

APA KHABAR

Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



**54th EDITION
APRIL 2018**



**Members of the Malayan Victory Parade Contingent
at the Dunlop Factory in June 1946
Lim Keng Watt (4/SSVF) marked x**

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MVG MEMBERS COMMEMORATE THE FALL OF SINGAPORE IN PERTH, WA, AND SUMATRA. IN ADDITION TO OUR UPDATED WEBSITE MVG NOW HAS A FACEBOOK PAGE

The Fall of Singapore on 15th February, 1942, 76 years ago, is not a date which is marked or commemorated in the United Kingdom, except by those of us whose lives were changed irrevocably by the events which unfolded as a result of the disastrous defeat for the Allied forces. The date is, however, marked by our Australian members in Perth, WA, and on Bangka Island in Sumatra by the relatives of those who were captured and massacred there by the Japanese.

On Sunday 11th February, the annual service of commemoration took place at Point Walter Reserve, Bicton, WA, to mark the sinking of the **SS Vyner Brooke** and subsequent massacre of the Australian Army Nurses on Radji Beach. A report on this service is given by MVG member **Robert Gray**, who sings in the 'a cappella' choir. [See P. 2]

Following this service, on the 16th February, **Judy Balcombe** travelled to Muntok on Bangka Island, Sumatra, to take part in the "Walk for Humanity" on Radji Beach, which had been organised by **Michael Noyes**, son of one of the Army nurses massacred there. The event was attended by **Lieutenant Commander Mark Graichen**, Assistant Defence Attache – Jakarta (representing the Australian Defence Attache **Bob Plath**) and also by two other members of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, **Lieutenant Commander Bruce Bird** and **Mathew Barclay** (1st Assistant Secretary at the Embassy). It was also attended by other relatives and the Muntok Historical Society. A report was written by **Lt. Cdr. Mark Graichen** for the "Navy Daily". Our report by **Judy Balcombe** can be read on Ps. 3-7. We are very grateful to **Judy** for her untiring work in keeping alive the memory of those who were incarcerated in civilian internee camps on Bangka Island and in remembering those who died. As previously reported, the **Peace Museum** in Muntok now has electricity, thanks to those who generously contributed to the funds, and we hope that the exhibits will be better preserved by the installation of air conditioning units. The Museum is being run by the **Timah Tinwinning Museum** in Muntok, which tells the history of the tin mining heritage of the island. This museum also has a gallery, called the **Vivian Bullwinkel Gallery**, which tells the story of the massacre of the Australian Army Nurses and, in particular, the survival against all odds of **Vivian Bullwinkel** herself.

We are also grateful to **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson** for their indefatigable work in preparing a service each year to commemorate the Fall of Singapore, and to keep the significance of this date alive and bring it to the attention of the government of Western Australia. As well as marking the date, the service also commemorates the role played by the Malayan Volunteer Forces together with the Australian Imperial Forces who were sent to defend Malaya and Singapore from the invading Japanese army.

This year, the service took place on Saturday, 17th February in the Memorial Gardens in the City of Stirling where the 2 MVG plaques can be found. Reports on this service can be found on Ps. 2 and 3.

Despite dire reports about the unauthorized use of information put on to people's Facebook pages, the MVG now has a bespoke Facebook page which was set up and is run by MVG member **Becca Kenneison**. We hope that this will encourage more people to join the Group and share with us their relatives' experiences during WW2 in the Far East – whether it be during the Malayan Campaign, as an evacuee or as a FEPOW or civilian internee.

We would also urge members to look at the updated website and let us know of any errors or omissions. Back copies of the newsletters are now available to read without a password, except the latest one which will be added after a 3 month interval. Some 29 members have put their names forward to attend the joint meeting of the British Malaysian Society and the MVG on 5th April. This is taking place at the temporary Malaysian High Commission in Bedford Row, London WC1 by kind permission of the Malaysian High Commissioner, **HE Dato' Ahmad Rasidi Azizi**. In addition to talks by **Jonathan Moffatt** and **Rosemary Fell**, a short film will be shown. This was produced by the British High Commission in Kuala Lumpur for the 60th anniversary of Merdeka. The meeting will be followed by a light Malaysian lunch. We are looking forward to this joint meeting after a gap of two years. The report on this meeting will be in the July newsletter.

The next annual event which is due to take place is the FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady and St. Thomas in Wymondham, Norfolk, on **Sunday 13th May**. Please would you let **Rosemary** know if you would like to attend this service and lay a wreath on behalf of the MVG. We have now established a good rapport with **Peter Wiseman**, the Historian and Archivist of the Church and the Books of Remembrance, which are housed in the FEPOW Chapel within the Church.

Attendance is by ticket only – due to the great demand to attend the service. These can be obtained from:

administrator@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk If anyone wishes to go and needs a wreath, please get in touch with **Rosemary**. We hope now that we have established a link with the Church, we can continue the tradition of wreath laying to commemorate the Malayan Volunteers who were taken prisoner after the fall of Singapore.

If anyone would like to join the Gardening Group on Sunday, 13th May at the NMA, to help with the annual tidying up of the MVG's Memorial Garden, you would be very welcome. Please let Rosemary know and bring a picnic lunch. Remembrance Sunday this year marks the end of World War One, and falls on Armistice Day itself – the 11th day of the 11th month 2018. There will probably be a huge demand for tickets for the Cenotaph Parade in Whitehall. If you wish to take part in the service and parade, please would you let Rosemary know in good time, as tickets have to be applied for no later than August. Some members have already sent their names.

On a personal note, I would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who has sent me a card or letter on hearing the news of Donald's death. You have all be so kind and thoughtful and I am very appreciative of your concern and good wishes at this difficult time. In January, before Donald died, he designed and donated to the Group the Book Mark shown on the back cover of the newsletter. He thought this would be a good way to advertise the MVG. The Book Mark is enclosed with the posted newsletters but if those of you who receive e-mailed copies would like one, please let me know.

Message from Becca Kenneison about the MVG's Facebook page:

"The MVG now has its own Facebook page. Anyone can join; all you have to do is find the Malayan Volunteers Group page on Facebook and click on the '+Join Group' button just under the banner photograph. It's a useful forum for photographs, Volunteer stories and queries. We hope to see you there!"

Becca adds: "I've managed one long post on Paddy Martin one of SOE's more notable recruits from the Volunteers.

Help needed, please, to update evacuee lists for the website. See back page for details.

THE VYNER BROOKE TRAGEDY COMMEMORATION SERVICE

Report by Robert Gray

The annual service held on Sunday 11th February this year in Perth, Western Australia, commemorates the sinking by Japanese dive bombers of the *MV Vyner Brooke* in February 1942. The small vessel departed Singapore just two days before The Fall, with hundreds of civilian evacuees, mainly women and children, including 65 Australian Army Nurses. Many evacuees, including 12 nurses were lost at sea, and those who made their way to shore on nearby Bangka Island, clinging to the few surviving life rafts and flotsam, were held captive until war's end in atrocious Japanese prison camps and suffered a very high mortality rate. Twenty one nurses were tragically massacred by a squad of Japanese commandos on Radji Beach.

The Applecross Sub-Branch of the Returned & Services League of WA and the City of Melville sponsor and organise the commemoration. The guest speaker at this year's service was Major Jo Wilson, aided by Lt. Vanessa Fraser, both representing the present day Australian Army Nursing Service. The *Born to Sing* Choir sang appropriate tunes, including *Londonderry Air*, which was one of the 'a cappella' songs in the repertoire of the women's camp choir. There were wonderful contributions to the service by girls from the nearby Santa Maria College, who had prepared information displays, gave readings during the service and acted as ushers. Likewise, the congregation appreciated the emotional tunes played magnificently by the band of the Presbyterian Ladies College Pipes and Drums.

All in all, the service was a fitting tribute to all the brave souls who were fated to be on that last desperate voyage of the *Vyner Brooke*.

FALL OF SINGAPORE COMMEMORATION, 17th February 2018

Stirling City Gardens, Western Australia

Report by Elizabeth Adamson

Extracts from the speech by The Hon. Michael Mischin, Shadow Attorney General

Australians and Malaysians – in particular members of the then 18,000 strong Malayan Volunteer Forces – stood shoulder to shoulder against Japanese Imperialism in 1942, and we stand shoulder to shoulder today in shared friendship.

76 years ago, on 31st January 1942, Japanese forces that had landed on the north east coast of Malaya the previous December, forced British and Australian forces to withdraw across the Causeway and the Strait of Johore to Singapore Island. Inevitably, on 15th February 1942, the British-led command surrendered Singapore to the 25th Japanese Army.

Some 130,000 troops, including almost 15,000 Australians, were surrendered. 1,800 Australians had been killed or listed missing in action, in that failed defence of Singapore, and of course, what followed remains to this day one of the worst chapters in our history. Of 22,000 Australians taken prisoner, 8,000 never came home after forced slavery and starvation on projects like the Thai-Burma Railway. Of those who did return after the war, many would not have survived had it not been for the assistance from the Malayan Volunteer Forces, fellow captives.

Let's remember those dark times of the past by honouring the fallen and injured on both sides of the conflict, and give thanks for what we have now. The peace and co-operation that we would not have had, had it not been for the sacrifices of so many brave men and women during that bloody campaign in 1942.

Extracts from the speech presented by Elizabeth Adamson

We are honoured to have with us today members of the Peace Detachment of the Republic of Singapore Air Force. I thought they might be interested in a slice of history (if they do not know it already) about the air war over Singapore from November 1941 – February 1942.

Squadron 488 of the Royal New Zealand Air Force was formed in September 1941, commanded by **Squadron Leader W.G. Clouston**, and was one of several Commonwealth squadrons equipped with Brewster Buffaloes. 488 operated from Kallang Airfield on Singapore Island, and this squadron, 488 RNZAF, was still in training when the Japanese attacked. They were still sorting out difficulties with their machines, including dysfunctional oxygen which prevented high altitude flying, weight difficulties which resulted in armour and machine guns being discarded and high maintenance requirements resulting in the use of old ex-airline engines being used in the Brewsters. There were also problems in getting spares, with peace time red tape, and restricted flying hours laid down by the British High Command in Singapore.

Sqn. Ldr. Clouston had presented a plan, "Get Mobile", to provide daylight cover off the coast to **Admiral Phillip's** Force Z, but this was rejected by the navy. 488 Squadron's achievements are difficult to determine, but **P/O Noel Sharp** is credited with 3 victories.

This all happened 76 years ago, and because I wasn't there at the time, I must borrow someone else's eyes. I will quote a few extracts from a little book, "Malayan Climax" by **Carline Reid**. **Carline** was a young Australian secretary working in the KL Headquarters of the Selangor Local Defence Corps (LDC), and later when in Singapore she was co-opted into the Army and worked in Advance Head Quarters of Army, Navy and Air Force. Her eye witness account of her experiences of the chaos of war and the evacuation are in the language of the time:

"I shall never forget the day the first Perak evacuees arrived in KL. Exhausted women driving cars loaded with people, children, cots and a few belongings. Some had driven all night, and their eyes popping out with fatigue. They had mostly been ordered out of their homes at very short notice, and told not to take more than 2 small suitcases. Their husbands had disappeared at even shorter notice to report to the Volunteers – they had no idea when, if ever, they would see them again.

Women came looking for missing husbands, and it seemed nobody's business to get them in touch with each other, and I found myself turned into a sort of inquiry bureau for lost LDC husbands. I did my best to get letters and messages through to Tanjong Malim, where many of the men were stationed, doing liaison work and acting as interpreters with the regular army. People were so grateful to get any messages or letters. The Padang outside the Selangor Club where Rugger, Hockey, Tennis etc. were played, and where ceremonial parades had been held, was now a ludicrous sight. Formerly this had been a huge rectangular lawn, but on 9th December, as I drove past to the office, it looked like a bad dream. Everything ever used for any game was brought out and distributed with a view to preventing enemy landings. There was a dizzy and uneven pattern of posts and ropes, hockey goals, heavy rollers, lawn mowers and sections of grandstand dotted about, and on top of anything at all flat, an imaginative coolie had put out huge pot plants.

26th December is easy to remember – Kuala Lumpur's biggest raid, when Government Buildings were demolished, the Post Office and the Selangor Club (the famous 'Spotted Dog') and many other important buildings were hit and a tremendous amount of damage done.

Men dropping in from out stations would bring blood curdling stories of the campaign. Of Gurkhas camped by a river menaced by the Japs, who would strip themselves and carrying nothing but their famous kukris, would jump into the water and disappear in the direction of the enemy. Later they would return bringing with them grisly trophies of the night's work. Their method of warfare is very distasteful to the Jap, with the belief that if a son of Nippon dies in battle complete with his head, he will go straight to heaven, but apparently the whole thing is ruined if the head is chopped off – and chopping off heads is the Gurkha's mode of killing!"

Carline did eventually board an evacuation ship, which was under bombing, as all ships were. She wrote: "Midnight on deck – a wild display of fireworks glowed, beds of fire crossed and re-crossed the sky. Flames came from fires in the town, godowns of rubber near the docks, and an island of petrol whose tanks were drained out and set alight in accordance with the scorched earth policy.

At sea: It was amazing how well most people took the bombing. Everyone had had plenty of experience of raids before, but this was rather different, with the prospect of the ship sinking in shark infested waters with no lifebelts and practically no life boats. The men on the decks were really marvellous. They stood their ground in the face of remorseless bombing and machine gun fire, to shoot at the enemy with everything they had, Lewis Guns, Tommy Guns and even rifles."

Carline did get home to Tasmania, but only after travelling on five different ships on a very circuitous route.

After acknowledgements and thanks to various people, I ended with the following quotation:

In the year 480 BC the Greek lyric poet **Simonides of Ceops** wrote after the Battle of Thermopylae:

"Go tell the Spartans, thou that passed by,

That faithful to their precepts, here we lie."

The **Kohima Epitaph** on the Kohima Monument on the Indian side of the border with Burma, is very similar and written after WW2. It says:

"When you go home, tell them of us and say

For your tomorrow, we gave our today."

VISIT TO MUNTOK, BANKA ISLAND, INDONESIA, FEBRUARY 2018

Report by Judy Balcombe

On 16th February, 2017, family members and friends of the 21 Australian Army Nurses who had been killed by Japanese soldiers on the beach near Muntok, Banka Island, travelled to this location to commemorate the 75th anniversary of this tragedy. Also present were the granddaughters of **Stoker Ernest Lloyd** from the *Prince of Wales* who had been shot but had survived, families of civilian internees, the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia and members of the Australian and British defence forces.

