



APA KHABAR

5th EDITION
JANUARY 2006

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL

As well as sending you good wishes for 2006, it seems the right time to say "Happy 1st Birthday" as well, because "Apa Khabar" and the Malayan Volunteers Group are a year old this month. There was not time to send out an extra edition of "Apa Khabar" in December to wish you a Merry Christmas, but we hope it was enjoyable and festive.

Our main priority this year is to attract more members, and consolidate our position as a serious group aiming to bring the Malayan Volunteers to the attention of the British public. With this in mind, we look forward to 2006 in the hopes that it will be a busy and fruitful year for our planned projects, and that the future of the MVG will be well established.

Perhaps we may allow ourselves a brief look back at our achievements so far. The Volunteers have been commemorated on 2 benches in the FEPOW Plot, and on a stone tablet in the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association Plot, both in the National Memorial Arboretum. Wreaths were laid at the Cenotaph in London on two occasions – at the Burma Star V-J Day Service, and on Remembrance Sunday. They were dedicated to the Malayan Volunteers both Military and Civilian, who served in WW2. We also have an ongoing project to sponsor the Library at the Thai/Burma railway Centre Museum in Kanchanaburi, Thailand, which we hope will come to fruition this year.

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY -- 13TH NOVEMBER 2005

It was an honour and a privilege to be part of a record crowd of marchers and onlookers attending the Remembrance Day Service at the Cenotaph on Sunday 13th November. Ten MVG members were among the marchers for the first time, and we all enjoyed the experience very much. It was felt that this should become a regular feature on our yearly list of events.

The march past at the Cenotaph is organized by the Royal British Legion. As this was the first time the MVG had applied for tickets, we were only issued with 10, and our place at the back of the Civilian Column M meant that we had a very long wait before it was our turn to march. We did not move off until after the television coverage had finished. This is why there was no mention of the Volunteers in the TV commentary, although Jonathan had written a very good piece about them, which was sent to the BBC Producer of the Programme.

It was 8.20 a.m. when Donald and I walked across Westminster Bridge on that Sunday morning. The bridge was closed to traffic, and there were very few people around. It was a cold, grey day and the Thames looked as smooth as glass. We were able to walk leisurely up Whitehall towards Trafalgar Square, after passing through the strict security checks. One or two people were standing around near the Horse Guards entrance in Whitehall with wooden markers or "paddles" (as named by the RBL) bearing letters and numbers. I had been instructed to collect our "paddle" from the Horse Guards Parade by 9 a.m. and, wondering which way to go, I asked a policeman. He gave me the excellent advice to plead ignorance and ask to be allowed to walk through Horse Guards to reach the Parade ground. This we did, and our request was granted, which saved a long walk round via Trafalgar Square. We also managed to take the short cut back into Whitehall, despite the reservations of the Officer in charge!

We waited for quite a long time before John and Felicity Bartleet arrived, followed by Sandy Lincoln and Mike Sargeant. Shortly afterwards, Christine Cavender and a friend arrived and Karen Harney with her mother. It was still just after 10 a.m. and we had an hour to wait until the start of the service. By this time, the wind had started to blow down Whitehall, and it was very cold despite brief appearances of the sun every now and then.

Promptly just before 11 a.m. the Queen and dignitaries walked out to their places at the Cenotaph, and the Service started with the 2 minutes silence. We were able to watch the Service on giant TV screens which had been placed along the length of Whitehall. The crowds were enormous too, as well as the columns of marchers. They stretched along the pavements right up to where we were standing.

It took nearly an hour after the service was over before we reached the Cenotaph, to hand in our wreath and march past it. The crowds were wonderful, they clapped and clapped as the long column of marchers weaved its way down Whitehall, into Parliament Square, and turned right into Great George Street. The crowds in Parliament Square were dense too, and the applause was most rewarding, not for us but for what we were remembering. We marched along Great George Street and turned right again towards Horse Guards Parade where HRH Prince Charles was taking the salute for the March Past. Our instructions said that we must line up on Horse Guards after the Salute, until all the marchers had arrived, and the Prince had departed. Luckily we were almost the last group to march past, and we only had to wait a short time before we were able to go. We said our goodbyes and all agreed that we must do it again in 2006. Mike, Sandy, Donald and I headed back towards Waterloo, and had a long, chatty lunch near the London Eye. It was a very good way to round off a memorable day, and yet another milestone for the MVG. Next year we must try to be better organized and all go off for lunch together.

MORE VIEWS ON THE DISBANDING OR NOT OF THE FMSVF.

The following comments on the subject of whether or not the FMSVF was disbanded prior to the surrender of Singapore to the Japanese in February 1942, have been sent in by Ian Stitt. They add another dimension to the debate which has been ongoing since it was mentioned in the 3rd Edition of "Apa Khabar."

Federated Malay States Volunteer Reserve.

