

Researching FEPOW History Group

The Newsletter Special Conference Edition

No 4 June 2008

Introduction from our Chairman

We approached the 2008 RFH Conference with some trepidation: could we possibly better or even equal the very successful 2006 one? The answer was to be a resounding, 'Yes'. We were very pleased with how the conference went and the high standard of speakers who were so well received by delegates and FEPOW guests alike. You can see some of the early responses at <http://www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk/confs/mayo8/conf08feed.html>

We felt, as well, that there was a perfect balance of old faces and newcomers among both delegates and FEPOW. We were particularly pleased to welcome back Rod Suddaby from the Imperial War Museum and Alan Bowgen from the National Archives at Kew.

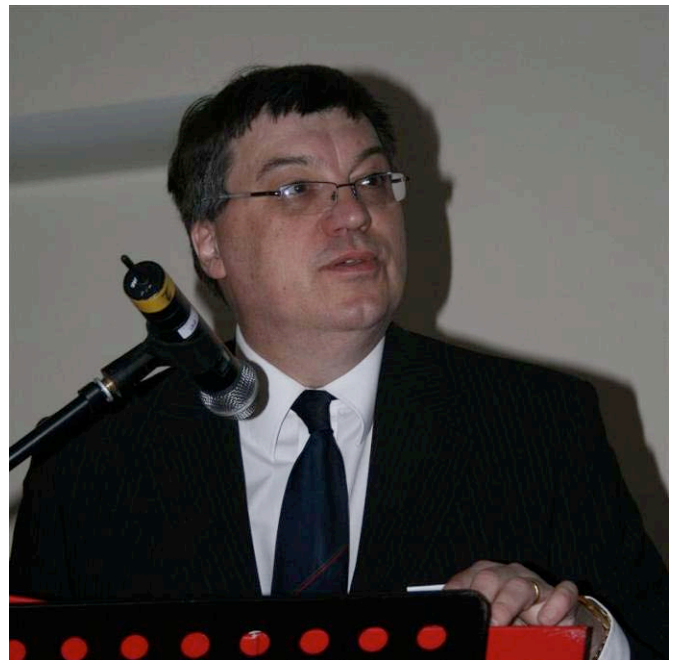


FEPOW and delegates at the conference

We feel humbled that many came so far to attend conference, from places such as Singapore, South Africa, Canada & Thailand. It was a truly international occasion meriting a detailed conference report which comes in this expanded newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about the various talks and events.

This year our conference was financially assisted by Antalis, who kindly supplied the conference packs and pens as well as bearing the cost of photocopying material. We are grateful as well to the students of the University of Staffordshire who gave up their weekend to film

the conference as well as conduct interviews with individual FEPOW. There will be more information in due course on the website about how the filmed material will be available. We also record our thanks to the staff at the National Memorial Arboretum who supported us in organising the conference.



Jonathan Moffatt

Erica Toosey, who has been responsible for our front of house organisation for the last three years has decided to step down. We are grateful for her energetic, kind and thoughtful input and we will miss her but hope she will come back to see us in 2010. Her place is taken by Sarah Hawkin, who assisted Erica this year. We are delighted to welcome her to the organising team.

Now we look forward to a third Conference in 2010 and are already meeting to discuss this. Your feedback and suggestions would be most welcome.

Jonathan Moffatt, Chairman

The Malayan Campaign and the Fall of Singapore: *Mr Jeyathurai [Jeya]*

Our first speaker was Mr Jeyathurai [Jeya], Director of the Changi Museum in Singapore. He was to prove the inspiring speaker that I well remembered from my Singapore days, giving us a very clear analysis of the problems surrounding the defence of Singapore and the reasons why Malaya and Singapore fell so quickly to the Japanese.



Jeya speaking about the Fall of Singapore

Jeya outlined the problems of defending Singapore Naval Base; the failure of the Naval Swing Strategy, the related budgetary constraints and strategic priorities then the reversion from a Naval to an Air Defence Strategy then Army strategy. In his talk, Jeya tried to put us into the mind of the Japanese General Yamashita who was given 100 days to take Singapore but

who was not without his own problems including rivalries and quarrels between his commanders, his own differences with higher authority and an inexperienced Imperial Guards Division.

Japanese Intelligence before and during the campaign was exceptionally good. The Japanese rapidly moved down the Malayan peninsular using mobile columns & jungle hook tactics, coming down the main roads and outflanking the Allied troops. Kuala Lumpur fell following the disastrous Battle of Slim River on January 6th 1942.

Percival's defence plan for Singapore depended on holding the southern Malay state of Johore but Johore was lost and there were no permanent defences on the north coast of Singapore. Following the dictum 'attack at the point of least resistance' Yamashita planned his assault on Singapore Island. He was able to deceive Malaya Command that his main attack would come on the North East Coast.

