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Committee Members - Ms Angela Lane, Mrs Annette Hughes, Rowford Bowditch, Anthony Truett,
Richard Gibb**

BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET FOR MARCH 2026

NEWS FROM THE FIRST MEETING IN FEBRUARY

It was yet another of those dark, dreary days with yet more rain and just six of us braved the weather and met up at the Holiday Inn. This meeting was the closest one to the date of the surrender to the Japanese of Singapore on 15/02/42 by Percival and we took time to remember those who were taken prisoner and mark the date that is still considered to be the main focus that we commemorate. As is the norm for our meetings, no matter how many of us are able to travel into our meetings, there is always plenty to chat about, news to share (one constant topic at present is how our chairman, Keith, is getting on and he is making slow progress but is looking forward to possibly being able to come and join us again at some point in the future – he is much missed) and we always have new topics coming up from what we continue to learn about that our FEPOW went through during their captivity.

"Chin up, girls, I'm proud of you and I love you all"

Radji Beach, 16 February 1942



"Chin up, girls. I'm proud of you
.. ..
.. .."

Those were the last words spoken by Matron Irene Drummond to her fellow twenty one Australian nurses who had survived the sinking by the Japanese of the Vyner Brook on which they had hoped to escape the invasion of Singapore. Many of their fellow passengers had either died during the attack on the ship or drowned in the sea as they attempted to make it to shore. These brave women had managed to struggle ashore at Radji Beach on Bangka Island which was already under Japanese control and they surrendered to a patrol of Japanese soldiers as they were in desperate need of help. Sadly this was not to be what they hoped for and Matron Drummond spoke those words in the title as the Japanese troops ordered them to turn and walk into the sea. They bravely linked hands – heard Irene call out to them – and they took their last few steps and were then gunned down in cold blood Just one of them survived despite being shot through her side and she feigned death and floated face down taking side breaths until their murderers left the beach. This was Vivian Bulwinkell.

Many years later she was finally allowed to tell the truth about this massacre which also involved the heartless rape of these unfortunate but brave women prior to their slaughter who had survived the sinking of their ship by the Japanese and their desperate struggle make it to land.

Here at BAFEPOW we are so fortunate to have Arlene Bennett as a member despite her living in Australia and she has joined us here in Birmingham at least once a year whilst over in the UK and we hope to see her again later this year. She has told us about this tragedy in far more detail than I have gone into here and she continues to support my own efforts to have the British nurses, in particular, Dame Margot Turner, mentioned alongside Vivian Bulwinkel in the FEPOW Hut at the NMA. This is ongoing.

The annual service of remembrance for the nurses and also the British troops who were killed by the same Japanese troops here (especially Stoker Lloyd who subsequently met Vivian on the beach but sadly died shortly afterwards) has taken place on Bangka Island where Arlene, joined by Judy Campbell, and some relatives of the nurses, representatives from the Australian Embassy and various others including local people united to remember those who perished. This service took place on February 15th and on the 16th the annual Radji Walk of Remembrance was held on Radji Beach where those present walk into the sea and place flowers into the water. A few years ago, our member Carol had joined Arlene and Judy for this, and in the absence of any British representation from our High Commission, she took on the role of representing the UK. This year we were promised that this oversight would not happen again but sadly, due to unforeseen circumstances at the Embassy, they, unavoidably, let us down again! Maybe they will be there next year to represent us.

YET ANOTHER LINK COMES FROM A COMMENT IN A SECOND HAND BOOK

Quite a number of us are not put off by buying our books about WWII in the Far East from second hand booksellers. In fact it is often in the hope that the original owner might have been out in the Far East in the war and may have written their personal comments and annotations as we read through the pages and these comments add to the insight into their own experiences during those difficult years – some, as we have found, even challenge the accuracy of the book's author and, in some cases, dispute whether the author was actually present when describing some well known places and events.

We are so fortunate to have Phil Bradshaw as one of our members, and he has done a monumental amount of research into his grandfather's time as a member of the RAMC, 196th Field Ambulance and We are always so pleased when he is able to come and join us at one of our meetings in Birmingham and update us on what his latest research has discovered and has been added to the one bulging file that he first brought us and to the second file that is already filling up rapidly. So, a few weeks ago he let me know about a name that he came across in a book that he had bought second hand on Ebay and he has kindly given permission for me to share with you what arose from his discovery and this is what he wrote:-

Finding Bamboo and Barbed Wire

Stanley Wood-Higgs' name first appeared on a list of mostly 196th Field Ambulance men, however Stanley was an exception as he was with the 197th. The list itself was just a fragment, a lost little piece of P.O.W. transport information mixed in with some other records.

