

APA KHABAR

Patron: The Duchess of Norfolk

www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk

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A SUMMER of REMEMBRANCE, THANKSGIVING and CELEBRATION

It has been a busy summer for MVG members around the world. Services of remembrance and thanksgiving have been held in England and Western Australia to mark the 65th Anniversary of V-J Day; the 50th Anniversary of the Cessation of the Malayan Emergency; and the 65th Anniversary of the Japanese surrender in Singapore. As well as these, tributes were made, on 15th August 2010, by

Quentin Boyce, the Australian Governor-General, to the WW 11 heroes in Sabah. Full reports on these Services are given below. The MVG has cause for celebration as well, with the announcement of an award in the Queen's Birthday Honours list for MVG member Michael Doncaster. The MVG congratulates him for his award of "Conspicuous Service Medal for Meritorious Achievement as Staff Officer International Engagement in Navy Strategic Command".

Congratulations are also due to MVG member Emeritus Professor John Mackie, affectionately known as "Captain Jack", on reaching his 100th birthday. The University of Otago organized the celebration dinner in Nelson, and details are given below. Fifteen individual certificates have now been sent out to MVG Honorary Life Members who are Veteran Volunteers or were imprisoned as children in civilian POW camps. In this 65th Anniversary year we remember them and salute them with pride. Membership of the MVG is continuing to grow, particularly in Australia where there are now 30 members. Most of them live in or around Perth in Western Australia, and members George Hess'e and Elizabeth Bunney are planning to hold social meetings and get-togethers. We wish them every success.

In 2011, MVG Malaysia Secretary, Andrew Hwang, is planning to mark the 70th Anniversary of the Japanese invasion by organizing a Remembrance Sunday Ceremony at the Stadthuys in Malacca, on Sunday 14th November. Andrew asks "Can I count on the official support of the MVG?" Permission has to be sought and granted by various organizations before such a service can take place, and Andrew will work hard to secure the backing of local Veteran Associations as well as others, including the media, High Commissioners and politicians. Please let Andrew, Jonathan or Rosemary know if you would like to attend this Service in Malacca next year. We need to know whether members would be prepared to travel from England or Australia for the service, and roughly how many.

On a sad note, we are deeply sorry to announce the death of Frances Francis on 7th September. A founder member of the MVG, gracious lady, and much loved by all who knew her, Frances will be sorely missed. Her obituary is given later.

V J DAY SERVICE, 15TH AUGUST 2010 – Report by Anne Hinam

The 65th anniversary of V J Day fell on a Sunday, the weather was beautiful, and well before 12 o'clock the National Memorial Arboretum car park was overflowing on to the approach road. Around 80 MVG members gathered from midday in POD 1 of the Pavilion Marquee for a reception and buffet lunch. Many had travelled long distances to be there, from Scotland, from Wales, and the length and breadth of England. Conversation flowed happily over an excellent lunch. MVG members are such congenial people, so easy to talk to, since we share common experiences and a common background.

The Gurkhas, who were deployed elsewhere, were represented by Major (retd.) Rob Cross and his wife Margaret. He served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers and is Chairman of the North Midlands Branch of the Gurkha Welfare Trust.

The service in the Chapel, at two o'clock, was conducted by Canon Christopher Samuels, one of the Queen's Chaplains and also National Chaplain to the Dunkirk Veterans' Association. Our organist was Gerald Lindner, MVG member, who kindly offered his services to play for us.



Ron Mitchell and Jean Lips lay the Wreath
on the Memorial Stone

After a lament played by Pipe Major Duncan Thomson and an introduction and welcome by Canon Samuels came a series of readings and hymns, with an address by Canon Samuels. It was good to hear the congregation sing up so well. The full Order of Service can be seen on the MVG website.

Margaret Dryburgh's "The Captives' Hymn" was read at the service, not sung, as the tune is not well known. Canon Samuels told us that he had been so impressed by the hymn when he first read it that he had found a hymn tune that fitted the words, and this he asked us to sing. This hymn, written in internment and sung in the camp every Sunday, is indeed impressive, particularly for, as one website puts it, "its absence of bitterness or hatred".

At the end of the Chapel service, the piper led a parade to the MVG Memorial Garden for the wreath laying by Jean Lips and veteran Ron Mitchell, followed by the two minutes' silence and the Last Post played by Colour Sergeant Adrian Harper. After further readings and prayers the piper played a lament and the service ended with Reveille. Before leaving the Garden we read the dedication on the wreath, sensitively worded to include all. It read:-

In memory of
The Malayan Volunteer Forces
both military and civilian,
Sunday, 15th August 2010,
those who served;
those who died;
those who became FEPOWs;
and to give thanks for
those who returned home.

Then back to POD 1 for tea and biscuits and further conversation. It had been a very fitting occasion, of proud memories with some sadness at the recollection of so much unnecessary suffering and lives cut short over 65 years ago.

Many thanks to Rosemary for her superb organization, her hard work and efficiency.

Photos are on the MVG website:-

<http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk/gallery2/main.php>

Jonathan Moffatt added:

We all had a tremendous day at the NMA on VJ Day with the service conducted by Canon Christopher Samuels and an excellent lunch and tea. 80 members attended plus a number of guests. Pipe Major Duncan Thomson, formerly A&SH, ended our tea break with a stirring Auld Lang Syne. Photos are now on the website gallery and more are welcome from those who attended.

The event and the Malayan Volunteers received good media coverage both on ITV Central news and in 5 radio interviews with MVG members Anne Hinam, Rosemary Fell, Anton Rippon and myself.

50th ANNIVERSARY MEMORIAL SERVICE COMMEMORATING THE CESSATION OF THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY Organised by the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association Australia Inc.

MVG member **Bill Adamson**, President of the Association, sent the details of this annual event, which took place on Tuesday 31st August 2010.

The Memorial Service took place at the State War Memorial Flame of Remembrance, King's Park, Perth WA on Merdeka Day, in the pouring rain. Dignitaries, Special Guests and ESO Presidents were met at the Rotunda 1 (between the State War Memorial Flame of Remembrance and the State War Memorial) from 11 a.m. Visitors were invited to partake of "**Makanan Ringan**" (light refreshments which are served in Malaysia) before and after the ceremony. This had been prepared by friends of the Malaysian Consulate and the Malaysian Consul in Perth.

Following the Service, all visitors were invited to a BBQ Sizzle/light lunch with an Asian flavour at "The Wildflower Pavilion". MVG members **George and Hyacinth Hess'e** and **Elizabeth Bunney**, attended the Service which lasted for 30 to 40 minutes commencing at 12 noon with a "fly past" from RAAF Pearce.

MEMORIAL SERVICE TO MARK THE 65TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE JAPANESE SURRENDER IN SINGAPORE ON 12TH SEPTEMBER 2010 – Report by George Hess'e

This Service took place on 12th September at 5.30 p.m., the date and time to coincide with the actual signing of the Surrender by the Japanese Forces in Singapore in the presence of Lord Louis Mountbatten. The actual surrender was on 15th August, but as Lord Mountbatten was not available then, the signing ceremony was postponed until September.

It was originally intended to hold the Memorial Service in the Changi Museum Prison Chapel, for nostalgic reasons, but unfortunately, to the great disappointment of Robin Blackburn the Manager of Changi Museum, it was not possible to arrange this, due to the Singapore Grand Prix and a Drug Realization Association Meeting at the Museum at the same time.

In May, it was decided to hold the Memorial Service in Perth where the largest numbers of MVG members live. St. Martin's Church in Noranda (a suburb of Perth) was chosen, and a retired Police Chaplain, Revd. Barry May, asked to conduct the Service. As an ex-service member of the Australian Army who had service in New Guinea, he knew the conditions of war in the tropics.

A model of "The Fallen Warrior" was erected in the lobby of the Church with the Union Jack as a background. This proved to

be a very effective introduction to the Service, as everybody who entered the Church stopped to look at the model, as though they were paying homage. This was very touching and set the mood. Visitors were also asked to sign the Visitors' Book in the lobby and were then given a Pew Sheet and an Order of Service. The Church has a capacity of 120 persons, 90 notices were sent out and 61 people attended.

The Service started with the singing of the hymn "Abide with me", followed with prayers by the Revd. Barry May. The first reading, Jeremiah 19: 1-15, was by Miss Judy Hess'e, and the second reading by Mr. Bill Adamson was from Colossians 3: 12-21. Next came the hymn "The Lord is my Shepherd". The Revd. Barry May then delivered his sermon entitled "Japanese Surrender of Malaya". Miss Gwen Cooke then read "The Captives' Hymn" as a prayer before the congregation sang the closing hymn, "Mine Eyes have seen the Glory".

Finally Mr. Andrew Partington, the Organist, who is also a bugler, sounded the Last Post followed by the 2 minutes' silence and Reveille. By this time there were not too many dry eyes in the Church.

After the final blessing, the congregation filed back into the lobby, where they were given either a rose or a sprig of rosemary to place as a tribute at the base of "The Fallen Warrior". Refreshments for 100 were laid out in the Church Hall for the congregation of 60, and the Fellowship lasted until 7p.m.

"CAPTAIN JACK'S" BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS – By kind permission of Alison Finigan, University of Otago, NZ

A wonderful programme had been arranged by the Otago University School of Mining and Metallurgy to celebrate the 100th birthday of **Emeritus Professor John ('Jack') B. Mackie**. The MVG sent birthday wishes and a copy of John's Honorary Life Membership. These were presented to him at the special dinner, which had been organised in his honour, by **Professor Harry McQuillan**, a former student and an old friend. [See photo on right].

Alison writes:-

"...the certificates that you sent for Captain Jack were printed out on parchment paper, and presented to him at his birthday dinner in Nelson last Saturday night.... He was thrilled to receive your greetings and obviously moved by the Life Membership Award."



Programme of events:-

Thursday 16th September – 4.30 – 7.00pm Welcome Drink.

Friday 17th September – 6.00pm onwards - OSM Reunion # Dinner with Toasts # Festschrift presentation *

Saturday 18th September – 6.30pm Dinner Celebration # Nelson Mayor **Kerry Marshall, MC**

Sunday 19th September – Brunch at The Boathouse

*The Festschrift was prepared by Alison Finigan. It covers 'Captain Jack's' outstanding contribution to Mining and Surveying at Otago University from 1947 to 1974. It contains 6 academic papers in his areas of interest and some wonderful memories, tributes and photographs submitted by former students and colleagues. It is being issued as a book with a limited run of 200 copies and will be available for purchase at a cost of NZ\$25.

N.B. The MVG is delighted to thank Alison for a complimentary copy which is being sent to Rosemary.

A TOAST TO 'CAPTAIN JACK' – Proposed by Mick Buckenham

Ten years ago, on the occasion of Jack Mackie's 90th birthday, Mick Buckenham proposed a toast to his extraordinary life. The story is told in Jack's autobiography, "Captain Jack", but a synopsis of the salient points was set out by Mick, and the following are extracts taken from that toast.

"John Mackie was a Dunedin boy, attending primary school at Maori Hill and following a well-trodden path through the town belt to Otago Boys' High School. For a bright student the University of Otago inevitably followed. As was the case with a number of his colleagues, John studied geology and attended the Otago School of Mines, completing in a five year period an MSc with 1st Class Honours in Geology and an AOSM and a BE in Mining. At school and University, John was an all-rounder, excelling in sports (recognition in shooting, cadets, athletics and harriers), in scholarship and in student affairs (President of the OSM Students Association).

On graduation in 1935, John took up a position prospecting in Malaya, soon moving on to become a Mines' Inspector within the Colonial Service. Following the Japanese invasion, John was mobilized, gaining Captain's rank in the defence forces. On retreating to Singapore he was taken prisoner, spending more than 3 years in Changi and in Kuching, North Borneo. These were hard days experienced by many OSM graduates working in the Far East, nearly half of whom lost their lives. [...]

After the war, John returned briefly to Malaya but came back to New Zealand in 1946 to take a lecturing position in Surveying at the School of Mines – but of course the real reason was to marry Sue. [...]

Under the direction of **Gordon Williams (Shorty)** the Otago School of Mines was being rejuvenated at this time and [...] developed in quite spectacular fashion due to the enrolment of returned servicemen and the strong intake of younger school leavers [...]. The Mining School prospered with degrees/diplomas/associateships supported by active research in mining

(metal and coal), applied geology, physical and extractive metallurgy, minerals processing and surveying as well as Industrial Consulting Service. 'Jack' Mackie, Doug Buchanan, John Rogers, Hugh Muir, Ivon Graham, Les Wylie, Stan Boatwood and Rae Emslie were the staff of the time.

While Mackie was one of the stars and Rae Emslie a national badminton champion, Stan Boatwood, the live-in caretaker, was the best qualified in both blasting and underground work. His practical experience with explosives was in fishing where he soon lost a hand and wore in its place a hook. His considerable underground practical experience came as janitor/cleaner of that well-known Dunedin watering hole – the below street-level Exchange toilets!

Tansey, White, Lyons, Hart, Cowie, Sparrow and Jarvis and many others supported by Craig, Tate and Gordon formed a strong and mature student body. Those of us fresh out of school had to learn life skills quickly, to put it mildly, from these "men of war". They were uncomplicated but great student days and I wonder if JBM remembers the Mining School Dinner of '48? Perhaps he does, but maybe not his dropping of an outside pass in the form of a pumpkin from Frederick Soper the then Vice-Chancellor of the University, as we were being evicted from the RSA Hall in lower Moray Place where the dinner had been held.