Once across the Straits of Johore the Japanese rebuilt the Causeway and brought tanks and reinforcements across. After a week of intense fighting Percival capitulated at the Ford Factory on February 15th 1942. Many delegates appreciated Jeya's concise presentation of events and felt that they had been given an overview that was clear and easily understood.

Jonathan Moffatt

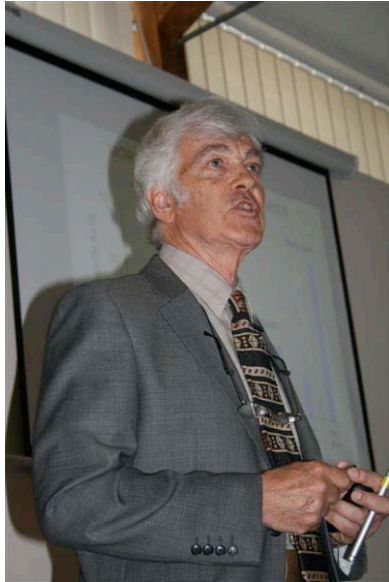
Civilian Internees on Singapore Island: some medical perspectives *Dr Nigel Stanley*

Dr Nigel Stanley's fascinating talk on medical aspects of civilian internment in Changi Gaol and Sime Road camps, Singapore drew on his extensive research, medical expertise and a strong personal involvement. Nigel's father was a doctor in the Malayan Medical Service, a Changi internee murdered by the Kempri Tei during the notorious Double Tenth investigation. Nigel, his mother and sister were evacuated from Penang then Singapore.

With superb illustrations from FEPOW artists Jack Chalker, Leo Rawlings & Ronald Searle, Nigel outlined civilian internee nutrition & diet and the causes and symptoms of the resulting deficiency diseases: cardiovascular beri beri, scrotal dermatitis and pellagra.

Nigel also described infectious diseases and their impact on camp life; the effects of captivity on women including births; contagious skin diseases; tropical ulcers; the fate of diabetics in captivity and eye diseases - he illustrated the long-term importance of artists' work in relation to this.

It was in no small part down to the skills of the Changi medical team that in the first two years of captivity the death rate was in line with a normal civilian one but the Double Tenth and starvation 1944-1945 resulted in a much higher mortality.



Nigel Stanley

A particular success story was that of the children: of some 300 child captives only 2 died and both from pre-existing conditions.

Despite the seriousness of the subject matter the talk was accompanied by often amusing anecdotes, particularly in relation to the failed 'Changi Quit Smoking Campaign' conducted by Drs Bain, Lowther & Stanley.

Nigel's talk ended with images of Singapore cemeteries: Bidadari, where the civilian internee dead were originally buried, Kranji, and a memorial stone in a Japanese cemetery which disturbingly referred to the executed Japanese war criminals as 'the 135 martyrs.'

Contributions from the floor included short recollections by former Changi and Sime Rd internees, Olga Henderson and Harry Hesp.

Jonathan Moffatt

The Hong Kong POW 1941-45 Tony Banham

Tony Banham is the author of two books on this subject, or should I say two books so far; these are *Not the Slightest Chance* and *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, writes Keith Andrews. If his talk was going to be as interesting and well researched as his books, then we were in for a treat, and Tony did not disappoint. His research and attention to detail held the attention of those listening.

Hong Kong was the somewhat forgotten tragedy, overshadowed by the Fall of Singapore, and as Tony pointed out was fought over a smaller area than the Malayan Campaign. He also made the point that the relatively small size of the garrison helped him to pursue individual stories. His research not only focuses on the military personnel but also the suffering of the civilian population before, during and after the battle. That however is not the end of it: once the servicemen became POW of the Japanese, they were sent in many cases to Japan or other areas and Tony has traced those men also.

During his talk, snippets of detail that may not have been common knowledge started to emerge: the 1940 evacuation of around 4000 non-essential Europeans from Hong Kong to Australia via Manila.

Some of those were Eurasians married to European husbands but because of Australia's immigration policy, were not allowed to proceed from Manila and were returned to Hong Kong. The *Lisbon Maru* was sunk on her second voyage from Hong Kong to Japan was another interesting fact, the results from the first led to the second trip, with tragic results.



Tony Banham

Tony's use of photo identification and documents is outstanding, as are his statistics on many aspects of life in the camps under the Japanese. He also credits his sources of the material he uses which is a great help to those doing their own research on this subject and those sources are worldwide: museums, archives and private collections. He paid tribute to the work of Roger Mansell uncovering Japanese camp documents at NARA in the United States.

Tony is due to publish his next book *We Shall Suffer There* later this year, and has plans

for another two or three. His *Hong Kong Diary* website is very well worth a visit, and gives details of individuals that were involved in the Battle of Hong Kong.

It all started many moons ago with Tony finding a Japanese bullet on one of the Hong Kong battlefields, that was amazing in itself, and a bonus for us.

No bullet, no books and no talk.