A highlight of the service on the beach last year, was when 22 current Australian Army Nurses linked arms and walked together into the sea, just as the Nurses had been ordered to do on 16th February, 1942, when they were machine-gunned to death. **Matron Irene Drummond** had called to her Nurses, "Chin up, girls, I am proud of you and I love to you all." All the nurses, men, civilian women and stretcher cases were killed except **Vivian Bullwinkel**, **Ernest Lloyd** and **Eric Germann** who lived to testify to this atrocity.

All present in February 2017 were so moved by this spontaneous action of today's Army Nurses that it was decided to attempt an annual gathering at Muntok and to join in a "Walk for Humanity", replicating the Nurses' walk. We wished to remember the Nurses, Men and Civilian Women who had died on the beach, the thousands who perished when their ships were bombed in Banka Strait and the many who suffered and died in the prison camps. We also wished to remember the many people who suffer and die in wars around the world today. In February 2018, a smaller, but no less passionate group gathered in Muntok, staying at the ever-helpful Yasmin Hotel. Present were the niece and great-nephew of **Matron Irene Drummond**, the niece of **Dorothy (Bud) Elmes** and nephew of **Nurse Kathleen Neuss**, **Arlene Bennett** from the Nurses' Memorial Centre in Melbourne, retired naval officer **Bruce Bird**, **Judy Balcombe** representing the civilian shipwreck victims and internees, and 2 members of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta. On arrival, we were greeted by a ceremonial dance and red carpet, indicating how deeply the local people respect the World War 2 victims.

Welcome to Muntok



*Secluded here one might believe
All in the world was peaceful too
Until the shattered folk appear
And sentries spoil the lovely view.*

Wreaths had been ordered or made by internees' families and on 16th February, we proceeded first to the former Women's prison camp site at Kampong Menjelang. A brief service was held here and the names of the 88 British, Australian and New Zealand internees who had died at Muntok and who are believed to remain buried in Muntok were read. A poem by internee **Margaret Dryburgh** was spoken in English and in Indonesian, reminding people that this was a sacred place.

*How silent is this place
The brilliant sunshine filters through the trees
The leaves are rustled by a gentle breeze
A wild and open space
By shrubs pink tipped, mauve blossomed, is o'ergrown
A hush enfolds me, deep as I've known
Unbroken, save by distant insects' drone
A jungle clearing
A track through which we bear our load to Him
How silent is this place
How sacred is this place.*

The service at the Women's camp site concluded with the words of a poem by internee **Marjorie Jennings** who, like **Margaret Dryburgh**, died in camp.

*One day all this must end, and we
Who live to see succeeding years
Must in the new world strive to build
A lasting peace, from blood and tears.*

Next we drove to the Nurses' Memorial at the lighthouse at Tanjong Kelian. This site was not where the Banka Island massacre took place but was chosen by **Vivian Bullwinkel** as an area more accessible to the public.



Nurses' Memorial, Tanjong Kelian, Muntok.

In addition, the lighthouse had been seen by the shipwrecked victims and had served as a beacon for people struggling to reach the shore.

The memorial is maintained by the Australian Government Office of War Graves and is kept in good repair. A large plaque bears the names of all the Australian Army Nurses – the 12 who drowned in the bombing of the **Vyner Brooke**, the 21 Nurses massacred on the beach, the 8 Nurses who died in Muntok and Belalau Camps and the 24 surviving Nurses.

Wreaths were laid in memory of all the Nurses and bombed victims. A photograph of **Stoker Ernest Lloyd** who survived the massacre on the beach was presented.

In the afternoon, we were driven to the newly-created Memorial overlooking the Banka Strait, across to Sumatra. In this stretch of sea, over 40 boats leaving Singapore were bombed and sunk by Japanese planes and warships. It is estimated that between 4,000 and 5,000 people lost their lives in these attacks. On the beach near this Memorial, 2 groups of men, civilian women, stretcher cases and 21 Australian Army Nurses who had reached the shore were massacred by Japanese soldiers. **Private Cecil George Kinsley** was a stretcher case wounded on the **Vyner Brooke** and bayoneted by the Japanese. He was cared for in the jungle for 12 days by the wounded **Vivian Bullwinkel** but later died of his wounds in Muntok jail.

Memorial to the massacred and shipwrecked victims



Moving speeches were made by **Michael Noyes**, nephew of nurse **Kathleen Neuss**, **Georgina Banks**, niece of **Nurse Dorothy Elmes**, **Lt. Cdr. Mark Graichen** of the Australian Navy and Muntok's Catholic priest, **Father Paulus Kara**. The words of The Captives Hymn were read.

Wreaths were laid, including one in memory of **Major William Alston Tebbutt**. He had been in charge of the Nurses on board the **Vyner Brooke** and while a prisoner himself, tried to trace their movements throughout the war.

At the end of the war, the Japanese had said there were 'no more camps' but it was through **Major Tebbutt's** persistence to the Australian Army that the surviving nurses and internees were finally found and released from Belalau in 1945.

As had occurred in February 2017, all attendees linked arms and walked towards the sea. Flowers and wreaths

Walk for Humanity, Muntok, 16th February 2018



were scattered and everyone thought of the victims in 1942 and those suffering in wars and conflicts today.

In the following days, we visited Menumbing Hill, with a view across to Sumatra. We also saw the Timah Tinwinning Museum with the **Vivian Bullwinkel Galleri** and the Muntok Peace Museum which has many exhibits relating to the war. See Peace Museum website: <http://muntokpeacemuseum.org> We saw the former Customs House and Muntok cinema, where many prisoners were first held on reaching Muntok in February 1942. We inspected the likely

site of the murder of **Vivian Gordon Bowen**, Australia's Official Representative to Singapore who was killed behind the former cinema building, and laid flowers at his memorial. We traced the foundations of the former Coolie Lines building, situated next to the Muntok Men's Camp in the Muntok jail. A barbed wire passage had linked the jail to the Coolie Lines, which served as a rudimentary hospital for the dying civilian men during the war. We also visited the area behind the Pertamina petrol station, which had been the Muntok Town Cemetery. Here civilian men were buried during the war and women were brought here after the war from their graves under the rubber trees at Kampong Menjelang. We drove to the Catholic Cemetery where the remains of 25 graves, which had been removed to build the Pertamina petrol station in 1981, were reburied in a communal grave. The grave holding these people now has a plaque with the names of the 33 women and 55 men who died in Muntok and who, we believe, are still buried in the town.

Close by, in Kampong Menjelang, we visited the "Mother with the Ring". This older lady has two treasured possessions – first, a small diamond ring given to her father-in-law by a lady with 2 children, who were either shipwreck victims leaving the beach or prisoners in the camp, in return for food. The Mother also has a pocket watch from Robinson's department store, given to her father-in-law by a man in similar circumstances. These items would have been hidden from the Japanese and are now kept safely and brought out to show visitors. The Mother's family had lived in "Old Menjelang", a village which was deserted many years ago. The inhabitants, who had helped **Vivian Bullwinkel** and **Private Kinsley** after the massacre and had given food to other shipwreck victims, feared for their lives and fled from their homes, never to return.

The town of Muntok was bombed and residents were attacked by the Japanese. Many people hid in the safety of a large rock, 'Batu Balai' for some weeks until ordered to return to work. But "Old Menjelang" and Kampong Genggilang near the massacre site were abandoned.

Today, the massacre is said to have occurred on 'Radji Beach', but this name is not on any Indonesian or Dutch map and the origin of the word is unclear. 'Radji Beach' does not appear in Australian newspapers until November 1945. **Vivian Bullwinkel** did not know the origin of the word when she re-visited Muntok in 1992 to choose a site for the Nurses' Memorial.

Some possibilities for the name are:

1. There is a coral reef near the Tanjong Kelian Lighthouse at Muntok called **Korang Hadjie**.
2. **Hadjie** or **Radjie** can be used to describe a senior Muslim man in a village, and **Vivian Bullwinkel** would have met such a person when requesting help.
3. **Radjie** is a word in Scottish dialect meaning a violent tantrum (possibly used as a code to describe the attack

by northern English or Scottish women in the camps?)

4. **Rajik** is a Hindu word for 'shining' or 'diamond' – there are alluvial diamonds in Indonesia or maybe named after the diamond ring given to the Mother's family?
 5. **Taraji** is a tropical flower (Campanula).
 6. Lastly, and sadly most likely, an Indonesian dictionary tells us that the root word **Raja** is associated with violence such as stabbing, physical punishment, torture or murder. **Rajah** means 'in shreds, broken or torn to pieces.'
- Any further thoughts or information will be gratefully received.

Because the name of 'Radji Beach' is not known to Indonesian people today, the exact location of the massacre is unclear. Local historians believe the nurses and stretcher cases were killed on the beach named 'Teluk Menggeris' (called after a local plant) and that the men were taken around the point of 'Tanjong Sabajau' to be killed. 'Teluk Menggeris' has long been known as 'Teluk Inggris' or English Bay, where locals think the English people were murdered. **Vivian Bullwinkel** described finding 2 streams with fresh water as she hid in the jungle and maps show such water. In 1942, there were footpaths leading from the beach to nearby Kampongs of Gelinggang and Menjelang.

The current memorial plaque to the nurses and all victims massacred on the beach and killed in the water has been placed one beach further north at Tanjong Betumpak. This does overlook Teluk Menggeris and the large graveyard of the Banka Strait, where up to 5,000 people on 40 boats fleeing Singapore lost their lives and where human bones were found for many years. The current memorial site is also accessible by 4-wheel drive vehicles (albeit a bumpy ride), whereas Teluk Menggeris must be reached by motorboat, motor bike or on foot through the jungle.

More research is taking place to help locate the exact places of these tragedies.

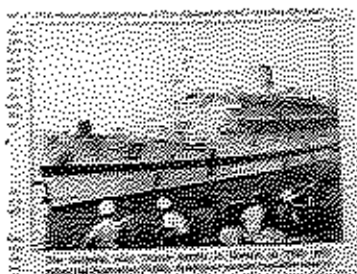
We left Muntok remembering the victims of the massacre and all who suffered during the war. We resolve to continue to seek more information, to explore ways to perpetuate the memory of those who suffered and to help the people of Muntok today. Providing a Nurse's scholarship in Muntok, involvement in a local women's and children's clinic and helping to teach English are two planned projects for the future.

We cannot change the past, but we can try to heal it and continue to visit this place of memories which made us welcome.

REPATRIATION TO AUSTRALIA ON THE ORANJE

With kind permission of Jane Booker Nielsen

This is my father's account of his voyage in the Dutch hospital ship *the Oranje* to Sydney from Singapore in 1945. In Sydney, he met his wife, **Miriam**, again and his three and a half year old daughter, **Merilyn**, for the first time. *The Oranje* sailed from Singapore on the 20th September and arrived in Darwin on the 27th. She arrived in Sydney by all accounts on the 29th September 1945.



The Royal Naval Hospital where the British ex-POWs were taken to meet their families was at Riverwood in south Sydney. During WW2 the hospital was at first an army hospital for the United States Army, but in 1945 it was taken over by the Royal Navy and then the Australian Army.

George Booker writes:

"I was a planter in Malaya before the war and was a member of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Forces. When the Japanese attacked in December 1941 and eventually captured Singapore, I was taken prisoner along with the British, Australian and Indian troops.

Oranje in Darwin

When Japan surrendered in 1945, I was in Changi having worked on the Siam Railway the year before. *The Oranje* sailed over to Singapore from Colombo to collect Australian sick and wounded. About 15 British Officers from various regiments and some Volunteers had asked to be repatriated to Australia because our wives had been evacuated there before the Fall of Singapore.

On the day *the Oranje* was due to sail for Australia, word came through to Changi that about 20 Australians were AWOL in Singapore City and did those British men still want to go to Australia? I was sitting chatting to friends, when someone said, "Aren't you wanting to go to Australia?" I said, "Yes" and he told me, "There is a truck going down to Singapore now, and you can get on to a ship going there!" I just dropped everything and rushed off, hopped on to a lorry which then raced down to the Singapore docks, only to find that *the Oranje* had sailed a short while before. We were loaded onto a Harbour Board launch and

went speeding out to catch up with the ship. On tying up alongside her, we were lifted up by crane, one by one, sitting on what seemed like a tea tray and landed on the sports-deck! The ship then picked up speed and continued her journey, first to Darwin where we were all kitted out with new uniforms etc., and then to Brisbane and finally to Sydney.

We (the British ex-POWs) were told to keep a low profile while the Alf were disembarking with bands playing and hundreds of relatives on the quayside. The Australian ex-POWs of whom there were 687 in all were then transported by double decker buses or ambulance through Sydney. Once clear of the port facilities, the cavalcade was greeted by huge cheering crowds.

When the last decorated bus and the crowds had disappeared, two Royal Navy ambulances appeared from behind one of the godowns and we the 15 or so British ex-POWs were taken to the Royal Navy Hospital in one of the suburbs of Sydney where we were reunited with our loved ones.

I returned to Malaya after the war and in 1953, I and my family travelled home to England on leave in *the Oranje*. She had been in collision with another Dutch ship *the Wilhelm Ruys* in the Red Sea on her way out to Singapore. Apart from the tarpaulins covering the hole in her bows, *the Oranje* was the most luxurious ship to travel in."

[Note: The history of this ship is recorded in "The Oranje Story" by Lorna Howlett.]

HUBERT BERKELEY – the early 20th century peoples' campaigner

With thanks to Dave Croft RAFBPA

From: The Geographical Journal of the Royal Geographic Society – July 1942

OBITUARY

CAPTAIN HUBERT BERKELEY, I.S.O., J.P.

Captain Hubert Berkeley, who died on 27 April 1942, entered the Civil Service of Perak in 1888, where he was District Officer from 1891 until his retirement in 1926. His knowledge of the topography of Upper Perak and of the adjacent countries and their inhabitants was of great value to the Government, especially in delimiting the Siam-Perak boundary in 1909. He knew the Malays intimately, protected them from commercial interests, and kept open house for them at his headquarters at Griik. After retiring he lived at Droitwich, where he was Chairman of the County Bench. He had been a Fellow of our Society since 1923.

