



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 DECEMBER 2025



Merry Christmas to all our BAFEPOW friends!!

On behalf of the BAFEPOW committee, I (Barbara) would like to wish you all the happiest and most enjoyable festive season! The world is unsettled at present but we wish you a peaceful and pleasant time however I do wonder what the cartoon FEPOW on this old card was hoping for when he hung up his stocking on that imaginary Christmas eve so long ago?

The card shown above is another one that comes from the Sherwood Foresters who were POWs in Changi and it looks as though that sock has at least one hole in it which would be a certainty by Christmas 1944 as there was little chance of them having any new clothing or footwear, even the bedding looks better than they probably had too! They were probably hoping that they would not be spending another year as prisoners and perhaps they were starting to get some news through that the war in Europe was going towards victory over the Germans sometime into the New Year. Our POWs would definitely have been thinking of home and of hanging up their stockings with their loved ones once more and to be enjoying the company of their families and friends – sadly they still had months of deprivation to endure but we know that by Christmas 1945 almost all of them would be home at last. For some of them they found that homes had been destroyed and loved ones had passed away – uncertain times!

News From Remembrance Events 2025

The first event to mention is a very special one and it brings much emotion for myself (BJ) because it took quite a lot of courage for the young man in the photograph to take on the responsibility of laying a BAFEPOW wreath at the monument in Perton, Wolverhampton. His grandfather, Tom Horrobin had done this in the past and then Tom's eldest grandson, Thomas, had taken on the role but, he is away at University now and, as most of you know, so sadly, Tom, one of the longstanding members of BAFE-POW, has recently passed away and we are all desperately sorry for Gwen and her family. Gwen was concerned that the wreath that they had got would not be laid in remembrance of Tom's half-brother, Joe, and his FEPOW comrades. However, Tom's younger grandson, Joseph, proudly stepped forward to do it for his Grandad.

Joseph, thank you for 'keeping the spirit going that kept them going' and your Nan, your parents, and your brother, Thomas and all of us in BAFEPOW are very proud that you did it for the FEPOW.



News from Tony, one of our committee members -

Tony decided to attend the service at his local church instead of going to the usual annual service in Camden. During the run-up to VJ 80 Tony had got to know the vicar, **Andrew Birks, there in Melbourn quite well and had encouraged him to put on a VJ80 event which he did and then Tony discovered that this vicar had recently become an honorary member of the Java Club which confirmed that he had a definite interest in the Far East in WWII!



Tony said, "Excellent attendance at the Remembrance Day service in Melbourn. Including 99 year old Royal Navy man, John Barnard, holder of the France and Germany Star, Burma Star and Légion

d'Honneur. He was one of the crew of HMS Glenroy, a troop ship in the Far East on VJ DAY and was determined to lay his floral tribute today.”

****Tony wrote to say the following - This year I laid a wreath at the village. The Vicar (or Rural Dean - not sure where it comes in the pecking order) is an honorary member of the Java club. He conducted some FEPOW funerals when he was in Brighton. I lent him a book on Padre Duckworth and another making reference to him. His sermon in the service was about Chaplains and what they had to deal with so I assume he had read the books. I have never heard mention of Chaplains before in a service. I thought it was very fitting. I imagine he feels like an unofficial Chaplain to the Java club”**

Tony’s friend also created a wooden poppy cross for BAFEPOW and placed it at the nearby village of Sawston on the memorial there.

Tony had also traveled into London to visit the Field of Poppies at Westminster Abbey and he placed a FEPOW poppy there on behalf of our loved ones – thank you so much, Tony, for all that you do in honour of them!



News from the Far East -

Angela, another of our committee, stopped over in Singapore on her way over to visit a friend in Australia and she visited Kranji War Cemetery on 11/11/25 where she placed a BAFEPOW cross next to a wreath that someone had laid earlier that day. She is also hoping to meet up with our BAFEPOW members, Martyn and Jann, in Perth before she flies home again.



News from the Shirley RBL Remembrance Parade -

This was quite something judging from the video I saw on Facebook filmed by an on-looker. Well done, Richard (our member Ann’s son and I’ll just mention that he served in the Sherwood Foresters which is why I chose the opening picture) He is the Standard Bearer for the Shirley RBL but has forgone that honour to take on all the complicated arrangements that have to be done to arrange for road closures etc and to organise all the various groups that participate in the procession and the service. A real tribute to his FEPOW Grandad, Edwin Coy and to his father, Ken Coy, who was our Vice Chairman and a long standing member of BAFEPOW like Edwin who was also on the committee.

News from the NMA –

James and his daughter, Louise, made the journey to the NMA to join in the COFEPOW Remembrance Service there. It was well attended as usual and was a moving service.

News from Barbara (BAFEPOW Secretary -

As well as being secretary to our association, I am also on the Branch committee of my local British Legion and my role is to organise our Annual Service of Remembrance. Since lockdown when our club was closed and also underwent big changes to the building and we lost the majority of our original

members so we are working to encourage people to come back and support us – the saying of ‘Use it or lose it’ springs to mind. This was my second service to arrange and I managed to get a local vicar to help lead the service (she was great!) and we even had a lady to play the last post and reveille, much better than a recording. We have a new standard bearer and he was so nervous about leading our small parade and I had to ‘coach’ him and he was perfect and here I will also thank our member, Richard, Ann’s son, for the support that he has given to Liam who is so thankful for your help. The service went really well and we were again joined by our MP and our local councillor. I laid a BAFE-POW wreath at our monument and I also said the Kohima Epitaph and the FEPOW prayer and even said that I did it in honour of my own dear Dad, his comrades and all those involved in the Far East in WWII.