By 1963 and under an economist Vice-Chancellor, Arthur Beecham, the OSM, then the Faculty of Technology, was being dismembered. After some years of lobbying and active involvement with his profession, John Mackie, with the support of the University, established a Department of Surveying within the Faculty of Science. The Otago School of Mines, which many years earlier lost Geology to the Science Faculty, barely survived with the loss of Surveying and Metallurgy (under Beecham) and the subsequent departure of Gordon Williams for Iran.

John Mackie's new Department, housed in a converted bakery and initially offering a Diploma programme, prospered. Over time, it developed to offer a BSc degree in Surveying and then a BSurv and higher degrees, supported by active research and publication. The School of Mines on the other hand continued to rebuild once again until the inevitable next review and in the longer term its ultimate transfer and demise – but this is another story....

John retired in 1976 having been awarded a Personal Professorship and Emeritus status, and moved to Nelson [...]

Other achievements of John Mackie: the award of the Efficiency Decoration with bar for military activities; Fulton Medals for surveying papers on education, and in 1995 an OBE for services to education, surveying and to the nation. Mention should be made of his service to and recognition by his professional society, the Royal Society, the Army and the Boy Scouts Association and of his publication of an internationally acclaimed text, 'Astronomy for Surveyors'. In scouting he was ably supported by Doug Buchanan. Their scouting skills were not always convincing, as witnessed by some during the famous field trip to Stewart Island. While I missed out on this trip, I well recall a field trip to the Caanan near Takaka – a most carefully chosen camp site (in the best Baden Powell tradition) was washed out just a few hours later in the dark of the night".

Mick recently updated his toast with the following note:

"Since that memorable evening ten years ago, Jack's life has moved on in two quite different but important ways; the passing of wife Sue, a dear companion and friend, and further recognition of Jack's scholarly work by the award of an honorary Doctor of Science degree by the University of Otago. We again offer our sympathy to you and your family members on Sue's passing, and at the same time we offer our congratulations to you on your most recent academic achievement.

Jack, while I know that you can no longer continue with your sporting interests such as golf, you remain active and alert and interested in the broader and developing fields of surveying. I am sure one day we will see you on TV in the "This is your Life" programme and maybe even in "Dancing with the Stars"!

We salute you on a brilliant innings of 100 not out. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to have known you for so long, and once again to propose a toast to you as our special guest – Jack (John) Bullamore Mackie, born 1910 and still going strong!"

Emeritus Professor John B. Mackie

Honours and Achievements

BSc (1929); MSc (1932); BE, Mining (1934); AOSM (1934); HonDSc (2000).

Awards and Achievements

1934 – Duffus Lubecki Research Scholarship in Geology
1934 – Associate of the Otago School of Mines
1934 – University Blue for Shooting
1947 – Member of Staff, Otago University & Lectureship in School of Mines
1956 – Registered as Surveyor, NZ Survey Board
1956 – Awarded ED (Efficiency Decoration) and bar, NZ Defence Force
1957 – Fulton Medal (Class A2) for his paper 'The Education & Training of the Land Surveyor in NZ'
1960 – Associate Professor, University of Otago
1962 – Medal of Merit (Scouting)

1969 – Professor, University of Otago
1973 – Fulton Gold Medal (Class A1) for outstanding service to the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors
1975 – Retired from University of Otago
1976 – Emeritus Professor, University of Otago
1977 – Awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal
1995 – Awarded OBE for services to surveying and the community
2000 – Awarded an Honorary Doctor of Science from the University of Otago

Memberships

FNZIS Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Surveyors (1969)
MIPENZ Member of the Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand
FGS Fellow of the Geological Society
FRASNZ Fellow of the Royal Astrological Society of New Zealand

Military Service

1936 – 1949 Captain FMSVF
1942 – 1945 Prisoner of War
1949 – 1955 Royal NZ Engineers
Commander 3rd Field Reg.
Retired with rank of Major.

SANDAKAN: It was a historic day for Sandakan when the Governor-General of Australia, Her Excellency **Quentin Bryce**, flew in direct from Australia about 3.30pm on Saturday. It is believed that Bryce is the first ever Governor-General to visit Sabah - and the first ever direct flight between Canberra and Sandakan. She and her husband, Michael, were met by Deputy Chief Minister **Datuk Peter Pang**; Culture, Tourism and Environment Minister **Datuk Masidi Manjun**; and Sandakan Municipal Council President **James Wong**.

Caroline Wong, daughter of **James Wong**, presented Her Excellency with a bouquet containing a dozen native species of flowers.

The Malay Regiment mounted a Guard of Honour as she walked towards a waiting limousine along a path strewn with flowers.

The main purpose of the visit was to attend the Sandakan Memorial Day Service at 7 a.m. on Sunday 15 August, and to launch a book entitled "Blood Brothers" by historian author **Lynette Ramsay Silver**. **Quentin Bryce** also visited the Memorial of Chinese Martyrs, St. Michael's Anglican Church and the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre where she met a group of Australian volunteer workers.

James Wong was pleased that the Memorial Service was broadcast live to Australia, thus helping to put Sandakan on the map.

Tengku Datuk Dr. Adlin, Chairman of the Sabah Tourism Board said that the War Heritage Tourism, centred on the Sandakan-Ranau Death March, had always been promoted, and that the visit of the Governor-General would help the long standing historical relationship between Sabah and Australia. He felt it would also highlight the Sandakan Memorial Day Service which has been held in all major cities in Australia since the war.

More than 250 Australians had flown in for the Service. "It is a record for us", said **Gwenda Zappala**, Sabah Tourism Board's Australian Representative.

TRIBUTE TO WW11 HEROES

"SANDAKAN: Blood Brothers" - a fitting title of the book, written by Australian historian **Lynette Silver** as a tribute to Sabah's WW11 heroes. It details the true grit, valour and sacrifices of the men who helped the Allied Forces during the Japanese Occupation.

The book was jointly launched by Sabah Deputy Chief Minister **Datuk Peter Pang En Yin** and Australian Governor-General **Quentin Bryce**.

Speaking about her decision to write the book, **Lynette Silver** said that it served as a note of thanks to the people of Sabah who played a major part during the War, including helping the Australian, British and other Allied Forces POWs. She had decided to write the book when she attended the opening of the Sandakan Memorial Park in 1999.

On that day she met local Volunteers **Chin Chee Kong** and **Joseph Wong** who were sitting quietly in a corner. "No reference was made to them", she said, "and I felt this was a shame, as I knew they were involved in the war. Also other Sabahans were tortured because of their involvement, but their presence was not mentioned either".

All proceeds from the book would be donated to educating children in Sabah's rural villages.

Her Excellency, **Quentin Bryce**, paid tribute to the Sabahans who risked their lives to help Allied soldiers. She said that the Allied soldiers were provided with nourishment, shelter and safety by the local people. She laid a wreath at a monument built at the site of a prisoner of war camp, watched by a crowd of 800



Malaysians and Australians - many of whom lost their relatives in the death marches that occurred towards the end of World War 11 some 65 years ago. The Japanese Imperial Army ordered prisoners of war to trek along 240km of treacherous terrain in a series of forced marches from here to Ranau, resulting in the deaths of 2,428 Australian and British Servicemen.

Andrew Hwang writes in a letter to The Star on 17/8/10:- "We should also remember ...those who took part in the ill-fated Jesselton Uprising against the Japanese on Oct 9, 1943..... leader Kuching-born **Albert Kwok**; deputy **Lim Teng Fatt**; **Charles Peter**, CPO North Borneo Armed Constabulary; **Lt. Li Tet Phui**, **Sgt. Jules Stephens**, **Sgt. Budh Singh** & **Cpl. Sohan Singh**, North Borneo Volunteer Force". These men all lost their lives, together with many others executed and tortured by the Japanese. An estimated 2,400 Sabahans took part in the North Borneo Resistance.

LIVERPOOL PIER HEAD FEPOW MEMORIAL – AN APPEAL

The organizers of the Researching FEPOW History Group are proposing to launch a national appeal to create a permanent memorial to the memory of the FEPOW who returned to Liverpool from captivity in the Far East during the autumn of 1945. This appeal will be launched on the 65th Anniversary of the docking of the first repatriation ship into Liverpool on 9th October 1945. Over 50,000 British forces were captured by the Japanese in the Far East and a quarter of them died in captivity. The remaining survivors (around 37,000 men) finally returned to the UK in the autumn of 1945, with over half of them disembarking at Liverpool.

There is no mention of the arrival back home of the FEPOW on any of the many memorial plaques, sculptures and structures situated on the Pier Head. With your support the Group wants to create a lasting memorial to the memory of these men who survived captivity in the Far East. As we know, for many, the battle to survive did not end when they were repatriated and returned home. The proposal is currently under consideration by Liverpool City Council, and it has the support of both their Planning and World Heritage Site departments.

It is proposed that the memorial will be a large engraved plaque bearing the names of the repatriation ships which docked in Liverpool during October and November 1945, listed in two columns either side of a central dedication. The plaque would be situated alongside other WW11 maritime memorials on a raised Portland stone structure on the Pier Head facing the River Mersey. A national fundraising appeal is proposed to raise in the region of £6,000 for the memorial. The first day of the conference coincides with the anniversary of the arrival of the *Monawai*, the first repatriation ship to reach Liverpool 65 years ago. If you would like to support this appeal and see the Liverpool Pier Head FEPOW Memorial created, please do not send money yet. We need to gauge the level of support and would ask that you log on to the website:

www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk to register your support.

Further details about the plans and how to donate to the appeal will be published on the website shortly. E-mail: sarahhawkins90@hotmail.com if you want any more information.

Jonathan Moffatt - RFH Chairman and MVG Historian and Archivist adds:-

Those of you whose relatives were repatriated to Liverpool or indeed Southampton on October 1945 may be interested in the Researching FEPOW History Conference Liverpool Pier Head Project. Meg Parkes, who works at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, has put forward a plan to put up this memorial plaque with the other maritime memorials close to the Albert Docks and Liver Building. As a regular visitor to Liverpool, I can say that it is a marvellous location. For the details log on to :- http://www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk/news/memorial_appeal.html



"SS ROOSEBOOM" – Michael Pether replies to Mary Gladstone's enquiry in 'Apa Khabar' Edition 23

"I read of **Mary Gladstone's** enquiry regarding the sinking of the "SS Rooseboom" in Apa Khabar, and because I have a similar interest – in the context of my quest to find what happened to my uncle (a 19 year old private in the FMSVF who went missing after escaping from Blakan Mati after the surrender) – and am undertaking fresh research on the sinking, I can offer a few additional pieces of information – which clarify when and where the "Rooseboom" was actually sunk. These raise some startling and horrifying questions as to how many people were actually on the "Rooseboom" compared with the "...more than 500..." stated by **Walter Gibson** in his book".

Conditions in Padang (the final point on the official escape route in western Sumatra and the port of departure of the "SS Rooseboom") – From the diaries and other accounts I hold, the conditions were initially quite good for all those arriving by train and road, but then quickly became more difficult insofar as food, accommodation and some aspects of discipline. e.g. **Frank Man**, RNVR, recorded arriving on 20/2 and "...we marched to the local Club where we were provided with an excellent lunch and a glass of beer ..."; several also recorded that conditions for civilians were better than the Army (particularly the ORs); after a large contingent embarked on the "HMS Danae" on 20/2 things became more straightened; **Major Durward Sime**, AIF, arrived on 21/2 and recorded "...we stayed at the Dutch Club sleeping on the stage". Also at Padang were several senior Army Officers including **Brigadier Paris** ...here again there were several hundred troops of all ranks, quite a number of them being fairly senior officers ... at Padang food was very short, but the British army authorities gave each Officer twenty guilders and each OR five guilders. Arriving on 23/2 **G.W. Fletcher**, 2/15th Field Regt., AIF, recorded "...Padang is very similar to most Malayan towns with numerous stalls set up in bazaar fashion down the streets. Business was going on as usual and no one seemed the least perturbed about the recent bombing of the harbour..." **Roila Edwardes-Ker**, Singapore Royal Artillery (Volunteers) arrived about the same time and makes some interesting points about the number of men who had arrived "...there were two ships at the docks ready to embark the British and Australian contingent in Padang numbering 1018 military personnel and some 1200 civilians. The larger ship, the **Rosenboom** (sic), was supposed to take some 2000 military and civilians and make for Ceylon. The smaller ship, the **Domayer Van Twist** (sic), of some 500 tons, which was to take Australian and Naval personnel and members of the

Volunteer Forces, was to make for Java and, if necessary, for Australia after refuelling in Java ..." "I and the rest of the party were originally supposed to be going on the **Rosenboom** but **Colonel Broadhurst** asked [us] to come on the **Domayer Van Twist** ... the **Rosenboom** sailed after us [the DVT sailed at 0400 hrs on 26/2] with 2300 on board. The ship was torpedoed not far from Ceylon..." When **John Wagstaff**, Signals Btn., FMSVF arrived on 24/2 he noted "...we ran into British Army 'organization' with a vengeance ... and at the schoolhouse ... we took an immediate dislike for the half-colonel in charge ... who had seen fit to have exposed pit latrines dug all over this small yard ... the cookhouse was situated less than three yards from one of the open pit latrines ... the flies were simply appalling ... I have never seen so many, either before or since in any part of the Tropics ... early arrivals in Padang had all been billeted in private houses or in other places where comfortable and hygienic accommodation existed ... we discovered the '**Oranje**' Hotel and had a civilized meal in civilized surroundings ... in the afternoon we heard that a ship had arrived and would be taking people that night. This was good news, although there was no hope of us being on it ... [on the 26/2] the staff at headquarters [had] pushed off on the ship that sailed during the night and the new OIC, a **Colonel Wolfe-Murray** was fortunately of a different calibre from his predecessor. One of his first acts was to call for fresh nominal rolls of all persons awaiting evacuation in Padang ... he then arranged that priority would be given according to date of arrival in Padang ... Australians would be sent on ships bound for Java or Australia and British troops and civilians on ships bound for Ceylon or India [on 27/2]. In the afternoon we heard that another ship had arrived, this was the "**Rooseboom**" and moreover it would be sailing for Ceylon ... when later on the warning order for this ship was posted the list included all except two of the British ORs who had escaped Singapore on the *tongkang* with us. The list also included a few 'high priorities' who had just arrived in Padang and but for these some of us might have been on the list. Among the priority passengers for the ship this night were **Group Captain Nunn** and his wife ... it is tragic this ship never reached Ceylon ..."