One major aspect that Tony did pay tribute to in his talk was the willingness of others to share information with him, and he with them, and that is what these Conferences are all about.

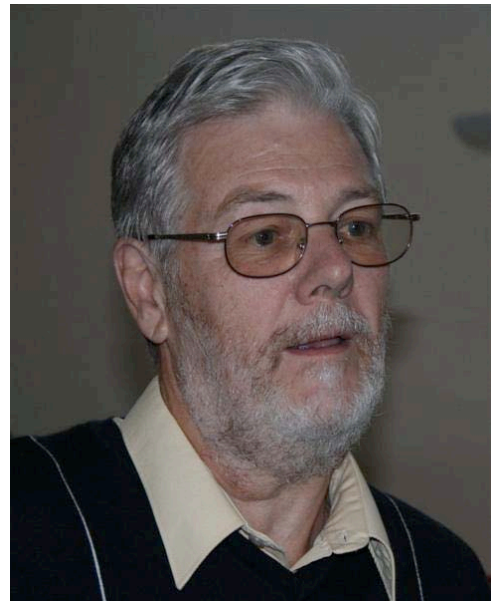
Keith Andrews

FEPOW Postal History *David Tett*

David Tett's talk provided an insight into the subject of communications with the POW and internees. At the time it was often not possible to know where to write or, when a card or letter was received, where it was from. He illustrated examples of POW cards from Singapore, with various marks, cards from Sumatra (indicating they were coming from Malaya), Borneo, Java, Burma, Thailand, and Indochina (purporting to come from Thailand). He followed with cards from civilians in Singapore, Sumatra, Thailand and Borneo.

David then showed correspondence to the POW and demonstrated how these letters and cards were forwarded to the POWs, who had often been moved from camp to camp or country to country. These included correspondence to POWs in Singapore, Burma, Sumatra, Java, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan, Japan and Borneo from the UK, USA, Australia, Dutch East Indies, Holland, India, South Africa and several other countries. He then covered civilian mails to internees in Singapore, Sumatra and Borneo.

He drew attention to David Nelson's work with the BRE team in Changi.



David Tett

Finally he showed mails to and from Hong Kong illustrating how mails to POW and internees in Hong Kong were traced and the vagaries of the mail from the prisoners. In the Q&A that followed David emphasized the importance of mail on the morale of the prisoners.

Martin Percival

A personal perspective *Fred Seiker FEPOW*



Fred Seiker

Fred Seiker was a prisoner of war from 1942 to 1945. Born in Rotterdam in 1915 Fred trained at the local marine engineering college and served on North Atlantic convoys bringing much needed supplies to Britain. He was captured on Java in 1942 when the Japanese invaded and worked on the Thailand-Burma Railway. His talk at conference focussed on the period of his captivity in Java and on the Thailand-Burma railway and he spoke movingly about life in the prison camps both from his personal perspective but also from a more general, historical point of view.

For the duration of his talk there was barely a murmur in the room and many delegates were moved by the tales he told of hardship and disease that he encountered as a young man. The film team from Staffordshire University were able to capture Fred's talk on camera and later interviewed him on a one-to-one basis about his experiences as a prisoner of war.

Fred added to the final question and answer session of conference asking for delegates to take time to remember not only the sacrifices and hardships of the POW during the war but also the women who had to cope when the men came home from captivity. This, he acknowledged, was a very difficult task as men were altered by their experiences and found adjusting to life back home very difficult.

Julie Summers

Rod Beattie in conversation with Julie Summers

On Saturday afternoon we were treated to a whirlwind update on Rod Beattie's on-going work in Thailand. He spoke in conversation with Julie about his continuing research into the POW records, working as he is doing on facts and figures for camp deaths not only for his fellow Australians but also on behalf of the Dutch and British prisoners. He produced fascinating statistics on causes of death and in doing so was able to lay down facts rather than conjecture about such important matters as the numbers of camps involved in the cholera outbreak in 1943. It was interesting to note, for example, that less than one percent of the Dutch prisoners died of cholera on the railway. He confirmed what has been surmised, which is that the biggest killer on the railway was dysentery although many men died of multiple conditions including dysentery.

Rod told delegates that he is in the process of working up an aerial view of the railway based on RAF reconnaissance photographs that will show not only the 415km route but also the sidings, passing places and stations that comprise over 650km of track built by the prisoners and Asian labourers.



Rod Beattie

As this was a Q&A session there were many questions from FEPOW and delegates and it is clear that there is real fascination in Rod's continuing research and we are indebted to his tireless energy in keeping alive the memory of all FEPOW who worked on the Railway.

Julie Summers

Thai Meal at Thai Lanna

On the Saturday evening, over 70 speakers, delegates and FEPOW attended dinner at the Thai Lanna restaurant in Brownhills.

The evening was an informal event with no seating plan, which gave delegates the opportunity to talk to each other in a relaxed environment and follow up on contacts made during the day. There was plenty of good food and lively conversation on offer during the evening and new friendships were formed over some delicious traditional Thai dishes and the odd beer or two.