I somewhat bristled reading in Apa Khabar 3rd Edition that the FMSVR were disbanded. A total misconception, which I am glad to see some of the Malayan Volunteers Group disputing in the 4th Edition. I should disclose my interest. I have a photograph which includes my Father taken at the Malay States Volunteer Reserve Camp at Port Dickson in July 1928. On 1st December 1941 he was mobilized as a member of the Federated Malay States Volunteer Reserve Light Battery. The FMSVR was a locally recruited and trained reserve equivalent to the Territorial Army and my Father always referred to it as the "Reserve" not "Force", the latter term which now seems to be common in today's publications.

In the December 1941 Order of Battle the FMSVR formed the major component of the about 16,500 strong Line of Communication Command (Brigadier Moir). The principal duties of the L of C troops were to protect strategic targets but as is apparent from reports, including those in Apa Khabar, that they were also assigned additional roles embedded in the Allied Army. As the Allied Army retreated the FMSVR faced the dilemma of any retreating Territorial Reserve, of how to cope with the division of the loyalty of volunteers between staying in the force or returning to look after their family and homes. To the disgust of Angus Rose (A&SH and the Independent Coy) stated in his book (Who Dies Fighting - 1944) the FMSVR adopted a policy allowing those who wished to return to their homes, once their States had been overrun, to be released from service. As a result the FMSVR diminished in manpower and the L of C Command was supplemented with other units. This became particularly necessary once the L of C Command was given a further responsibility, that of protecting the left flank from infiltration from the enemy forces encroaching by sea along the west coast.

On 13 January 1942, the Line of Communication Command was disbanded. By this time the front line had reached Johore and those Selangor volunteers who wished to be released were granted permission to do so. The FMSVR continued to operate, as they had been doing, with various units of the Allied Army. The remaining FMSVR Infantry units, at that time operating at Tanjong Kling near Malacca, were reformed as a thousand plus strong depot unit in Singapore.

However the disbandment of the L of C Command seems to have passed totally unnoticed by the members of the FMSVR Light Battery (see reports by Hay and Oppenheim, Cambridge University Library, British Association of Malaya Papers, Ref. BAM XII/21) who at that time were manning coastal defence positions at Pontian Kechil and Pontian Besar and in concert with Royal Artillery units. They remained there until 27/28 January when they moved to Johore Barhu crossing the causeway to a position on the Ponggol Peninsula. The Light Battery was in action, as an FMSVR unit, until they received orders to destroy their guns at their final position near Monks Hill, north-east of the Governor's House, on 15 February 1942.

For further details, I would refer all to the Line of Command War Diary. The actual War Diary was destroyed before the surrender in Singapore but a retrospective summary was commissioned by Brigadier Moir and rewritten, including a section on the reformed FMSVR Depot Unit, during the early days of imprisonment in Changi. This summary is available at the National Archive, Kew (ref CAB 106/156).

Ian Stitt

Member MVG

THE MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS AND THE FEPOW MEMORIAL BUILDING IN ALREWAS.

As reported in the 4th Edition of "Apa Khabar", several MVG members attended the opening of the new FEPOW Memorial Building at the National Memorial Arboretum on V-J Day, 15th August 2005. It is a fine memorial, and the Exhibition housed in the building is a credit to COFEPOW. However, on visiting the Memorial Building and Exhibition ourselves, we were disappointed to find no mention of the Malayan Volunteers in the text, especially as I had written to Carol Cooper before the museum was built, requesting that the Volunteers should be included in the FEPOW Story.

In Carol's reply, I was told that the text for the Exhibition was being written by professional people in London, and that the matter was in their hands. Shortly afterwards, Jonathan Moffatt was contacted by the television producer Dick Meadows, who said that he was writing the text for the museum. He said that he wanted to write 2-3 paragraphs on the Malayan Volunteers, amounting to some 130 words. Jonathan supplied Dick Meadows with the information he requested, and after a few more contacts by e-mail and telephone, Jonathan felt that the Volunteers would be given the coverage they deserve, in view of their unique local knowledge of the Malay peninsula - its customs, climate, terrain and languages. Photographic material was also discussed in connection with the text.

Having anticipated seeing at least one panel on the Volunteers, it was a blow to find nothing at all about them, and we wondered whether we had missed something in the huge crowd of people walking through the Exhibition. However, when other MVG members expressed their disappointment and concern as well, I wrote to Carol Cooper again, to ask why the

information about the Volunteers had not been included in the FEPOW story. I also asked whether it would be possible to add some extra boards in the future so that the Volunteers' story could be told after all.

The reply which came stated that the "Malayan Volunteer Force" was mentioned on the panel headed "Disaster and Defeat" under the section "Enemy Onslaught." The relevant sentence which was quoted to me reads "Among those captured were more than 10,000 former civilians, many of them British, serving in the Malayan Volunteer Forces." This is the only information about the Volunteers in the Exhibition.

As well as this answer, the MVG was offered the chance to raise funds for additional panels which are being considered. These would be housed on the outside of the building under the veranda, and in return the panels would be credited to the MVG.

In my second letter to Carol Cooper, I expressed our sadness, once again, at the lost opportunity to bring the Malayan Volunteers to the notice of the British public, especially as so little is known about them in this country. In particular, I said it was sad to think that one sentence was considered sufficient to cover adequately, the unique role played by the Volunteers in the Malayan Campaign and in captivity. I also asked what had happened to Dick Meadows' intended text about them.