Sinking of the "SS. Rooseboom" – I have come across specific details of the sinking derived from high ranking Japanese officers and, it appears, the log book of the Japanese submarine that torpedoed the "**Rooseboom**". Until now, all I had ever seen were statements in **Walter Gibson's** book which place it in the middle of the Indian Ocean (I wonder whether there are any records in the UK National Archives file?). Specifically the ship was sunk by one of the very large class of Japanese submarines (called '**Sensuikan**') by the name of I-59 (later redesignated I-159) which had left Penang on 21st February under the Command of a **Lt. Yoshimatsu**. It is recorded that I-59 had clearly identified the "**Rooseboom**" either before or after torpedoing (given the fact that it was the middle of the night we must assume that the submarine had been following the ship for at least a day to observe it in daylight to know its name – or it had picked up some unrecorded survivor). According to the Japanese records the ship was sunk at **0150 hrs on 1/3/42** (the Allied records believed it was on **28/2/42** and this could only have come from **Gibson** or one of the Malay seamen who survived) and the co-ordinates for the sinking were 00 degrees North/87 degrees East (Allied records state 00 degrees 15 North/86 degrees 50 East) – this differs from **Walter Gibson** in his book who recorded the sinking at **1150 hrs on 28th February**. It is generally known from **Gibson's** book that he survived in the only lifeboat with **Doris Lim** and three Malay seamen, to land on a remote North Western island. What is less well known is that the "**SS Palopo**" which left Padang after the "**Rooseboom**" came across an oil slick and debris in the Indian Ocean, and then picked up either two or four (depending on the source) Malay seamen, squatting on a small raft or box in the Indian Ocean, who had been crew on the "**Rooseboom**". I would be extremely interested to find if any ship's log of the "**SS Palopo**" still exists to ascertain if there was a debriefing of these seamen. Interestingly, the Japanese co-ordinates reveal that the ship had (sensibly) been taken on a course, not on a straight line between Padang and Colombo (as shown in **Gibson's** book) but on a much longer course directly along the equator and well south of Ceylon – presumably to avoid submarines waiting on the route to Colombo!

I mention that it has prompted me to embark on another (it is likely to be lengthy) research effort to create a probable list of some of the people who were on the "**SS Rooseboom**"; and also on the ship the "**SS Ban Ho Guan**" which left Padang on the 28th February with Malayan Volunteers, civilians, British Forces and AIF on board, bound on an easterly course for Tjilichap and possibly Fremantle. This was torpedoed by another Japanese submarine later that day and sunk with no known survivors (although there is a suggestion the **Captain van der Berg** survived to become a POW). This would be in a similar fashion to the memorial records already on the **MVG website** for the "**Kuala**", the "**Tandjong Pinang**", the "**Scott Harley**" and the "**Giang Bee**" – the latter was a research effort very much in collaboration with **MVG's Becca Kenneison**.

I would be extremely interested to hear from anyone with knowledge – anecdotal or otherwise – of people or events related to either of these ships and the people on them. My e-mail is: mncpether@xtra.co.nz and my postal address is: 55, Te Pene Road, Maraetai, Manukau 2018, New Zealand.

BOY SOLDIERS IN MALAYA AND ON THE THAILAND-BURMA RAILWAY –edited by Jonathan Moffatt.

*A child's experience of war is a frequent theme in our newsletters though usually in terms of evacuation stories. A growing number of our MVG members were child internees in Sumatra or Singapore and others in their late teens, like **Ron Mitchell** and his brothers, **Malcolm** and **Ian**, were prisoners of war [Ron marched to Changi on his 18th birthday], but few are aware of the story of three much younger boy soldiers who endured captivity on the Thailand-Burma Railway.*

William James Brind [1900 – 1990] was a European prison warder at Taiping and a Sgt. in 1/FMSVF. He had previously served for 23 years in the Wiltshire Regiment. His sons **Freddie** [born 1928] & **Jimmy** [born 1926] enlisted as boy soldiers in the second Battalion Gordon Highlanders at Singapore on the 1st December 1941, joining a third boy soldier, **William Bremner** [born 1926].

Jim Brind was aged fifteen and a half, his younger brother, **Fred**, was still one month short of his fourteenth birthday. It was not a propitious day for two young boys to leave their family and join the army. Tension in the Far East was increasing. On that very day the whole garrison had been brought to the second degree of readiness and the Volunteers mobilized. The Gordons were ordered to occupy their war station at Pengerang and left Selarang Barracks the following morning. **Jim** and **Fred** had lived in Taiping with their family. Both boys were keen to join the army, and when **Jim** missed an opportunity of going to the Army Boys' School at Chepstow, their father wrote to the War Office and enquired about local enlistment. He was told that they could be accepted by the Gordons at Singapore.

The brothers joined **Boy Bremner** who was the same age as **Jim**, but had enlisted earlier from the Married Quarters in Selarang where he lived with his father, **Private Bremner**. They were attached to the Transport Platoon which had no role on Pengerang and were employed on a number of tasks such as delivering rations to the married Quarters, traffic duty at the guardroom with **Sgt. Duffy** and **Cpl. Glennie**. Occasionally **Jim** went on river patrol with **Cpl. Mutch**. The Japanese were still several hundred miles to the north so there was never anything to report, nevertheless it was still an exciting experience for a fifteen year old boy.

When the battalion returned from Johore where it had been attached to 27th Australian Brigade, the three boys joined it on 2nd February in Birdwood Hutted Camp, just across the road from Selarang which was now in use as a hospital. After Birdwood was heavily bombed on 7th February the three boys were sent to Fort Canning and remained there until after the surrender. The three boys were now extremely worried as to how the Japanese would treat them. With other military personnel they were told to assemble on the field opposite the Courthouse with the civilians due for internment. It was there that **Jim** and his brother met their father. Their mother, younger brother and sister had been evacuated to safety several weeks earlier. The few Gordons who were with them advised them to put on civilian clothes and join their father as internees. It was not an option that appealed to them and their father agreed. Not only did he consider it their duty to remain with their regiment, he probably believed they would be better provided for in a military environment. As casually as that two fifteen year olds (including **Bremner**) and one fourteen year old became Prisoners of War of one of the most vicious armies in the world. With three or four other Gordons the Boys made their way back to Changi and rejoined the battalion which was now occupying one barrack block in Kitchener Barracks. From now on they were ordinary POWs with no special consideration other than being under the watchful eye of **Company Sergeant-Major Willie Low**.

The three boys endured the experience of being crammed into Selarang Barracks in September 1942 with all the other fit personnel from Changi area because no one would sign individual documents promising not to attempt escape. It was an intimidating experience with manned machine guns covering the barbed wire surrounding the seven barrack blocks. Every piece of space was occupied, even the flat roof-tops. The Gordons shared the top of the barrack block nearest to the building that had once been their canteen which brought back memories of more pleasant times. The situation could not last and eventually after three days and the threat of a life threatening epidemic, the **Senior British Officer Lt. Col. Holmes** of the Manchester Regiment (a real thorn in the side of the Japanese) ordered all chits to be signed. In a final act of defiance, chits changed hands to be signed. The only outward sign of the presence of 15,000 troops in such a small area were the scars left on the parade ground where the deep latrines had been dug.

In October 1942, under command of **Lt. Col. Stitt** a large party of Gordons left Changi for Siam. The party included **Jim**, his brother and **Bremner**. No one knew about the hardship and the suffering that lay ahead. To the contrary, there was a strong rumour that the Siamese Government was offering POWs sanctuary because they were an accommodation problem to the Japanese. There was talk of well built camps with electric light and running water.

The conditions on that railway are so well documented that the hardships endured by **Jim** and his brother need no repeating but can be well imagined from the names of their work camps, Ban Pong – Chungkai – Wun Lung and finally Takanun. They received their fair share of beatings, alternated with humiliating taunts of 'baby' soldiers. The two brothers never left Siam and when the Japanese surrendered they were at a place called Tarawa Camp 4 on the French Indo-Chinese border repairing a steel bridge which had been bombed by the Allies. They left Tarawa by rail for Bangkok with a stop-over of two or three weeks before flying out for Rangoon.

After all that they had endured, fate was not finished with them. Their plane developed engine trouble but fortunately they were clear of the jungle at the time, and were able to make a forced landing on a dry rice field without sustaining any casualties. The forty-two of them, including three aircrew were taken by bullock cart to a nearby beach bordering the Bay of Bengal and food was dropped from searching aircraft. Eventually, they were flown out four at a time by light aircraft. Their three and a half years ordeal was finally over.

Jim and **Fred** had no regrets about not taking the soft option by staying with their father as internees or by not being evacuated earlier from Singapore because of their ages. They were born in India into a military family and as it was always their intention to become soldiers they did not seek or expect special consideration. It would have been a greater humiliation to have been singled out for evacuation to the UK while their father remained behind as an internee. They had the double satisfaction of surviving Japanese brutality for three and a half years with a sense of duty totally fulfilled.

"COVER MY DEFENCELESS HEAD" – By Daphne Davidson

Preface by Ian L. Richardson – who gave permission for publication of this copyright article

Daphne, Diana and Isobel Jansz were three sisters who were all incarcerated in Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp during the Japanese occupation of Singapore.

Diana Margaret married about early 1940 to Corporal **Frederick Logan** who had arrived with the Gordon Highlanders to occupy the newly built Selerang Barracks in Changi in 1938. In May 1941 **Genevieve Logan** was born. Freddie went into the British camp in Changi and was later sent to the Burma/Thailand Railway. Diana and eight month old, shell-shocked baby Genevieve were put into Changi Prison. Diana was given number 2910 and baby Genny number 2911. Freddie Logan survived the Death Railway to return to Changi in very sick condition but recovered somewhat. On liberation Freddie remained hospitalized for a short while but then returned to England with his wife and daughter.

Isobel, the youngest of the three sisters, married Sergeant **John Richard G Jenkins** of the RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps – service #7262400) sometime in 1941. After capitulation John Jenkins went into Roberts POW camp, then later picked for a work force to go to Thailand. As much as is known he survived to return to Singapore and eventually met up with Isobel. She returned to England with Diana and Freddy Logan but at some point her marriage failed. She remarried to **Cecil Sack**, a metallurgist, and they lived many years in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia. They had a son named **Philip Sack**.

Daphne, the eldest of the three, born in 1905, got her teaching degree at Edinburgh University then returned to Singapore. By 1940, she was a private secretary at the Singapore Police Headquarters. She met and married a long time expatriate with the extraordinarily long name of **James Tyndall Coventry Simpson Davidson**. Jim Davidson worked for William Jacks & Co., a Singapore importer of building materials and hardware. He was very personable, liked to travel and had a photography hobby developing and printing his own pictures. He was also enlisted with the SSVF as a signaller. It seems Jim remained in Singapore during the invasion of Malaya, but was more and more frequently gone from their home at 1, Chancery Hill Lane, about a mile or so south of the MacRitchie Reservoir. Daphne, now pregnant, remained commuting to her job at the Police H.Q. in the city.

My father, **Louis A.L. Richardson** – "Alex" and my mother **Kathleen** were good friends with the Davidsons some years before the war. Alex was with the FMSVF 1st Battalion's 1st Engineers Detachment, and by early January 1942 they had retreated into Singapore and were first posted to Adams Barracks, then to a tented camp on Rideout Road, where his unit was positioned to defend MacRitchie Reservoir. This was within walking distance of the Davidson's home where he got a home cooked meal now and then. He mentioned to Jim in all the hectic rush of events, he had never kept a photo of Kathleen. Jim said he had a portrait of her he'd taken at the Singapore Swimming Club and ran off a print for him. Dad carried it with him through the POW years, and it survives today in my family histories.... But it is better Daphne tells her own story here on...

Talk given to Mothers' Union members in the UK and Jersey C.I. by Daphne Davidson

These are memories of a time in my life that has receded into the past. The passing of the years has kindly drawn a veil over those parts best forgotten.