Part 1 – Upper Perak pre-1909. In 1900, there was a general border agreement made with Siam that would significantly change the position of the Malay-Siam border. That agreement also placed the *Kroh* plateau within Malayan territory and with the signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1909 placed the headwaters of the Perak and Rui rivers fully into Upper Perak territory, which in turn was to have an impact on the activities of two major British mining companies at *Klian Intan*.

A major contender in how the mining company was brought into line in respect of its potential for clogging up the Perak river catchment (via the Rui river), thus threatening traditional wet rice cultivation downstream of the mines, was the Upper Perak District Officer, **Hubert Berkeley**, who fought to include the river headlands into the 'new' northern Malaya. His fight for where the boundary was to be defined was not without difficulty but was eventually successful and in turn FMS ownership of the watershed meant that traditional Malayan wet rice cultivation downstream could be continued against the growing pressure exerted by the large scale tin mining. The region's boundary locations go back in time as oral histories, as mentioned in **W.E. Maxwell's** expedition journal of 1876 where, "The flight of a prime suspect (**Datoh Maharaja Lela of Perak**) in Resident Birch's murder in November 1875 into the remote watershed of the Perak river prompted the despatch of a British Military expedition led by **W.E. Maxwell**. **Maxwell's** expedition journal would be the most detailed survey of the watershed to have emerged since **Anderson's** description of 'Patani2 Country' of 1824." In his expedition, **Maxwell** referred to 'native sources that described oral histories that set out the ancestral claims of the downstream Perak court to all lands falling within the watershed of the Perak river and its tributaries.' The histories **Maxwell** collected 'singled out a number of landmarks, both natural and man-made, that allegedly marked the boundary between Perak and Patani (Yala Province). These included a

mountain and a hollow, also the subterranean feeder stream of the Rui river; inland boundaries were marked by a plain of orange trees! On their own, however, a collection of oral histories was not sufficient in itself to confront Siam over the question of Perak rights to a large swathe of territory.'

In 1904, *Grik* was chosen as a District Office for Hulu Perak as a result of the December 1900 border agreement between Britain and Siam, with the newly appointed District Officer, **Hubert Berkeley**, taking up residence there.

Part 2 – The District Officers. The predecessor of **Hubert Berkeley**, who became permanent District Officer for Upper Perak in 1904, was **C.F. Bozzolo** who, as with **Berkeley**, showed an unusual approach to his duties and social life, such as, for example, he always wore a sarong and hat at work, even in the office. In 1888, he (**Bozzolo**) had travelled the upper Pelus river and then the Menlik, one of the main tributaries of the river, both part of the Perak river basin. On a later 'expedition' **Hubert Berkeley** and party, on a visit to *Belum* c1909 (with 21 elephants), noted that at the confluence of the Rui and Perak rivers, the Rui 'empties its muddy waters, *full of mining silt*, into the beautiful Perak River.' This observation backed up the contents of a letter written to the Perak Resident, dated 24 August 1907: 'I have this month made a close inspection of the (Rui) river bed and I find the deep holes – on some of which one could not touch the bottom with a pole – silted up and not even knee deep.' It was this cause of mining waste siltation that **Berkeley** fought to prevent entering the river system by the moving of the Siam-Malay Border (north) to include the Perak river catchment and thereby placing control of mining discharges with the Perak government: the legal prevention of mining silt discharge into the Perak river would save ruining wet rice acres downstream and the livelihoods of the people who depended on them.

Warning – the following may well be apocryphal stories!

Captain (he served as a captain in the British Army in WW1) **Hubert Berkeley** was a member of an English aristocratic family and he served Upper Perak as District Officer until he retired to England in 1926. Apparently suspicious of any European posted into his district, he was also very much against bringing it into the 20th century, or if it had to proceed, then slowly, a step at a time. His motto, *Koh Dahulu* (go slowly), was to be found on the coat of arms he designed for Upper Perak, being an elephant rampant with the motto embossed on dinnerware etc. Social duties were undertaken wearing a sarong and shirt with a tartan style pattern. He also wore, at times, a hat with a Royal Navy cap ribbon inscribed *HMS Malayas*.



At his residence, 10, Downing Street, *Grik*, European (male) guests staying overnight had the delight of his company in the sharing of an outside *thunder box* during morning ablutions. He had a total dislike for official paperwork, memos etc. which seemingly ended up in his *jamban* (toilet), where he was convinced it could be put to better use than that intended by Government! For those guests who suffered a temporary problem on the *thunder box* (and who wouldn't with the DO sharing a double unit at the same time), there was a large photograph of Sir Frank Swettenham (retired from Colonial Service in 1904) on the wall whose unsmiling face was intended to help overcome the problem!

Berkeley named a number of thoroughfares in *Grik* after well known ones in London – *Whitehall* (district office), *Downing Street*, *Piccadilly*, *Rotten Row* and *Berkeley Square* (of course) where several of the road joined at the *padang*. He certainly didn't like high ranking government officials visiting; early in his career as a DO, when informed of an imminent tour of inspection, replied that (following floods) there wasn't a bridge at one point on the route. The visit was cancelled although there never had been a bridge at the place indicated! On another occasion, a visit by the British Resident of Perak was foiled by a newly felled tree across the road. Without assistance to remove the tree the Resident was forced to turn back. Later, another Resident, Lt. Col. W.J.P. Hume, who did get through on an official visit, when being shown round *Grik*, enquired why no road had been named after him, and was promised that it would be put right. *Hume's Mews* came into being, a short alley-way ending in secondary growth!

Berkeley also kept horses and a number of elephants for transport around the district; cars were not wanted in his territory, also not lawyers if he could help it! He was driven daily to a hot spring in his *barouche* (horse drawn open

carriage) by his *syce* (coachman) who would be dressed in the Berkeley family livery of red and white. In the book, *"Noone of the Ulu"* it mentions *'and on the road to Betong in Siam was the hot spring where Berkeley would go in the cool of the morning with his lovely Malay adopted daughter.'* Berkeley never married and when, in 1949, an Acting DO noticing some fair skinned young Malays at *Grik* was told they were descended from the Berkeley line. Could this be that his adopted daughter wasn't adopted as we understand it?

In his role as magistrate, Berkeley has been quoted as saying that in the courthouse he dispenses justice not law – in a land dispute he had both parties contest the claim by a tug-of-war, using rotan (rattan) creepers. The winning team's claim was upheld. On another occasion a lawyer arrived, seemingly without warning, to defend a man charged with (cattle) theft only to be informed shortly after the proceedings had started that "The Defendant was guilty." Protesting that the defence hadn't been called, Berkeley informed the lawyer that his client had always been a cattle thief, as had his father and grandfather. Cattle theft, or smuggling, between Siam and Malaya in Upper Perak may have happened at the border junction mentioned in *"Noone of the Ulu"* where *'two tracks coming down over the mountains from Siam converge to lead off again in three directions southwards.'* It was used by smugglers, and it seemed that Berkeley's way of dispensing justice was acceptable to *'his'* people, as he appeared to others, *'wishing to avoid the main route.'* It was said to have been held in high esteem by many. An example of his type of justice is the story of twenty five cases to be heard in the magistrate's court for the same minor offence on the day he had planned to be absent, and where all twenty five had already pleaded guilty. In this instance, he discharged all those with odd numbers on the court list, and all those with even numbers were fined five dollars.* He continued with his planned day!

Captain Hubert Berkeley I.S.O. (1921) retired from colonial service in 1926 at the age of 62 and became a magistrate in Worcestershire in 1927. He died in 1942 of natural causes.

*N.B. The Dad's Army programme, *"A Brush with the Law,"* shown recently where Lay Magistrate **Captain Square** makes decisions from the bench that appear to have a sort of similarity to that of Magistrate **Hubert Berkeley** in his court dealings back in Upper Perak.

1. **Kroh** – was named after *Keruh*, meaning muddy or murky waters. It's named from a nearby river that was the bathing area for **King Reman's** elephants. This area became a lake and when large numbers of elephants had bathed, the waters naturally became 'murky'. The modern name for **Kroh - Pengkalan Hulu** - upstream bridgehead.
2. **Patani** - an historical region in the northern part of the Malay peninsula. The section that is adjacent to headwaters of the Perak river system was, under the Siamese monarchy system, recognized as part of the **Kingdom of Reman**. The **Hulu Perak** district was passed to the Perak government in a ceremony held in **Kroh** on 16th July 1909.
3. **HMS Malaya** visited Malaya in early 1921 and stopped at ports along the west coast, Penang being one of them. It is likely he visited the ship as an official visitor when in port, or did he travel back to Malaya on board this ship his war service with the British Army was 1914 – 1920?

Consulted materials:

Chinese Enterprise and Malay Power – Philip King 2007

From Periphery to Centre – Philip King, University of Wollongong 2006

Imperial War Museum

Malay Maris Archives – Lowell Thomas papers

National Archives

Noone of the Ulu

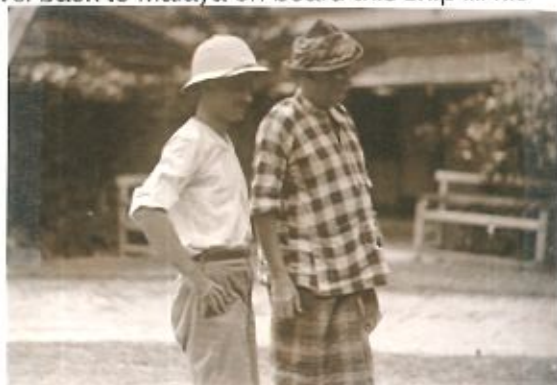
Out in the Midday Sun – The British in Malaya 1880-1960

Tales from the South China Seas – Images of the British in South East Asia **Berkeley with Lowell Thomas in 1921 -**

The British Empire – Berkeley of Upper Perak.

an American Journalist & film maker

[Editor: Kathleen Reeve (my mother) used to regale visitors with stories about Hubert Berkeley – much along the lines of this article – he was said to have ignored official government papers & pasted them on the walls of his lavatory for guests to read there; he would secretly move the boundary stones between Malaya and Siam further north into Siamese territory until some Siamese officials would notice this and move them back again; and he would take his harem of local ladies out in his horse-drawn *landau* for a daily ride or to swim in the river. There was probably an element of truth in these stories!]



NURSING SISTERS ALETHEA GENTLES and SALLIE SCARF

By kind permission of Sallie Hammond

[Editor: Sallie told her mother's story in A.K. editions 44 & 45 ("As I Remember it") and A.K. 46 ("A Journey of Nightmares"). This is the story of her mother's nursing friends.]

Part 1 – Alethea Gentles.

Sister Alethea Gentles was my mother's close friend and her bridesmaid on 15th May 1941. I have a picture of the wedding party in Alor Star, with 'Pongo' Scarf included as well.

Alethea (Mary) Gentles came from a small village in England. Her father was a Vicar. The Depression Years after WW1 were difficult for her family. Alethea told my mother that food was simple and sometimes scarce in her home. Vicars did not earn very much in those days. Maybe because of this, Alethea Gentles always carried a few candies with her – in case. Alethea trained as a Nursing Sister in England and then joined Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service. She was posted to Malaya about 1939. She met my mother, an Australian Nursing Sister with QAINS in Singapore.

Both were posted to Alor Star General Hospital in 1939. My mother loved "Gentles" and said she was an exceptional nurse – so good, conscientious and kind to her patients. My mother was "Davies" in those days. It was common, even when I trained as a nurse, to address each other by surname.

My mother met my handsome father, Squadron Leader Harley Boxall in Alor Star in 1940. They were married in May 1941. At the same time, Sallie (Gunn) met the dashing Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf (Pongo) and they were married within 2 weeks of my parents! (May 1941). Sadly Sallie was to be widowed 7 months later – December 9 1941.

"Gentles" was a sensible, practical person. Sallie was a free spirit!!

The day after the bombing at Butterworth, RAF 62 Squadron Base, December 10 1941, the medical staff, patients, civilians and Service Personnel; were to be evacuated to Singapore because of the rapidly advancing Japanese Army.

Sallie was sent on ahead with other civilian wives as she was newly widowed.

My mother, Pat Boxall, Alethea Gentles, Phyllis Briggs and my mother's Amah took my father's Ford V8 and planned to drive to Singapore – about 300 miles I think.

My mother had hardly driven my father's car and the roads were a muddy mess with retreating soldiers, evacuees, the local population with their animals and a steep winding road. With the anxiety of it all, my mother crashed my father's car. It slid off the road down the side of a mountain. No-one was injured – Amah was the most upset. Phyllis Briggs said nothing.

Alethea Gentles in her calm manner offered the three of them a candy and told my mother "everything will be alright." It was. They clambered up to the main road and were picked up by a passing Army Truck filled with soldiers and taken to Singapore.

Amah decided there and then that she would make her own way back to her kampong.

So the three Nursing sisters carried on to Singapore. On arrival they offered their services to the Johore General Hospital which needed more trained staff to handle the influx of wounded. They were there for a couple of weeks (I think) then evacuated with their patients to Singapore across the Causeway.

My mother was evacuated from Singapore in the middle of January 1942 on the "Aorangi" but Alethea Gentles and Phyllis Briggs left much later, just before Singapore fell, on the SS Kuala. Alethea died when the Kuala was attacked by Japanese torpedo bombers but Phyllis survived and was captured and interned as a civilian.

After the war, when my mother found out the fate of her dear friend she was very upset – and continued to grieve for Alethea throughout her life.

Part 2 – Sallie Scarf

Sallie Scarf left Singapore in January 1942 on a small Dutch ship bound for Colombo, Ceylon. The ship had been offered by the Netherlands to evacuate wounded servicemen and civilians from Singapore.

Sallie was an obsessed dog lover and as she was about to board the ship, she saw a thin, stray dog on the dock – a bull mastiff. She decided to save the dog and tied a scarf around its neck and took the dog on board much to the irritation of the Dutch/Malay crew.

The rations for the passengers on the voyage to Colombo were limited and Sallie asked the Dutch Captain if he could supply scraps of food for her dog, adding that if he didn't get enough food he would become aggressive. The Captain was amused and sent scraps of food for the dog from his table.

Sallie landed safely in Colombo with the dog. She travelled to New Delhi with the dog and found work as a Sister in one of the Hospitals. I don't know the fate of the dog.

In 1944 Sallie met Major Stuart Gunn of the British Army and married him in New Delhi.