An e-mailed answer from Dick Meadows himself was included in Carol Cooper's reply. This explained the logistical demands of condensing the huge FEPOW story across the whole of the Far East conquered by the Japanese, into one compact Exhibition. Basically, Dick Meadows said that the Malayan Volunteers were not the only casualties of this limitation — many other aspects of the Japanese conquest of the Far East were also omitted or only mentioned briefly.

As far as the additional boards are concerned, they were not offered for the chance to tell the Volunteer story, but only for listing the Regiments/Units/Forces involved in the Far East conflict.

While one has to accept these explanations, they are not entirely convincing. However, there seem to be two conclusions which can be drawn from this correspondence. The first is that there is considerable confusion over the exact numbers of British Malayan Civilians/Volunteer Forces who were caught up in the Far East Campaign. In the Memorial Building, the number quoted is 10,000; Dick Meadows put a figure of 14,000 in his e-mail; while the latest figures (and without doubt the most accurate ones) compiled by John Brown, put the number at over 18,000. This is one area where we could strive to set the record straight.

The second conclusion is that it is quite clear that the only way to get the Malayan Volunteers better known and commemorated in this country is to work at it ourselves, with the valued help and support of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association (NMBVA). This is what we must strive to do in the future, both in this country and in the Far East.

If anyone has any queries about this correspondence, or would like to have copies of the letters which have passed between Carol Cooper and myself, please let me know.

Report by Rosemary Fell.

INFORMATION EXCHANGE.

Ian Stitt writes:-

In rereading the 3rd Edition, I noted the piece by Peter Gibson. I was a pupil at Tanglin School, Cameron Highlands from September 1947 to December 1948. I well remember the stables, down a steep slope behind the School buildings and I learnt to ride there. I'm afraid I do not recognise anyone in the photos. My memories of the school are now somewhat faded but I do recall playing football with I think an Ian Henderson and another Ian whose surname I have now forgotten. My abiding memory was, I think at the end of my final term, when I and others contracted malaria (unheard of in the Cameron Highlands!), were confined to the sick bay, then at term end transferring to Batu Gajah Hospital in an Army ambulance as part of an Army controlled convoy from school to Tapah. We then had some days being treated, rather well, in Batu Gajah Hospital. Subsequently, I went to school in Perth enjoying a ten day each way "school trip", Singapore — Fremantle on either the Gorgon or Charon.

Ian Aviet writes:-

My cousin, Philip Bodein Aviet, has an interesting history. He was killed in action when his Lancaster bomber was shot down in the sea on a bombing raid in WW2. What is unique about it is that my cousin was born in KOBE, JAPAN and returned to England when he was 10 years old. He was not a Malayan Volunteer, but he joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. The bombing mission was to bomb Stettin, but the bomber was hit over the east coast of Denmark, and crashed in the sea two miles north of the island of Anholt in the Kattegat. Philip's body was washed ashore in Sweden where he is buried. About 2 years ago, my niece who is working in Sweden came over for a holiday, and I asked her to try and find his grave which she did, and wrote a letter about her journey there. There are only 8 other graves there, all Air Force personnel whose bodies were retrieved from the sea by Swedish fishermen. Every year a group of Swedish people tend the graves and put flowers on the graves on the anniversary of their deaths.

John Mackie writes:-

"Thanks for telling me about your father and your escape to Australia. A good number of Malayan womenfolk and children ended up in that country after getting away from Singapore. One I knew was Margaret Greetham, and her three daughters, one of whom is now 70 and living part-time in Bali and the remainder in Bowen, Queensland. Her name is Ann Donan. What a coincidence your finding that you and Susan Whitley were both evacuated in the *Aorangi*. This means "cloud piercer" and is the name of NZ's highest mountain, Mt. Cook. I have a few more photographs of people who lived in Malaya during my time there, and I'll send them to you in due course, although I wonder if there are any folk alive who will recognise those faces."

Herewith another photograph taken in the Selangor Club, KL, at the St. George's Ball in 1937. The people in it are:

Rear, L to R: Rob Leach, Phyl Leach, Louis Denholm, Inez Taylor, Jack Piddleston (Pidford), Sylvia Bowden, John Mackie.

Front, L to R: ? Newbiggin, Jane Stewart, Duncan Hutton.

Regards,

John Mackie



Here is another photograph, taken at the Se. Andrew's Ball in the Selangor Club in 1938. The people in it are:

Rear, L to R: Ronnie MacArthur, Lal Laffan, John:Msckie.

Front, L to R: Midge Laffan, Ruth MacArthur, Jean Heddle.

Regards,

John Mackie.



M A L A Y A N V O L U N T E E R F O R C E S .CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE.

From records available in this office, the following are particulars of service of Captain John Bullamore Mackie, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force:-

Served in the ranks (Private to Sergeant), Federated Malay States Volunteer Force.	July, 1936 to February, 1938.	Colour Service.
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Commissioned 2/Lieutenant, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force.	February, 1938.	Active List.
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Promoted Lieutenant.	October, 1940.	Active List.
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Mobilised for active service with the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force.	1.12.1941	
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Promoted Captain	December, 1941.	
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Prisoner-of-war	16.2.1942 to 11.9.1945.	
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Demobilised	16.6.1946.	
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Entitled to the award of:

1939-1945 Star;
Pacific Star;
Defence Medal;
War Medal.