I start in Australia – the year is 1941 – the place Sydney. My husband and I were on our way back to Singapore after a wonderful holiday in Australia, Tasmania and New Zealand. Our ship, the "Tasman" lay under the shadow of that famous bridge referred to affectionately by most Australians as "Our Bridge". Talk of war and Japan's intentions were the topics of the day. We were not unduly apprehensive as Singapore was considered impregnable and a great fortress.

We watched the wharfees coming on board – muscular men some driving up in expensive cars, lights twinkling on the busy harbour, the cargo coming on board.

One morning we left the ship and strolled towards the approach to the famous bridge. My husband wondered if he could get near enough to take a photograph for our collection. We were waiting for a chance to cross a busy section of the street when a huge car drew up alongside us. The occupants were three elderly women, exquisitely dressed, who looked us over very scathingly. My husband, a Scot whose sense of humour gave me acute embarrassment at times, turned to me and said in Malay, a language he spoke fluently, "Look at those old trout." I hurried him away and we went towards the bridge. As we reached a barrier nearby we were stopped by a policeman who said, "Were you standing on the corner of such-and-such a street just now?" "Yes", we said in surprise. "Your passports, please". Mystified, we did as he requested and as, at that time, I was employed by the Police in Singapore, I mentioned the fact. The arm of the law laughed and said, "Well, you were heard speaking a foreign language and a woman promptly telephoned Police Headquarters, describing you as "suspicious characters". How I chortled at my husband's sheepish look. Incidentally, the police were thorough in their checking up on us as we found when we returned to the ship. They also checked at the hotel where we had stayed and with our Bank.

The "Tasman" sailed, blacked out at night, back to Singapore. Everything appeared quite normal, in Singapore. I was soon back at work at Police Headquarters concentrating on such things as Emergency Regulations, Positions of Air-raid Shelters, Vulnerable Places to be guarded if attacked. No-one expected Japan would strike as suddenly as she did or that she would be so unsporting as to come down the Peninsula from the North when all our guns were pointing out to sea. My husband was in the Volunteer Signals Unit and disappeared at weekends or brought his unit back to the house to test and work their equipment. To be prepared, we built an air-raid shelter under a hill behind the house, especially for the servants. Cookie, who rejoiced in the name of **Elias E. Gomez**, came from Portuguese Goa in India. His wife **Josephine** was small and pretty as a picture and they had a fat little baby son.

We also had a houseboy called **Joseph**. Thereby hangs a tale. Being away from the house all day I had to leave most of the chores to the servants as is customary (or was) in that part of the world. In a hurry one morning, I asked Joseph, who could write English quite well, to make up a list of clothes for the laundryman who called once a week. As a rule, my more delicate garments were washed and ironed by Cookie's wife. When I returned at tea-time, there was a list ... "Master's trousers, master's shirts, pyjamas, socks" ... and lastly "one pair of bags". For the life of me, I could not think of anything among my husband's garments that could be so described! The mystery was solved when **Ah Ching** brought back the washing. Lying on top was one of my bras that had got into the laundry basket by mistake!

At 4.15a.m. on the morning of December 8th 1941, Japan struck. We were awakened out of a deep sleep by the air-raid sirens and rushed out on the verandah – over Singapore town the sky was a brilliant red, flames glowed on the skyline. In the raid 61 innocent people died and 133 were injured – most of the bombs from 17 Japanese bombers fell on crowded Chinatown.

I have hazy recollections of those days after the first bombing. We carried on – a little fearsome, a little nervous. I went to see my old friend Doctor Thompson. A dour Scot, his remarks were brief. "This, lassie," said he "is a nice time to become pregnant." Little did he or I then know how much my pregnancy was going to help me. When women and children were forced to walk from Raffles Hotel to the first internment centre (about 10 miles) I was allowed to travel in an ambulance with the very old and sick. The Japanese, I discovered, had a great respect for age and motherhood.

On the 7th February, at work, I received a telephone call to tell me that our house had received a direct hit from the first shelling from Johore about 17 miles away. My husband and I hurried home. If Cookie and his family had not been in the shelter, they would have been killed. The servants' quarters were a shambles and half the house had gone. My piano and all my husband's musical instruments were bits of matchwood. We collected our personal belongings and moved into a flat in town vacated by someone who had fled earlier that week. Unfortunately, we were close to Fort Canning and the noise of the guns seemed to be almost overhead. When my husband left for the front I slept alone until the last dreadful days when it was too dangerous to be there and I was persuaded to use a camp bed in my office at Police Headquarters. An enormous Irish policeman kept an eye on me.

This stood me in good stead when the strain became almost unbearable wondering whether my husband was safe. We surrendered on Sunday, 15th February. I walked through the deserted streets to the Volunteer Headquarters to find my man or get news of him. Japanese soldiers, mere boys, stood in Fullerton Square clad in jungle dress. As I crossed Fullerton Bridge near Marine Police Headquarters, I was stopped by a sentry with bayonet 4 inches from my chin – I prayed wordlessly, bowed and looked and pointed at the Volunteer Headquarters opposite Raffles Hotel. The face behind the bayonet nodded – a mere lad. Back at Headquarters, I found James waiting there for me. He had news of the surrender before we did and had come to wish me goodbye and tell me what to do when we were repatriated. I could hardly bear to see him go.

Shortly after the surrender the Japanese arrived to take over our police buildings. A small, smartly dressed Japanese with a revolver on his hip singled me out and said in excellent English, "I will speak with you – where may I interview you?" I felt **Pat Shannon** standing by me stiffen and I said quietly, "It's O.K. Pat", and to the Japanese, "This is my office, please come in." I felt comforted to know our men were just outside. I then had the strangest interview I have ever experienced in a full and active life. It transpired that the Japanese was a newspaper correspondent attached to the Military regime, and his first question took me completely by surprise. "Is it true, madam, that the English were dancing at their exclusive Tanglin Club the night before Singapore fell?"

I thought for a moment and then said, "I am sorry I cannot help you. I and my husband are not very well off and we could not afford to belong to such an expensive club. Personally, I do not think people have time to dance when the position has been so grave for all of us."

He gave me a look and then asked me about places on the island, its population, positions of hospitals, police stations, & fire brigades. I answered as accurately as I could with a map to show him where the various places were. I remembered the Inspector-General of Police's words to us when news of Singapore's surrender came. "I trust", said the **Hon. Mr. Dickenson**, known to all of us as 'Dickie', "we will be as gallant

in defeat as we would have been had we been victorious." These words went with me through the long difficult years of stern discipline, lack of freedom and the anxiety over our loved ones separated from us. I thought of them with sadness, when I saw women slapped because they would not bow to the Japanese sentries or failed to stand to attention when Japanese officers passed by.

From homes, offices, Military cantonments, all British women and children left alone in Singapore were gathered together and sent to Raffles Hotel while the Japanese and our people worked out what they were going to do with us. My young sister **Isobel** was interned with me, and she had joined us at Raffles Hotel. Her husband was with the R.A.M.C. and they had not long been married. She wanted to see him before they parted in case we were repatriated. Later we learned that the Japanese refused to allow the Red Cross ship to collect us. However, the thought of repatriation kept us hopeful for the first couple of years.

The Japanese commandant at Raffles Hotel sent for us. Under armed guard we walked slowly through the lovely ballroom of the hotel where I had danced so often, up the magnificent staircase to the first floor and were taken to a large room overlooking an inside courtyard. Our escort ordered us to sit and sentries at the door sprang to attention as a small, neat Japanese entered the room. He barked an order to the sentries in Japanese and to my horror they went round that large room and shut every window – and all the doors leading out. Sometimes in a nightmare I live again that short period of time.

I prayed a silent prayer for courage and calmness. It seemed an eternity before the officer spoke to us. In English, he asked why Isobel wished to see her husband. I collected my sanity and explained that she wished to see him and ascertain his wishes in case we were repatriated – her husband, I explained, was working in the hospital behind the hotel.

"Ah", he said – one word only and then wrote something on a piece of paper and said, "You may go". How I got up and walked out of that room I do not know. We were both trembling. Isobel's face was white. Perhaps the fact that her husband was a medical officer made us privileged – she was allowed to meet **John** next day escorted by a Japanese sentry and one of our police officers.

Owing to my condition, described as 'delicate' by our Victorian grandmothers, I travelled to the first place of internment a few miles out of the city by an ambulance, with the one small suitcase I was allowed, packed with the things I had bought for the baby. The house had been a Chinese millionaire's home on the east coast of the island. In some ways, the law of the jungle came into force then. The first arrivals collared the comfortable bedrooms and those who arrived later were given an area on the concrete floor of the drawing-room. How glad I was that I had all that fat from good Australian living to help me – for the carpet on which I lay did not protect me from the hard marble floor underneath. We were served with small rations of food so hunger raised its ugly head and made sleep difficult. When we left, a lot of lovely things from that house went with us to Changi Gaol. At the time I was most indignant but later I learnt to adjust my values.

In March 1942 we went to Changi prison. I by ambulance again, my friends and sister walking the nine miles with their pitiful belongings – what they could not carry, they never saw again. I was very proud of them when we overtook them near the Prison gates walking or limping along with heads held high – singing "There'll always be an England". Even the Japanese sentries appeared to be impressed.

Life in prison taught us many things – the cheerfulness and warmth of friendship, the closing in of ranks when a common enemy threatened and what can best be described by the following old Arab saying:

"It is good to know the truth and speak it.

It is better to know the truth and speak of palm trees."

Among us, we discovered, were women we could not trust – weak women who helped the Japanese for the sake of extra food and who betrayed us if they had a chance.

Changi Prison was, as prisons go, the newest and best in the Far East, the pride of Britain and the Singapore Authorities. We were housed in "E" block, the European section of the prison – each cell had its own toilet and wash-basin. Two women and two children were allotted a cell, but until **Jenny** was born in July, I became a member of a party of four who banded together. One of us, an American woman, got there first and found a corner for us, calmly collecting a good sized table she found in the workshop where we were given space. She slept on this table and by doing so saved it for us so that we were the favoured ones who always ate in style. I remember **Hoggie** rising up like a serpent on her table during the night to curse most effectively at the snoring which made our nights a trifle unmelodious. There were about sixty of us in this long, airy room and our numbers gave us a feeling of safety for we never knew when the Japanese would come storming through the workshop on some fanciful charge to make us shiver for a while, only breathing normally again when we heard their boots clomping down the steep stone stairs.

A bare, sparsely grassed courtyard near 'E' Block was where we were allowed to sit in the cool of the mornings or late afternoons. This was derisively called "The Rose Garden". Here, if my memory serves me right, we were allowed to meet the men from the other side of the Prison. As my man was in the Military P.O.W. camp, when the Japanese asked for a list of husbands, fathers, sons, etc., women wished to see, I suddenly thought of two good friends of ours, both fathers of little girls, and put their names down as "**GODFATHERS to Jennefer Davidson**". To my surprise and delight their names were approved while nephews, cousins, brothers-in-law, etc., were disqualified. I have often wondered what the Japanese thought of Godfathers! **To be continued in January.**

EURASIAN "D" COMPANY OF 4/SSVF (MALACCA VOLUNTEER CORPS) – Letters to "The Sun"

A letter from **S.T. Rajagopal** entitled "Our Forgotten Heroes" was printed in "The Sun" on 27/8/10. This is what he had to say about "D" company 4/SSVF:-

"The heroic roles in fighting the Japanese invaders and the communist menace in Malaya by the Portuguese-Eurasian community are unknown to many. It's timely to take a peep at their sacrifices as we celebrate our 53 years of hard fought Independence.

A few hundred men from the 500-year-old- minority community served in the British and Malaysian armies and the police force. There is no mention in many books on Malaysian history about their daring deeds. Neither is there any mention of them in the Portuguese Settlements museum.

The only reliable sources are from the 4th British Battalion's "D" Company Volunteer **Horace Sta Maria**, 88, and the late **Bernard Sta Maria's** informative book *"My People, My Country"*.

Fearing a surprise Japanese attack on British-ruled Malaya, the 4th British Battalion recruited about 1500 local volunteers and trained them in Malacca. They were divided into four companies along ethnic lines, A-company for Europeans, B-Malays, C-Chinese and D-Portuguese-Eurasians and Indians who commanded the medical corps.[Ed. "B" & "C" Coys incorrectly named] When the Japanese Imperial army attacked Malaya on Dec 8, 1941, the Volunteers were mobilized and rushed to defend Singapore, stationed at the first line of defence at Bukit Timah.

The D-company's 200 men fought against the Japanese till the last line of defence at Mount Pleasant. They only dropped their guns when the British surrendered to the Imperial army on Feb 15, 1942.

When the D-company and allied forces assembled at Farrer Park in Singapore on the orders of the Japanese army leaders, some Portuguese-Eurasians escaped in pairs and returned to Malacca. Other Portuguese-Eurasians were held for a month, tortured and forced to do manual jobs before being allowed to return to Malacca.

There, they regrouped and joined an anti-Japanese resistance group in Kuala Lipis and plotted to fight the Japanese. However, news leaked out and the Japanese arrested them, took them to Singapore and executed them.

After the war, the British held a victory parade in London on June 8, 1946 to honour the fighters. **Lt. A.S. Machado** received a medal for bravery on behalf of the D-company. Other D-company fighters in Malacca each received four medals at a grand parade.

