, and the other a New Zealand family, but an aunt of mine, my mother's sister, offered me a home, so I went to her. After studying hard, I managed to get my "Cambridge School Certificate" and after a spell with the "Malayan Air Training Corps", I joined the Merchant Navy and arrived in Britain in 1953. However, this isn't the end of the story. In about 1956, I suddenly lost the hearing in my right ear, and the consultant said it was due to the suffering I had undergone during the war, either the beatings by the Japanese (they usually hit you on your ears) or else Malaria and Beri-Beri had caused it. Anyway, I was forced to retire early about 17 years ago, through ill health. I was advised that I could apply for a War Pension, which I did, and I was awarded one. Although I am deaf now, I still consider myself lucky to have survived while so many of my childhood friends perished in ULU TIRAM and BAHAU.

Note:-

The Aviet Family is mentioned in " Respected Citizens" a book by Nadia H. Wright. It relates the History of Armenians in Singapore and Malaya. A short review of this book is as follows.

"Armenians are one of the most scattered races in the world. Whether enticed by better conditions elsewhere or forced to flee by conquest, they have put down roots in many new lands. When conditions for some Armenians long domiciled in Persia, became untenable, they looked for new homes, turning towards India and later the British trading settlements at Penang and Singapore

Although no more than 830 Armenians ever lived in Singapore and Malaya, they played a significant role in the social, civic and economic life of the early British settlements in both countries.

The Armenians' achievements were quite incommensurate with their minute numbers. Not only did Armenians become respected citizens during their lifetimes, but four of Singapore's icons owe their existence to them: the Straits Times newspaper, Singapore's national flower – the Vanda Miss Joaquim orchid, Raffles Hotel and the Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator.

This seminal account of the Armenians of Singapore and Malaya focuses on the dynamics of the community, the achievements of individuals and the families themselves."

ACCOUNT OF SETTING UP THE THAILAND-BURMA RAILWAY CENTRE

By

ROD BEATTIE December 2004

Contributed by AUDREY HOLMES MCCORMICK from shorthand notes.

The original intention was to lease a plot of ground for the proposed museum, adjacent to the Kanchanaburi Railway Station, from the State Railways of Thailand. Initial enquiries showed this to be difficult, time consuming, probably expensive and risky with the possibility of having the lease cancelled once the building was complete. It was then thought better to purchase, freehold, the land required.

It was soon after the block of land close to Kanchanaburi War Cemetery was purchased, on my behalf and rented to myself, by a close Thai business associate (Khun Pornsak) that we (Andy Guest and myself) were approached by the British Embassy and asked to attend a meeting at the Embassy. At this meeting the plans we had drawn for the proposed museum were discussed. The Embassy representatives at the meeting offered help in funding the construction of the museum – but the museum had to be much more significant and larger than that planned by Andy and myself. A condition attached to the offer of fund raising was that the Embassy would bring in a firm of museum designers to design the new, larger museum.

This was done and at a subsequent meeting I raised objections to some of what was included on the plans drawn up by Concept International Design. The plans were subsequently modified slightly but since the plans were being presented as only a concept set and not final I did not push my continuing opposition to certain design aspects. It was they who included in these drawings, the idea of a statue of a Japanese soldier. This second set of plans was circulated to a small number of people around the world with the announcement of our intention of building the museum. It was this set of plans that caused such anger to be directed at myself and then the article in the Sunday Times (May 21, 2000 by Michael Sheridan) made matter much worse. In the last two lines 'we' were quoted as saying that we were seeking funding in Britain and Japan. For many this was the last straw. Anger became hate.

I had not said anything about funding to Michael so at the first opportunity I asked him where he had received that information. He told me, without naming any names, that he had been given this information by someone close to the British Embassy.

These rumours of Japanese links naturally infuriated every British organization and individual who may otherwise have supported the project, so the museum has been cold-shouldered by almost every British organization that should have welcomed and supported it – even by individuals who should have known of my work well enough to realize that I would not have proceeded in the manner attributed to me.

(Inside the museum too, is an invitation to visit the Australian Government funded Hellfire Pass Museum. A visit there that followed, scotched rumours of rivalry or ill-feeling, and the Hellfire Pass Memorial authorities have recently sought material from TBRC – Feb 2005).

Beattie: I used my own personal funds to initiate this project along with those contributed by a friend Andy Guest (a British businessman with business interests in Thailand and Australia).