The Thai Lanna staff worked exceptionally hard to keep us all in food and drinks, which was

no mean feat given the numbers of us all wanting food at the same time. When it arrived, the food was beautifully presented and always served with a beaming smile. Aye, the head waiter, was rushed off his feet and had developed a pronounced limp by the end of the evening. Happily I can report that he is now fully recovered.

Feedback from the meal was very positive and all those attending had a great evening. In order to allow for even more networking and swapping of stories to take place, we have decided for the next conference to move towards a buffet style dinner.

Erica Toosey

From the Pearl River to Pearl Harbour: *Peter Thompson*

The title of Peter Thompson's latest book is *Pacific Fury*. Before reading extracts from the book, he paid tribute to the FEPOW in the audience:

'Gentlemen you are the *crème de la crème*. You are the reason why we can enjoy peace.' This was warmly received by delegates.



FePOW Guests and delegates

Peter's research has been extensive and he has been fortunate in meeting or being in contact with several people including, he told us, John Wyatt, Brenda McDuff and Bill Macauley, all of whom had been enormously valuable in sharing their stories and private collections with him. A theme of this conference, the generosity of others in sharing material, means that writers such as Peter have access to first-hand sources for their books and this is invaluable in weaving personal tales with historical information. Peter clearly has respect and trust from his contacts and it is obvious from the way he weaves first-hand tales into his narrative that he is highly experienced at handling personal material.



Peter Thompson

He spoke about the experiences of several individuals in Hong Kong and China as well as reading at some length about the work of the late Captain Bill Drower who worked as a translator, first for the Australians and later for the British on the Thailand-Burma Railway. This aspect of the talk illustrated the great dangers that translators encountered when handling situations that arose between the FEPOW and their captors. The respect in which Bill Drower was held after the war was shown in a photograph of him arriving in Australia surrounded by grateful diggers who had been the beneficiaries of his brave negotiations.

Peter's book will appear in September 2008 in Australia and will be eagerly anticipated by delegates whose appetites were whetted by his talk.

Julie Summers/Jonathan Moffatt

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission in the Far East: *Peter Francis*

On Sunday morning we listened to an outstanding talk by Peter Francis of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. He explained the background history of the extraordinary organisation which, as one of the early commissioners, Rudyard Kipling, pointed

out, was the biggest single piece of work since the Pharaohs, and they only worked in their own country.

Responsible in perpetuity for 23,000 burial locations in 150 countries, the Commission's task is worldwide and unending. The focus of their

work is on remembrance and their responsibility beyond caring for the fabric of the cemeteries and memorials is to keep alive the memory of those 1,700,000 servicemen and women who died in the two world wars.

Peter explained several details that were of particular interest to the delegates. Although burials were carried out during the war by the army and later by the prisoners, after the war Commonwealth burial parties collected the bodies from the disparate locations around south-east Asia and concentrated them into the famous cemeteries we know today: Kranji in Singapore, Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand, Thanbyuzayat in Burma, Sai Wan in Hong Kong as well as others throughout the region. He told delegates that the reason for the pedestal headstones rather than the familiar Portland stone headstones of the Western Front was a solution to the recurring problem of earthquakes in the area. Headstones are slotted into long beams below the ground, sometimes many metres long, and these risk twisting and fracturing during earth movements which, in turn, would damage the headstones. The pedestals are less vulnerable and were first used at Gallipoli after the Great War.

Peter also talked about access to information about CWGC cemeteries and memorials via the Commission's website www.cwgc.org.



A pedestal headstone in Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

If details cannot be found or at least not to the satisfaction of the researcher, he encouraged delegates to contact the Commission who have extensive archives at their headquarters at Maidenhead.

The talk was warmly received by delegates and there were many questions during the Q&A session.

Julie Summers

Singapore Sites and Commemoration: Jeya

Jeya's second talk, again accompanied by excellent photographs, was entitled 'Singapore Sites & Commemoration (A Personal Journey)'. Both as a tour operator and as director of the Changi Museum, Jeya has been concerned with the conservation and commemoration of military sites and with remembrance ceremonies.

In the early days of Singapore's independence remembrance ceremonies were largely organized, for instance at Kranji Cemetery, by the British High Commission with limited local participation. Singapore's education policy had a low focus on history with emphasis on science and the economy. There was no culture of commemoration nor a desire to conserve historical sites. This was not focused on until the 1980s and then with an emphasis on civil defence. The Singaporean focus on World War Two was not on battles but on the Japanese occupation 1942-1945. To the Allies liberation came in 1945 but many Singaporeans still think of liberation from colonial rule in the 1960s.