Many Portuguese-Eurasians served in the army and police during and after the Emergency. Their services spanned between 18 and 35 years.

Some also accompanied the Malaysian army to Congo in 1960s which served under the United Nations peace-keeping plan. Now, many army and police veterans are in the Portuguese Settlement and elsewhere but they are forgotten by their own community.

When the settlement celebrates Merdeka functions on Aug 31 yearly, the veterans don't occupy the centre stage or get highlighted. Neither are prayers offered for the dead war heroes on Warriors' Day. A sad case indeed.

"Our heroes' record set straight" – MVG Malaysia Secretary Andrew Hwang's reply to S.J. Rajagopal

"I refer to 'Our forgotten heroes' (Letter, Aug 27). As a historical researcher on the Eurasian volunteer soldiers who served in the Second World War, I noted a few inaccuracies in **S.T. Rajagopal's** commendable letter.

I believe the mistakes are not his, but that of the late **Bernard Sta Maria** in his 1982 book, *"My People, My Country"*.

First, the Malacca Eurasian (as they were classified during the British era) soldiers were part-time "volunteer" or reservist soldiers and not regulars in D (or the Eurasian) Company of the Malacca Volunteer Corps (MVC), which was later re-named the 4th Battalion of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (4/SSVF). The MVC or 4/SSVF was formed in 1923 as a strategic military reserve.

Second, the Eurasian company's strength never exceeded 130 men at any time and 4/SSVF only mustered 675 men of all ranks in five companies and two sections on Dec 1, 1941 when they were mobilized for war. Their designated area of deployment was in Fortress Singapore and they were all in their positions in Singapore before the Japanese landed at Kota Bahru on 8 December, 1941.

Third, the Indian volunteers were mostly in the Signals Section and they were not in command of the medical corps which was British-led.

Fourth, when the British Surrender was announced on Feb 15, 1942, D Company was left practically leaderless as all the company's officers and most of the NCOs had disappeared.

The late **Theodore Moissinac** in his 2001 memoir, *"Rev. Fr. Bourke, a Redemptorist priest in captivity"*, [*Apa Khabar*, Edition 22, pages 11 – 13] stated that they were holding the fort north of Newton Circus in Singapore. As Moissinac was the Company Quartermaster Sergeant and the only NCO left, he took charge of D Company and led them on the march to captivity at Farrer Park POW Camp. The last English officer with them was Captain Rev. Fr. Gerard Bourke, the Roman Catholic military chaplain of 4/SSVF, who was subsequently forcibly separated from the Eurasian volunteers. Capt. Rev. Fr. Bourke survived the war.

The Eurasian officers and NCOs who had disappeared had in fact shed their uniforms and were keeping a low profile. A Eurasian traitor betrayed **Capt. Roy de Vries**, **Capt. Andrew Pinto**, **Capt. E.A. Rodrigues** and **Cpl. Allen Sta Maria**, who were all arrested by the Japanese on Oct 21, 1942, some eight months after the fall of Singapore. I have copies of the war crimes transcripts concerning the torture and death of **Capt. de Vries**.

For those interested in learning more about the brave volunteer soldiers who fought for Malaya in the Second World War, please refer to www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk or e-mail mvg.malaysia@gmail.com

UNION FLAG OF SURRENDER IN KUALA LUMPUR – sent by Andrew Hwang by kind permission of Ivan Ho.

Andrew writes:-

Former MVG member **Ivan Ho** contacted me and asked me to help him write about the actual flag used at the Surrender of the Japanese forces in KL at Victoria Institution. It seems that when **General Roberts** came to take the surrender it was discovered that there was no Union Flag at the V.I. Asking around, Gen. Roberts ascertained that Ivan's mother's family had a flag concealed at the Commercial Press premises which they owned. A runner was dispatched to borrow the flag and Gen. Roberts signed it, confirming that it was used for this historic event. Ivan has inherited the flag and it is kept at his home.

An account of this event was printed in the **1984 New Straits Times Annual**. If anyone has a copy of this Annual – please get in touch with Andrew OR scan the article and send it to him, on:-

ac_hwang@yahoo.com or 28, Jalan Batu Laut, Taman Bukit Seputeh, 58000 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Ivan Ho has indicated that he would like to donate the flag to a museum eventually. He has contacted the Imperial War Museum in London, but they told him that they would accept it without any guarantee that it would ever be displayed. **Does anyone have any suggestions where this flag could be safely kept and displayed?** Please contact Andrew, Jonathan or Rosemary if you can help – suggestions will be passed on.

Excerpt of an interview with Ivan Ho's uncle about the history of The Commercial Press which operated in a building at High Street, Kuala Lumpur, from the New Straits Times article. The business was owned by the **Yuen** family, to which Ivan's mother belonged:-

"...we opened the shop again. For a month there was no electricity and we powered the machines with our feet. When the British returned in victory, the Japanese surrendered in a ceremony at Victoria Institution. The British Army had no Union Jack and they borrowed one from me. It was returned to us with the initials of a **Lt. Gen. Roberts**. You see a **Captain Wahab** who was in the advance party of the British army had met my sister in India. When he reached the town, he immediately contacted me and it was through him that the British knew we possessed a Union Jack. The printing press may soon be no more. My sons are not interested in taking over the business. I'm thinking of retiring soon," he says.

Inside the building, one steps into a different world. Away from the street it is cool, as the ancient long-stemmed fans churn the air. Dust has settled on the cupboards and files, though the printing section is clean. Next to **Harry's** desk is an old Chubb safe, older than he is.

The ground floor of the building is filled with printing machines and other paraphernalia, dusty leaflets and paper. The first floor houses the composing and book binding machines. The second floor is for storage. There is still a copperplate printing and stereotype making machine in the building – both dating back to the 1900s. Nobody lives here any more.



This Union Jack was loan to the British
forces I used at the Victoria Institution
for the Official signing of Surrender by the
Japanese Army. This flag is had
been signed by the British officer on
returning to us.

10/23/83 Ben & Mr. Lane from N.S.T. came to interview I had seen this

The only film on Japanese
surrender ceremony

YOUR readers may be interested to know that the *Times of London* recently published an obituary of General Sir Quvry Roberts who died on March 16 at the age of 87.

A reader of the *Times* later wrote in to say that the obituary failed to mention Sir Ouvry's role as commander of land forces in Operation Zipper, the invasion of Malaya and re-conquest of Singapore, already

mounted when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan.

The writer, Stephen Harper, added: "Sailing mainly from India, this was the longest sea crossing of an invasion armada before the Falklands conflict, throwing 180,000 British and Indian forces onto beaches near Port Swettenham."

"By the time D-Day (Sept. 9) came, the Japanese in Malaya had reluctantly accepted their

emperor's order to cease fire and the landings were unopposed. Even so the invasion forces, apart from the first assault troops, were bogged down on beaches with much worse surfaces than anything intelligence had indicated."

I was one of the eight officers witnessing the surrender ceremony (apart from the general's staff) on Sept 12, 1945, at the Victoria Institution, Kuala Lumpur.

The late Major A.H.H. Beamish, subsequently the director of broadcasting in Malaysia and Singapore, took the only film of the ceremony.

He presented it to the Malaysian Government for its historical archives.

It would be interesting to view it on television one day.

DERRICK J. COUPLAND
Major (Retired)
Singapore

FRANCIS LIGHT'S GRAVESTONE – OLD PENANG CEMETERY
GEORGETOWN

This photograph (taken some years ago) shows the neglected state of the Cemeteries in Penang, even Francis Light's grave



**NOTICE TO PERSONS WITH BURIAL RIGHTS AND
PERSONAL REPRESENTATIVES AND/OR FAMILY
MEMBERS OF BURIAL RIGHTS OF THE DECEASED
BURIED AT WESTERN ROAD
CHRISTIAN CEMETERY, PENANG
(TO UPDATE THE REGISTER OF
MAJLIS PERBANDARAN PULAU PINANG)**

Notice is hereby given that the Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang (MPPPP) who is maintaining the Register of Burials is undergoing an exercise to update the register of burial rights, particulars of all rights granted and the plan of the cemetery.

2. The MPPPP do hereby require all the personal representatives and family members of the deceased buried at Western Road Christian Cemetery, Penang provide to MPPPP the following particulars:

- (i) the date of the purchase of rights to the plot;
- (ii) name and address of the applicants (email, phone);
- (iii) name and address of current personal representatives (email, phone);
- (iv) evidence of the fees paid for the purchase;
- (v) the Plot number in which the right is exercisable;
- (vi) the name of the Deceased buried (if any);
- (vii) any lawful assignment or transmission of the right notified in writing to the MPPPP; and
- (viii) any documentary evidence of rights acquired.

3. The persons with burial rights and the personal representatives and/or family members are required to provide the above particulars **ON OR BEFORE 30th NOVEMBER 2010** to Pengarah Perancangan Pembangunan, Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang, Tingkat 11, Komtar, 10675 Pulau Pinang failing which MPPPP will take necessary actions to re-possess the burial plots for use.

4. MPPPP hereby gives the personal representatives and family members of the deceased buried at the Western Road, Christian Cemetery One (1) month to remove or fill up with cement the concrete flower pots/vessels or any other water retaining decorations built on the graves to prevent mosquito breeding failing which MPPPP will take necessary action.

5. Notice is also given that the cemetery is closed except for those with permission obtained from the caretaker of the Cemetery at Tel. No. 04-227 5658 / 5134 or Level 11, KOMTAR.

Dated this 1st day of September 2010

Yang Dipertua
Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang

It is a sad fact that the cemeteries and graves containing the remains of British Malaysians are fast disappearing across South East Asia in the name of development.

The early 1960s saw the neglect then destruction of the cemetery at Muntok containing the graves of British and Australian male civilian internees who died in Japanese captivity in Sumatra.

Then in the late 1990s the destruction of the Bidadari Cemetery, Singapore, which contained the graves of several hundred civilian internees of the Japanese, as well as many prominent citizens of Colonial Singapore. These graves did not enjoy the protection of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

A small notice in a local Malaysian newspaper indicates that the already quite neglected and overcrowded Western Road Christian Cemetery, Penang, containing a number of historical graves as well as those of some MVG family members, is next on the list. The notice gives an inadequate 3 months' notice. As it is unlikely the Penang Municipal Council (Malay acronym: MPPPP) advertised in the major newspapers in the countries where many Christian citizens of Penang have emigrated to [Singapore, Australia, Canada, & New Zealand] we are reproducing the notice here. **Do write to the MPPPP as a matter of URGENCY if you are personally affected.]**

Address to write to - on or before 30 November 2010:-

Pengarah Perancangan Pembangunan, Majlis Perbandaran Pulau Pinang, Tingkat 11, Komtar, 10675 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia.

WAR MEMORIALS IN NEED OF PROTECTION

As well as disappearing Cemeteries in the Far East, War Memorials are also under threat from desecration in the UK. In a special article in the Telegraph on 24th August 2010, Philip Johnston argues that a specific crime of defacing a war memorial should now be introduced in the wake of various cases which have been brought to court, ranging from mindless vandalism, such as urinating on War Memorials, to actual defacement with politically or religiously motivated graffiti. He also points out that if we mind about how our War Memorials are treated, then we should make sure they are looked after. No formal register of War Memorials exists at present, but the War Memorials Trust hopes to complete one in time for the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War in 2014. Most Memorials were built through local fund-raising – and have a range of different owners.

Former military commanders also came out in favour of special protection for War Memorials.

MALAYAN VOLUNTEER HOLDINGS AT THE IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM DEPARTMENT OF DOCUMENTS

An update by Rod Suddaby – September 2010

Guidance to using this list:

- Where a name is followed by a number, you should go to – www.iwmcollections.org.uk/qryDocuments in **Collections online** and put that number in the **Catalogue Number Box** in order to see our database entry. Please note that (i) in one or two cases (Reynolds and Soul, for example) the name of the collection will be different, but their records form a significant part of the collection (ii) with numbers over 15,500 the summary of the collection may not appear in the database which you can see at home as the Museum is working on a revised and updated version of *Collections Online* that is unlikely to become available remotely until May 2011.
- All the collections followed by a number can be readily retrieved for a researcher to consult.
- Where a name is followed by a box number (such as 65/15/1), there is as yet no catalogue entry, but the collection can be readily retrieved for a researcher to consult.
- Where nothing follows a name, the collection does form part of our permanent collections, but has not yet been allocated a box number and remains without a catalogue entry. They should all have at least box numbers by the end of March 2011, but in the meantime please contact me at least two working days in advance of any visit to consult them so that I can be sure to have them accessible.
- The list below includes, of course, some collections (Coltart, Henman and Inder for instance) that consist of nothing more than a handful of prisoner of war postcards, a single letter or an extremely brief memoir, and others (Mackintosh, Wells) which include substantial diaries.