My parents were eventually reunited after leaving Singapore independently via Australia. My father was posted to India as Wing Commander in New Delhi. There they met Sallie with her new husband, and my mother renewed her friendship with Sallie. I was born on 1st July 1944 in New Delhi and Sallie was invited to become one of my Godmothers, hence my name.

The Gunns moved back to England after the war, but Sallie lost her first child due to the stress of receiving the Victoria Cross on behalf of her first husband, Arthur Scarf, from King George VI at Buckingham Palace in 1946. She later had 4 daughters who were raised in a liberal home with lots of love and affection and several dogs. They all became very successful in their careers including one who became a journalist and was employed by a Member of Parliament as a speech writer.

Sallie was an exuberant character who loved life. She was also a smoker and developed lung cancer from which she died in 1987 despite being warned to give it up.

My uncle visited Sallie on one occasion and said that her house was a bit chaotic with dogs sitting in all the chairs, but she was an amazing character and very courageous. She seemed undaunted by the tragedy of Malaya and Singapore and will never be forgotten.

THE SURVEYOR SURVEYED

ERIC STEWART WILLBOURN OBE., ED., MA (cantab.), FGS. – 21/10/1889 – 25/11/1977

**By kind permission of his grandson Roger S. Willbourn assisted by
Amanda E. Royde-Smith (granddaughter) and Caroline V. Willbourn (granddaughter-in-law)**

During their first long leave in 1924, **Eric** spent an unusually long time in England, as he was helping to set up the Malaya Pavilion at the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park. Ironically, he also represented the FMS Geological Survey in Japan when he attended the Pacific Science Congress there in October/November 1926, and was accompanied there by **Jessie**; they attended a tea-ceremony during that visit.

The fluctuating price of tin, the depression of 1920-21, the Wall Street crash of 1929 and the Great Depression of the first half of the 1930s must all have impinged upon the lives of civil servants, tin-miners and rubber planters in Malaya but, of course, life went on and geological surveying was as important in the bad times as it was in the good. There were many other minerals in Malaya, some of which (such as gold) had been mined for a very long time and others such as wolfram, tungsten and titanium which grew in importance as technology (and armaments' manufacture) advanced. Life as an expatriate colonial civilian probably didn't change particularly rapidly between the wars and in general life was undoubtedly very pleasant, with parties, balls, sports and many visits to Maxwell Hill, Fraser's Hill and Cameron Highlands on occasions to escape the heat and humidity. In the latter years of their time in BG, they lived in a substantial house at No. 1, Frost Road, on the edge of the Kinta Golf Club and the racecourse.

Their two children were taken back to Yorkshire to be brought up in Bridlington by **Eric's** mother and unmarried sisters, **Tony** at the heart-breakingly early age of four and **Betty** similarly at the age of seven. Both children had to endure the loneliness of boarding school education and the heartbreak of only seeing their parents every few years; no skype or internet in the 1920s and 1930s. **Eric's** first two post-WW1 tours were each of four years' duration but then in 1931, **Scrivenor** retired after running the Geological Survey for almost 28 years, and **Eric** was promoted to be the new, second Director of the GS. From then onwards, leave came every 2½ years.

The early thirties were a period of belt-tightening all round the globe and Malaya was no different, with still only three expatriates on the GS staff. However, from 1935 onwards, **Eric** was able to put his expansion plans into action and by 1939 there were no fewer than nine expatriate geologists and chemists employed, a few of whom came from Australia and New Zealand.

The other crucial improvement that **Eric** was able to make was in the area of salary. **Scrivenor** had, apparently, enjoyed the benefits of a significant private income and regarded the opportunity to work for the greater good of the Empire as an honour in itself and seemed unconcerned that his staff might not have such advantages! Once the worst of the Depression years had passed, in mid-1935, **Eric** lobbied the Colonial Office very hard to increase the salary scales in the Malayan Geological Survey, to be in line with other colonial civil service departments. In this he was successful and so this then provided the necessary framework for the expansion in staff numbers to which I have just referred. Amongst those he recruited in the late 1930s were his three post-war successors as GS Directors, **F.T. Ingham**, **Harold Service** and **J.B. Alexander** as well as the redoubtable **James Richardson** who arrived in early 1936.

Interestingly, whilst virtually all the expat staff of the GS were captured by the Japanese and many, including **Eric** and **James Richardson**, were sent to work on the Burma Railway, the only ones who did not return to Malaya after the war were **Eric** and **Richardson**. Given the excellence of his work, it is hard to believe that (had he stayed) **Richardson** would not have become Director-General when **Ingham** retired in 1952. As the Director of an expanding operation, **Eric's** journeys of exploration and survey obviously decreased over time and more of his time was spent on overall management, as well as writing and publishing the results of his work. During the inter-war years, he published some 25 works on the geology and mineral mining operations throughout Malaya (and Siam/Sumatra), a number of which have copies in the British Library here in London.

Eric and **Jessie** doubtless had retirement from Malaya looming ever larger in their sights as the 1930s drew to a close – by 1939 they were both 50 and the conventional retirement age for British Servants of the Empire was 55. Three of **Eric's** brothers had been living and working in East Africa and at some point in the late 1920s, **Eric** and **Jessie** had purchased a coffee plantation in the Kenyan high country outside Nairobi, possibly with a view to retiring there by 1944 – it would have given them not only the sunshine and warmth that they both needed but also the comfortable, relaxed, colonial semi-rural life-style to which they were accustomed – but without the unrelenting stickiness and debilitating humidity of the Malay peninsula.

One must remember that in the 1920s and 1930s, most British colonialists almost certainly believed that the Empire would outlive them all; after all, why should it not? In 1929, they had gone back on leave to England via Mombasa and Nairobi, with the seven-year-old Elizabeth, but unfortunately they found that **Eric's** two younger brothers, **Cyril** and

Arthur, who had been put in charge of the development of their coffee plantation, had been somewhat dilatory, to put it mildly, and it was not proving to be a success. Had the disasters of WW2 not been visited upon them, maybe they would have retired there together and made a success of it, but that can only be speculation.

Of course, the war clouds did gather in the late 1930s. Their last home leave together was in 1938. **Jessie**, together with **Tony** and **Betty**, went to see her old friends in Austria in March of that year and happened to arrive there one week after the *Anschluss*. Most of her Austrian friends were horrified at this turn of events but, tellingly, a number of her friends' relatives were delighted. Their next home leave would have been due in mid-1941 but of course, for very obvious reasons, this was not a practicable option and they remained in Malaya; by that summer, it has become generally recognised that a war with Japan was more likely than not and some preparations were being made, although, as events were to prove, they were disastrously insufficient. The Japanese had invaded northern Vietnam in September 1940 and had marched unopposed into southern Vietnam in July 1941, ready to use it as a springboard to take over the Dutch East Indies and thereby gain unfettered access to its huge oil reserves.

Furthermore, in 1939, a nationalist and fascist-leaning faction had taken over control of the military-dominated government of Thailand, the young teenage-King being in effective exile in neutral Switzerland throughout the war. There would have been no prizes for identifying the perilous position of Malaya amongst all these states of Indo-China and south-east Asia which were already clear targets in the Japanese gun-sights.

Eric had been a dedicated member of the **MSVR** and its 1936 successor, the **FMSVF**, for over twenty years. Given his service as a Lieutenant in the Signals during WW1, he rejoined the **MSVR** as an officer in 1920 and then rose steadily through the ranks until, at some point in the early 1930s, he became a Major and the Commanding Officer of "C" Company in the 1st (**Perak**) Battalion of the **FMSVF**. He was the second in command of the **Perak Battalion**, which was led by **Colonel Jim Staley**. **Jonathan Moffatt's** meticulous records show that **Eric** was later transferred to the Training Battalion – one should take in to account that he was already 50 years old by 1939. In October 1940, the Malayan Government formed a **Local Defence Corps (LDC)** and it would seem that **Eric** then transferred to this, although whether he did so immediately is not known. Certainly by August 1941, however, **Eric** was 2 i/c of the **Perak LDC** – and **Jessie** had signed up to the **Medical Auxiliary Service** at the Batu Gajah 'European' Hospital and was training to drive 'Ambulances' (in reality, converted lorries!) as well as in first aid. It is difficult for me to imagine our grandfather as a Military man but he must have had sufficient martial qualities to stay in the **FMSVF** and then the **LDC** for so long, many years beyond the call of duty. He was clearly aware of the threat from Japan before it became generally recognised since, in mid-1940, well over a year before the outbreak of war with Japan, **Eric** had approached the Military Directorate in Singapore and offered the entire senior staff of the GS for intelligence duties. Given their extensive and detailed knowledge of the Malayan countryside right up to, and in certain cases across the Siamese border, this would have been a highly valuable resource for the British Army. Regrettably, this offer was curdly refused as being *"quite unnecessary"*.

From mid-November 1941, the rumours and 'flaps' about an impending Japanese attack increased in severity and frequency. Eventually, on the first of December, the **Volunteers** and the **LDC** were mobilized and, of course, on Monday 8th, the same day as the attack on Pearl Harbour, the Japanese landed in southern Siam and at Kota Bharu. A mere week later, the Government ordered the evacuation of all expatriate women and children from Perak State and, only six days after that all non-combatant European men as well. **Jessie** and **Eric** had been planning to spend Christmas with their friends **John** and **Jo Cowgill** in Seremban (**John** was the British Resident for Negri Sembilan). **Jessie** had been working every day as a Medical Auxiliary at the BG Hospital but on 17th December had driven down to Seremban with **Mrs. Doris Richardson**, in the **Richardson's** large **De Soto** car, to join the **Cowgills** a week earlier than had been intended. She had just one small suitcase, their house at No. 1, Frost Road (now Jalan Kinta, next to the golf course) being evacuated in a rush and left in the care of servants.

Richardson reports that he met **Eric** at the **LDC HQ** in Ipoh on 20th December. **Eric** and his fellow senior officers divided the **Perak LDC** into three groups: those aged 40 and under were sent to join the **Volunteers**; those who were unfit or unsuitable were discharged and told to head south; and those who were older but fit (such as **Eric**) organised themselves to assist the military as much as they could, with driving transport, preventing looting, manning fire engines and maintaining as much order amongst the civilian population as was possible. In a letter home he wrote that *"..... (we) had enemy planes over us constantly....."*

In the face of the rapidly advancing Japanese, they were sent down to Tanjong Malim, in the far south of Perak, just on the Selangor state boundary around 40 miles to the north of KL. They suffered frequent bombing and strafing by enemy aircraft, jumping into slit trenches whenever possible but still taking some casualties. Their main duties were to keep Motor Transport running in support of the Army, taking soldiers in and out of the Line and evacuating the

wounded. **Eric** records that they had a visit from the Governor and his wife, **Sir Shenton and Lady Thomas**, and to his *"great satisfaction, they told me they had just seen Jessie with the Cowgills in Seremban."* He also states that it was *"very sporting of them"* to drive up to a point so close to the front line and that afterwards they had sent his men beer and cigarettes(!).

By the turn of the year, the Japanese were landing to the south of Telok Anson, at Utan Melintang on the estuary of the Slim River and were effectively outflanking the British forces; within a week, the major engagement at Slim River had been fought and lost and the retreat to KL and the south was in full flow. **Eric** was instructed to take the majority of his men back south, assisting the army with their transport requirements, apart from a few parties which had special duties: one small group of his men were detailed to take \$8 million from the KL State Treasury straight back to Singapore! **Jessie** was at The Residency in Seremban with the **Cowgills**, along with the wives of two of the other GS staff (**Grace Hatral** and **Doris Richardson**), from where she wrote on **Christmas Day** to **Tony** and **Betty** in England. She mentions that she is *"working at the local hospital, driving a little ambulance about between wards and the operating theatres"* and after an early breakfast was just about to start her morning duty there. She noted that there were soldiers in the church at the 6.45am mass on **Christmas Day** wearing only pyjamas, as they had come from hospital wards! On 8th January she was still in Seremban but on 19th January, she and **Jo Cowgill** were forced to evacuate. After a difficult drive and a very disturbed night 'camping' in the hospital at Johore Bahru, they arrived in Singapore on the morning of Sunday 11th January, at which point they were immediately invited by **Lady Shenton** to stay at Government House.

By coincidence, **Eric** also arrived in Singapore on 11th January with his LDC convoy of miscellaneous vehicles, evacuees and LDC troops. Having found billets for his men in a school, he made enquiries as to **Jessie's** whereabouts and located her at Government House – at which point **Lady Shenton** insisted that he, too, move in there with **Jessie**. On 12th January, they write home to **Eric's** mother in Bridlington to advise her of their current safety and comfortable accommodation in Government House and expressing *"an unpleasant surprise at the weakness of our defences but we know that we are going to sock the Japs good and heavy some time – later if not sooner"* – which last remark does somewhat betray a lack of confidence in the near term outcome! That night they were joined for dinner by **Sir Duff** and **Lady Diana Cooper**, **Eric** reporting that **Jessie** enjoyed a half-hour's tete-a-tete with **Lady Diana**, whom he describes as being *"still a beautiful creature - very tall and of good figure - but she owes a lot of her present good looks to beauty doctors."*

A letter he wrote to his mother a week later from Singapore, on 20th January, advises that he had left the **Perak LDC**, as they no longer had any effective role, and had volunteered his services to the **Australian Imperial Force [AIF]**, who had accepted his services as a Liaison Officer and for which he was instrumental in recruiting other Europeans who had been living in Malaya and who spoke Malay or Tamil or Chinese, since *"the Aussies don't know the language and don't know the natives and they need people like us who know the ropes."*

Jessie continued to work together with **Jo Cowgill** in the Medical Auxiliary service at a first aid post canteen and refused to leave with the other GS and Colonial wives on the various ships now sailing south to Batavia and Australia. The last letters that they wrote home to their children which got through were dated 13th, 14th and 20th January from Government House in which they express their pleasure at being together for this short spell and being so glad that **Tony** and **Betty** are 'safe' in England. **Jessie** says, *"Now we are as far south as we can come and I hope we can stick it here and see the tide turn and the Nips pushed back"* although some realism creeps in when she reports of the air-raids that *"...they haven't bombed Government House (yet) – probably they are hoping to live in it themselves!"*

From Government House, **Jessie** and the **Cowgills** had then moved into a house at 9, Mount Faber Road (which they had been offered by a Doctor who had moved to live in the hospital) but had then been forced to leave there as it was dangerously close to the docks, which had come in for regular heavy bombing. So they had moved to College Road, near the General Hospital, which was a little further inland from the docks. **Jessie** continued to drive a variety of vehicles, taking people to and from the hospital and various medical personnel hither and thither. **Eric** was still attached to the Australians at the General Base Depot, the place to which reinforcements were sent and from where drafts were dispatched up to the fighting. Then, of course, the Causeway was blown up on 31st January and **Eric** was reduced to camping under some rubber trees near the Island Golf Club. **Eric** was able to visit **Jessie** occasionally and she and **Jo** were now very busy working as Auxiliary Nurses. **Lady Shenton** had said to **Jo Cowgill** that she (**Lady Shenton**) and **Jo** should not leave, being married to senior Colonial Administrators and **Eric** was simply unable to persuade **Jessie** to leave as she wanted to continue with her Medical Auxiliary duty; she refused to leave while nurses were still needed, whilst she could continue to be of use and whilst women were permitted to stay. **Eric** later wrote that although he tried to get her to leave, he was proud of her refusal to do so. [To be continued in July].