My interest in the 'Death Railway' began about eleven years ago when I was asked if I could do some work on the pathway leading to Hellfire Pass prior to a visit by the then Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating. I subsequently offered my services to the Australian Thai Chamber of Commerce to keep the access pathway clear for visitors. I quickly realised the significance of the site and began to clear more of the old railway route so as to allow visitors to see more. Eventually I cleared more than five kilometers of rail track of 50 years of jungle growth (with little more help than that of my wife, Thuy. During this time the Australian Prime Minister announced that the Australian Government would fund the further development of Hellfire Pass and the construction of a visitor center. I was subsequently appointed Project Manager under contract to Office of Australian War Graves to oversee the construction of the visitor center and other permanent improvements to the area. As Project Manager it was my duty to ensure that the visitor center was completed in time for the official opening on 24 April 1998 – it was not my duty to advise on the content of the museum.

This was the same time as 'Project REMEMBER' was set up in the UK, possibly to work with the Australian Government to further the development of the Hellfire Pass Memorial. (I was never a member of that Committee). When 'Project REMEMBER' approached the Australian Government they were rebuffed – they had nothing to offer, and had no money. 'Project REMEMBER' then tried to do their own thing and asked me to try and find them a site. I found them three, over a period of time, none of which was followed up. These were at Tampii, at Tonchan and one adjacent to the "Bridge over the River Kwai", but without result. Nothing was done.

In 1995 I was appointed Manager of the Commonwealth War Graves Cemeteries in Thailand. It was then that I really began to realise the size of the tourist industry based on the "Bridge over the River Kwai" and the war cemetery. *"Yes, the Thai tourist industry promotes the war cemetery as a tourist attraction."* So much so that up to half a million people visit the cemetery each year. Also I began to learn first hand how little the tour guides knew of history and the rubbish they presented to their visitors. Unfortunately only a small percentage of these visitors were given to opportunity to visit the newly completed museum at Hellfire Pass.

So there was still a need for a substantial and truthful museum in Kanchanaburi, but with the group in the UK not achieving anything I set out to do it myself. (The Duke of Edinburgh had visited Kanchanaburi late in 1996 and had expressed great interest in the story of the railway and efforts to commemorate the story. He knew of the formation of 'Project REMEMBER' but as far as I know (not being a member of 'Project REMEMBER') he was never directly involved.

In 1999 Andy Guest, who was living in Kanchanaburi at the time offered to help me get my idea (dream?) off the ground – he had no involvement in the railway but just saw value in what I was trying to do here, so Andy helped me do all the planning needed to turn an idea into reality – but the museum has always been my concept. A simple one based on providing truthful information to those who are seeking it. Particularly descendants of those who suffered or died as prisoners of the Japanese. At the end of 1999 the land was purchased and we soon received that fateful telephone call from the British Embassy.

After the British Embassy offered to raise the funds for the museum little happened for almost a year other than my paying £ 500 a month rent on a bare block of land. So after a year of apparent procrastination by the British Embassy, Andy and I decided if anything was to happen we had to build it

ourselves. There was some disbelief in the Embassy, so we went back to our original plans and started building. The Embassy then offered to raise the funds to do the fit-out of the museum but after another year, they had not raised anything. My inheritance from my father's will went and my salary went. But now that it was being built Andy Guest put in a million Baht and my Thai business associate promised funds to ensure the completion of the building. It was at this time that I asked a retired British businessman, Hugh Cope, to be my Centre Manager once it was finished. Hugh was so interested in the project that he offered to put substantial money into the project.

We formed a Thai registered company (T.B.R.C. Co Ltd – taken from the museum's name Thailand – Burma Railway Centre) with myself, Andy Guest, Hugh Cope as the major shareholders, Colonel Johnny Thoyts as a minor shareholder and three Thai shareholders each holding a small shareholding. The company's function was to complete and operate the museum within the building funded by myself and my Thai business associate. With limited capital the company was forced to borrow substantial funds to complete the museum galleries to a standard suitable for opening to the public.

This was achieved when we opened in January 2003. Soon after Colonel Thoyts retired to Hua Hin and no longer plays any part in the day to day running of the museum. With the museum unlikely to provide an income for any of the shareholders, Andy Guest moved back to the UK to resume his career in the computer industry. This has meant that the load of running and supporting a new museum has fallen on two people – Hugh and myself.

With the substantial costs of running such a museum (rent, salaries for the minimum staff of 11, air conditioning and all the other costs) being £ 4,000 per month not only have Hugh and I not been paid a salary since starting the project but we have been forced to put substantial funds in for most of the past two years just to keep the museum open. November 2004 was the first month when the museum's income covered its own running costs – forget any salary for Hugh or myself, that is still a long way off.

(I learned later that Rod had recently sold his family home and his second house, for guests - built on a beautiful site on the banks of the River Kwai. After clearing the land it was discovered that it had been the site of a British PoW camp - Hintok River Camp. He was now in rented accommodation with his wife and three daughters.) This was a painful decision for them all. It was not only a stunning location, but he kept it immaculately and in memory of those who died there, built a large cross overlooking the site where men were cremated.)