ALEXANDER AHB (88/5/1) – 2/FMSVF
 ALEXANDER NL (65/15/1) – JVE & Dalforce
 BAILLIES WH (3710) – 2/FMSVF
 BAND RWI (7717) – 1/SSVF
 BANFIELD AG (4139) – 1/SSVF then CSM FMSVF
 BENNETT R (3806) – Armoured Cars, FMSVF 2nd Lt.
 BENNITT AJ (4367) – Civilian Internee
 BIRD AW (2189) – MVAf
 BLOOM Mrs. F (66/254/1) – Civilian Internee
 BREWER F (67/182/1) – 3/SSVF & Dalforce
 BRUNDLE KA (99/50/1) – 1/SSVF escaped on the Kuala
 BUCKLEY Dr. TA (96/19/1) – FMSVF & Civilian Internee
 BUXTON CA (65/12/1) – Civilian Internee
 COLE RS (66/23/1) – Civilian Internee
 COLTART GM (-) – SRA [V] Lt.
 CORKE CG (-) – 2/FMSVF
 CRAIG Mrs. CE – Husband was SSVF
 CRAWFORD R * (-) – JVE
 DENNE GAA (-) – 4/FMSVF
 DOBREE PGJ (95/34/1) – FMSVF Light Battery
 EDUARDES-KER R (1134) – SRA [V] to Malay Regiment
 EVANS TH (85/29/1) – SRA [V]
 FOSS Mrs. J (66/254/1) – Civilian Internee
 FURNEAUX WJ (80/46/1) – MVAf
 GALE JK (83/32/1) – SRA [V]
 GODBER RJ (-) – Armoured Cars, FMSVF
 GOTTO BA (-) – VF Civilian Internee
 HADLEY Mrs. MM (-) – Civilian Internee
 HARDING FL (8474) – Capt. FMSVF 45 MT
 HART TM (01/24/1) – 2/FMSVF
 HAY AW (-) – Capt. 1/SSVF
 HAY MC (-) – FMSVF Light Battery
 HEBDITCH EG (3661) – SRE [V]
 HEDLEY J (221) – JVE
 HEMBREY BM (-) – 1/FMSVF to SOE
 HENMAN ORT * (-) – Lt. MRNVR
 HODGSON JR (97/41/1) – 4/SSVF
 HUNTSMAN G * (-) – Civilian Internee
 INDER RL * (-) – JVE
 INNES-KER WM (84/45/1) – 1/SSVF
 JENNINGS Mrs. M (9788) – Civilian Internee
 JOHNSON-HILL KC (-) – SRA [V]
 JOHNSTON DA (-) – SRA [V]
 KINAHAN CHG (457) – SRE [V]
 LEE CH (11119) – 3/FMSVF Armoured Cars
 LITTLEDYKE SJ (15361) – 2/FMSVF
 MACKINTOSH I (-) – FMSVF 3 Malayan Field Ambulance
 MAGILL WD (-) – Maj. 3/FMSVF
 MALET HFG (3159) – Capt. 4/FMSVF
 MAN FOS (838) – MRNVR
 McARTHUR CR (1895) – CSM 2/FMSVF
 transcript of original held elsewhere
 McPHERSON Dr. DR (3803) – Lt. FMSVF
 MIDDLETON-SMITH R (02/50/1) – 1/SSVF
 MILLEN SJ (3158) – 1/SSVF
 MILLS RT (13030) – FMSVF Armoured Cars
 MOFFATT MGF (11185) – FMSVF
 MORGAN ED (91/18/1) – 1/SSVF
 MUIR-JONES C (99/50/1) – FMSVF escaped on "Celia"
 MURPHY MP (1707) – FMSVF
 NELSON D (66/220/1) – SRE [V]
 NEWAY TH (3804) – Lt. Col. CO 1/SSVF
 NEWINGTON PCB (7620) – Civilian Internee
 NEILD P (66/221/1) – Not listed in O.P.
 PARSONS JER (66/229/1) – JVE
 PAVILLARD Dr. SS (67/202/1) – MO 1/SSVF
 PELTON F (435) – Capt. 2/FMSVF
 PHOTIADES NA (6869) – Lt. FMSVF
 PORTER HA (90/2/1) – SRE [V]
 REA JT – 1/SSVF
 REYNOLDS WR (442) – Capt. of "Krait"
 RICHARDSON JA (87/58/1) – 4/FMSVF
 ROMNEY PH (4584) – FMSVF Malay Mail
 ROSS HR (653) – FMSVF Light Battery
 SCOTT CA (-) – Col. CO 4/SSVF (access restriction)
 SCOTT GW (1810) – 1/SSVF Armoured Cars
 SCOTT WG (-) – Capt. 1/FMSVF
 SEED CWS (2242) – Lt. Col. 2/FMSVF
 SHEARN ED (2033) – MVAf
 SHEPPARD MCF (65/12/1) – Capt. 1/FMSVF
 SIMPSON IA * (-) – 2/FMSVF
 SMITH RJFdeDL (66/217/1) – KVF
 SOPER JRP (65/10/1) – Lt. 1/FMSVF
 SOUL DB (10450) – JVE
 TAYLOR LV (899) – 1. SSVF
 THOMAS Mrs. M (66/254/1) – Civilian Internee
 THORNTON C (11433) – FMSVF
 TODD RBR (84/2/1) – 2/FMSVF
 TURNER SY (91/14/1) – MVAf
 VARDY Dr. EC (67/166/1) – MO FMSVF to RAMC
 WAGSTAFF JH (91/14/1) – FMSVF Signals
 WALKER-TAYLOR BP (11577) – FMSVF
 WARREN HG (97/6/1) – FMSVF
 WEBB A (66/227/1) – Padre Capt. 2/FMSVF
 WELLS CW (-) – 3/FMSVF
 WEST Dr. GF (98/7/1) – CO FMSVF 3 Malayan Field Amb.
 WILKIE RD (-) – Capt. 1/SSVF

If anyone else has any documents/diaries/letters etc. which you would like to donate to the Imperial War Museum – or which you know are there, but have not been listed above, please get in touch with Rod Suddaby, Keeper of Documents at the I.W.M. or with Jonathan Moffatt. For advice on any documents you may hold, or you are unsure about what to do with them, ask Jonathan.

"EUROPEANS ONCE PLAYED THE DRUMS IN SELANGOR VOLUNTEER BAND"

Looking back on 21 years of steady progress – to beat retreat on K.L. Padang

Headlines from 'The Straits Times' on Tuesday, 11 October, 1938 – with pictures showing 'The Selangor Volunteer Band and Drums' and 'Mr. E.J. Kenneison, "father" of the Selangor Band and Drums started during the War (WW1) with a number of European members of the old Malay States Volunteer Rifles'

THE STRAITS TIMES REPORT SAID:-

"The Band and Drums of the 2nd (Selangor) Battalion, F.M.S. Volunteer Force is to Beat the Retreat for the first time on the Padang on Wednesday evening. Without question the best Volunteer band in the Peninsula today, its history goes back to 1917 when **Mr. E.J. Kenneison** took on the job of creating a band for the old Malay States Volunteer Rifles. Mr. Kenneison enrolled in the Leicestershire Regiment on 10 August, 1895. He fought in the Siege of Ladysmith, served throughout the South African War, was discharged in 1905 as a sergeant-drummer of the regiment, and later served in the Kolar Goldfield Rifle Volunteers and South Mahratta Railway Rifles until 1911. It was these circumstances which helped to bring about the first Volunteer Band and Drums in Malaya. **That sergeant-drummer is today Mr. E.J. Kenneison, Managing Director of Kenneison Bros. Ltd., who operate the limestone quarries at Batu Caves in Selangor.**"

QUOTING FROM A CONTEMPORARY NEWSPAPER COMMENT IN 1918 THE STRAITS TIMES said:-

"A company of the M.S.V.R. (the now disbanded Malay States Volunteer Rifles) has just held a most enjoyable week-end camp at Kuala Lumpur, but with the journalist's fear of the fickle D.O.R.A., I refrain from aiding, cherishing, or comforting the enemy by letting the Emperor William and his myrmidons know what they did, and how they did it. One thing, however, may be mentioned without prejudice to our Forces in Flanders, Mesopot, or Bulgaria; and that is the wonderful progress that has been made by the drums of the M.S.V.R. When it was decided to fall in parades last year, **Company Sergeant-Major C.E. Evans** was deputed to find a stalwart, able and willing to beat the necessary drum."

DIFFICULT TO FIND MEN, the report continues:-

"There were many willing but none able, and the CSM was about to give up the search in despair, when he suddenly discovered, in the reserves, a real line ex-sergeant-drummer of the Leicestershire Regiment, **Sergeant-Drummer Kenneison**, who got to work at once, and proceeded to beg, borrow or hire the necessary instruments of music. It was difficult to find the men, as there was an idea abroad that joining the band was shirking combative duty, but finally 15 were persuaded and formed the nucleus of our drums. They knew nothing whatever of drums and flutes, but the sergeant-drummer took them in hand and miracles happened. In October last, a more-or-less complete outfit arrived from the **Malay States Guides**; and so proficient had the drums become at the last annual inspection that **His Excellency the G.O.C.** congratulated the sergeant-drummer upon the excellent results he had achieved in so short a time. Today, the M.S.V.R. drums would not disgrace a regular drum and fife band."

THE STRAITS TIMES REPORT ON 11 OCTOBER 1938 CONTINUED:-

"THE PIONEERS, of the original band:-

In the photograph below [**Editor: which I don't have.**] the original corps of drummers are shown - including:- **C.S.M. Charles E. Evans** (Penang); **H.L. Linnell** (Wardleburn Estate, Klang Gates, Selangor); **H.M.S. Wagner** (Dour Estate, Batu Caves, Selangor); **P. Blackburn** (Sungei Wangi Estate, Sitiawan, Perak); **F.B. O'Malley** (Bukit Blimping Estate, Kuala Selangor); and **R.Nixon** (Batu Caves Estate, Kuala Lumpur). The drums continued in fullest energy when the M.S.V. Rifles were disbanded on 31 December, 1920, and lasted with the new M.S.V. Regiment until a dwindling number of European drummers caused its disbandment in 1925. But before that, it achieved the honour of being inspected by the **Prince of Wales**, when **His Royal Highness** visited Malaya in 1922.

A new era began in July 26, 1924, when **Lieut. Alan Loke**, who also is still in the country, presented to the then Malayan Volunteer Infantry (a non-European regiment which later merged in the F.M.S. Volunteer Force), a set of band instruments.

The M.V.I. thereupon not only inaugurated the first band, but took over the M.S.V.R. drums and formed a Band and Drums, upon which Sergeant-Drummer Kenneison (later Lieut. Kenneison) again got to work. It became the Selangor Battalion Band and Drums.

In 1936, **Lieut.-Col. J.C. Cuthbert, M.C.**, Officer Commanding the Selangor Battalion, re-organized the band with new instruments, obtained with a government grant, and these instruments are now in use in the band, as well as the original drum-majors sash, gloves and mace, carried by Mr. Kenneison.

IMPROVED EQUIPMENT

But the equipment of the bandsmen has recently been greatly improved by red-and-yellow wings and dress cords, and by the hand painting of all eleven drums with the Regimental crests, consisting of a tiger and scroll, by **Mr. Hugh Le Fleming**.

The Band and Drums has recently been under the baton of the first stipendiary Bandmaster in Malaya, **Mr. J.A. Roeytenburg**, and it has made such strides that its 62 members and the 11 players constituting the Regimental Dance Orchestra travel between Seremban and Ipoh to fulfill their public duties."

BOOKS

"THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF DEATH". By Stephen Brookes. Published by John Murray in 2000 (No other information)

Reviewed by Audrey Holmes McCormick:-

An admirable and amazing read is a book I have just belatedly come across, by **Stephen Brookes**. It is the story of an Anglo-Burmese family from Maymyo (now Myanmar) making an amazing escape journey from Burma via China and the Burma Road, "a 300 mile trek barefoot", through swamps and over mountain ridges, and the developing courage of this young boy **Stephen** (only 11 years old when the family started out) who managed to keep nearly all his family alive (even after his English father – an Indian army surgeon – died on the way). It is beautifully written, very moving and terrible: almost unputdownable..... additionally of interest to us, there are some food insights I have not read of in our own POW memoirs: "There was food in the jungle if you knew how to go about it", Stephen learned.

I wondered that – so far as I know – some of these things did not appear in the POW camps – despite the frequent cutting of bamboo clumps (for example) as the railway line was cleared.

Stephen dug "yams from the banks of streams and cut bamboo shoots from the base of the huge clumps" (despite the nesting snakes). The yams were like potatoes, Stephen said, while the bamboo shoots were "delightfully crunchy" when boiled he likened the leaves to spinach, and the stalks to asparagus He caught fish on a bent pin – but the Gurkha kukri he learned to use for the same purpose, would hardly have been available to our own men. Tapioca trees could also be found – Malay families hiding in the jungle from the Japanese however, could eat too much tapioca (which almost totally lacked nutrition but was at least filling). But wherever there had been a hut or settlement, a banana tree even without fruit, could provide a edible inner core from the stem of its large lower leaves. I have not heard of anything which indicates our POWs managed to supplement food in this way, except the few who managed to fish when opportunity arose. (While some others, after the Kinkaseki mine camp prisoners were moved on without food – ate grass soup).

My copy of Stephen Brookes' book came from my public library. But it is such a story of courage, I shall want to read it again, and own it. For the adult Stephen so clearly has remembered the boy's heart (and fear), and the tragedies his family met along the way – with inhumanities which included that, seemingly, of a British official they had known personally but who left them to cope alone until it came to the father's burial. For then he gave his former friend a respectful burial – as our POWs did their own dead, of course. But in the worst times, the boy Stephen at 11 and 12 and 13, was a man.

