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Richard Gibbs**

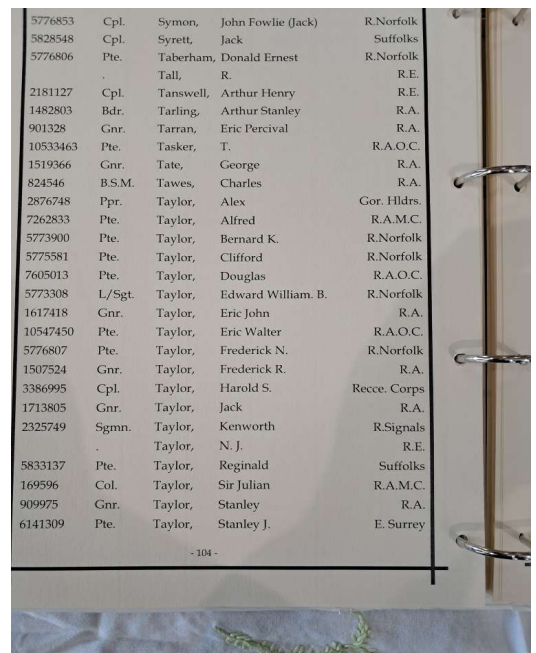
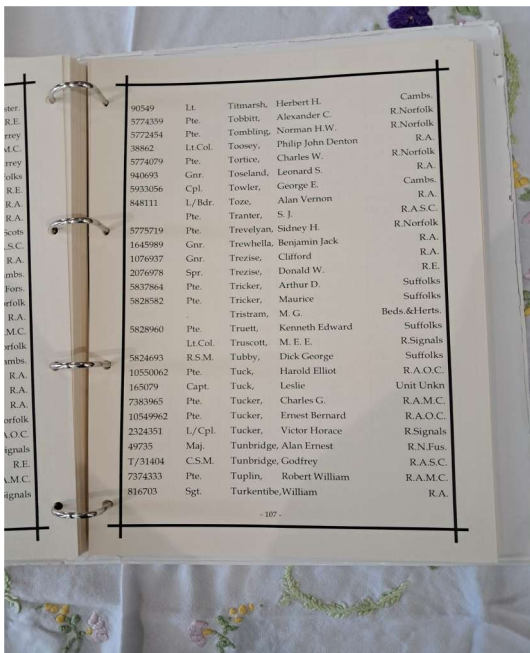
BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET FOR JUNE 2026

THE ANNUAL FEPOW REMEMBRANCE SERVICE AT WYMONDHAM

This took place on Sunday, May 17th at the Church of Our Lady and St Thomas of Canterbury in Wymondham. Our member, Peter Wiseman, is the Parish Archivist at the FEPOW Church and he welcomes all those with a FEPOW link to attend this service and again we were pleased to have our members, Tony Truett and Annette Masters, at the service and to lay a BAFEPOW wreath on our behalf.

If you are unaware of this very special church then here is how it came to be as it is the only church of its kind in the world that is dedicated to the memory of FEPOW and Civilian Internees of all Faiths and Nationalities who died in the Japanese POW and Internment Camps of WWII. It was built by Fr Malcolm Cowin in 1952, the design was by Donovan Purcell and it is a permanent memorial to those who suffered as either POWs or Internees in the Far East during WWII. Originally the Rolls of Honour were only for those who had died during this time but, more recently, the names of FEPOW who survived captivity but have passed away since have been put in a separate book and, although the database is not publicly accessible, it is searchable on request by Peter Wiseman. The books themselves containing the names can be seen in the cabinet in the church and a page is always open. A page showing a specific name can be displayed on request, perhaps for the birthday or anniversary of a death of the FEPOW.

Tony has very kindly shared the photos that he took in the Church and the ones relating to the book of names are shown below. On the left the column contains Annette and Tony's father's name – Kenneth Edward Truett and on the right is my (BJ's) father's name – Eric John Taylor.





The above photo shows the young people providing a 'guard of honour' for the book of FEPOW that died in captivity are from the local Scout and Guides - so good to see young folk taking part in remembrance. Below the photos show the wreaths that were laid including the BAFEPOW one.