THE VICTORY CELEBRATIONS – London 8th June 1946

By Audrey Lim Swee Peck

My father **Lim Keng Watt** (1909-96) was witness to some of the most important events in Malayan/Malaysian history of the 20th century. In my book called *Memories of a Malaccan*, we can see World War 2 through his eyes: he was in the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force serving in Singapore just before its fall, but fortunately escaped being killed by the Japanese.

Another momentous event he took part in was the Victory Celebrations in London in 1946 when **Sergeant Lim Keng Watt 80047** was chosen to represent the "B" (Chinese) Company of his Battalion (4/SSVF) in the Victory Parade. The letter which gave him this piece of news also appointed **CSM Mohammed Ali** of "C" (Malay) Company and **Lt. Alfred Machado** of "D" (Eurasian) Company under the command of **Major W. Stubbs**. All three Malaccans were alumni of **St. Francis Institution**, the second oldest de la Salle missionary school in Malaya.

For many of the Malayan Victory Paraders, it was an exhilarating experience: for most of them, it was their first time overseas, coupled with the fact that it was a great honour to represent their units in the motherland, as it were, and they were going to be in the grandest capital in the world.

The ship **SS Orontes** which brought **LKW** and the others fortunate to be selected for the Victory Parade left Singapore in late April. All 141 men of the contingent received free issues of tropical and warm clothing, the latter probably because it was thought that the men would find it cold, especially as they would be camping in tents on the grounds of Kensington Gardens once they reached London.

They arrived in Southampton on the 16th May 1946 and from there they caught a train to Waterloo Station for their final destination, London! The Malayan Contingent arrived in London on the 17th May. This meant that the Malayan armed forces sent for the Victory Celebrations had about 3½ weeks to rehearse for the grand march past and to visit the tourist attractions in London and elsewhere in Britain. Prior to their arrival an organisation had been set up for the general welfare and entertainment of all the Victory Contingents from overseas.

As **Major Stubbs**, the Officer Commanding Malaya Victory Contingent, writes in his Foreword in the Victory Parade Souvenir magazine, ***"You can rest assured that everyone had a really good time and that within the resources of war-weary England, everything was done for their entertainment and enjoyment."***

A highlight for the Malayan Contingent was when the British Royal Family **George VI** and **Queen Elizabeth** with their two young daughters **Elizabeth** and **Margaret** visited their camp on 6th June. No doubt Their Majesties must have enquired how the Malayan soldiers, sailors and pilots were enjoying their stay, and I am sure that these men were thrilled beyond words to have such charming royals ask after their welfare.

But, of course, uppermost in the minds of our Malaya men was the march past two days later, for which they had been practicing so hard so they would acquit themselves admirably on the big day.

The Victory Celebrations in London on the 8th June started officially with His Majesty's procession from Buckingham Palace at 10.10am, while the grand march past of all armed forces from the Allied Forces, the Dominions and various parts of the British Empire started from marble Arch and halted at The Mall for the salute, ending eventually at Hyde Park corner. The Malayan troops marched past the Grand Stand at 12.30pm. Just as the crowds started dispersing after the march, it started raining, but luckily it cleared by evening so that the firework display and illuminations formed a wondrous show for both local and overseas spectators that night. After regular air raids and curfews, and enforced blackouts every sunset during the length of the war to prevent German pilots from being able to identify their targets, the Londoners were ready to enjoy a show of bright lights. The principal buildings of London were lit by floodlights, and later the London skies burst into a fantastic display of fireworks – a sensory overload of light, colour and sound but welcome after all those years of curfew, blackout and restraint.

Back in Malacca there were no Victory celebrations of any kind, as his good friend and colleague **Rene Aeria** complains in a letter that he sent to my father. I find this long letter interesting because it tells us what was happening back home. It also underlines my father's enthusiasm in all that he did.

RA writes: ***"I suppose you are excelling yourself in the way of autographs and photos. I can just imagine you giving no rest to your guides with your many and multifarious questions on this, that and the other..."***

Sure enough, when my father visited Fort Dunlop in Birmingham with 54 other men and officers, he thoroughly enjoyed the two-hour tour of the Dunlop Rubber Works. At the end of the excursion, he received a note of thanks from **Mr. Foster**, the general works manager. I wonder if he had arranged the group for the photo, something he was wont to do, and this note was to thank him for his help.

Other places **LKW** visited during his UK stay included the National Film Studios in Elstree, London, Canterbury Cathedral, Edinburgh, Stratford-on-Avon, Margate, Ramsgate and Brighton. In Brighton he stayed

at the YMCA on the 23rd June 1946, and gallivanted around town with some of the group, or with fellow-sergeant **Tan Teik Hoe** from Seremban, collecting postcards and souvenirs, as he did everywhere else. It was only an overnight visit, as the two Sergeants left the YMCA the following morning at 6.45 am to arrive at Victoria Station at 8am just in time for them to get ready for a group photo taken at the Albert Memorial. Then it was time to do some final shopping for souvenirs and gifts for family and friends, but my father being a keen violinist wasn't going to miss the chance of a lifetime – he paid 30 shillings to hear **Yehudi Menuhin** play at the Royal Albert Hall.

He was undoubtedly on cloud nine listening to such exquisite music, but on reaching camp at 10.30pm that night he had to attend to more mundane matters like packing for the long trip home. Yes, the Malayan Contingent was set to sail back home. From Euston Station, they left for Liverpool to embark on the **SS Mauretania** on the 25th June.

My father made many friends throughout this trip. As usual, he collected many autographs from his fellow servicemen on the **Orontes** on the way to England and during his UK stay, and he continued to get more on the **Mauretania**.

Now let me introduce you to a fellow sergeant whom he befriended, **Sgt. Amrik Sodhy** from the Local Defence Corps of Selangor. **Sodhy** was a tall man who made a formidable first impression. In 1936, he had been school captain of Victoria Institution, one of the oldest and most prestigious schools in Kuala Lumpur, so he was used to being in charge and giving orders. Also, he could do a flawless English upper-class accent if and when the case arose.

The need came when some burly British guards at Kensington Gardens wanted to pummel **LKW** for waking them up with his bugle-playing early in the morning. He had been warned by them a few times, but being a dutiful soldier, he played reveille again.

This was the last straw for these guards who had had one too many the night before, and they pounced on him, and began beating him up. The commotion woke some of the other Malaysians, including **Sgt. Sodhy** who quickly sized up the situation.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," Sodhy said, doing his most commanding British Army officer impersonation, **"Cease and desist – this soldier is only doing his duty, but I'll make sure he stops blowing his bugle if you stop giving him blows!"**

Thus was **Keng Watt** saved from further injuries. In gratitude, as the two men became friends, **LKW** told his saviour that his youngest sister **Guat Eng** was still unattached, and that he could arrange a match for **Sodhy** when they got home.

"Thanks, but no thanks, Keng Watt. If she is as dark as you, I'm not interested."***

All during his trip, my father was writing regularly in his diary. It is a pity that many of his entries are a bit challenging to read, as the ink has seeped a little through the thin and very old pages which are, of course, more than 70 years old! But luckily his entries for the days before and after the grand march past are easily legible:

"(Tuesday) 4/6/46: Lucky day. After dinner went to British National Studios to see scenes from 'Spring Song' being shot.... Then went to Westminster Theatre to see 'Freda', a beautiful story of the love of an Englishman and a German girl. After which dined at the Savoy with the Ranees and Rajah Muda of Sarawak" with whom he chatted for two hours. A splendid day indeed!

The next day was less exciting as the troops had two parade practices, but then 6th June was a red-letter day, as this was when the Royal family visited the camp. I think that my father actually filmed this visit and part of the Victory Celebrations, as I later found a roll of film dated 1946. (I sent this precious roll to our National Archives, but unfortunately never recovered it, as they had lost it.)

Then he went off to Gamages (a famous toy store at the time) to buy \$15 worth of toys for his four young sons back home (no, he didn't forget me – I was not yet born!), after which he went to see the comic opera **'The Bartered Bride'** at Sadler's Wells. Dinner this time was at the Hong Kong Restaurant (he was probably homesick for Chinese food).

On the eve of the march past there was another rehearsal which was supposed to have been visited by the War Secretary who failed to turn up. Also, the group photo session was cancelled, so he went off to Selfridges to buy a gold chain for my mother.

The highlight of the Victory Celebrations was the Victory Parade and March Past which comprised a marching column of all armed forces from various parts of the British Empire. Of that great day on Saturday 8th June 1946, my father briefly writes: **"The big day. Fall in at 9.15 and left for route march. Tremendous crowd and cheers of joy in peace."**

On his return to camp at 2pm he took a bath, and tired out by the marching and the excitement and jubilation of the Parade, he was so exhausted that he slept till 6pm before leaving to see the night-time festivities which comprised both illuminations and fireworks.

After the Parade, the Malayan Contingent still had just over two weeks before they were to sail home on 25th June. The Malayan Victory contingent arrived in Singapore in mid-July, and various Paraders were interviewed.

A news cutting summarises their great adventure in the UK: **"They enjoyed 'great hospitality' and found London's traffic bewildering, the underground exhilarating, the King and Queen charming, the women stunning, the coupon and ration system worrying, but they found it assuring that the war damage in London was less than they had expected."**

After settling back into their normal lives back home, some of the VP representatives from the various battalions and states wrote essays about their great UK adventure for their Victory Parade Souvenir magazine. The booklet makes wonderful reading, while the all black and white photos within must have evoked heartwarming memories in each proud VPer when he got it.

****The irony came a few years later when, without my father's match-making efforts, Sodhy met my Koh Chik Guat Eng in board ship en route to the UK. They fell in love, got married and thus Sgt. Sodhy became my Uncle Rick**

Illuminations June 8 to 15

The following buildings among others will be brightly lit from June 8th to 15th inclusive, from 8 p.m.

| House of Parliament | Notre Dame |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Westminster Abbey | |
| In Whitehall | |
| House Office, War Office, | Cherry Court, Trafalgar |
| Treasury, Home Office, Admiralty, | Square, Strand, West |
| Royal United Service Institute | Chamber, St. James Park |
| and Home Guards Parade | |
| In Trafalgar Square | |
| National Gallery, Admiralty Arch | |
| Victoria Column and Fountain | |
| St. James's Park | St. James's Park |
| London Transport Building, | St. James's Park |
| 25 Abchurch Lane, Whitechapel | |
| London Palace | Westminster, Strand, St. |
| St. Paul's Cathedral | St. Paul's, Strand, Strand |
| Tower of London | Black Lion |
| Royal Mint | Black Lion |
| Richard Green Phoenix | White Lion, Strand, St. |
| Royal Naval College, Greenwich | Black Lion, Strand, St. |

Fireworks June 8

There will be a special display on the Thames between Westminster and Lambeth Bridges on Saturday, June 8th, from 8 p.m. It will probably be necessary to close Westminster and Lambeth Bridges (and perhaps Vauxhall and Waterloo Bridges) to vehicles with consequent restriction of use, and the main services normally running these bridges.

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

On the night concerned, special traffic arrangements will be in force.

TRAMS & TRUCKS: These will run later than on any other night up to 11.30 p.m. or 12 a.m. from the Central Area.

BUSES: The hours of operation leaving the Central Area will run up to about 1 a.m.

GREEN LINE COACHES: These will run from Central Area points about the hour later than the normal departure time shown on the timetable.

UNDERGROUND: The top entry will leave about one hour later than normal from Central Area stations.

Westminster station will be closed at 8 p.m. or before as the night of June 8th and will not be reopened that night.



VICTORY CELEBRATIONS

TRANSPORT ARRANGEMENTS

LONDON TRANSPORT AT LONDON'S SERVICE

How to get there

Closing of Routes

The route of the Floating Colours Procession is like the road will be closed to motor traffic at 5 a.m. at 8.15 a.m. the part of the route of the Floating Colours Procession is closed on the way between the Strand and Victoria Place. The remainder of the route will be closed in stages later on.

Public Transport

The use of public transport is strongly recommended. You can obtain street by street guidance to the nearest station or bus stop by the time, including the time, the street on which the procession is taking place, and the time of the procession.

Car Traffic

If you are coming to see the Floating Colours and you wish to stand by the river, you will find the best place to stand is at the Strand, where you will be able to see the procession and the river. If you wish to see the procession, you will find the best place to stand is at the Strand, where you will be able to see the procession and the river.

Put the label in a conspicuous position as your vehicle approaches the main gate on the bank. You will then be directed by A.A. signs to the parking ground.

The procession will form up at 10.15 a.m. and will be able to reach the Strand. It is strongly recommended that you will be able to reach the Strand. It is strongly recommended that you will be able to reach the Strand.

Vehicle can cross the Strand at the point shown in white on the map up to the latest possible time.

Parking

Parking will be provided only in streets specially designated. It will be provided only in streets specially designated.

The parking spaces are small, drivers must take care not to encroach on the footways or the road.

Taxis

Taxis will also be used to approach roads to the Strand and back. After passengers have been taken to the Strand, taxis will be used to approach roads to the Strand and back.

Special cabs will be provided near the Floating Colours Procession and the last reserved points.

Time of Arrival

You are advised to be in your position early.