"SURVIVING CHANGI: E.E. COLMAN – A CHESS BIOGRAPHY". By Olimpiu G. Urcan. Published by Singapore Heritage Society in 2007 (info@singaporeheritage.com) ISBN 978-981-05-7922-7

With input from **Jonathan Moffatt**

Colman was an interesting man who was involved with the formation of the Malay Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC) in 1910, through his experience with the Malay Football Association (MFA) which he founded in 1908. An avid chess player, Colman entered the London Chess Championship for 1919 – 1920 while he was home on leave. Later while imprisoned in Changi, he was part of the chess-playing group of prisoners which included men such as Arthur Reynolds, Lieut. Patrick McArthur (RAMC) Maurice Edwards (Royal Marine) and Gunner William Arthur Bryant (Australian 2/15 Field Regiment) to mention a few.

"A DOCTOR'S WAR". By Rowley Richards. Published by Harper Collins in 2006 in Sydney. ISBN 0-7322-8009-5 and 978-0-7322-8009-3 "A memoir of such deep emotional strength your breath will literally be taken away" – a quote from ANDREW DENTON. Rowley Richards was an Australian doctor with the rank of Captain who administered to the sick POWs in the Camp at Moulmein in Burma.

"SANDAKAN: BLOOD BROTHERS". By Lynette Silver. No other details known.

As mentioned on P 5, this book was launched on 15th August 2010, during the 65th anniversary of the Sandakan-Ranau Death Marches. Its inception came as a result of Silver's observation of the lack of acknowledgement of local Sabahans who had put their own lives at stake to save others during World War 2. In 1999, Lynette Silver had noticed the way in which local heroes were ignored, while the press concentrated on a handful of foreign war veterans. She was determined to redress the situation, and decided that the only way to honour the people of Sabah for the enormous help they gave the Allied Forces during the war, was to write a book, dedicated to the locals who helped. She worked on the book for 17 hours a day for four months, and described it as "the single most rewarding work" she had ever done.

Among the local war veterans who witnessed the book launch, was retired policeman, **Philip Mairon Bahanja**, aged 82, who recalled having to kill 4 Japanese soldiers, and the suffering and challenges he endured during the war. He said that he was barely 16 when the Japanese Army arrested him along with 30 others in Jesselton (now Kota Kinabalu). They were brought to Sandakan and forced to work as labourers in Buli Sim-Sim. After some time they fled and joined the guerillas, and spent the rest of the war helping the Allied Forces. Fear of losing his head kept Philip going – as he recalled the words frequently used by the Japanese, "*potong kepala*" meaning "cut the head off".

WEBSITES TO VISIT

[http://www.gg.gov.au/res/File/PDFs/honours/qb10/Media%20CSM%20\(FINAL\).pdf](http://www.gg.gov.au/res/File/PDFs/honours/qb10/Media%20CSM%20(FINAL).pdf) – Michael Doncaster's Conspicuous Service Medal Award

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Shows-Events/RHS-Show-Tatton-Park/2010/Gardens/Gardens-A-to-Z/Bamboo> - Meg Parkes' FEPOW Schools' Project

<http://www.highgateart.com> – Bill Vowler's daughter Laurie has just re-opened her Highgate Gallery in London.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE

Jean Lips writes:-

Re: V-J Day. "I just felt so proud to be laying the wreath with my brother (Ron Mitchell). I also knew he would be having problems with his leg, and was happy to be at hand ... just in case.
Yes, it really was Ronald's day. Wonderful! Midge, Ian's (Mitchell) widow had a great time too, I understand, as a good few people chatted to her about Ian.

A thought struck me on the way home: 3 Mitchell 'children' came through the war, and 65 years later, a son of each of them attended the Memorial Service. Yes, it was quite a family reunion; there were 9 of us there. My congratulations again for the tremendous success of the whole day. You even fixed the weather! It was a gigantic task, down to even giving Ron and his entourage a 3 minute start before the main body set off to the Memorial Garden. I loved it when Ron decided to wait at the last corner, to come in with the main body of people. In the twelve months since my first visit to the NMA, our Garden has certainly sprouted. Those bamboos are going to be a glorious sight - a landmark, in fact. I wonder what it will be like for the next time?

[Editor: Thank you very much for your kind remarks, Jean - AND to everyone else who wrote about the day with their thanks. I don't have room for all the other letters and e-mails but they were very much appreciated by all of us who were associated with organizing the day.]

An important query from new members Judy and David Balcombe from Victoria, Australia:-

"I have a question, if any members may be able to help me? My grandfather died in Muntok camp on Bangka Island, Indonesia on 2/8/1944. We have a photograph of his grave with the headstone being a cross with his name on it, date of death and a British flag on it. The cross stands in a neat plot filled with gravel and with a stone surround. There are many similar graves around his. The grave is very well made and tidy - I do not think it would have been made during the War but is likely to date from the post-War period. A person I have been in touch with says his mother received a similar photo in 1949.

I am aware that graves from Palembang and Muntok camps were relocated to War cemeteries in Jakarta by the Indonesian Government in the early 1960s. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission does not have any record of my grandfather's grave, and, indeed, very regrettably, their website states that graves from Palembang and Muntok were re-interred in common graves in Jakarta in the 1960s. This might have been understandable if the original graves had no identification, but I wonder if this can have been the case with these very clearly marked graves?

I would be very grateful to hear if any members have any detail or recollection of the circumstances surrounding the relocation of these graves. We would like to know, if possible, where our relatives now lie and also be able to place a memorial to them."

An enquiry from Christine Clarke about her relatives who were evacuated from Singapore on the 'Aorangi':-

Thank you for the kind services of the Malayan Volunteers Group website. My grandmother was a 9 year old girl named **Ruth Bowden** at the time of the Singapore Evacuation of 1942, daughter of **Francis George Bowden** and **Evelyn Dora Bowden** (whose father was a warrant officer, Royal Artillery, & whose name appears on the Singapore Memorial). She was evacuated aboard the **Aorangi** to Australia (she suggested to Fremantle) and then boarded the **Narkunda** to, I believe, Adelaide, in which area the family remained for about three years' time before boarding the **Madura** to England in 1946.

I am seeking any and all information about Evelyn Dora Bowden, her daughter (my grandmother) Ruth Bowden, and her brother **James George Bowden** born during their time in Australia, please. I have to ask too - might the name "**Eulinie Bowden**" in the evacuee list on this document be a translation error, as it correctly names the ship Evelyn Dora and Ruth Bowden were aboard? Or might there be another Mrs. Bowden with daughter Ruth? Are the ship passenger lists for the **Aorangi** and the **Narkunda** available anywhere for view?

Can anyone tell me about the family's time in Australia, please? Where did they stay in Australia, to which area or areas were evacuees brought to live? Which school might my grandmother have attended in the Adelaide area, between the ages of 10 and 13?

[Ed: If anyone can help Christine, please contact her on e-mail: safechildren@rocketmail.com]

Raymond Wood writes:-

I have now read through all the possible Newsletters and found them very moving indeed, as well as informative. Having first gone to Singapore in 1947, I feel an affinity with some of their stories when the Japanese Prisoners were still there and many of my friends had been in the 'bag'. You may be interested to know the following:-

Edition 12 asks for information about **Joe Speelman** whom I knew quite well in Kuala Lumpur in 1957-63, but much of it was given in the next edition; he was the best Manager the (Royal) Selangor Club ever had, of which I am still a Life member 53 years later. I shall be there again next year.

Edition 14 says the Malayan RNVR was disbanded on 11th March 1947. This may be true but it must have been resurrected as I was a member, Sailing Instructor Sub-Lt, in 1957-8 in Kuala Lumpur on the shore-based HMS

Selangor, of which Lt. Cmdr. Dick Lee was the Commanding Officer. The only reason I left was that the Queen's Commission was not able to be ratified after Independence.

Raymond has included an amusing story from his memoirs about his time as an MRNVR Officer:-

"The MRNVR Officers were often invited to a cocktail party on board visiting British or Australian naval ships. One such occasion was on the Battleship HMS Devonshire, moored off Port Swettenham on the coast about 30 miles from Kuala Lumpur. We had been warned to arrive by a certain time, before the later arrival of the King of Malaya (whose Malayan title is Yang de Pertuan Agong). On Independence, the arrangement was that of the nine ruling Sultans and Rajahs in the former Federation of Malaya, one of the rulers in turn would be elected by the others to serve as King for a period of five years. This was the sort of cocktail party Hollywood films love to portray. The ship was dressed overall with flags and bunting; the after-deck was covered by an awning festooned with fairy lights, and the Royal Marine band was playing cheerful dance tunes. We were taken to the ship by naval tender and, on ascending the gangway steps, piped aboard and greeted by the Officer of the Watch. Whilst we were waiting in line to be greeted by the Admiral and some local dignitaries, my wife Pauline (who was beautifully attired in a full-length gown bought specially for the occasion), whispered to me that the elastic had broken on the waist of her under slip. We could not get out of the greeting line without causing confusion and, with perfect aplomb, she carefully stepped out of her slip, draped it over her left arm as a silk shawl, and carried on as if nothing had happened whilst gracefully shaking the Admiral's hand. I was immensely proud of her presence of mind. Not long after, whilst we were having cocktails and chatting to the Admiral, we told him the episode and he roared with laughter. At that point, the Bo'sun piped the call for VIPs and the Admiral was informed that His Majesty, the King of Malaya, was coming aboard. Immediate panic set in with the Admiral saying "My God, where's my hat?" and promptly grabbed one from the head of a junior officer standing nearby. A few seconds later a head appeared over the handrail belonging to one of our MRNVR officers Lt. Colin Norris, saying, "Sorry, I'm late sir"; I will not repeat what the Admiral then said!! A short while afterwards, His Majesty and his Queen duly arrived and were greeted in full royal fashion. It was a night to remember."

An important message from Audrey McCormick:-

Quite some time ago, I had an enquiry asking whether I had any pictures of **Ken Wadsworth** from **Melbourne** - ex Railway POW with whom I had been in touch several years ago. Since then Ken has died. At the time of the enquiry, I couldn't find the photos, but **they have now come to light.**

If anyone made that enquiry or knows who did, please get in touch with me on:-

audrey.mccormick@dsl.pipex.com

Audrey added:-

Did you know that **Padre Noel Duckworth** stayed behind with the wounded in the ambulance after the **Battle of Sengarang** - not knowing what the Japs might do to them, be killed or taken prisoner. Padre Duckworth was nicknamed "The Pocket Sized Padre" - and had been Cox for Cambridge in the early 1930s!

OBITUARIES

FRANCES FRANCIS (nee SHORT) - 1931 - 2010

It is with deep regret and sadness that we report the death of Frances on 7th September 2010 after a short illness, positively and bravely borne. All of us who knew Frances, will remember her with love and great fondness, and we send her family our sincere condolences on the loss of a wonderful mother and good friend. She will also be sorely missed by all her friends in the MVG.

Daughter of Senior PWD Architect, **Charles Hatton Short**, in Singapore, and Member of the 1/SSVF, Frances first went out to visit her father's grave in Chungkai on a Pilgrimage with the Royal British Legion. In October 1996, Frances and I met on the RBL Pilgrimage which had been arranged to coincide with H.M. The Queen's Royal visit to Thailand. HRH The Duke of Edinburgh flew from Bangkok to attend Services in the Cemeteries in Kanchanaburi and Chungkai. Frances' father and mine both lie in Chungkai Cemetery, and it was here that we became firm friends. Frances was determined to introduce Malayan Volunteer families to each other. She attended the first MVG Lunch in London, arranged by **Sandy Lincoln**, and every one since; she visited the FEPOW Chapel in Wymondham to attend one of their first Annual Services; and was present at the Dedication Service in the FEPOW Plot at the NMA, when a section of the original rail track from the Burma/Thailand Railway was laid down. Every November, Frances went to the

Field of Remembrance at Westminster Abbey for the Cross Planting Ceremony attended for many years by the Queen Mother. It was at one of these ceremonies that she met **Merilyn Hywel-Jones**, and persuaded her to join the MVG.

Frances, quietly and without fanfare, spread the word about the Volunteers whenever and wherever she could, and supported every event which promoted them, giving encouragement to the founding of the MVG.



She was also a good friend to the Thailand Burma Railway Centre Museum in Kanchanaburi, visiting it many times to support the work being done by **Rod Beattie** and his team, in Thailand.

After the death of her husband, Frances moved to Ringmer, just outside Lewes, where she returned to her beloved hobby of painting, with considerable success and acclaim. At art classes she came into contact with **Anne Scott**, a fellow artist with Volunteer and Malayan connections – another member for the MVG! Friend and fellow Pilgrim whom Frances met on various visits to Thailand and Singapore with the RBL, is **Pam Danks**, also a member of the MVG.

Frances was full of fun; a wonderful mother to her two step sons; an active, enthusiastic and founder member of the MVG; a lover of great music; and well loved by all who knew her. At the Service of Thanksgiving for her life on 27th September, 2010, at St. Anne's Church in Lewes, 7 members of the MVG, listened to beautiful readings by members of her family, a memorable eulogy by the Vicar, and wonderful music by J.S. Bach, played with great passion by the organist who also taught Frances the piano. We shall all miss her immensely.

Rosemary Fell.