Unfortunately, the museum has been largely ignored by many tour companies with the reason being given that the museum is too good and visitors want to spend more than the 40 minutes allocated to visiting a museum during the daily rush through Kanchanaburi. When UK, Dutch and Australian tour operators learn of the quality of our museum and ask that TBRC be included in the 'Visit the River Kwai' tour program then I will have achieved my aim of providing quality information to the huge number of visitors to Kanchanaburi.

The Japanese link stories unfortunately have left the museum widely unsupported. However the Dutch community have seen past the unfounded rumours, seen the work Rod has achieved and the results displayed, and proffer both moral and formal support with the formation of a Foundation under Dutch law, developing a Board of Trustees (which already has three members) and with a small supportive

association of Friends. Whilst support from names of strong railway influence is badly awaited he and Hugh both work on. (Rod's own workweek can be as much as 115 hours.)

It is amazing what the Centre has achieved since opening and the latest creation (of a statue based on a drawing by Australian former PoW, Ray Parkin and paid for by the Dutch Government) may symbolize both the support prisoners gave one another in desperate circumstance and the support so desperately needed by several dedicated men in equally desperate circumstance. Highly symbolic in all respects.

Editor's Note:-

The TBRC and UK Embassy are now working together on friendly terms, and in full co-operation with each other.



POST SCRIPT TO AUDREY HOLMES MCCORMICK'S INTERVIEW WITH ROD BEATTIE.

Audrey writes:-

I visited the TBRC in December 2004, and was mightily impressed by the Museum with its 9 galleries, and by the dedication of the two men who run it. Rod Beattie (who is MD) built the museum which is beside the Kanchanaburi War Graves Cemetery. He is now the CWGC Superintendant (Thailand), and was previously Project Engineer for the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum, the site for which he personally cleared from encroaching jungle. Hugh Cope is the Centre Manager, and runs the centre with Rod. I know Rod works a 115-hour week, and both men take no wages out of the museum at present, while employing 11 Thais there. The latest addition to the museum, is a statue based on the figures drawn by the famous Australian artist Ray Parkin, simply named "two malarias and a cholera," which was donated by Dutch Government funding. A Foundation of Friends is being set up to assist in obtaining finance for the museum into the future. It is registered at The Hague, by the way. (Editor's note:- why does this not surprise me?) TBRC is a research museum, and does not conflict with the Hellfire Pass Memorial (but co-operates, unofficially at least!) Both Museums are well worth seeing and only an hour's drive apart. After walking through the atmospheric Pass, refreshment can be obtained at the Museum, and the panoramic view from the Viewpoint is definitely a very good thing!

Rod is seeking material with relevance to the Volunteers, in the form of copies of diaries, books and other information, which can be added to the Reference Library in the TBRC. Rod is determined that the museum will have a permanent memorial and research library. Should anyone have any material of this nature which they would be prepared to donate to the museum, the person to contact is:-

Rod Beattie, Thailand-Burma Railway Centre, Jaokannun Road, Kanchanaburi 71000, Thailand.
E-mail:- admin@tbrconline.com

The TBRC has a puzzle, which may now be solved, but in case it isn't, this is it. They keep and collect original POW Railway artifacts found on the remaining parts of the railway out in the bundu. This includes spikes etc. The spikes are marked with owner/place of origin, e.g. FMR40. Can anyone identify : SYR+39 ?Also, Rod is trying to trace the origin of a small sample of coal. Any ideas?

OBITUARY of RAYMOND EDWARD PARKIN. AM Dr Lit.

Passed away June 19th 2005, aged 94. Survivor of HMAS Perth. Prisoner of War on the Burma-Thailand Railway and in Japan. Author and Artist extraordinaire. Revered by the Thailand Burma Railway Memorial Association (Inc) W.A. "Weary" Dunlop will look out for him.

SOME INTERESTING WEBSITES TO VISIT.

Herman FMY. Singapura/Singapore. Editor of the website of Military and Paramilitary Flags and Ranks of Singapore.

<http://www.geocities.com/inescutcheon/FlagsMilitary>

<http://www.geocities.com/inescutcheon/RanksMilitary>

Brian P. Farrell.

<http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/hist/hisbpf.htm>

Rod Beattie's Interview re Setting up the TBRC

<http://www.2bangkok.com/2bangkok/srt/kanchan.shtml>

The Changi Museum – Changi Register.

http://www.changimuseum.com/search_engine/search_index.htm

Amazon Books.

http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/0670913413/ref=pd_bxgy_text_2_cp/026-3153685-0142023

BOOKS.

"THE HAPPINESS BOX." By David Griffin, with drawings by Leslie Greener. Published by Media Masters PTE LTD. in 1991. ISBN 981-00-2654-4

Written at Changi in December 1942 for the children. Buried before Christmas 1942, and dug up from its secret hiding place after the liberation of Singapore on 5th September 1945. It is dedicated "to the children whose fathers went to Singapore and never came back."