Assigned commission in the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force. 16.6.1942.
Force. [Left Malaya]

CENTRAL RECORDS OFFICE,
Malayan Volunteer Forces,
Kuala Lumpur.
28th June, 1949.

(SG.) A.J. HAWKINS,
Major,
C.O., C.R.O., V.F.R.O.,
Malaya.

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY.
(SG.) A.J. HAWKINS,
Major,
C.O., C.R.O., V.F.R.O.,
Malaya.
7 March, 1951.

**JOHN MACKIE'S CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE
IN
THE MALAYAN VOLUNTEER FORCES**

MARK JOHN KENNAWAY'S CURRY TIFFIN PARTY AT ESCOT IN 1939



MARK JOHN'S CURRY TIFFIN PARTY AT ESCOT IN 1939.

The response to John Mackie's photograph of the Escot Party has been extraordinary. For this reason, the photograph has been reproduced again, so that the following names can be added:-

Front Row from the Left:-

/ ? / Penelope Landon / Thyra Landon / John Mackie / Joyce Brown / Wendy Callard / ? / Stonehewer / Hardwick.

Middle Row from the Left:-

/ ? / Deb Callard / Gwen Burgess / ? / ? / ? / Mark John Kennaway / ? / ? /

Back Row from the Left:-

/ ? / ? / ? / ? / ? / ? / Bird / George Callard / ? / James Landon / Jock Burgess / ? / Peter Lucy / Bowman / Jock Brown /

Rosemary Lloyd-Williams writes:-

Amazingly, I think I know/recognize people in the two photos in the 4th Edition of the Newsletter. In Mark John Kennaway's Tiffin Party, Jock and Joyce Brown are related to my cousin's father Geoffrey Brown. I didn't know them, but will send the page to my cousin! In the bottom photo I think the men in the top row, second from left, may be my cousin's father Geoffrey Brown, although he's been named as Bird. I'll let you know my cousin's comments.

Bill Cranston writes:-

I am particularly interested in contacting anyone with connections with 1940-42 Local Defence Corps; A.R.P.; Dalforce; and Armoured Car Company FMSVF.

If anyone can help Bill, his address is:-

260, Bradford Road, Castle Bromwich, West Midlands. B36 9AB.

Sir Roger Moon, Bt. writes:-

The following may be of slight interest to someone.

After the surrender of Singapore on 15/2/42 the JVE who had been entrenched on a hill above Tanglin Club at a place called Draycott, marched to Changi on the 16th carrying such possessions as they could manage. A long walk in the heat, and rations had been sparse for some days. We had been allotted the ground floor of Block H. On the top were SSVF. For the first 5 or 6 days the atmosphere was most peculiar. Leaving aside all the various emotions we all felt, too involved to discuss, there was a semi holiday air about. No officers, no parades, no bounds, no Japanese and no food. We spent our time swimming, gathering on the lawn in front of the barracks, meeting old and new friends, and playing Bridge for long hours. It was there that I met **Stephen Law**. He worked for Dunlops in Singapore (I was with Dunlops — in those days, called Dunlop Plantations.) Stephen was a charming person, a sergeant in the SSVF. Sadly he died of cholera. Many years later I met his widow. Another SSVF person I got to know was **Ken Warden**, who I remember with much affection. Amongst my few possessions carried to Changi, I had 1) a copy of the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam and 2) a pack of cards — hence the Bridge!! I had hardly played Bridge and soon I found myself playing with the Bridge Champion of Singapore — **Ken Warden**. That was the start of a happy companionship. I found myself on many occasions at the same camp as Ken [particularly at Kinsaiyok] When circumstances permitted, he and I would have long sessions playing Piquet. I never ever won. I cannot recall what happened either to the Rubaiyat [I have a new copy beside my chair] or the cards — I think they fell to pieces whilst at Timonta in 1944.