ARTHUR TITHERINGTON – 1922 – 2010

Well known for his dogged pursuit of justice for all Far East Prisoners of War, firstly for proper compensation from the Japanese and secondly for a full apology from the Emperor, Arthur Titherington was to partly achieve one part of his fight, when the Blair Government awarded an ex-gratia payment of £10,000 to some 16,000 prisoners and their widows in 2000. It was not, however, from the Japanese Government, but from the British tax-payer. He never stopped in his fight for a full apology from the Japanese for the lost years of his youth, and the brutal treatment meted out to the POWs by their captors. The Japanese word "**Shazai**" meaning "I have committed a sin, for which I apologize" was what Arthur Titherington required, but never achieved from the post-war Japanese Government or Emperor. "I do not forgive and I do not forget" was his rallying cry over the 58 years following the Anglo-Japanese peace treaty, signed in 1952, when the FEPOWs received a paltry £76 10s from the Japanese, for their suffering. "It is not a question of revenge, but of justice", he said.

Captured in Singapore, Arthur Titherington was shipped to Formosa to work in the notorious Kinkaseki copper mine, where conditions were appalling. Out of 523 prisoners sent there, only 90 survived the war. Titherington's weight halved to 5 stone 7 lbs. His job was to load chunks of ore into bogeys before being made a driller with responsibility for laying explosives. Beaten by his captors, (to whom he referred as 'Frying Pan' 'Ghost' and 'The Beast') he took some satisfaction from hiding the occasional stick of gelignite in a bogey which might later explode.

After the initial expectations of compensation and an apology faded, the subject came to the fore again as former FEPOWs retired from their post-war occupations, and took up the issues once more. Arthur became exasperated with governmental indifference and the public's assumption that only those on the Burma/Siam Railway had suffered. He started **The Japanese Labour Camp Survivors' Association** whose members famously turned their backs on the Emperor Akihito in The Mall during his state visit in 1998. Representing his Association, he joined other representatives of Australian and American POWs to bring a case for compensation and justice before the courts in Tokyo. The case was turned down, whereupon Arthur Titherington walked to the Japanese Diet, spat twice on the steps and said "There is no justice in this country. They are lying bastards".

Not all FEPOWs appreciated Arthur Titherington's uncompromising stand, but whatever they thought about his approach to seek justice from the Japanese, they cannot deny his fervour in trying to achieve it.

Arthur Titherington died on 19th September 2010, aged 88. A brave, if controversial, man who will be missed by FEPOWs everywhere.

KWA GEOK CHOO – 1921 – 2010

Wife of **Lee Kuan Yew**, Singapore's founding father, and mother of current Prime Minister, **Lee Hsien Loong**, Geok Choo died on October 2nd 2010. She studied law at Cambridge where she met her husband. In Singapore they started the law firm Lee and Lee with Kuan Yew's brother. Her husband always called her "Choo" and she is remembered for wearing the traditional Chinese Cheongsam dress when she accompanied him on official trips.

The MVG sends its condolences to her family and to the Republic of Singapore for their loss.

The MVG also announces the death of **Air Commodore Pat Kennedy**, aged 92. He flew with great distinction in the Burma campaign, and following the Japanese surrender, he was one of the first to fly into the Dutch East Indies where Dr. Sukarno had proclaimed the Republic of Indonesia. Taking Command of 81 Squadron, he led the airborne hunt for jungle POW and civilian camps, and provided cover for the ground units hunting for these camps, amongst an increasingly dangerous situation, particularly in Java. The flying conditions were arduous and dangerous as they dropped supplies to the many camps hidden in the jungle. He was awarded a DFC for his achievements – the citation read, "He has a prolonged and excellent record of gallantry and devotion to duty". He died on 2nd May 2010.

Lieut.-Commander David Foster's death was recorded on 4th June 2010, aged 90. Commanding 849 Naval Air Squadron, David Foster took part in the largest operation undertaken by the Fleet Air Arm, on 24th January 1945. Called Operation Meridian, 140 aircraft, flying from carriers, attacked oil refineries at Palembang in the then Dutch East Indies, which were supplying the Japanese war machine. The first attack caught the Jap fighters unawares, nevertheless, they were scrambled in time to intercept the Allied bombers, which had to dive bomb their target through barrage balloons covering the refineries. All aircraft returned to their carriers safely although damaged by the fighters. 5 days later Foster was ordered to repeat the attack, but this time the Jap fighters intercepted them 100 miles from their target and fought them all the way in. 4 out of 12 aircraft were lost, although one crew was rescued by the destroyer **Whelp** (1st Officer was one **Philip Mountbatten**), and 6 were damaged. Foster was awarded the DSO for his bravery. He wrote the book, "Wings Over the Sea", in 1990.

AN IMPORTANT LATE ANNOUNCEMENT – RECEIVED 8TH OCTOBER

IMAGES AND INFORMATION ON SSVF HQ AT BEACH ROAD, SINGAPORE

The following e-mail was received on 8th October 2010:-

Dear Sirs,

I am **Ho Weng Hin**, partner of architectural conservation consultancy **Studio Lapis**, based in Singapore. We are the conservation consultants for the South Beach project, which is the new development that incorporates part of the former Beach Road Camp and former NAAFI Britannia Club along Beach Road, Singapore.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Beach,_Singapore

Three of the military buildings that were formerly home to the Singapore/ Straits Settlements Volunteer Corps, including the Drill Hall, have been conserved by the Singapore government. These will be restored, and converted to new uses as an integral part of the future South Beach development.

In the course of our research, we came across your Malayan Volunteers Group website, which has been immensely informative and useful. Personally, I am moved that there still exist such close bonds, and fond recollections of Singapore and Malaya.

Currently, there are plans to design a special gathering space in front of the WW11 Memorial Plaque on the main façade of the SSVF Drill Hall for Remembrance Day (11 November) and Total Defence Day (15 February) memorial services. We are now researching on the likely size of the gathering of people during these occasions so that we could provide sufficient space. I attach two recent photographs of the Drill Hall façade and memorial plaque for your reference.

We shall be grateful if you, or any members of your association could kindly advise us on this matter, and furnish any information that may be relevant. It would be great if there are photographs (recent or historic) to show past memorial services held at the Drill Hall, so that we could help the architects in their design. I would greatly appreciate your kind assistance, and look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you.

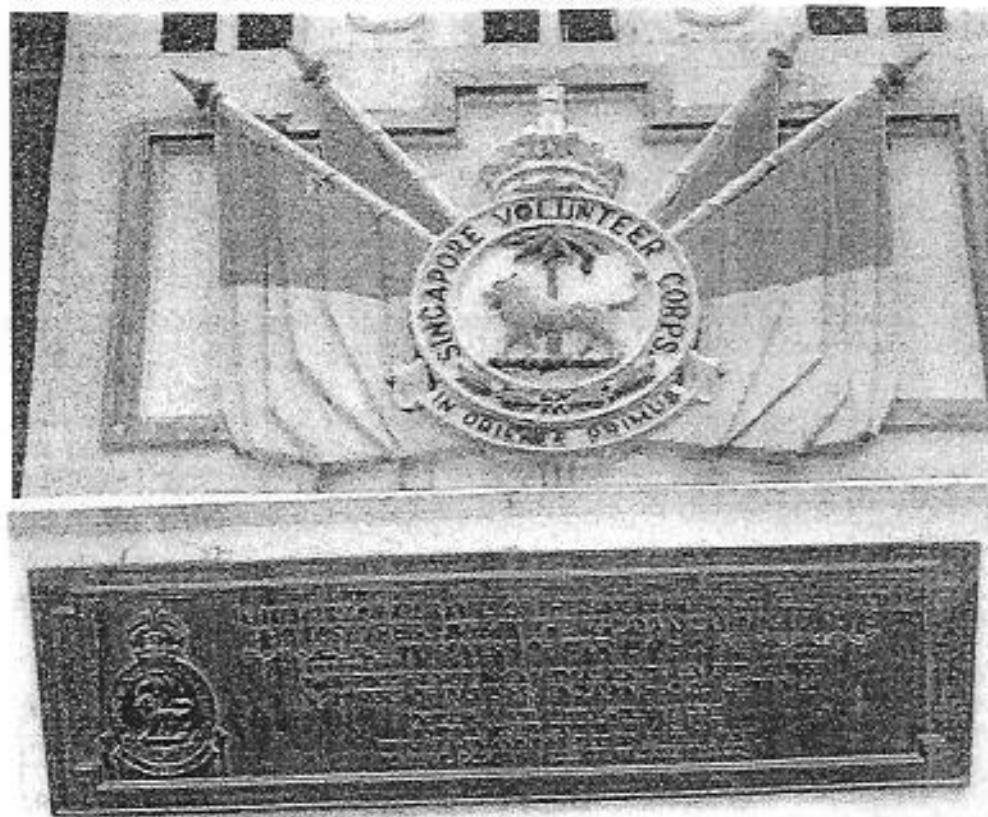
Yours sincerely,

HO WENG HIN

Architectural Conservation Specialist Consultant,
STUDIO LAPIS

30, Toh Tuck Place, Singapore 596805

e-mail: mail@studiolapis.sg and howh@studiolapis.sg



MVG LONDON LUNCH at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, Saturday, 2nd October 2010 – Report by Jonathan Moffatt

37 MVG members attended this year's London lunch in the RAF Club Ballroom. We were pleased to welcome several new members, including Tony Parrini, Chairman of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, with his wife. Also as a guest of MVG, we were delighted to have the company of Mr. Jeyathurai [Jeya], Director of the Changi Museum, Singapore. A number of personal reunions took place and there was a sharing of documents and photos. After a time for drinks and conversation, we enjoyed a good lunch of steak and kidney pie with seasonal vegetables, followed by fruit trifle, coffee and petit fours.

Speakers this year were MVG members Anne Scott and Susan Whitley – two of the four Kennaway sisters whose story was published in that marvellous book "Tales from the South China Seas" and also in Anne's memoirs "Journey by Candlelight". They told the story of their father, Mark John Kennaway, manager for many years of Escot Estate, Perak, and of growing up at Escot; of the events of 1941 – 1942 and their evacuation: Susan on the Aorangi and Anne on the Duchess of Bedford. Mother and daughters were reunited in South Africa and subsequently surviving the sinking of the Orcades. Mark John Kennaway survived captivity as a Changi POW and returned to Malaya post war.

Their excellent talk was very well received and the theme of Evacuation discussed. The resilience of mothers with young children who endured bombing, sinking, the loss of husbands, home and possessions was acknowledged, and the sisters thanked for their entertaining and, at times, amusing anecdotal talk.

Thanks are once again owed to Daniel Chaplain who sold the tickets for the raffle, and successfully extracted £138 out of members for MVG funds. Jonathan helped with the drawing of tickets and distribution of the numerous and varied prizes. We thank everyone who so generously donated the prizes – some imaginatively wrapped, and displayed.

A number of those attending the Lunch met up again at the RFH Conference held at the NMA the following weekend, including Hugh Chaplain, whom we have to thank for organizing the Lunch which ran so smoothly.



RFH CONFERENCE AT THE NMA, 9TH & 10TH OCTOBER 2010 – Report by Rosemary Fell

A wonderful, informative, exhausting and fulfilling week-end came to its conclusion at about 4.15 pm on Sunday 10th October. Delegates at the 3rd International Researching FEPOW History Conference had sat through hours of the most amazing collection of speakers with as much knowledge as one could find anywhere in the world on the subject of Far East Prisoners of War. All acknowledged experts in their field, we listened with rapt attention to Rod Beattie, Director of the Thailand Burma Railway Centre Museum, as he outlined the fascinating workings of the "V" scheme, operating right under the noses of the Japanese at enormous risk to those who were involved. We were fascinated and horrified by Dr. Geoff Gill's accounts of the various tropical and deficiency diseases which the POWs suffered in all the camps, many carrying the parasites in their bodies for the rest of their lives. Tony Banham gave us a real insight into the orderly way in which the evacuation of women and children was organized from Hong Kong, which contrasted starkly with the chaos of subsequent evacuations from Singapore. You could have heard a pin drop as Dr. Bernice Archer outlined the sufferings of the civilian women and children internees in their prison camps. This topic is little known about, especially the ordeal of the Dutch women and children on the islands of the Dutch East Indies of Sumatra and Java. These women had to work long hours doing manual work in the fields and some were forced to become "comfort women" for Japanese officers. They also suffered from lack of food and medical supplies, and endured savage punishments for any perceived breaches of discipline or lack of respect towards their Japanese guards. In Changi prison, the conditions for the women and children were marginally better, and we heard about the Changi Quilts made by them, and how each embroidered section carried a message of hope for their men folk. Other speakers included Dr. Rob Havers on Changi; Julie Summers on the effect of returning POWs on their families; and Mr. Jeyathurai, Director of the Changi Museum in Singapore, who gave us a brief outline of plans to inscribe the name of every FEPOW imprisoned in Changi on the remaining section of wall of the original Changi Prison – a huge undertaking. Roger Mansell sent a video message, urging us all to "share, share, share" our research information, so that everyone can learn from it. A poignant moment came when Dr. Nigel Stanley mentioned his father's treatment at the hands of the Kempeitai on the "double tenth" 68 years ago that Sunday.

We also had time to meet other people at the Conference – in the White Swan pub on the Friday evening, and at dinner held at the NMA on Saturday. It was wonderful to see so many MVG members at the Conference – 19 – if I counted correctly, and 2 new members who liked the look of us and decided to join!