Most of the other names I already recognised, but after searching further on Stanley's name I discovered he had written a book about his experiences called 'Bamboo and Barbed Wire', I had a book about the 196th Field Ambulance, but was not aware that there was one for the 197th. Would any of my grandfather's unit be mentioned in it....

I decided to order a copy, and when it came sat down to read it. Sure enough there were a few 196th servicemen included, not many - but obviously they had worked together. Also under the front cover of the book was a name and address for "Joe Foulger", Shotesham near Norwich... intriguing... As a lot of the unit came from Norfolk & Suffolk was Joe a FEPOW as well? Indeed so –

as it turned out he that he was and had been with the 198th Field Ambulance. I was now more pleased with the book, it was a good copy and had obviously been looked after.

Family History of Uncle Joe Foulger

1st Amesbury Girls Brigade company were asked by The Girls Brigade Ministries to represent the Girls Brigade on the 12th August 2025, at Downing Street's VJ80th afternoon tea celebrations. My 11 year old daughter, Pippa was fortunate enough to attend and had a fantastic experience. She met the Prime Minister and his wife, Larry the cat, lots of veterans, MP's and other personnel.

Prior to going to Downing Street, her Grandad discussed, and provided her, with information about our Great Uncle Joe, who joined the Royal Army Medical Corps at the outbreak of war, and was sent to Singapore, where he became a prisoner of war, in February 1942. This was his story given by Pippa's Grandad :

Clare Joseph Foulger (Known as Joe)

(Named after an uncle who died in Aldershot during WW1

Joe was my Grand Father's youngest brother (The youngest of five). He would be Pippa's Great, Great Uncle.

Born 10th September, 1919, Norwich, Norfolk

Died 2nd October, 1993, aged 74, Norwich, Norfolk.

He was a Butcher before joining the Army and a long-time member of St John's Ambulance Brigade, he joined the Royal Army Medical Corps, attached to the Norfolk Regiment (18th Division).

He was sent to Singapore in 1942, as a Corporal, of the RAMC.

Captured by the Japanese on 15th January, 1942 and transported by POW transport to Thailand. He worked, under appalling conditions, as a medic, on the Thai/Burma railway, at KANCHANABURI (just East of Bangkok) and finally at UBON RATCHATHANI (North East Thailand), where the Japanese were building an airfield.

After about three years, he was liberated from UBON camp, on 30th August, 1945, aged about 25.

He became a member of the Far Eastern POW Association and the Burma Star Association.

When he returned, he joined his father and his brother, Douglas, (who served in the London Irish Rifles), in the family business of Builders and Carpenters. Joe ran the Funeral Service part of the business.

He never completely recovered from his experiences and I never heard him talk about it.

This story was published on social media and on-line and in a local magazine, where it was seen by Phil Bradshaw who contacted 1st Amesbury Girls Brigade as he had been researching his Grandfather who may possibly have met Uncle Joe. He had a book called '**Bamboo and Barbed Wire**' about the RAMC and their experiences as POW's of Japanese. Phil had bought the copy of the book via E-bay which was found to have Joe's name and address written under the inside cover.

Phil very kindly returned the book to us and provided the family with his research and copies of Uncle Joe's POW booklet and release card.

As a family we have found lots of information about Uncle Joe.

Jane's father Richard, also served in the forces and was a former member of the Intelligence Corps - and below is a photograph of Jane with her father, Richard and her daughter, Pippa.



THE AUSTRALIAN SECRET CODE BREAKERS

It was so good to hear from yet another of our Australian members after he received a copy of the BAFEPOW news sheet for February. Bill was interested to read about our potential suggestions for a BAFEPOW trip and he was interested in a possible trip to Bletchley Park as he himself had visited this museum during a visit to the UK in 2016. He sent me an article about the Australian version of the code breaking that took place during WWII and has allowed me to include it in our news letter as I think it is really interesting – thank you, Bill.

DECODING ENEMY MESSAGES

Following the secrets code act expiring after WW2, there has been books and movies made of the Bletchley Park code breaking organisation in the UK.

However here in Melbourne we had our own Bletchley Park “Monterey” in St Kilda.

There is little written about Monterey and FRUMEL in the history books and virtually nothing recognising the crucial role women played in this history. Without them, it is doubtful that FRUMEL would have played such an important role in Pacific intelligence.