Reserved places on Line of Route

There will be no standing room in the following places, which are being reserved for children, disabled persons, and other persons of special interest. The following places are being reserved for children, disabled persons, and other persons of special interest.



Lim Keng Watt



ORIENT LINE, S.S. ORIENT. 2800 TONS
Registered in England. April, May, 1946.

The Victory Celebrations



Malayan troops marching in the Victory Parade, 8 June 1946



L. Lim Keng Watt
R. Amrik Sodhy

HAROLD JAMES and GLADYS ISABEL PAGE in World War Two contd.

By kind permission of their granddaughter Judy Barradell-Smith

List of evacuees from Singapore – official record

PAGE Mrs Gladys Isabel

Evacuated, aged 49, on the **Empress of Japan**. Arrived Liverpool 19.3.42.

Returned to live in Pinner, Middlesex. Wife of **H.J. PAGE** [Civilian Internee]

Empress of Japan – left Singapore harbour on 31.01.42 with 1,221 evacuees on board as The Causeway in Singapore was being blown up by the Japanese [Editor: It was blown up by the British.]. The ship arrived first in Batavia, then set off onwards to England via South Africa. She arrived in Liverpool on 19.3.42, some passengers having disembarked in Cape Town. A number of families of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were on board. It has been suggested that changing the name from the Empress of Japan to the Empress of Scotland during the voyage was in honour of this. It was probably more to do with disassociating themselves from any name connected with Japan. It was almost the last big boat to leave Singapore. Thereafter, various people were able to escape by any small boats they could gain access to.

The following extract was written by Piri and Suze NAPPER's son who was evacuated earlier to the UK & survived. [The NAPPERS were both lost, on the Kuala and Tien Kwang.]

The formal directive from Churchill was that people should stay at their posts in Singapore till the end, destroying facilities and supplies ahead of the Japanese advance. But on 12th February, when the Japanese were only around five miles from the city centre, and were clearly not going to be stopped, there was an official review of what small ships and boats were available to take significant numbers. The potential capacity was established and then instructions sent to the various military and civil organizations, giving them an allocation of passes, and telling them to select personnel who would be more useful trying to escape and continue the war effort rather than face certain death or capture in the next few days. In general these people had to leave without letting colleagues know what was going on, to minimize loss of morale and a stampede at the docks of unauthorized people trying to escape. [N.B. Harold Page was one of those chosen to escape.]

The official flotilla comprised over 40 vessels, including a large number of small boats (e.g. launches) and a few larger ones (e.g. the Kuala and Tien Kwang). The personnel selected were mostly military, but there were 300 passes for key civilians, (e.g. Fire Service, ARP, and Public Works Department [75 passes]) and a large party of nurses. There were also a considerable number of women and children. These probably included many of those who had spurned the earlier opportunities and insisted on staying with their husbands. On 13th February the officials had to work out who should get the passes and notify them (most were already on duty of course), and then the personnel had to get to the docks, with minimal hand luggage, find their allocated boat and board it. With the docks as ever under heavy bombardment, warehouse fires raging and unauthorized people trying to muscle in, the chaos can be imagined.

Three employees of the RRI (Kuala Lumpur Rubber Research Institute) including Mr. Harold Page, the Director of the RRI, Mr. Sharp and Mr. Owen (whose eye witness account follows) were allocated to the Tien Kwang – an Auxiliary Patrol Vessel of 787 tons, taking 300-400 passengers. The other boat was the Kuala – also an Auxiliary patrol Vessel of 954 tons, taking over 500 passengers. The Kuala was the only vessel of the flotilla taking women and children, maybe around 200, including a large contingent of nurses and some doctors.

The two ships sailed together, and were guided through the minefield outside the harbour, the Tien Kwang following the Kuala. They had instructions to sail to Batavia, in Java, via the Straits of Rhio, Barhala [Berhala?] and Banka, nearly 600 miles, following the route most of the earlier ships had taken. However, even by now the Japanese had control of the Banka Strait, over 200 miles away, taking the key airport of Palembang the next day. This controlled both the oilfield nearby and the Banka Strait. Many of the people escaping by boat in the days before were killed or captured in the area.

The Japanese very soon had control of both northern and southern Sumatra, with the only feasible escape route being through central Sumatra – 250 miles up the Indragiri river and over to the Port of Padang on the west coast which was still open. This was the route organised at the last minute in an SOE-related operation, providing provisions, accommodation and transport to help move large numbers of escapees across to Padang.

Immediately south of Singapore are two archipelagos, the Rhio and the Lingga, owned by the Dutch (now Indonesia), comprising hundreds of islands, mostly small and uninhabited. The immediate plan for the two ships was to travel by night and at daybreak seek shelter as close as possible to such an island. They would camouflage the ships with foliage from the jungle and hope they would be undetected by enemy planes until they could resume their journey at night.

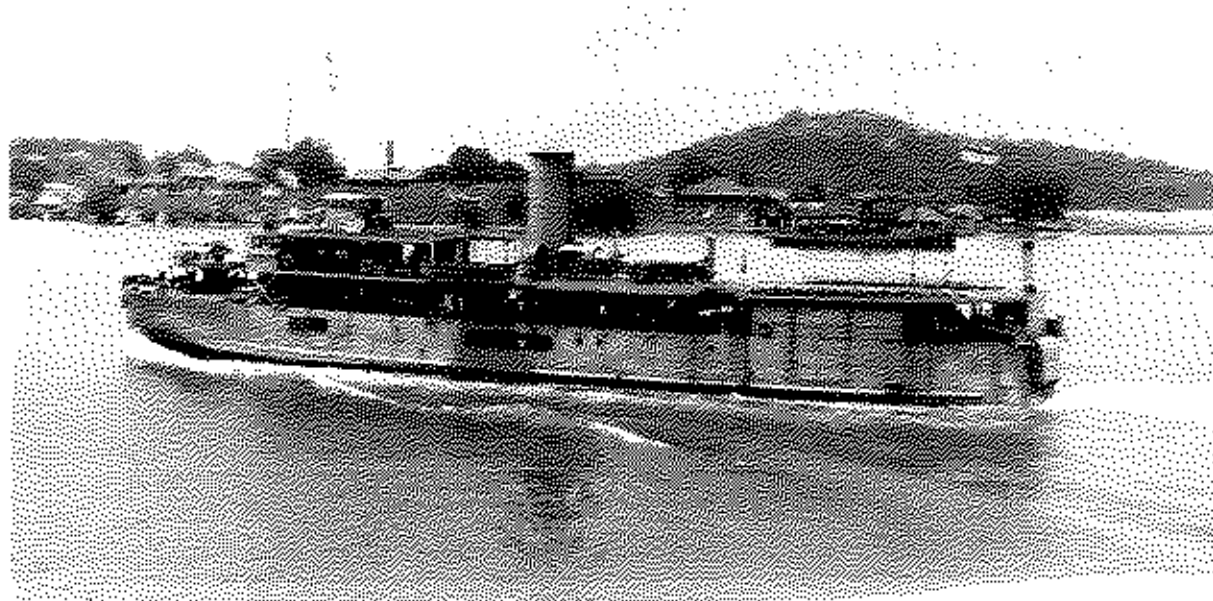
The first morning they reached the small island of Pom Pong around 50 miles away. They anchored 200-300 yards from the shore, and a similar distance apart, with the Tien Kwang the closer to the shore. At daybreak the ships despatched boats to gather foliage from the island to camouflage the ships. Pom Pong was a small uninhabited island, covered with jungle, with sides rising steeply from the water, except for a small beach on either side. It rose to 200-300 feet, and was around half a mile wide and a mile long. There were two small springs, but no food (e.g coconuts). At about 11am Saturday 14th February 1942, the following events happened, as described by one of the R.R.I. personnel **Gwilym Owen**, in a letter to my grandparents (**Mr. & Mrs. NAPPER**) after the war.

Gwilym Owen's eye witness account of the bombing of the Tien Kwang and Kuala.

Both ships were anchored close together near an uninhabited island in the Lingga Archipelago on the morning of the 14th February 1942. On board the Kuala were women and children together with some men, the total number of passengers and crew estimated at about 500. Mrs. Napper was a passenger on this ship. On board the Tien Kwang were men only, members of the armed forces and civilians, the total number estimated to be about 300. Mr. Napper and the writer were passengers on this ship.

The Japanese bombers came over and dropped a salvo of bombs. The Tien Kwang was not touched then but the Kuala received a direct hit and was set on fire immediately. It is known that many people were killed on board but, of course, the exact number is not known. I distinctly remember seeing hundreds of people jumping over the side of the ship but we were not sufficiently close to recognise individuals with the naked eye. When this happened, we received orders to abandon ship. I did not go overboard immediately as I realised I could never reach the island. I can't swim and I did not have a lifebelt. I remember looking over the side after a short interval and seeing Messrs **Napper, Page and Sharp** amongst hundreds of others swimming towards the island. As far as I could judge, my three colleagues were not in difficulties then. Just at that moment the Japanese bombers came over again and I rushed down to the bowels of the ship. The Tien Kwang was hit but apparently no serious damage was done, at least the ship was not sinking. I shall not attempt to describe what I saw when I came to the side of the ship again but suffice it to say that it was evident that most of the bombs dropped by the Japanese bombers when they came over a second time must have fallen in the water between the ship and the island and the result can be imagined. Those who were still swimming were too far away to be recognized and I did not see **Napper, Page or Sharp**. In that brief interval of time (I went overboard myself soon afterwards) I did not look to see whether or not the Kuala was still afloat but judging by her condition when I saw her before the Japanese bombers came over a second time it is highly probable that she was already sunk.

I jumped overboard when a raft was dropped into the water from the top deck. I clung to this (along with others) and we were carried away by a very strong current which flowed parallel with the island and despite our efforts we failed to reach this particular island. We were picked up by natives in a rowing boat about 8 hours later.



Pre WW2 picture of Tien Kwang. It was designated as an auxiliary anti submarine boat during this period. 787 tons. Built 1925

Soon after I jumped into the water, the planes came over a third time and more bombs were dropped. I got the impression then, as did many others, that the enemy machine-gunned the people in the water but there seems to be some doubt about this. However, perhaps this is of little importance now except in so far as it might account for a number of deaths at this stage. When the immediate danger was over I looked back and saw that the Tien Kwang was still afloat but there was no sign of the Kuala.

That describes briefly the events as I observed them at the time. It is clear from the foregoing that I cannot state definitely at what precise moment Mr. and Mrs. Napper lost their lives. It is known that neither reached the island near which the ships were anchored (Mr. Page can vouch for this) and it is unlikely that they reached any of the other islands in the archipelago as it is believed that all those who did succeed in reaching any of the numerous islands were accounted for later.

It remains to consider at what stage in these happenings did Mr. and Mrs. Napper lose their lives. [Judy B-S states that her grandparents were particularly interested to know if there was any evidence as to whether Piri or Suze died first – for legal reasons.] It is, of course, not known whether Mrs. Napper was killed or severely wounded while still on the Kuala. If the latter was the case she would have perished soon afterwards because it must be remembered that the ship was on fire. Assuming that she jumped overboard, then she was in the water several seconds before her husband jumped over the side of the other ship. In this connection it should be noted that Napper was seen swimming more than half way between the ships and the island. The question arises would Mrs. Napper have reached the shores of the island by this time if she had survived the first bombing? That is a question I cannot answer but can only suggest that if she was a strong swimmer there was every chance that she would be very near the island at any rate if she was still alive at that stage.

Immediately after Napper was seen swimming the enemy planes came over the second time and dropped several bombs. Since Napper never reached the island I am inclined to think that he was either killed or injured then. It is possible, of course, that both of them suffered the same fate at this stage, but the fact remains that Napper was definitely seen immediately before the second bombing whereas as far as I can tell Mrs. Napper was not seen.

In the end around 600 people made it to the island. Of the rest, say 300, some were killed outright by the three direct hits on the Kuala, some drowned swimming for the shore, many were killed by the subsequent bombing attacks on the people in the water, and some were swept away from the island by the strong current, to be picked up in time like Mr. Owen, or suffered a long drawn out fate by exposure and drowning. As well as rafts, all moveable floating material was torn from the ships before they were abandoned and thrown into the water. The survivors on Pom Pong Island were taken off by various boats of different types over the following week. The first batch of 200 women, children and the badly injured were taken on board by the small Dutch ship *Tangjong Pinang*, bound for Batavia, which was soon to be captured by the Japanese. [Editor: This ship was also sunk by the Japanese with the loss of all lives.] Most of the others, and those swept away but picked up, like Mr. Owen, managed to get to the mouth of the Indragiri River, maybe via a short stay on one of the inhabited islands, with the help of the organised search and rescue teams. There they were joined by survivors from other boats and made their way across Sumatra to Padang. But the majority failed to get a ship out to Batavia or Colombo in time and were taken prisoner when the Japanese arrived in early March. And not every ship out of Padang reached safety. Of the surviving R.R.I. personnel, Mr. Page and Mr. Owen ended up captured and interned in Padang, but Mr. Sharp managed to get away to safety.

Singapore capitulated to the Japanese on 15th February 1942 [To be continued in July]

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

David Wingate adds the following information about his father Major Eric Wingate:

He was the son of Major Reginald Ramsay Wingate DCL who assisted Bandsman Rendle VC in the same action when he was awarded the VC at Wulverghem, Belgium on 20th November 1914.

At St. Edwards School, Oxford, Eric Wingate was given a commission in the TA and his first command was as a young 2/Lt. with a platoon of the Devonshires guarding the Phillips Ship Yards in Dartmouth. He went on to become an intelligence officer and volunteered to go out to the Far East after VE Day. His MID (NE Europe) and MBE (NEI) were awarded for gallantry.

After the war, he was given a job as a shipping agent with the Mansfields Co. in Singapore, made a manager in Penang in the 1950s, then Director in 1964 and soon afterwards Chairman of the Straits Group of Companies. He was also Chairman of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce, Straits Steamship Co., Mansfields & Co., Sarawak Steamship Co., the Missions to Seamen, Watt & Ackerman Engineering, Singapore Outward Bound School, Rediffusion Singapore, Ocean Properties and various others, also a Director of Malaysia/Singapore Airlines and Gleneagles Hospital.

He retired to Dartmouth in 1974 where he became a Director of the Dartmouth Harbour Board, Chairman of the Dartmouth & Kingswear Society, general committee member of the Dartmouth Yacht Club, a town & district councillor & was made an Honorary Citizen in 1989. As Mayor Elect of Dartmouth, he died before taking office.