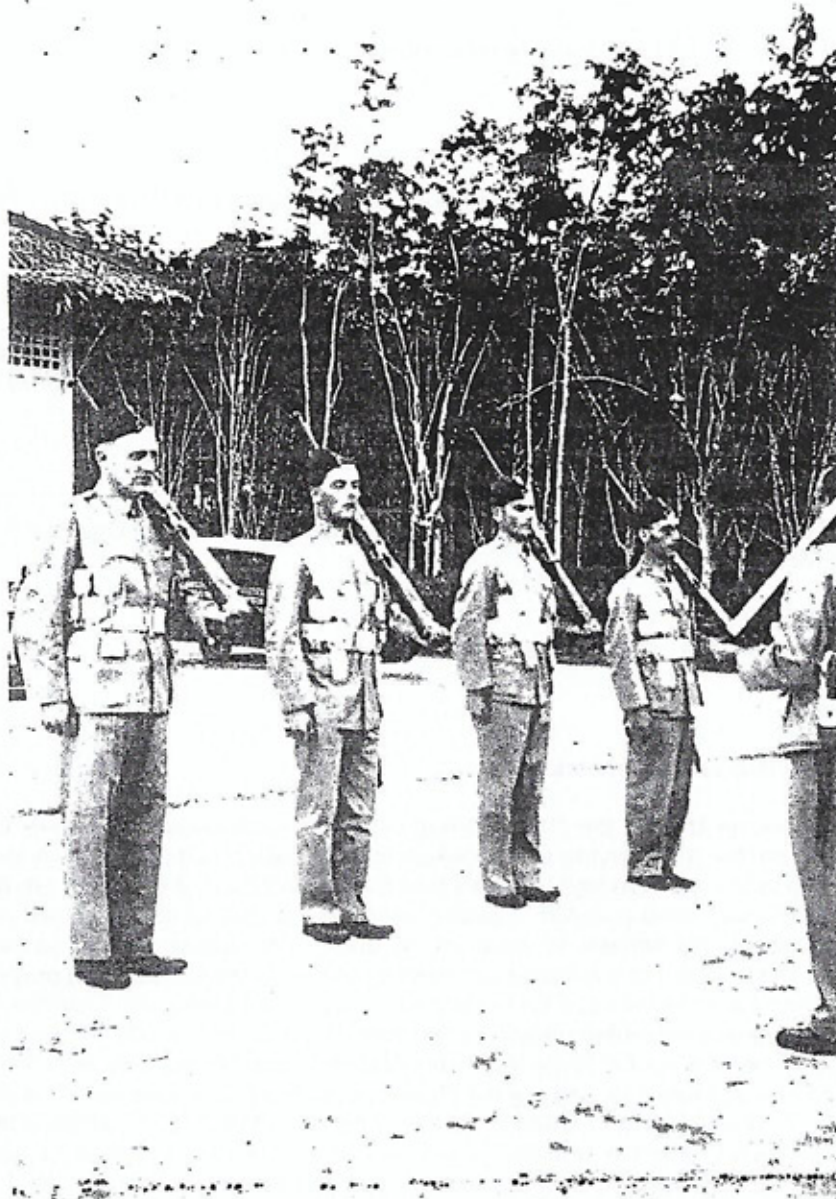
I do not imagine that any of the "Children" of the pre-war era in Malacca or Seremban would have known my wife. Her parents Tinggi (6'8") and Marion Maxwell were well known figures in Malacca. And here I digress. Tinggi's brother was a Brigadier and commanded the 23rd Infantry Brigade of the A.I.F. to whom the JVE were attached. Thus on the night the 7th/8th February 1942 when the enemy crossed the Johore Straits we were sent in support in the marsh behind Tengah Aerodrome [which was in flames] The Maxwell girls, Sally and Meg (who became my wife) suffered so badly from Malaria they were shipped off to school to Châtelard in Switzerland. When the war started they went to England, Downe House etc. and finally to Australia. Well in 1950 I met and married Meg. At that time she was doing special nursing at Malacca Hospital for Leslie Shields FRCS. His wife Peggy became one of our dearest friends. Peggy's sister Pen was the widow of Stephen Law who I met in Changi!! Leslie Shields later became the Dunlop doctor and in addition had a Practice in Malacca. He died many many years ago. Peggy sadly suffers from Alzheimers.

As you know, I keep in touch with Pam Danks. I knew her father, a splendid chap, in Kanyu 2 days in 1943.

Sally nee Maxwell is still alive. My darling Meg died in 2000. She used to tell me how the children in Seremban used to play at the Club with a Tiger cub. Later there was a book called "Blang My Tiger" Sometime in the 60's she and I went to Regents Park to see Blang.

I enclose a photo of a JVE Guard taken at Khota Tinggi.

The fellow on the left was, I think, PWD; then a planter called **Curwen**; then **W.R.H. Scott (Bill)** later to be my best man; and finally the fellow on the right was Education in Segamat called **Ince**.



Ian Aviet writes:-

My brother in Australia is a collector of model soldiers and he sent me photos of some of his collection of the S.V.C. The following information was sent with the sets of Toy Soldiers which were made by Shamus O.D.Wade under the trade name of "Nostalgia Models" They are 1/32" models, and Shamus Wade specialized in regiments from the colonies. He stopped making them in 1988 and is now Secretary of the Commonwealth Forces History Trust. This is a registered charity No:1011521. The address is:- 37, Davis Road, Acton, London W3 7 SE. Tel: No: 0181 249 1045

The Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps, 1899.

Founded several years before the Great Volunteer Movement in the United Kingdom, the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps, was the first Volunteer Organisation in the British Empire. In 1857 it was presented with a colour by Mrs. Butterworth, the widow of the late Governor.

