



Officers - Chairman - Keith Andrews, Treasurer - Margaret Walton , Secretary - Barbara James
Committee Members - Angela Lane, Annette Hughes, Rowford Bowditch, Tony Truett, Richard Gibbs

BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET FOR SEPTEMBER 2025

WE COMMEMORATED VJ80!



BAFEPOW'S NEW VJ80 BADGE LOGO FLIES HIGH ABOARD A CATALINA FLYING BOAT!!!

It is no exaggeration to say that BAFEPOW certainly did its part to commemorate VJ80 and to remember our FEPOW, the Forgotten Army, the Internees and the Romusha. The Forgotten Army was given a proper recognition and you may feel, like myself, that it has now been rightfully commemorated as being those who were fighting in Burma and Malaya and is separate from the FEPOW. There were numerous services and commemorations taking place all over the UK and, at last, VJ Day got the recognition it has for so long missed receiving and may that long continue!

As you can see from the photo above, BAFEPOW has certainly been commemorating VJ80 in more locations than just Birmingham! (There was a VJ80 service held at the Hall of Memory and the Council House in Birmingham but it didn't get much publicity!) Possibly the most unusual commemoration was achieved by our committee member, Tony Truett, who visited Duxford Air Museum and somehow got talking to Jeff, the pilot of a magnificent Catalina Flying Boat and inevitably he talked to Jeff about WWII and FEPOWs and BAFEPOW too. The plane was already due to be flown over some VJ80 events, including one across the channel to the Hague/Rotterdam at the request of some Dutch Indische descendants. Tony was wearing his BAFEPOW VJ80 badge which he pointed out to Jeff and then came the amazing offer that if Tony could get a copy made to go on the fuselage of the plane, then it would proudly fly over Cambridge as a tribute. Well, there's no stopping Tony when there's a challenge concerning a 'FEPOW thing' and off he went to find somewhere that might be able to do it and he fortunately came across such a place and again, after doing the WWII FEPOW history chat, Adam was on board with Tony's project. The next day Tony went to check on progress and not just one but four badge

transfers were ready and waiting – and at no cost to us – Adam we are so grateful to you! Back then to Duxford and soon ‘Little Miss Pick Up’ was in the splendid company of the BAFEPOW VJ80 emblem – the FEPOW would have approved, I’m sure. But, not only did Tony get to admire the fuselage from the runway, he and his sister, Annette, got taken up for a flight over and as far as Suffolk where so many airfields had seen flights set off to Europe from in WWII – many, many thanks to you, Tony, for achieving something quite unique and to Jeff and the team of ‘Little Miss Pick Up’ for helping us commemorate VJ80 in a special way and also many thanks to Adam for his skilful manufacture of the emblem to go onto the fuselage!

Tony and Annette weren’t finished there as on VJ80 Day they attended a VJ80 service at the church at Cambridge University :-



On VJ0 Day a Birmingham Association of Far East Prisoner's of War Wreath was laid in Cambridge University Church St Mary's the Great by Tony Truett with a guard of honour provided by the American Airforce.



And there’s more! Tony also did an interview for ITV news which was shown in East Anglia!

So you might think that Tony and Annette were in need of a rest after all this but no – the next day they were up very early and on the train to London for the VJ80 service in Camden – this is one of my very favourite FEPOW memorials by the way, and even though my Dad was fortunate not to be sent from Saigon to work on the Thai/Burma Railway as he had dysentery when his comrades were sent – I’ll just mention here that this unfortunate group of 700 included George Wills, a Birmingham FEPOW who enlisted when my Dad did and was

in Saigon too – most people will hear about the Railway before they maybe learn about anything else so the rails in the monument seem very appropriate – on the next page is a photo of it with wreaths laid on VJ80 Day including the BAFEPOW one laid by Tony – see what you think of this small but splendid memorial.



We had another very busy member, Chris Broadhurst, who not only did an interview about her dear Dad which appeared in the local Redditch Standard newspaper but she was the guest of honour at the VJ80 service organised by the local Royal British Legion where she was presented with some items including a RBL teddy bear. (With so many busy members, I am running out of space – will add more from Chris in October)



Wreaths laid at the FEPOW memorial in Bromsgrove – see details on the next page.



BAFEPOW and FEPOW wreaths were laid on our behalf at the FEPOW memorial within the Burma Star Ground in Bromsgrove by Richard Gibbs (our new committee member) and Rob Ward who very kindly keeps an eye on the bench there that is dedicated to Pat de Paeztron – many thanks to you both for doing so on my behalf .The wreath on the left, I believe may have been laid on behalf of Pam Stubbs by her daughter.



COFEPOW held its VJ80 commemorations on Saturday,16th September at Lichfield Cathedral and it was very well attended by its own members and also members from the local community. I had the honour of laying a BAFEPOW wreath and it is in the photo on the left, the second wreath up from bottom on the left, There were several other members of our group present too. COFEPOW also held an evening event at the NMA which I did not attend but Keith Andrews was there – *see the last entry in this news sheet, On Sunday 17th September, there was the usual COFEPOW AGM which I attended with other BAFEPOW members and then they held a service on commemoration in the FEPOW Grove and I laid a BAFEPOW wreath there in front of a field of poppies that were lying before the Sumatra Railway memorial. It can be seen on the upper right hand side in the photo. I also had the privilege of reading a poem during the service which was very special for me to do in honour of my Dad. I was pleased to see so many members of the public were there too and I enjoyed talking to so many people over the three days and they all had close family connections to WWII in the Far East although they weren't members of any FEPOW group. After the service there was a lunch in the Aspect Building and I had a very pleasant chat to the new COFEPOW Padre, Rev Richard Brooker and discovered that he knew our member, Richard Coy and his son, Freddie, and he knew them from the FEPOW services in Shirley. Richard is also the grandson of a FEPOW and has a keen interest in Bishop Leonard Wilson. I don't take any photos during the VJ80 service on VJ Day as it seemed inappropriate and there was so much to watch – weren't the veterans amazing? And the fly pasts – oh my word – the Red Arrows made the ground shake but the Memorial Fly Past was amazing – the whole event was superb and the War in the Far East was properly remembered at last!