Into the 1990s there was generally a negative view of the British war effort. Jeya showed Peter Archer's painting of the Argylls crossing the

Causeway to Singapore. Where were the locals on the painting? On the sidelines, mere observers. And then came the issue of the demolition of Changi prison 1999-2004 which aroused strong feeling, particularly in Australia. Singapore's bureaucracy compromised and the Changi Wall of Remembrance was created.

For many years Jeya has run educational tours taking Singaporean children on battlefield tours and combating negative perceptions. He holds commemoration services for school parties at Kranji: national flags of Singapore and the Allied nations; a piper and/or bugler, the poppy is introduced and individual students place on a grave they select. So tourism becomes an ally of historical conservation.

The Changi Museum was established in 1988. In 2006 the Changi Museum received 88,000 visitors. In 2005 the National Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the end of the War was held at Kranji.

His talk was warmly received by delegates and there were several questions from the floor about commemoration in Singapore.

Jonathan Moffatt

Civilian and Fepow Concert Parties: *Professor Sears Eldredge*

'Last but definitely not least' was my immediate reaction to Sears Eldredge's marvellous talk on camp entertainments and I know from comments that have come in since conference that this was a widely held view.

In dealing with the entertainment put on for the prisoners of war and civilian internees by members of the various concert parties that developed over the three and a half years of captivity, Sears trod a delicate line. It would be all too easy to make out that the prison camps were just a big picnic but he handled the subject with great sensitivity pointing out the vital importance of the civilising effect of culture on the human mind. One medical officer, Sears quoted, said that the entertainments did as much if not more for the mental welfare of the prisoners than the limited hospitals could do.

It was certainly clear that what began as the usual army revue-type entertainment evolved into a highly sophisticated and complex series of shows, plays and concerts. And never, he told us, and this was confirmed by Harry Hesp, was vulgar language permitted. The most highly prized performers were the female impersonators, who took their roles as seriously as they did their wardrobes.

Dresses were fashioned out of mosquito nets, false breasts from coconut shells. If silk stockings were needed for a show a notice went out and these precious commodities were supplied anonymously. Musical instruments were made where none were available and the

most famous of these was a double bass which was used in Chungkai camp at concerts. It was plucked rather than bowed but worked perfectly.



Sears Eldredge

This was an apposite, beautifully illustrated talk on which to end because it reminded the assembled delegates that the strength of the human spirit is something so strong that it cannot be crushed even in the most difficult of times. All delegates welcome the promised publication of Sears' important book and wish him well with the final stages of his work.

Julie Summers

Q&A Sharing Session

Julie Summers presided over a final Q&A session at the end of conference which brought proceedings to a close. **Jen Howe** read a piece from her father's wartime diary in which he spoke of the camp entertainments, leading delegates neatly from Sears' talk. **Dr Jeremy Allgrove** talked about his own experience of growing up the son of a rubber plantation manager. **Fred Seiker** asked delegates to remember the role played by the women after the war and this was echoed by **Helen Monument** who bravely stood up to talk about her own experience of learning about her father's

captivity. She spoke of her pride in her father for what he had suffered and acknowledged the role his prisoner of war experiences had played on his life.



Helen Monument and her FEPOW father, Geoffrey

Geoffrey Monument then spoke briefly about life as a POW emphasising that there had been many positives from his perspective as well as the documented atrocities. It was a moving father and daughter act and reminded delegates, if indeed they needed reminding, that the effect of captivity is still felt in homes and families to this day. **John Hedley** spoke in support of what Geoffrey Monument had said and emphasised the need to put the FEPOW experience into perspective.

Stephanie Hess talked about her grandfather's diary with which she was entrusted at the age of 14 but which only recently she has had the opportunity to transcribe. She spoke of how it changed not only her life but her daughter Alicky's and emphasised the beneficial effect it had had on the ten year old to learn about her great-grandfather's past.

Meg Parkes spoke about her work for the School of Tropical Medicine in Liverpool and asked FEPOW and delegates to contact her if they had any information that might help in her research.

Rod Beattie was the final speaker at this informal session and talked about his most recent research in the area around the notorious camp at Songkurai. He presented Julie with a nail and bolt from the railway at Songkurai and these, it was agreed, would be presented to the FEPOW building with a brief history of the camp and some accompanying photographs that Julie and Rod will work on over the next few months.

We all felt the Q&A session was a positive way to wind up the conference and to remind one another of the value of sharing stories, ideas and research.

Capturing the Moment – Students Help FEPOW to Build More Bridges

The idea was simple: why not try to record video interviews with some of the FEPOW in conversation with lecturers during the conference? But how? Unable to afford to hire a film crew, I mentioned the idea to staff at the Arboretum and they suggested asking a group of film students from the University of Staffordshire in Stoke who had recently been filming at NMA and who came highly recommended.

The result: six final year students, led by Nikki Lochery, agreed to record the interviews for us. And not content with that assignment, they also volunteered to record all the lectures as well. All we could offer them was their expenses and they didn't want to accept that. All that remained was to seek permission from the FEPOW - most readily agreed.