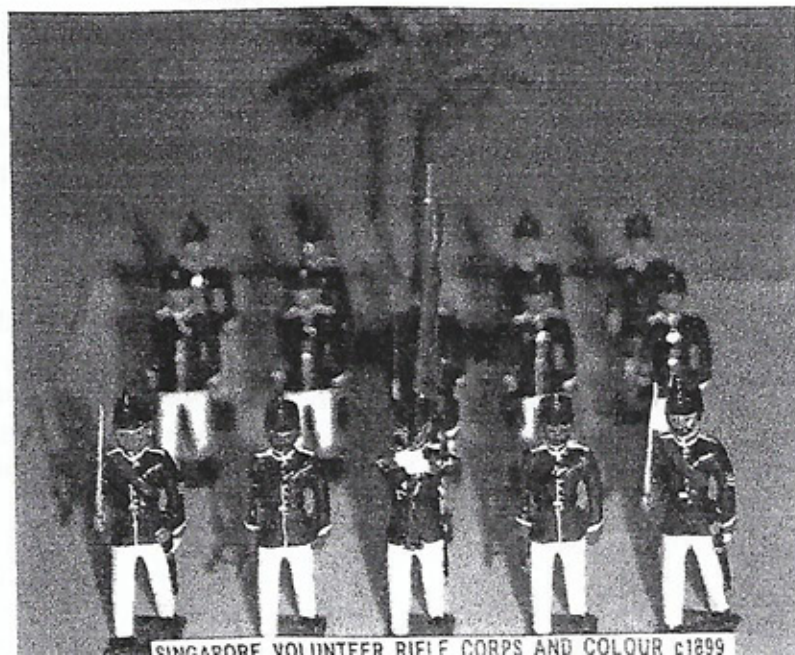
The colour is curious. First, Rifle Regiments were not supposed to have colours anyway. Most Regiments had two colours but the Singapore Volunteers had only one. Lastly, the Singapore Colour was extremely large. The Nostalgia colour is 14" x 2". The standard pole is 34". The colour is dark green with the Union Jack in one corner and a gold scroll in the centre. The Nostalgia Colour is flying free not hanging in demure folds. The Nostalgia Singapore Riflemen wear rifle green jackets with red facings, and black shakoes with horse hair plumes. They are armed with the Snider Carbine.

All the different riflemen wore the same uniform. The European had a European complexion and reddish brown hair. The Chinese had the appropriate complexion and eyes. The Eurasian had a light brown complexion with a rather drooping moustache (the other riflemen were clean shaven). Later issues of the Eurasians had rather darker faces than the earlier issues.

N44	Singapore Volunteers Colour Party. Sergeant Charles Burton Buckley (with moustache) and Sgt. A. Clarke, marching, swords at the carry. 1 Standard Bearer with colour, 2 European Riflemen, 1 Chinese Rifleman and 1 Eurasian Rifleman, marching, trail.		
		<u>The set of 7</u>	£5.52
N45	7	Singapore Volunteers Riflemen (incl. at least 1 Chinese and 1 Eurasian) marching, trail, one sergeant.	
		<u>The set of 8</u>	£5.52
N46	8	Singapore Volunteers Riflemen (incl. at least 1 Chinese and 1 Eurasian) marching, trail. No sergeant.	
		<u>The set of 8</u>	£5.52
N47		Single figure of Singapore Volunteers Riflemen, marching, trail.	£0.75

Date of issue - November 1, 1974

Number issued - 1014 figures were issued, of which 72 were standard bearers.



SHELAGH LEA'S OBITUARY. 1916 - 2005

Shelagh Lea survived shipwreck, then near-starvation and numerous bouts of malaria during three-and-a-half years in Japanese internment camps in Sumatra. Her captivity diaries were later among accounts used as the basis for the TV series *Tenko* and the film *Paradise Road*.

Dorothy Shelagh Brown was the daughter of E.A. Brown, a well-known Singapore businessman, retired Major in the SVC and choirmaster of St Andrew's Cathedral. Shelagh was sent to school in England, but by 1939 she was back in Singapore working for the Ministry of War Economy.

On February 10 1942, with just a few possessions, Shelagh and her mother Mary left their home. "We took our dogs to the vets," she recalled, "and told him if we were not back in three days then you know what to do." Her father had elected to stay in the city, so the two women were sent to the Raffles hotel to await evacuation.

Looking out on to burning buildings and streets strewn with the dead and dying, Shelagh watched Singapore crumble. Mother and daughter were sent to the docks and put aboard the *Vyner Brooke*, a freighter equipped for 12 passengers into which were crammed 250 evacuees, mostly women and children. They set sail at night, anchoring during the day.

They were spotted by Japanese bombers which attacked, firing continuously until a bomb smashed through the vessel's forward hatch and exploded inside, blowing a hole in the keel and injuring many of those on board. The ship started to list and the evacuees began to abandon ship. Mrs Brown, despite weighing 15 stone and having a heart condition, climbed down a rope ladder, but Shelagh was thrown into the water.

She found Mrs Brown holding on to an injured nurse whom she had promised not to leave. She was finally persuaded to let go when it became clear that the nurse had died. Shelagh and her mother clung to a raft in the open sea for the next 18 hours. Numb with cold, at one point Shelagh found a large lump of seaweed which she used to keep warm. At daybreak the next morning they found themselves surrounded by Japanese ships. They were hauled aboard and taken to Bangka island, from where they were transported to an internment camps at Palembang.