**TRANSCRIPT OF THE DIARY KEPT BY SIR ALASTAIR BLAIR-KERR
OF HIS ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE IN 1942 WITH HIS WIFE ESTHER (nec FOWLER-WRIGHT)**

By kind permission of their daughter Linda Hughes

February 13th

Jap pattern bombing increases. We are dive bombed and machine gunned several times. Shelling increases to a continuous barrage all over the town. We are cut off from the rest of the battalion (1/SSVF), and are receiving no ration. We live on bully beef and tea. We hear of fierce fighting on the Siglap sector; that the Japs have broken through and are advancing on Kallang. We are attached to the Manchesters on the Bidadari/Kallang front. No sleep for 48 hours and go off at 9.30 p.m. Heavy shelling; wakened by a shell bursting a few yards away. Shelling continues. No sleep for the rest of the night.

Feb 14th

Same as the 13th. Japs break through at Bidadari and we put up a continuous field of fire (machine gun) over the whole front. Shelling gets more intense and Japs are continuously in the sky. Telephone communication throughout the city is practically nil.

Feb 15th

We are joined by an anti-tank unit and put up the tank road block on Sir Arthur's Bridge. Our 25-pounders are doing a splendid work judging by the intensive shelling from the Japs. The Japs have continuous air reconnaissance and the moment we move our guns into a new position, shelling starts. The deadliest Jap weapon is their 42" mortar. We have to keep moving our positions to avoid mortar shells. Dive bombing and machine gunning and shelling continue all day without a break.

Artillery fire reduced about 4.30 p.m. and stops about 5.30 p.m. Rumours of a surrender start and circulate. One is that if Jap tanks appear at Kallang with their slits open, we must not fire on them. "Fortress" denies all rumours of capitulation. We believe it is "5th" Column and carry on. More rumours of Capitulation. At 7.30 mortar fire stops and we stop. Silence continues. No further orders until 9.15 p.m. We get orders to lay down arms, return to unit if possible and await further orders.

I pass on orders to the platoon (to all the machine gun and Northover projectors) and obtain permission to go to the General Hospital by car. Get through by 9.45 p.m. and meet Esther in Ward 2. Place crammed with wounded. Badly needed. A bit shell shocked and tired. Esther says their unit has to stay. I suggest getting away and she hastily packs essentials. We say goodbye to Miss Steward (matron whose permission Esther obtains). We get into Irving-Bell's M.C. car and have a look at the docks. They are ablaze from end to end and every boat in the harbour is burning. The streets are badly shell holed and all the wires are hanging down. The streets are deserted. Buildings are burning. Esther is in uniform. We return to platoon H.Q. at the Gas works, report and ask to see Mr. Henshall. He is not there. We say goodbye to Bob Gray who remains. We return to Clifford Pier. No Japs stop us. Presumably with Esther in uniform they take us for a medical unit. We meet some Australians and an officer from the Loyals. We decide to join up and get away. Each person is detailed to get supplies and we meet at Union Building (a temporary dressing station). There we meet Morris Edgar from K.L. He says he will come with us. We get into a sampan and row out to a launch. Engine is not working. We paddle the thing out to the break water. After we get into mid-stream, we cannot control the launch and drift out to sea. Danger of shore batteries opening up on us. So silence essential. Australians quite uncontrollable. I put Esther in charge of the launch and they "pipe down." We have little idea of the minefields but in any event we could not control the launch and have to take pot luck and forget it. We drift on to the rocks at St. John's Island by 6 a.m.

Feb 16th

We left Singapore at 2.30 a.m. and by 6 a.m. reached St. John's Island. The Jap internees were there, so we decide to get away. Pulled off the rocks and drifted all morning out towards Raffles Light. We try to make for one of the islands but the current too strong. The boat has 14 in it and begins to leak. The Jap "recce" planes are over frequently and we have to take cover in the launch. We are picked up by a Malay in a sampan. Esther and I and Sumby were taken to one of the islands.

The sea is absolutely clear blue. The sun is shining, the mass of little islands look grand. After 2½ months of war, we forget all about it. Looking back we see the smoke of Singapore which is burning all over the place; we also see the large columns of smoke on the right from Pulau Sambu (oil tanks had been set on fire a few days previously. We thought the Japs had done it. Learned later the British Navy had done it). The Malays on the island gave us coffee and bananas and coconuts. We were almost tempted to stay there for a few days; but we

must get on as the Jap planes are over frequently on the look out for escapees. We are taken by the Malays to another island where we bathe in the sea and bask in the sun for a couple of hours. The island is practically uninhabited and we get suspicious of "5th" column. We get another Malay to take us to another island. There we meet a group of military engineers (Danes most of them). Their officer informs us his boat is not large enough to take us and the engine is broken down. We get the Malays to take us away in the evening in a sampan with a sail. It is delightful sailing amongst the little islands. I never knew before that the sea south of Singapore was so beautiful. We reach an island (Kepala) about 7.15 p.m. and make for a bungalow at the top of the hill. There we meet 3 officers from the Punjabis (also escapees) and spend the night with them. The bungalow has been vacated by a Dutch planter who pushed off a few days before. This is the first night of our honeymoon, although we were married a week before; and it's the first time I have slept in pyjamas for 2½ months! Slept for 10 hours solidly and feel much better.

Feb 17th

Get up at 9 o'clock feeling much better. The others (Punjabis) leave about 9.30 in the Police Launch which they took from Singapore. We have no transport but find an old dilapidated rowing boat. We try to improvise a sail out of a bed sheet, but it is not successful. Two Loyals officers arrive on another part of the island, after a short chat, they decide to push on. They have some of their own men and the boat is full. We set out alone with one oar. We cannot control the boat and it goes round in circles. We hail another sampan in the distance and it draws alongside. There are 3 other regular officers and they take us with them. We call at another island for a feed of coconuts and fruits. The Malays inform us that we ought to go to an island called Murow. We decide to go and set sail about 6.30 p.m. We reach Murow about 11.30 p.m. We spend the night in a small boat by the quayside.

Feb 18th

In the morning, we collect some provisions and I get a rifle and 2 bandeliers of .303 ammunition from one chap who has several rifles and a tommy gun. We find there are about 150 people here - all soldiers. Esther is the only woman there. We meet Major Somervell (F.M.S. Volunteer) and he gives us information on a possible way of escape across Sumatra. The Jap recon planes are over and we take cover and buy some Malay clothes (sarongs) from the Malays and hide the khaki as it is much too easily spotted from the air.

A few of us set off in a sailing boat at 11 o'clock and reach a spot about 5 miles away. We climb to the top of a hill and find hidden among the trees a small hut with a lot of food and water and medical supplies. The hut was used as a store and dressing station. We intend to wait there until Friday but there is news that the Japs are on the island next to Murow. So we push off with Major Somervell and Capt. Thomas. [Esther is in one boat with the wounded chaps; I go with Thomas]. The tide is unsuitable and at 11 p.m. we are still where we started. However, we decide to row hard all night and try and get across the strait to Sumatra.

Feb 19th

At 7 a.m. we see the low lying hills of Sumatra in the distance. We turn South West and make the mainland by 10 o'clock. After going ashore, Somervell's boat pulls up beside us. There is a difference of opinion between Somervell and Thomas. Thomas decides to spend the night at a village some 4 miles away. The boats are separated but I get a message back to Esther and she persuades Somervell to come back to the village also. The party spends the night there, after checking that there are no Japs in the vicinity. We get word that Japs have taken Palembang airdrome and are advancing north to Bencoolen.

Esther and I sleep in a back room of a Chinese shop, a dingy little place, but being exhausted we soon fall asleep, despite mosquitoes. We sleep on camp beds. My camp bed falls to the floor about 4 a.m. and we have to share the remaining camp bed for the rest of the night.

Feb 20th

We make all necessary purchases in the morning. Somervell charts a large Chinese Tongkang with 2 men to sail it. We decide to share the cost with him. Our Straits Settlements dollars appear to be acceptable to everyone. (I left Singapore with 50/- Esther had about 400/-). It is all we got away with, and apart from that we are penniless. We set out about midday on the Tongkang. The party is now 23. Some are wounded and Esther gives them medical attention daily. Somervell has malaria. We all have bad tempers! We are all dressed in the most fantastic clothes to avoid spotting from the air. We have enough food and water for 3 days.

The sail down the coast of Sumatra is quite uneventful, although we are on the look out continually for Jap patrol boats. We have 8 rifles and 2 tommy guns with us and decide to engage anything within reason, and a boarding party is detailed. Somervell has received signed instructions from Lyon of the Gordons (who has gone ahead) to make for Pergaj Raja, up the Indragiri River.

[To be continued in July]

OBITUARIES

DONALD IAN NICHOLAS FELL Born 3rd May 1946 and died 16th February 2018

Jonathan Moffatt writes:

We were shocked and saddened to receive the news of Donald's death at home in Axminster. Donald was a key member of 'team MVG', present at all our services and events and extremely supportive of Rosemary's leadership role within the group. On behalf of all MVG members, I'd like to extend our condolences to Rosemary & family members and reiterate our support at this sad time. I know she has received many messages from MVG members.

Donald had a great ability to engage with people and we all remember his sense of humour, love of sport, particularly rugby, and interest in other people. I knew of his RAF Service but not the details, and little of his early life and his involvements after leaving the Forces. These gaps in knowledge were superbly filled in two eulogies at his funeral service which, at my request, are reproduced in edited form below.

The funeral service at the beautiful old Minster Church, Axminster, was well attended with MVG members well represented. We reflected on Donald's life and shared memories at the afternoon tea that followed the service. Donations were made to the RAF Benevolent Fund.



Reminiscences of Donald's life given by his cousin, Anthony Denton.

Donald was born in Edinburgh, but his parents moved to Crieff in Perthshire where they started a nursing home. His father, Dr. Frank Fell had fought in WW1 with the Black Watch, but qualified as a doctor between the wars and served in the RAMC in WW2. His mother, Doris, trained as a nurse. Sadly, his father died when Donald was 5 and his mother took him to live in Kenya with her brother (my father) whose wife had died in childbirth having me. We were brought up as brothers.

Donald went to school in Kenya until he was 13 when he returned to England to continue his education at Epsom College. He excelled in all sports – somewhat at the expense of his academic success, but aged 19 he was accepted as a Naval Cadet at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth. He planned to join the Fleet Air Arm to fly the new swing wing aircraft, but when these were cancelled he left the Navy and returned home and spent a year buying and selling antiques with his mother. He developed a love of mahogany furniture, old silver and glass and paintings both oils and watercolours.

He then decided to return to service life and joined the RAF – as detailed below. In 1978, his mother became very ill and he was obliged to leave the RAF to care for her, but she needed specialist care in a home and died in August. During this time at home, he sailed with my father (his uncle) and on one of these trips to Guernsey met Rosemary in Sark. Their friendship blossomed and in October that year they were married and returned to the family home in Axminster.

Donald's knowledge and love of sailing, together with his charisma and gift of the gab, enabled him to set up his own ships' chandlery business which he and Rosemary ran very successfully for 10 years, until bought out by the Axminster Power Tool Company. After a short time dealing in antiques again, they were offered a small coffee shop which they took over and set up a highly individual business with Donald in his element entertaining the regular customers with tales of all sorts. The coffee shop became almost like a club. Unfortunately, he damaged the same knee he'd hurt playing rugby for the RAF and despite surgery the knee did not respond well, so he and Rosemary decided to sell the coffee shop and Donald retired.

Donald had many interests, and was very knowledgeable in many fields. But his main love was sport of all kinds which he watched avidly on Sky TV, followed by antique programmes. He was also interested in military history, and with Rosemary's background in the Far East Theatre of WW2, read widely about the Malayan Campaign and collected books on the subject. He was a great raconteur, had a quick wit and was full of funny and interesting anecdotes. He was altogether a truly remarkable and amazing man and will be sorely missed by Rosemary, myself and his many friends.

Reminiscences of Donald's RAF career 1975 – 1978, given by a friend, Gp. Capt. R.G. Leonard OBE., RAF (Retd.)

I first met Don nearly 43 years ago in 1975 when we were both junior officers posted to Gan in the Indian Ocean to handle all RAF transport through the island. I had been there for a few months before Don was posted in as my boss. No-one on Gan knew who he was, and we were all a bit apprehensive about meeting this newcomer. However, my first meeting with him at the 'Blue Lagoon' transit hotel soon put us at our ease. There he was sitting on a bar stool flamboyantly regaling all and sundry with tales, with a glass of beer in his hand. That was the start of a long and entertaining friendship.

We met up again at RAF Lyneham where we shared a bachelor pad in Hilmarton with 2 other RAF personnel and a member of the Army Air Corps who 'lived' occasionally under the stairwell. As the oldest – and loudest – member of the household, Don had the largest room and organised us all. We spent many happy hours in the White Horse pub in Compton Bassett where Don had his own glass which turned out to be larger than a pint! At this time he played a lot of squash and represented the RAF in this sport as well. They were very happy days.

I remember him as a larger than life character, who could get himself out of any situation by the sheer force of his personality and confidence. His enthusiasm was infectious and he always had that certain charm and presence. One of my favourite memories of Don was one Sunday after lunch in the Officers' Mess at RAF Lyneham. We were sitting around in the ante room reading the papers and it was like a morgue. Suddenly, Don put down his paper and announced in a very loud voice, "My God, Queen Victoria's dead." It caused the well intended response.

LT. COL. IAN HYWEL-JONES MBE MC. Died on 12th January 2018 aged 85.

We are sad to report the death of Ian Hywel-Jones who was married to MVG member, the late Marilyn Hywel-Jones. Although Ian did not attend many MVG functions, nevertheless, he did support Marilyn in all her activities in the MVG and her attendance at most of the Group's annual events. A service of Thanksgiving for his life was held at noon on 15th March at All Saints' Church, Fulham.



**Ian and Marilyn Hywel-Jones
on their 50th Wedding Anniversary**

Tribute to Lt. Col. Ian Hywel-Jones, given at the Service by Christopher Miers.