In 1942, the US Navy set up a small signal's unit of men and women from the Australian Navy to form a radio intelligence operation, FRUMEL (Fleet Radio Unit Melbourne). FRUMEL was one of two combined allied radio operations that worked at deciphering Japanese codes for the Southwest Pacific theatre during World War II. The other was FRUPAC (Fleet Radio Unit Pacific), which operated out of Hawaii. The true extent of the achievements of FRUMEL during the war and the impact it had on allied victories was unknown until records were finally declassified in January 1987.

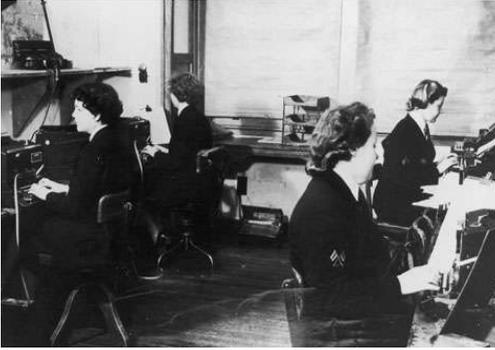
From February 1942 until October 1944, FRUMEL operated out of the ‘Monterey’ apartment building at 17 Queens Road, St Kilda. The operation contained three allied units, the two largest being the Australian and American administrations. While all three units maintained separate administration, they ran a well-coordinated joint code-breaking operation. The American contingent was headed by Lieutenant Rudolph J. (Rudi) Fabian, the Australian group operated under Commander Eric Nave and the British had a small foreign office section of linguists.

The commanders and navy staff worked closely with civilian experts, including mathematic academics from the University of Sydney. In total, FRUMEL had a relatively small operation of only a few hundred people. Of those, almost 90 per cent were women, both WRANS (Women's Royal Australian Naval Service) and civilians. While it was nowhere near the size or scope of the famous Bletchley Park in Britain, the small ‘Monterey’ operation played a significant role in allied victories in the Pacific. Codes were intercepted in various units set up around Australia, including Mornington in Victoria, ‘Harmen’ in Canberra and Townsville, Queensland. The biggest receiving station for Monterey was Adelaide River, which was staffed entirely by the United States Navy. These codes were then sent to ‘Monterey’, decoded and relayed to the appropriate commanders. In this way, ‘Monterey’ assisted in the success of the Battle of Midway in 1942, the destruction of a Japanese convoy of more than 5000 army reinforcements, and the death of Japanese Admiral Yamamoto – a significant blow to Japanese morale at the time.

For those working at ‘Monterey’, secrecy was key. The workers were not allowed to tell anyone what they did. It was tough and for many the silence lasted well beyond the war's end. Each worker was given a small section of code to decipher, and only a handful of people knew the complete code. Between March 1942 and December 1943, 3529 pages of intercepted reports were compiled by FRUMEL. By January 1945 the US forces turned control of FRUMEL facilities completely over to the Australians, and Melbourne continued to provide intelligence to navy forces until the end of the war.

In recognition of the great contribution FRUMEL made to the allied effort in the Pacific, the United States Government awarded a special US Presidential Citation to all ranks who served in the FRUMEL operation at the end of the war. The Australian Government refused this award on behalf of those working at Monterey without telling them. However, in the mid-2000s, the British Government awarded the men and women who worked at Monterey a special medal in honour of the contributions they made to Bletchley Park.

On the next page are two photographs showing work in progress during WWII at Monterey and the second shows the exterior of the building.



The photo on the left shows the decoding room in 1943 and the one on the right shows "Monterey" today at number 17, Queens Road, St Kilda

ONE OF OUR MEMBERS COMPLETES HER JOURNEY IN HER FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS

In past news sheets I have included some of Chris's journeys that she has made as she followed in her Dad's footsteps in particular the one where she did a cruise which went near to Tristan Da Cunha where the Kirkpool met its fate. The captain of the cruise ship slowed the ship so that a remembrance service could take place with Chris and some officers taking part – she threw a wreath into the sea to honour those who did not survive and those who were saved but were interned by the Japanese in such atrocious conditions at Fukushima.