The students arrived, ready for action, on the afternoon of Friday 30th and they were joined by a small group of Year 7 and 8 pupils from the Friary School in Lichfield, accompanied by their teacher. They had come along armed with cameras to work with, and learn from, the students.

Three interviews were recorded that day: Fergus Anckorn was interviewed by Julie

Summers, Harry Hesp by Sears Eldredge and Fred Seiker by David Tett. Over the following two days another six interviews were captured: Jack Chalker and Steve Cairns by Geoff Gill, Maurice Naylor and Gordon Smith by Rod Beattie and Jim Wakefield and Arthur White by Tony Banham. It was just a pity that time did not allow us to interview all the FEPOW who had so willingly agreed to participate.

The organisers are indebted to the students for their professional and thorough workmanship throughout the conference. They were quietly efficient and always willing to capture 'just one more before the next lecture starts'. But it was their sensitivity in the face of some gruelling testimony that was so impressive as it was obvious from the first interview on the Friday that the students were moved by the subject matter.

In addition, one of the Year 8 Friary School pupils, 13 year old Lewis Armour, had asked permission to interview one of the veterans himself on the Friday afternoon. He had brought along his own questions and was able to interview Fergus Anckorn and Harry Hesp. A fortnight later Lewis e-mailed a report of his

interviews and this has been posted on to our website: it is well worth reading.

It is hoped that we will be able to produce for sale a DVD of conference including some clips

from interviews in due course. Details will be posted on the website later on in the summer.

Meg Parkes

Relative Journey: River Kwai Revisited Sally Grumbridge Art Exhibition

Sally's father, George Porter, was a bombardier in the 135th Field Regiment RA when he was captured on Singapore. He worked on the Thailand-Burma Railway and talked to Sally about his wartime experiences. She grew up being proud of a father with a special war time past. After his death in 1979 she lost touch with this aspect of his life but in 2000 she became fascinated by the whole story and began to piece it together using stories from his notebook and other material on the period. Eventually she travelled with her daughter to Kanchanaburi and began a series of paintings and prints that culminated in an exhibition that was displayed at the Arboretum.

Railway artist, Jack Chalker, was moved by her paintings, as was fellow delegate, Stephanie

Hess, who wrote: 'The piece that most stood out for me was the painting depicting a lush glimpse of the passing landscape through a sliver of railway carriage door. It is most evocative and gives one a real sense of being on the inside looking out.... It seemed to be the painting that spoke to most people.'

'I liked the way she incorporated writings from her dad's diary into the paintings, as well as other images inspired by the bits & pieces he kept from his POW years. The symbol she used as her signature was on a piece of fabric amongst his possessions - apparently it means "Prisoner".'

'The exhibition tied in very well with the overall atmosphere of the Conference weekend - a positive feeling of tribute and remembrance.'

Julie Summers

Our FEPOW Guests by Keith Andrews

I have been asked by Julie (as only a Brigadier's granddaughter can ask the son of a Battery Sergeant Major!) to write a brief piece on each of our Far East Prisoner of War guests who were with us at conference. It was wonderful to have so many FEPOW there to share their experiences, and all in good health and spirits.

The information for the most part has come from Japanese POW index cards and liberated POW questionnaires, where they exist, that have been recovered from the National Archives at Kew. Many were recovered for the work Meg Parkes is doing at the Liverpool Hospital for Tropical Medicine.

Fergus Anckorn

947556 – Gunner – 118th Field Regiment RA
Fergus Anckorn was captured at Singapore. He was wounded in the battle and was a survivor of the Alexandra Hospital Massacre.

He was part of the party that left Singapore on October 26th 1942 bound for Thailand, where he became part of Work Group 1 on the Thailand-Burma Railway. The camps he was in along the Railway were Kanchanaburi, Wang

Pho, Chungkai, Nong Pladuk and then off-railway to Bangkok and Ubon. Pre-war Fergus was the youngest member of the Magic Circle and is today the oldest honorary member.



Fergus Anckorn

Steve Cairns MBE OBE

1493659 – Gunner – 85th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA, seconded to the Navy as a weapons' artificer at the time of the Fall of Singapore.

Steve Cairns was captured at Singapore and worked on the Thailand-Burma Railway, but the card makes no mention of the date he left Singapore. He became part of Work Group 4, and the camps he was in along the railway included Chungkai, Tha Sao, and Tha Khanun. Steve is the former national welfare officer of what is now the FEPOW Fellowship, formerly the National Federation of Far East Prisoner of War Clubs and Associations.

Jack Chalker

946145 – Gunner – 118th Field Regiment, RA



Jack Chalker

Jack Chalker's questionnaire is the only one come across so far which lists not only the British camp commanders, but the Japanese as well. Jack worked on the Thailand-Burma Railway and became part of Work Group 4. The camps he was in along the Railway were Kannyu, Chungkai, Tha Muang, and off-railway Nakhon Pathom. Jack's new book, *Burma Railway Images of War: The Original War Drawings of Japanese POW Jack Chalker* is now available.