Ian was a man of many parts – he sang with the Treasury Singers in Whitehall, composed poetry, wrote and produced pantomimes, was a keen and competent artist in pastels and travelled widely. He was also a bookworm with an extensive library. After leaving school, he trained with the Royal Welch Fusiliers, was commissioned from Sandhurst into the South Wales Borderers, and stationed in Germany. Later, aged 22 he was sent to Malaya during the Emergency, where he was awarded a well-deserved Military Cross: *"For personal courage and tireless devotion to duty, and the display of initiative and leadership during operations..... His splendid example is universally acknowledged by all officers and men in the Battalion."* After Malaya, in 1958, he was sent to Oman with small teams deployed to end the rebellion of rebels in the Jebel Akhdar an 8,000 ft. mountain, and was given temporary command of an SAS troop there. In 1963 he was posted to Berlin where he met Marilyn and they were married in 1965. She accompanied Ian when he returned to an Aden posting and they both retained an enduring fascination for the Middle East, travelling extensively throughout the region. Postings continued in Germany and Belfast, during the troubles, Abu Dhabi and in 1977 as Assistant Military Attache in Teheran until the Shah was deposed, and they were evacuated. Before retiring from the army in 1982 Ian had one more appointment as a military attaché in Saudi Arabia. He then took on the civilian job of Attache Liaison Officer in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for which he was awarded an MBE in 1997. Ian then devoted 15 years of his life as Project Co-ordinator in the preparation of the authoritative history of the VC and GC and their recipients. The 3-volume book is 2,444 pages long and is a great tribute to him. Ian spent his last days at Queen's Court Care Home in Wimbledon, but during a recent visit to a hospital a consultant reported: *"Thank you for referring to me this lovely 85 year old gentleman."* (Edited).

FERGUS ANCKORN. Born 10th December 1918, died 22nd March 2018 aged 99.
Magician and Burma Railway Survivor.

Fergus Anckorn began his career as a conjurer called "Wizardus" aged 18 – the youngest member of the Magic Circle and its oldest and longest-serving member when he died. He used his skills to advantage as a FEPOW on the Burma Railway, using magic tricks to save his life and he became known as "the conjurer on the River Kwai." In 1939, when war broke out, he was working as a company clerk in Sevenoaks, but enlisted as a gunner in the 118th Field Regiment Royal Artillery where he met Ronald Searle. They were both shipped out to the Far East, arriving in Singapore in early 1942. His first narrow escape came two days after arrival while on duty at the docks. He was dive-bombed by the Japs and to escape, plunged into the sea. On emerging he discovered that 5 of his companions had been blown to pieces. Just before Singapore fell he was ordered to drive a lorry carrying a live shell which had jammed. He ran straight into an air-raid shelter and the shell exploded. Barely alive he was taken to the Alexandra Military Hospital where the surgeon, on learning he was a conjurer, decided not to amputate his right hand which was dangling by a piece of skin. On 14th February, he witnessed and survived the Japanese attack on the hospital and massacre of about 200 patients and hospital staff. The survivors were taken to Changi where he recovered from his injuries before being sent to work on the Burma-Siam Railway, beginning at the Wampo Viaduct. Here he had another escape after having creosote poured over him by a Jap guard, causing his skin to blister and swell. He was taken to Chungkai Camp Hospital. As he recovered he began to do simple magic tricks to entertain his fellow POWs, coming to the attention of the sadistic Jap Camp Commandant, Osato Yoshio, who was a devotee of magic. Anckorn performed many tricks for the Japs – often using food as props – which was then given to him. In this way he was able to supplement his and his fellow POWs' meagre rations. He was repatriated on the *Orbiter Rangoon* weighing just six stone. After the war, he married Lucille, his pre-war sweetheart, and worked as a teacher at West Kent College, but still continued to perform as a magician.

BELINDA CORNER. Died on 27th March 2018.

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Belinda, wife of MVG member John Corner in Australia. We send our deepest sympathies to John and his family at this sad time. Belinda had been unwell for some time and was living in a care home. John writes: *"I am so relieved I was with her at the end; she passed peacefully and quickly and is at peace now. I can't believe I won't again see my beloved wife of 53 years. All Katie's family (John's daughter) came to see her off from the Home which handled things so well. At Katie's that evening we shared memories and raised a glass to absent friends."*

NEWS IN BRIEF

1. **Liz Moggie** has sent the following information:-

- a) **The Changi Museum**, which has been taken over by the National Museum of Singapore, is to close for 2 years from 1st April 2018 for alterations. The plaques, which are no longer wanted at the Changi Museum, will be transferred to **The Battlebox** which is now under the Directorship of **Jeya Ayadurai** and his company. Sadly, the Sime Road Plaque is in an even worse state than before. **[Editor: Perhaps with a change at the Changi Museum we should seek to cut our losses and have a new Plaque made in a more weather-resistant material which will not tarnish, and present it to The Battlebox? Your thoughts and comments would be very welcome.]**
- b) **Haw Par Villa** has also been taken over by **Jeya's Company**. This is open every day from 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.
- c) **The Raffles Hotel** is closed for renovations – and due to open again mid-2018.

2. **Newspaper reports in December 2017.**

Several reports in the Malaysian press covered the marking of the 80th anniversary of the Nanjing massacre in China at special ceremonies. A **New Straits Times** report said that **President Xi Jinping** attended but kept a low profile. But it is still a painful reminder of the 1937 massacre of an estimated 300,000 people by Japanese troops – although a post-war Allied tribunal put the figure at 142,000. There are still conservative Japanese politicians and scholars who deny that a massacre took place. Ties between the 2 countries have also been plagued by long-running territorial disputes over a cluster of East China Sea islets, and suspicion in China about efforts by Japan to amend its pacifist constitution. However, the 2 countries have sought to get relations back on track and **Abe** and **Xi** met last year during a regional summit in Vietnam.

3. **Emperor Akihito** is set to abdicate the Chrysanthemum Throne on 30th April 2019 and hand the throne over to his son, **Crown Prince Naruhito** and his wife **Masako**. **Akihito** has always stood for peace despite the war-time legacy of his father **Hirohito**, whose wartime memoirs were recently sold in Manhattan for US\$275,000 to **Dr. Katsuya Takasu**, a Japanese Plastic Surgeon working in America, who has used social media to praise Adolf Hitler and deny the Holocaust and the Nanjing massacres.

4. **Finally** – a WW2 underground bunker has been found in the grounds of Ipoh Airport – reports the Malay Mail. Believed to have been constructed between 1940 and 1941, the concrete shelter was built to protect Allied forces from Japanese military air strikes.

WEBSITES TO VISIT

<http://fepowhistory.com/2018/03/23/fergus-ankorn-the-conjuror-on-the-kwai/> Fergus Anckorn's obituary

<http://news.navy.gov.au/en/Mar2018/Community/4519/Remembering-heroism-and-sacrifice-of-Australian-Army-Nurses.htm#.Wq5JiEoSKDk.email=0A=0A> - Article in Australian Naval magazine.

https://www.facebook.com/groups/375356659604268/?notif_id=1518183412656582¬if_t=group_added_to_group&ref=notif MVG's Facebook which is now fully open.

https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jan/22/bodies-of-second-world-war-sailors-in-java-sea-dumped-in-mass-grave?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Messenger - loss of sunken war graves from ships sent by **Robbert van de Rijdt** from the Netherlands War Graves Foundation.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions are now due. We have kept the subscription at £20 sterling for another year despite the fact that postage has gone up again. But please note that the Australian subscriptions are paid in Australian dollars at a different rate.

Please read the enclosed Subscriptions Letter which gives the details of how subscriptions may be paid. There is a tear-off section to be returned with your cheques which should be made out to:

Mrs. R. Fell Malayan Volunteers Group

and sent to **Rosemary** at the address on P.27.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

WYMONDHAM – Sunday 13th May 2018. Annual FEPOW Service at the Church of Our Lady & St. Thomas of Canterbury

If anyone would like to attend this service on behalf of the MVG and Volunteers and lay a wreath, please let **Rosemary** know.

Entrance is by ticket only and can be obtained from: administrator@wymondhamrcchurch.org.uk The service starts at 12.30pm and a finger buffet lunch is served afterwards. This is a good opportunity to view the names of loved ones in the Memorial Books, housed in the FEPOW Chapel, but please check with **Peter Wiseman** to see if your names are listed at: phandtmwiseman@gmail.com **Peter** is the Historian and Archivist for the Church.

NMA – Sunday 13th May 2018. Annual Gardening and Plot Maintenance.

We have given up on the NMA replying to our offer to pay them a lump sum to maintain the plot in perpetuity. They obviously don't need our money which has now been earmarked for other projects! As long as we are able, we will continue to deal with the annual clean-up and pruning of the shrubs ourselves.

NMA – Wednesday 15th August 2018. Annual Service to commemorate V-J Day. 12 noon in the Chapel.

In a departure from the usual service in our Memorial Garden Plot, we are holding the service in the Chapel, which has been booked for us from 11.30 to 13.30. [See Report in A.K.52 Ps. 3 & 4]. The noise from the LaFarge machinery, just behind the Plot, has become unbearable and holding our services there has become untenable. Weather permitting, the wreath can be laid on the Memorial Stone in the Plot afterwards. More details will be given in July.

PERTH Western Australia. Merdeka Day Service in Kings Park. August 2018. Date TBA.

We thank **Bill and Elizabeth Adamson** for organising this annual service in conjunction with the MBVA WA Inc.

LONDON – Saturday 20th October 2018. Annual Reunion and Luncheon at the RAF Club, Piccadilly – 12-5pm

Please put this date in your diaries. A lighter menu, which was much appreciated last year, will be served and announced, with the cost, in July. We are delighted to announce that the talk is to be given by MVG member **Mary Harris**, entitled, **"Bouches Inutiles. Who were they and what happened to them?"** If you are intrigued by this title, do come to the lunch.

LONDON – Thursday 8th November 2018. Cross Planting Ceremony and Service at Westminster Abbey.

We thank **Alan and Karen Harney** for attending this ceremony and representing the MVG at the FEPOW Plot in 2017. Please let **Rosemary** know if you would like to join them this year, so that we can apply for tickets in good time. We are grateful to **Revd. Pauline Simpson** for organising our MVG Cross for the Plot.

LONDON – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Sunday Service and March Past at the Cenotaph in Whitehall

We plan to apply for the 12 tickets we were allocated in 2017 for the Service and Parade. Please let **Rosemary** know in good time if you wish to march and before August when the application has to be made digitally. Individual tickets will be supplied for each marcher, giving details of your full name, current address, place and date of birth. As this is the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1, and falls on Armistice Day itself, there will possibly be a huge demand for tickets.

CANADA – Sunday 11th November 2018. Remembrance Day Commemorative Service at the Cenotaph, Toronto, Ontario

We are delighted to announce that **Sallie Hammond**, our Secretary in Canada, has offered to lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday. Please would Canadian (and American) members let **Sallie** know if they would like to join her.

Sallie says that her husband **Alex** and son **Jonathan** will join her and she will lay a wreath for the MVG Canada/USA. She will be joined by **Wendy Freeman** and **Vilma Howe**.

Sallie has sent the following information about wreath laying in Canada:

Wreaths may or may not be part of a commemorative service, though they are very common for ceremonies on 11th November. During the wreath laying, appropriate music may be played, such as **"O God, Our Help in Ages Past"** or **"O Valiant Hearts."**

The wreath is usually carried by someone walking alongside the person who is to lay the wreath. The two approach, briefly pause, exchange the wreath, place it (often on a stand), step back, pause for a moment (military personnel will salute), turn to the right and walk off.

Protocol dictates the order in which the wreaths will be laid. According to the Royal Canadian Legion, depending on who is present, the order of precedence is:

- A representative of the Queen (Governor General, Lieutenant Governor)
- A representative of the Government of Canada (highest ranking official present)
- A representative of a provincial government
- A representative of a municipal government
- A Silver Cross Recipient
- A representative of the Canadian Armed Forces
- A representative of the Royal Canadian Legion
- Representatives of other organisations and individuals (MVG)

The order in which wreaths are laid may vary to suit the ceremony at regional and local levels. However, it is imperative that a wreath representing Canada be laid before all others.

- National Anthem: **O Canada**
- **God Save the Queen**

Sallie adds – if anyone needs accommodation to be booked please let her know. Toronto is a beautiful city even in November – but you will need warm clothing as November can be chilly.

MALAYSIA – Remembrance Sunday Services in KL and Penang – TBA

NMA – Monday 10th December 2018. Anniversary of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse.

Please contact **Bob Hall** for details. We hope it will be less cold this year.

SINGAPORE – 12th September 2020. Service at Kranji CWG Cemetery to mark the 75th Anniversary of the signing of the Japanese surrender.

A future date to keep in mind to join the MVG for the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Singapore.

BOOKMARK designed and donated by Donald Fell



ANNUAL EVENTS

FEBRUARY

Perth WA

Stirling Service - Fall of Singapore
Bicton Service - Vynner Brooke Sinking

FEBRUARY

Muntok, Sumatra

Radji Beach Service - Army nurses massacre

APRIL

Wymondham

FEPOW Church Service

AUGUST

NMA

V-J day Service

AUGUST

Perth WA

Remembrance Service

OCTOBER

London

Reunion and Luncheon

NOVEMBER

London

Cross Planting Ceremony
Remembrance Sunday

NOVEMBER

Canada

Remembrance Sunday

DECEMBER

NMA

Remembrance Service for
HMS Repulse & HMS Prince of Wales

FUTURE SPECIAL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 2020 - Singapore
Kranji Service - 75th Anniversary
of Japanese Surrender

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP



SSVF Badge



FMSVF Badge



JVE Badge



KEDAH Badge



KELANTAN Badge

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

This bookmark is enclosed with the printed copies of the April newsletter. It was designed by Donald Fell and it was his wish that it should be given to MVG members. If anyone who receives an e-mailed copy of the newsletter would like one, please send Rosemary a stamped addressed envelope. The bookmark is 8 inches long.

[N.B. The Wymondham FEPOW Church Service is in MAY not April.]

HELP WANTED URGENTLY

A message from Jonathan:

Help is needed to update the EVACUEES LIST for the new website.

We need 5 or 6 Volunteers to help with typing the names and some information about each evacuee.

Jonathan will explain the task and give you the surnames and the information.

If the task is divided between 5 or 6 people it will not be too arduous.

Please let Jonathan know if you can help with this job. [See address below.]

Victory Celebrations – 8th June 1946 Programme Front Cover



CONTACTS

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