"PRISONERS OF THE EMPEROR." New Unrestrained Edition. By Ian Mitchell. This is the 2nd Edition, published in 2005 by Coombe Publishing. ISBN 09536470-2-1

This unrestrained new edition redresses the constraints Ian felt when writing the first edition. He has, at last, been able to tell his remarkable story without fear or favour.

ONE FOURTEENTH OF AN ELEPHANT. By Ian Denys Peek. Published by Doubleday in 2004. ISBN 0385 607407
Memoir of Life and Death on the Burma-Thailand Railway. The book is dedicated "to those thousands of friends and unknown mates who died in appalling circumstances while building the accursed Siam-Burma Railway in 1942-45"

THE RAINBOW THROUGH THE RAIN. By Geoffrey Scott Mowat. Published by The New Cherwell Press – Oxford in 1995.
ISBN 0-951-7695-9-6

tale of a Japanese prisoner of war. This is the astonishing story of a daring attempt to escape from the Japanese in the immediate aftermath of the fall of Singapore. Sadly it was not to freedom, and capture came by the end of March 1942.

THE DEFENCE AND FALL OF SINGAPORE. 1940-1942. By Brian P. Farrell. Tempus Publishing Limited 2005.
ISBN 0-7524-2311-8

John Strachan writes:- "An original and provocative new history of the battle that marked the end of the British Empire."

RESPECTED CITIZENS. The History of Armenians in Singapore and Malaya. By Nadia H. Wright. Published by Amassia in 2003. ISBN 0-9751082-0-4

The book is dedicated to the author's mother – Vera Varsnik Deukmedjian, born in Alexandria, Egypt on 17th January 1916, and died in Oamaru, New Zealand on 29th October 1990. An Armenian in lonely exile.

JUNGLE MEDICINE AND SURGERY. By Sydney G. Nardell. Published by The Book Guild Ltd. in 1999. ISBN 1 85776 323 8
Sydney Nardell became a consultant surgeon to the Indian Army Medical Corps in Singapore. After the fall of Singapore he was sent up to Thailand where he was used by the Japanese to "treat" the sick and dying Asian Labour in their camps.

SINGAPORE BURNING. By Colin Smith. Published by Viking in 2005.

Patrick Bishop writing in the Telegraph on 21st May 2005 concludes his review as follows:-

"Singapore Burning" is a great hunk of a book, rich in personal accounts and unpublished source material. Despite its size, I read it at one sitting. It is beautifully told, shrewd and fair in its judgments and character assessments and on occasions wryly funny. It must now be considered the definitive book on this extraordinary drama.

EASTERN CUSTOMS. The Customs Service in British Malaya and the Opium Trade. By Derek Mackay. Published by The Radcliffe Press. ISBN 1-85043-844-7, 298 pages, price £27.50

This book is reviewed by Jonathan Moffatt, who writes:-

A well researched and very interesting book by a former Malayan Customs officer. It combines documentation and statistics with anecdotal accounts by former Custom officers including "Bicky" Roualie and John Lewis. There are good well-explained sections about chandhu, toddy, tax farming and the opium monopoly.

Some may be surprised that between 1910 and 1942 the main role of Malayan Customs was the enforcement of the Government Opium Monopoly which accounted for over 50% of revenue. Customs officers were responsible for the import, processing and distribution of opium. Only after 1945 did they take on an anti-narcotics role.

Only one criticism of this book would be the expensive price and its lack of well captioned quality photos. Nevertheless, a good read that fills an important gap in the history of British Malaya.

MVG LONDON LUNCH, AND REUNION.

Please put the date of the London reunion in your diaries. This will save Sandy having to ring everyone in October.

DATE:- Saturday 8th October 2005

PLACE:- The New Laughing Buddha.

ADDRESS:- Macclesfield Street, off Shaftesbury Avenue, London.

TIME:- 12p.m.

Please let Sandy know if you would like to go BY 25th September, so that she can make the necessary arrangements with the restaurant. We all had a very good party there last year, and the venue is as central as anywhere, easy to find and within walking distance of Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square.

Sandy can be contacted as follows:-

Address:- Sandy Lincoln, 19, Burke Street, Harrogate, North Yorkshire. HG1 4NR.

Tel. No:- 01423 500351

E-mail:- anlu@globalnet.co.uk

CONTACTS.

For help with research on British Malayans/Volunteer Forces/ Argylls and Royal Marines, please contact:-

JONATHAN MOFFATT, 49, Coombe Drive, Binley Woods, Coventry. CV3 2 QU. E-Mail:- JonathanMoffatt@aol.com

For the MVG Reunion Lunch and other "Volunteer Children" contacts, see address, tel. no. and e-mail address ABOVE of:-

SANDY LINCOLN.

Editor of Newsletter:-

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