George Duffy

3rd Officer, *MV American Leader* – American Merchant Marine

George Duffy's ship was sunk by the German auxiliary cruiser *Michel* of the German Navy on the September 10th 1942, and George was one of the survivors who were picked up. He was handed over to the Japanese on November 6th 1942 at Batavia in Java. In May 1944 he was one of 1,200 prisoners who embarked at Batavia on the *Chuka Maru* and was sent via Singapore to Sumatra to build the Sumatra Railway, the Pakanbaroe Rail Line. George's book *Ambushed under the Southern Cross* is due to be published this year.

John Hedley

P/221757 – Lieutenant – SSO attached 1st Mysore Infantry, Indian Army

John Hedley was at Pengerang Battery, Johore, when Singapore fell and with others decided to make an escape attempt getting as far as Padang, Sumatra where he was captured. The camps he was in were Padang, Belawan, Gloegoer Medan, Atjen Sumatra, 13km Petai Sumatra and Logas Sumatra.

Harry Hesp

Assistant Butcher, S.S. Empress of Asia

Harry Hesp's ship, the *Empress of Asia* was sunk while approaching Singapore with its cargo of troops, weapons and munitions, but fortunately with a very small loss of life. Harry and some of his shipmates volunteered to look after the wounded at Singapore's hospitals, Harry's first being the Tan Tock Seng Hospital and then the Singapore General Hospital. Harry was captured and interned and spent the war as a prisoner in various camps in Singapore including Changi Goal and Sime Road Camp. Until last year Harry was the editor of the Manchester and District FEPOW Focus newsletter.

Geoffrey Monument

S/271583 – Private – RASC

Geoffrey Monument was captured at Singapore and left there on August 16th 1942 bound for Formosa on the *England Maru*. He went to Heito camp which he left on November 14th bound for Japan, arriving at Moji on the 25th. He was sent to Number 2 Detachment Camp (Tokyo) Yokohama. In August 1943 he was sent to Shinagawa Hospital Camp and in October 1944 was back in No.2 Detachment Camp (renumbered No. 1 Detachment Camp). On May 13th he was transferred to Sendai, a mining camp. Geoffrey has written a book of his experiences *Angel on my Shoulder* which is available now.

Maurice Naylor CBE

1119530 – Gunner – 135th Field Regiment RA

Maurice Naylor was captured in Singapore and was part of a party that left Singapore on October 22nd 1942 bound for Thailand, where he became part of Work Group 1 on the Thailand-Burma Railway. The camps he was in along the Railway were Tha Makham, Nong Pladuk 1 and 2, and then off-railway Nakhon Pathom, Bangkok and Ubon.

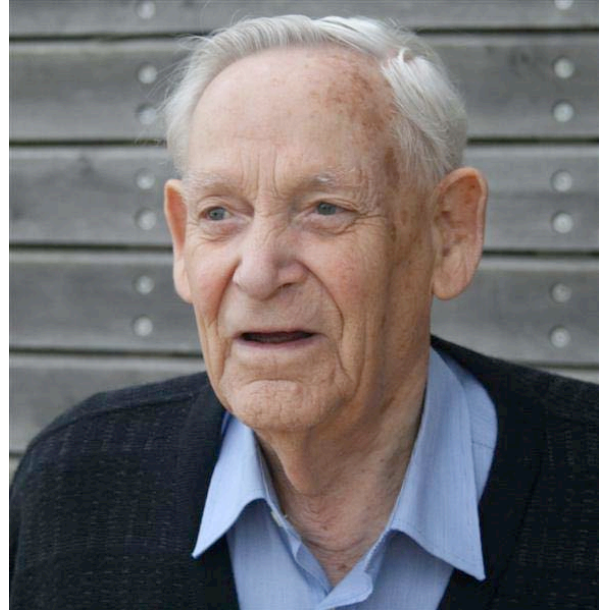
John Pratt

2339430 – Lance Corporal – 18th Division Signals

John Pratt was captured at Singapore and was in a party that left for the Railway. John's questionnaire shows that they stopped at Chumphon camp on the way up to Thailand. The camps John was in along the railway were Wang Pho, Tha Makham and Nong Pladuk. He then went back to Singapore, and his card shows the Roman numeral X or 10 as a Work Group, and this was the Group sent to Saigon, and then Bien Hoa and Lienkhang, all of which were in French Indo-China.