Other members also marked VJ Day but sadly no photos:-

Annette Hughes (BAFEPOW Committee member) liaised with a local councillor, got bunting up on the Walsall Council House and organised a VJ80 commemoration where she lives in honour of her FEPOW grandfather – hope all went well!

Richard Coy had done much of the planning for the VJ80 service in Shirley and whilst his son, Freddie, was on holiday, we were pleased that our committee member, Angela Lane, was on hand to lay the BAFEPOW wreath on our behalf.

Carol Rowe was interviewed on a local radio station about her father's experiences as a FEPOW.

What a wonderful few days where finally VJ Day 80 was recognised by the Nation and tributes were paid in a great many places at last – We Will Remember Them -the FEPOW, the Forgotten Army, the Internees and the Romusha – and we will endeavour to ensure it continues!

LETTERS TO LOVED ONES VE-VJ DAY 80

One of our members, Chris Best, has very kindly brought the following web site to my notice:-

<https://ve-vjday80.gov.uk>

It's a very interesting site and in the section labelled 'Letters to Loved Ones', which has been done in conjunction with the Imperial War Museum, are many wonderful letters that give an insight into how that generation coped with the separation that was so much a part of life during the war. Chris has contributed some of the letters written by her own father and his family. The whole site is interesting but it may not remain online for very long so do take a look.

***AND SOMETHING A LITTLE SPECIAL TO BRING THIS TO A CLOSE.....**

I make no apologies for ending this VJ80 news sheet by including a photograph from the CoFEPOW evening event which was held on 16/08/25 in the Aspect Building at the NMA. It may not be the best of photos because it was taken by someone there who, like myself, felt that it was a well deserved tribute and wanted to record it (thank you, Louise)

The tribute was being paid to Keith Andrews (our chairman) and it was being paid to him by the Trustees of CoFEPOW in recognition of not only his dedication to CoFEPOW to which he was a trustee for a number of years but especially for all of the research into FEPOW history that he has done and selflessly undertaken to do for so many relatives of FEPOW.

I'm sure that you will all join me in adding our own small tribute to the tireless work that Keith has done over the years – thank you, Keith, we do appreciate how much you have done to investigate the histories of so many FEPOW and events during their captivity for their families – you have helped so many of us! (BJ)



WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW, WIVES AND WIDOWS

If you need help with a grant towards hospital stays, Nursing Home Costs, alterations to the home, mobility aids etc, then please get in touch with:-

Mr Stephen John, the Java Club by email:- stephen.su.47@gmail.com or

Mrs Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA by email:- enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

The BAFEPOW news sheet is put together by the association secretary, Barbara James, and, hopefully, it contains items of interest to all members. You are very welcome to suggest future topics or to submit items for future inclusion. You can contact me via email:- bmjames142@yahoo.co.uk or by phone:- 07954104857

I COULDN'T CLOSE YET - JUST HAD TO ADD THIS! :-

You may look at the flying boat and not see any connection to WWII and our FEPOW – my husband, George looks at it and he sees his favourite kind of small plane and was envious of Tony and Annette's trip in this one but he has had a ride in one when we went to the Maldives, So I will tell you why I feel that this is the perfect plane to have our badge on the side.

PBY-5A Catalina G-PBYA, better known as "Miss Pick Up", is an 82-year-old WWII-era flying boat owned by Catalina Aircraft Limited (CAL), operated by Plane Sailing Air Displays Limited (PSADL), and proudly supported by The Catalina Society. Based at the Imperial War Museum Duxford near Cambridge, UK, she remains the last airworthy Catalina flying outside the Americas—a living tribute to the legacy of those who flew and maintained these iconic aircraft.

Why is she named 'Miss Pick Up'? The PBY Catalina flying boat, nicknamed "Miss Pick Up," was built in 1943 for the Royal Canadian Air Force and had a distinguished career before being acquired by a UK-based aviation organization in the late 1990s. The Catalina was so named as many people found it hard to remember the technical names for planes and found it easier to name them after places – Catalina is a small island in the Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Southern California, about 22 miles south-southwest of Los Angeles. It is part of the Southern Channel Islands and it gave it's name to these planes. They were very useful during sea warfare for spotting enemy ships and many were used out in the East during the Battle of the Pacific.

They were also used as rescue craft and you can imagine the delight of a crashed air crew desperately trying to remain afloat in far off waters to see a Catalina landing and approaching them to pick them up and carry them to safety hence this one bearing 'Miss Pick Up'. Many were in use after the final end of the war to transfer POWs to places where they could recuperate before being repatriated.

And so, I feel that Tony found just the right plane to carry our badge for VJ80 Day!



I also came across two very interesting videos about the Catalina, The first one is really interesting as it talks about these planes - their history and their uses and the second one is about the 'Miss Pick Up'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GMNkZa3RUX0>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YvwdoXhdURE>

Long may you continue to fly, Miss Pick Up, and to tell of your historical usage in WWII!