I haven’t included a photo of this event as I am running out of the size that I can email this to you and I thought that you might be more interested in another event that George and I had the honour of attending.

The VJ80 Reception at Windsor Castle -

I couldn’t believe it when George and I got the opportunity to attend this event as members of COFE-POW. It seemed too good to be true but the invites from Buckingham Palace finally arrived and confirmed us as guests of the King and Queen. On the evening of Armistice Day we set off from our hotel into Windsor and the roads up to the castle were choked with others arriving, some in limousines with fancy pennants displayed, and it was total confusion however the efficient Castle Staff and the police soon sorted it out and we entered and met up with our fellow FEPOW friends from COFEPOW, David, Jill, Karen and. Chris, Alan and Tom who are also BAFEPOW members.

We were guided along to the main banqueting hall which is impressive to say the least and we were offered tempting canapes and champagne or wine but we settled for apple juice! Shortly there was a murmur around the hall that the ‘Royals’ were circulating among the throng and suddenly the Queen was in front of me – help - should I curtsy/bow? No problem – she reached out and shook my hand and just chatted away, said that her father had been a German POW but never said much about it except that he was so glad that he wasn’t a FEPOW! A few minutes later the King came along and he was just equally chatty and wanted to know about our links to the Far East and I said that my dad was a FEPOW and then he asked George about his Dad to which he said that his Dad wasn’t in the Far East but that his father-in-law was but the King then said, “Yes, but what did your Dad do?” I thought that was lovely and George told him that his Dad had built Lancasters in the Austin Factory and was then moved to an airport in Nottinghamshire where he worked on damaged Lancaster bombers to return them into service again – the King seemed genuinely interested in this and I was so pleased for George.



We also chatted to Kier Starmer who (totally apolitically) spoke to us for about five minutes about the FEPOW and the Far East. We also spoke at some length to the King’s Personal Secretary who told us that the King was very aware that VE Day gets much more recognition than VJ Day and when he was with the King the previous evening he told us that the King had asked for this reception to be arranged because he wanted VJ Day to receive more attention in the future. We missed Kemi Badenoch in the melee and also the actor, Mark Rylance who, like ourselves, is the child of a FEPOW, and who you may remember that he took part in an episode of ‘Who Do You Think You Are?’ and missing him was probably a good thing as I would have berated him somewhat over what he said about the surrender and the FEPOWs – some descendant you are to say what you did, Mark Rylance – all POWs could be

described as surrendering when taken by the enemy although it is more likely to be described as 'captured' and most people don't realise that many troops in the Far East had previously been fighting in Europe or defending the UK during the Blitz before being sent to the Far East by Churchill who then failed them by refusing to send them the equipment that they needed to defend Singapore and other areas.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Tom Horrobin – sadly passed away on Saturday, October 25th aged 85, much loved husband of Gwen – both of whom have been longstanding members of BAFEPOW. The funeral will take place on Thursday, November 27th. (Tom's brother, Joe Horrobin, was a FEPOW and served in the Cambridgeshire regiment and was also a member of BAFEPOW)

Irene Bray – FEPOW widow sadly passed away on Monday, November 3rd aged 97. She had been a longstanding member of BAFEPOW and we kept in touch with her by post and telephone when she could no longer travel to our meetings and she will be much missed. Condolences go to her daughter, Wendy and Family and friends. Her funeral will take place at Sutton Coldfield Crematorium on Monday, 1st December at 10.45. (Irene was married to FEPOW, Edwin John Bray, Gnr, Royal Artillery who was held in Fukuoka, Japan)

Both Tom and Irene will be much missed by all of us who knew them – may they rest in peace.

Carol Cooper – it has been announced that Carol sadly passed away on November 10th. Without the discovery of a FEPOW diary that had been kept by Carol's father during his captivity there may not have been COFEPOW or the Hut or memorials at the NMA. So many of us have benefited from the research help from other members of this charity and have also met many other interesting fellow FEPOW descendants and made some very good lasting friendships – RIP, Carol and thank you!

NEWS FROM TOM JOWETT

Our member, Tom, has sent a message giving notice of annual service of remembrance for those who were on board HMS Exeter when it was sunk by the Japanese -

I have just had confirmation that our service will be held in the **North (our!) Chapel, Exeter Cathedral on Saturday 28th February 2026 at 11am.**

There will be the same arrangements as last year, with the Guildhall being open for us to sight the HMS Exeter model, either before or after our service, and 'lunch & chat' at a suitable hostelry.

I intend staying at the "White Hart" hotel (just across the road from the EWEC), for anybody wishing to make a weekend of it, I will circulate the best way to book when I have spoken to their management.

I am sure there will be further details prior to the event, but I wanted to make sure the date & time of the service for those of you living & holidaying in sunnier climes.

Could you give me a rough idea of numbers? either by tomjowett54@gmail.com or 07802 182710.

Thanks, Tom.

WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW, 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

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