When Chris received the February BAFEPOW news sheet she was immediately in touch with me to say that the bad weather that we were getting -rain, rain and more rain! – was no trouble to her as she was following on what will probably be her final part of her father's journey and I have since been in touch with her to ask for some additional info and her reply contained the following:-

The routes I did were

- a) Cape Town to Durban on tall ship Lord Nelson (couldn't get to Mozambique)
- b) Cape Town to Tristan da Cunha on "Ambience" ship where I was able to place a poppy bouquet for those who died
- c) Southampton to Cape Town on "Queen Anne" ship. (no ships from North Shields)

From what I saw, the scenery would have been pretty similar to that my Dad saw in 1942. Now all I have to do is his voyage home from Fukushima (Sendai) to Southampton on the troopship "Andes"...but I suspect that might have to be a pipe dream!

Please just use the above as you want.

As Malcolm was a member of the Merchant Navy, in my opinion, they often did not receive the recognition that was their due but he was a member of the FEPOW Association back in his home area of North Shields and our member, Kevin Snowdon, did come across his name on some of the items he had connected to that group. I hope you will find the following of interest as it seems appropriate to tell you about Chris's Dad in whose honour she has been travelling in those very special footsteps.

Chris Best's father, Malcolm Ingleby Scott was the radio officer on board the SS Kirkpool whilst on its way from the UK to Lorencos Marques in Mozambique when orders came in while they were Cape Town in South Africa to change their destination and to go to Durban and pick up coal and then to go to Montevideo in Uruguay, South America. As the ship made its way back towards the Cape to go into the South Atlantic Ocean the ship was spotted by the German ship, the Thor which was itself a disguised merchant cruiser which was armed with torpedoes. The Thor tracked the SS Kirkpool for a time through poor visibility using its early system of radar and then closed range and four torpedoes were launched, three of which hit their target and the Kirkpool was set on fire. Despite trying to defend itself by ramming the Thor but this attempt was unsuccessful. Fortunately for those on board the stricken ship, unlike the Japanese who would have left them to their fate, the Thor stayed in the vicin

ity and rescued 17 of the 46 members of the crew from the sea. These were then transferred to a German ship, the SS Regensburg, which already held POWs saved after the sinking of the Nankin, then on to the SS Dresden bound for Japan and finally on to the SS Rameses which entered Yokohama harbour where the Germans handed them over into Japanese custody. The survivors were then transferred by train to Fukushima where they came under the control of the special branch of the local police force in a Roman Catholic Convent which had been converted into a Civilian Internment Camp. This particular camp was completely unknown to the outside world from July 1942 until contact was made with the internees held there in August 1945! They were all finally rescued from the camp on September 10th 1945 and they were transferred on to the hospital ship, USS Rescue. The Kirkpool survivors then traveled finally via various destinations and ships until they reached Sydney where they were the first Japanese POW camp survivors to arrive. On October 26th the order for them to be transported back to the UK was given and they arrived back in Southampton via Fremantle, Bombay and the Suez aboard the HMT Andes just before Christmas to much celebration.

What is written above is in my own words but taken from the Roger Mansell site (if you haven't used his site then it is totally recommended for excellent research – and Chris herself contributed to the item about her father) There is a postscript included in the item and I cannot add or improve in any way to what it says, so here it is in its entirety (Barbara)

POSTSCRIPT

Malcolm Ingleby Scott was subsequently awarded the South Atlantic Star, the Pacific Star and the 1939-45 Star in recognition of his war service. His family was told in 1942 that he was missing and presumed dead. It was not until 1944 that they heard he was a POW in Japan. He married his fiancée Patricia Whalen in February 1946. Despite the odds, Patricia refused to give up hope that he was alive. They had one daughter, Christine, who has researched this history.

Malcolm never recovered from his experience in the camp, and was later diagnosed as suffering from what is now called '*post traumatic stress disorder*'. The effects of cardiac beri-beri and shrapnel wounds coupled with PTSD eventually took their toll and Mr. Scott died of a coronary thrombosis on 26th November 1959. He was 53 years old.

ROLL OF HONOUR

JAMES (JIM) WREN, FEPOW passed away on 01/02/2026 aged 105.

Jim was a Royal Marine, and a survivor of the HMS Repulse sinking after being torpedoed and he was then held as a FEPOW in Sumatra.

After his retirement, he continued to be a patron of the Force Z, HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse Survivors' Association. Jim left the military in 1953 and moved to Salisbury, his wife Margaret's hometown.

Until well into his 106th year he attended memorial events and spoke about his experiences in honour of all the mates he left behind. Jim met with the Duchess of Edinburgh ahead of VJ80, and had his portrait commissioned by King Charles.

On the next page are two photos of Jim – one as a young man and the other of him from last year's VJ80 commemorations.



WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW AND 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