Gordon Smith

187156 – 2nd Lieutenant – 2nd Battalion, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders

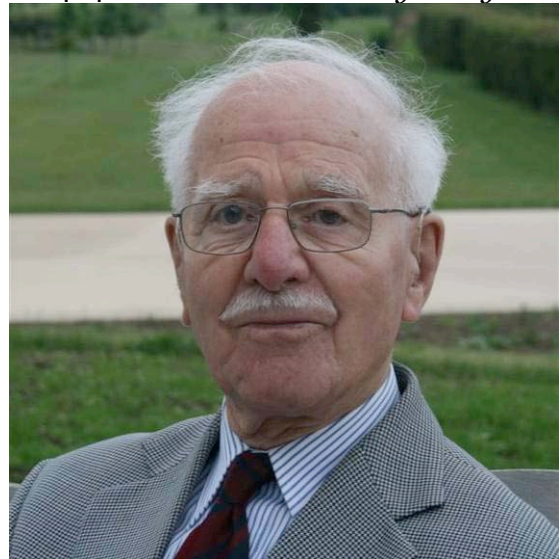


Gordon Smith

Gordon Smith was captured at Batu Tiga, Malaya according to his questionnaire on January 25th 1942 and was wounded at the time. He was sent to Pudu Jail in Kuala Lumpur until October 13th 1942, and then onto the Thailand-Burma Railway. The camps he was in on the Railway were Tha Makham, Nong Pladuk and Kanchanaburi. At the end of the war he was in Bangkok awaiting transfer to another camp. His book, *War Memories – A Medical Student in Malaya and Thailand* was launched at conference.

James Wakefield

166464 – 2nd Lieutenant – Royal Engineers



Jim Wakefield

James was captured at Hong Kong and spent the war in Shamshuipo, Argyle Street (N) and Shamshuipo (N) camps.

Alistair Urquhart

S/2883851 – Corporal – Fortress HQ, seconded from the Gordon Highlanders to RASC

Alistair was captured at Singapore, and left for the Thailand-Burma Railway on October 26th 1942, where he became part of Work Group 4. The camps he was in on the Railway were Kannyu, Chungkai and Tha Muang. However the end of June 1944 found him at River Valley Road which meant he would be transferred to Japan. Alistair became part of Japan party 3, which was loaded mainly onto two ships. Alistair was on the *Kachidoki Maru*, and the other was the *Rakuyo Maru*. Both ships were sunk and Alistair was eventually picked up by the Japanese and taken onto Japan in a whaling factory ship. He was sent to camp 25B Omuta in Japan. Alistair gives talks to schools regarding his experiences, and is involved with the Gordon Highlanders Museum.



Arthur White

Arthur White

4623 – Private – No.2 Company, H.K.V.D.C. Arthur was 18 when he was captured at Hong Kong, making him one of Hong Kong's youngest POW. Arthur was in Shamshuipo camp and was on the third draft to go to Japan on January 16th 1943 on the Tatsuta Maru. He was at Narumi camp in factories making rolling stock for railways and at Toyama camp.

Information for these brief biographies has been gathered by Keith Andrews from FEPOW cards and questionnaires now at the National Archives at Kew. This information, Keith remarked, is a goldmine to any researcher of the Far East Prisoners of War, and he wished to record his thanks to the FEPOW for filling the questionnaire out in the first place. Should any FEPOW not have copies of his Japanese POW Index Card and Liberated POW Questionnaires and would like them, please let Keith Andrews know and he would be happy to forward them.

Bookshop

There was a most impressive array of new titles on show, covering all aspects of FEPOW and civilian internee experiences, many of which had been written by delegates or lecturers. There were also leaflets and flyers promoting books due for publication in the near future, including *Stranger in the House*, by Julie Summers.

But star billing had to go to Gordon Smith's, *Wartime Memories: A Medical Student in Malaya and Thailand*. Gordon, who had served as a platoon commander in Malaya with 2A&SH and had survived the Battle of Slim River, travelled from the south of France. Encouraged by both Meg and Jonathan, Gordon decided last autumn that he would publish the personal

memoir of his experiences both before and during captivity. We were delighted when he agreed to launch his book during the weekend.

As well as strong sales of new titles (from each of which a commission was paid to NMA) there was also brisk business done as delegates and lecturers browsed the shelves of second-hand titles on offer. Many left with far more books than they had intended but no complaints were heard.

Mike and Paul had a very busy two days running the bookshop; everyone was grateful to them for providing this most valuable facility for the conference.

Meg Parkes

Gallery of photographs from conference 2008



Technical wizard Martin P. Merle Hesp knitting her way through conference



Alistair Urquhart, the snappiest dresser at conference, with his daughter Joyce Aiston



l-r Jen Howe, Rosemary Fell, Stephanie Hess, Rod Beattie



Sculpture at the new Armed Forces Memorial at the Arboretum



Mike Parkes and Harry Hesp on the evening before conference



Jim Wakefield in conversation with Steve Cairns



Meal at the Thai Lanna – cramped our seating but not our style



Fergus Anckorn and Stephanie Hess at dinner

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Editor's Note:

There will be a further newsletter in the Spring of 2009. If anyone wishes to contribute material or has suggestions for an article to appear in the newsletter please do contact me.

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