The women internees proved themselves to be resourceful and selfless in the face of many horrors. From designing lavatories to cope with the endless dysentery to devising sun hats out of old umbrellas, the women coped with their situation, forming a community and supporting each other when they were ill and unable to work.

Mrs Brown overcame terrible injuries to her feet after a long march early on in their incarceration, and when Shelagh was suffering bouts of malaria, her mother became the camp entrepreneur, making and selling mattresses stuffed with grass. Mother and daughter also took part in camp entertainments including Margaret Dryburgh's choir. Nevertheless, conditions were intolerable: "Bugs, rats, the trots — life is not such fun. When we go to the lav the mossies bite our bottoms. It is all very ghastly..."

Shortly after their seventh camp move in early 1945, Mrs Brown died, of beri-beri and malaria. The other women managed to get hold of a coffin, and they buried her placing the earth over her grave with their bare hands.

"One thing I was always thankful for," recalled Sheila, "was that she was spared the last awful journey and the last camp. At least she was out of her miseries before that." Half the women internees died but none of the children.

On Liberation she was reunited with her father, to whom she had to break the news of his wife's death. He had spent his captivity at Changi and Sime Road. None of their possessions had survived the occupation so they returned to Britain.

During her time in captivity, Shelagh would keep up morale by writing endless lists such as a description of her ideal wardrobe. She would also list the people she had known in her old life, always beginning with Arthur Lea, a young man whom she had met when he had umpired at her brother's rugby matches.

In 1946 Lea, now a clergyman, and Shelagh married in Canada. A year later their son was born followed by a daughter. In 1952 the family returned to England where Shelagh embraced her role as the wife of a country parson and indulged her passion for singing in choral societies.

Shelagh Lea's strength of spirit was not confined to her experiences during the war. In later life she survived two brushes with cancer and bore her final illness with stoicism and good humour.

BOOKS.

"BAMBOO DOCTOR." By Stanley S. Pavillard. First published by Macmillan & Co. Ltd. in 1960 and by Pan Books Ltd. in 1962. A harrowing account of one man's fight against death and disease in the Japanese hell-camps on the River Kwai. Stanley Pavillard was one of the band of doctors, but for whose life saving qualities very few prisoners would have survived. He will always be remembered by all who came under his care, and especially by his fellow "Vultures" of the Malayan Volunteer Forces.

"LIFE AND DEATH IN CHANGI." The Diary of Tom Kitching who died in Japanese Hands in Singapore in 1944. Edited by his son Brian Kitching, and published by him in 1998. ISBN 1 873891 35 0
This is the diary of Thomas Kitching, Chief Surveyor, Singapore, from the time when the Japanese attacked on December 7th/8th, 1941. It tells the story of Tom's experiences in the last desperate days before the fall of Singapore and in the two years and two months he spent in Japanese hands right up to his death from cancer in Changi Gaol on April 14th, 1944.

"OUT IN THE MIDDAY SUN." The British in Malaya 1880—1960. By Margaret Shennan. Published by John Murray. ISBN 0 7195 6331 3 Through memoirs, letters and interviews, Margaret Shennan chronicles the story of British Malaya and recreates a portrait of a sociable, intoxicating and now quite vanished world.
The book is dedicated by Margaret Shennan "To the memory of my father, who first went out to the Straits Settlements in 1926 and retired in 1953, and to his generation of British expatriates who loved Malaya, but endured outrageous fortune."

"HOSTAGES TO FORTUNE." Winston Churchill and the Loss of the Prince of Wales and Repulse. By Arthur Nicholson. Published by Sutton Publishing. ISBN 0 7509 3948 6
In the foreword written by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, he says "Much has been written about the sinking of Prince of Wales and Repulse by Japanese aircraft off the east coast of Malaya in December 1941, some by eminent historians, some by survivors of the action itself. There exists a mass of data concerning this disaster, but it is somewhat fragmented. Here for the first time all the multiple threads have been drawn together into a single, comprehensive tapestry. It is confined to fact, and any conclusions drawn result from meticulous analysis of available evidence — to the exclusion of opinion and hindsight."

I Will Sing to the End

by Ian MacLeod

(Foreword by H E Michael Teo Eng Cheng - Singapore High Commissioner to the UK and Northern Ireland)

Dorothy MacLeod escaped on the last ship from Singapore before the city was captured by the Japanese in February 1942. Tragically, over three years later, she died of debilitating dysentery and malnutrition in a Prisoner of War Camp off Sumatra.

Ian MacLeod spent 50 years researching the background to his mother's internment and this book is a result of his quest to find the truth behind her life and death in the camp.

It is an uplifting story of fortitude and the sustaining love of family and friends. Most of all, it is a tribute to the courageous woman with the golden voice who bravely 'sang to the end'.

'Twists of fate and lots of love gave Ian MacLeod the inspiration to complete his story about his mother's last days in a Japanese prisoner of war camp in the Pacific War.'
His Excellency Michael Teo Eng Cheng

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JONATHAN MOFFATT 'S REVIEW:-

'I WILL SING TO THE END' by Ian MacLeod [Cocos Publications] ISBN 0-9549632-0-2 187 pages including photos. Ordering details on the COFEPOW website.

Ian MacLeod's mother Dorothy, a talented singer and teacher, died in Japanese captivity in Sumatra, like so many internees a few months before the war ended. His father, Donald, a Singapore exchange broker and accomplished piper, commanded 2SSVF [2nd Battalion Straits Settlements Volunteer Corps] and was a POW in Singapore and Thailand. He died shortly after the war.

This book tells the story of Ian's 50 year search to find out about his mother's captivity and death.

The strength of this book is as a piece of family history including photos which give us glimpses of growing up in 1920s/1930s Singapore. There is also much of interest relating to the Volunteers - Donald's business partner was E.A. Brown who served in the Singapore Volunteer Rifles in the First World War and Donald himself was responsible in 1924 for raising the 1SSVF Scottish Company.

SOME INTERESTING WEB SITES TO VISIT

Geoffrey Mowat interviewed online and featuring extracts from his book "The Rainbow Through the Rain"
<http://www.premier.org.uk/engine.cfm?i=215>

Lancaster NE144 460 Squadron RAAF

This website contains details of Ian Aviet's cousin Philip Aviet who was killed in action on a bombing raid in August 1944.

<http://home.st.net.au/~pdunn/ne144.htm>

LAUNCH OF JULIE SUMMER'S BOOK

"THE COLONEL OF TAMARKAN. Philip Toosey and the Bridge on the River Kwai."

FEPOWS Charles Elston, Les Martin, Bill Drower and Stephen Alexander with Julie Summers and newly commissioned Toosey portrait at last night's book launch.



PROJECTS FOR 2006

Thailand/Burma Railway Centre Library Project.

We are very pleased to report that there has been complete agreement over the planned project to sponsor the TBRC Library, and in return the Library/Conference Centre/Research Room will contain a plaque dedicating it to the Malayan Volunteers.

Details of the Plaque and furnishing of the room will be discussed with Rod Beattie at Alrewas in April. A full report will be sent out at a later date.

MVG MEMORIAL PLOT at the NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM.

One possible fundraising project for the MVG in 2006 could be the creation of our own memorial plot at the NMA incorporating one of our memorial benches, oriental trees, a piece of Changi prison masonry [donated by veteran Ian Mitchell] and our ^{own} memorial stone.

The plot next to the NMBVA memorial is available and could be reserved.

Jonathan Moffatt visited the Arboretum to discuss and cost this possibility. It would be an expensive exercise with donations for a plot at between 1000 and 5000 pounds according to size. If we went for a 8m x 15m plot a donation of 3,000 would be expected. The trees would cost around 35 to 50 pounds each. About 80% of memorial plots are professionally designed. The Arboretum can put us on to 3 local trained landscape designers whose quotes would quite likely be a few thousand pounds. Once plans are drawn up they go for approval to the Trustees before work can commence.

CONFERENCE DATES

JANUARY 2006

Monday, 16th January

"Medicine, war, and captivity." South East Asia, 1941 – 1945

A unique opportunity to hear the stories of distinguished medical officers who were Far Eastern Prisoners of War.

35,000 British servicemen and 3000 civilians were captured due to the fall of Malaya and Singapore and then spent three and a half years as prisoners of the Japanese. Dietary inadequacies, overcrowded living conditions and enforced labour had inevitable health consequences. The circumstances of their internment, however, provided unique opportunities for research into starvation whilst lack of resources stimulated a fascinating and inventive practice of makeshift medicine.

Many interned doctors, dentists and other health providers kept careful records of their experiences, some of which were sketched secretly by imprisoned artists. This meeting commemorates the 60th anniversary of the prisoners' liberation, whilst reviewing the medical history of their captivity and their post-war health problems.

APRIL 2006

Saturday and Sunday. 29th and 30th April.

Researching FEPOW History Conference

Saturday and Sunday, 29 & 30 April, 2006, at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

£50 per delegate, for two days

There are still a few places left on a first-come, first-served basis.

Speakers include: Roger Mansell (founder of mansell.com, the FEPOW research website), Rod Beattie of the Thai-Burma Railway Museum at Kanchanaburi in Thailand, Roderick Suddaby, IWM in London, Alan Bowgen, National Archives in Kew and Julie Summers, author of The Colonel of Tamarkan about her grandfather Col Philip Toosey.

There will also be workshops run by Jonathan Moffatt, Meg Parkes, David Tett, Paul Riches, Dr Nigel Stanley and Pieter Tesch on a wide range of related topics.

Contact Meg Parkes - mm.parkes@btinternet.com, or write to Kranji, 34 Queens Road, Hoylake, Wirral CH47 2AJ, enclosing an A5 SAE - for Registration form and further information.

"APA KHABAR" SUBSCRIPTIONS.

In order to keep costs to a minimum, and to avoid having to send out letters, we would like to remind all MVG members that the subscriptions for 2006 are due in APRIL. We are increasing the subscription to £10 for this year, to cover the cost of Newsletters and other correspondence during the year.

Please make cheques out to:- Mrs. R. Fell, Volunteers Bench Fund.

Receipts for subs. will not be sent, unless requested. Donations will be acknowledged with a receipt.

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