In the first photo the wreath on the left sits on a blue cloth that is scattered with poppies to represent those who perished at sea. This very special

A FEPOW'S BADGE KEPT BY HIM – A REMINDER OF HIS IMPRISONMENT

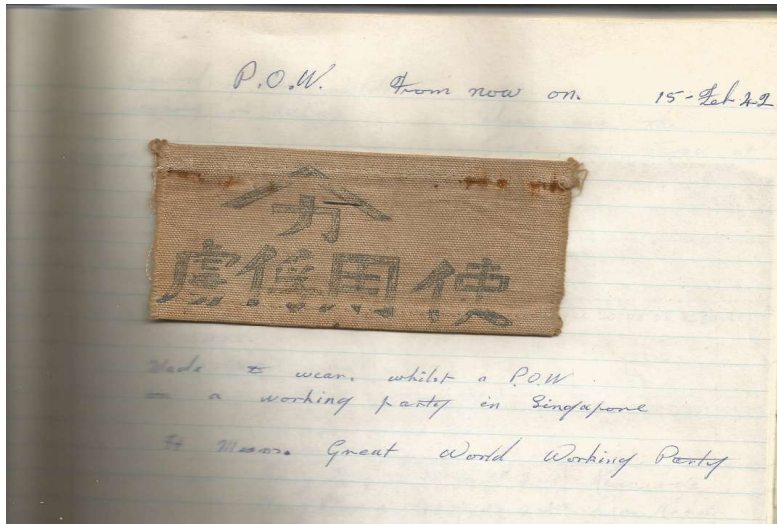
The topic of POWs being made to wear cloth badges after capture has come up at a number of our meetings during our discussions and it was interesting to see this photo appear on Facebook recently. Even better was that it had belonged to Don Commander, a Birmingham FEPOW, and the dear Dad of Jan Judge, a BAFEPOW member too. Jan and I have been in touch for quite a number of years, especially so after we discovered that both our Dads had worked at IMI Kynoch in Witton, Birmingham although they didn't know each other during that time.

Throughout the war many Japanese POWs were made to wear identification badges that were marked with numbers to denote their camp or if they were considered escape risks. It would be interesting to hear from anyone else if they know of camps elsewhere that this was the norm.

After the war ended in 1945 and up until 1946, Japanese prisoners wore badges to distinguish them from the civilian population and these often denoted the rank, role or unit for the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) and the Navy. These badges, especially those worn by military police or the Kempetai, contained personal info such as their name and blood type. The Allied Forces used them in a similar way to that used by the Japanese previously

so that Japanese soldiers used for labour parties could be identified or to keep track of the thousands of internees.

On the right is the translation written by its wearer – Donald Commander



P.O.W. From now on 15-Feb 42

Made to wear whilst a POW
on a working party in Singapore
It means Great World Working Party

A VISIT TO THE MUSEUM OF THE QUEEN'S ROYAL HUSSARS IN WARWICK (BJ)

On Thursday, May 7th George and I visited this museum to attend a talk given by Brian Williams who is a BAFEPOW member. The subject of his talk was 'Researching FEPOW History' and he had gained an invaluable insight into this during his own research for a book that he then wrote (he explains this himself further on so I won't do it here) and he came to one of our meetings when our then Vice-Chairman, Ken Coy, was celebrating his 80th birthday. Brian presented a copy of his book to Ken as a birthday present from us as his Dad, Edwin Coy, who was at one time on our committee too, is mentioned in the book and served in the Hussars and was also a FEPOW.

After taking a walk around the museum prior to Brian's talk, and I have to say how impressed with the way the curator and the museum team have managed to present the many and varied items that they have within quite a small site consisting of two buildings and it tells the history of the Hussars in a very interesting way – if you get the chance to go to Warwick, it is well worth a visit. The details for the museum are:- QRH Museum, Trinity Mews, Priory Road, Warwick, CV34 4NA

There were quite a large number of people present to hear Brian's talk and everyone was very friendly. A lot of them already knew one another and most seemed to know Brian and his wife, Jeanette whose father had been in the Hussars and was a FEPOW. Usually presentations allow for questions after it has finished but Brian was very relaxed and allowed us to add comments or ask questions as the evening progressed which worked really well. I was impressed with all the good advice and information that Brian managed to fit in and afterwards I had the opportunity to chat to a couple of others who were, like myself, FEPOW descendants. One was of particular interest when she told me that her father was captured in Singapore and had then been sent to Saigon and also Phumi – same as my Dad! Sadly I didn't make a note of his name or her contact details as the museum was closing so now I have some research of my own to attempt to make contact with her.

The following day I emailed Brian to thank him for his excellent presentation and to say how much George and I had enjoyed visiting this excellent museum – we must go again and spend more time there. I commented to Brian that I believed that his advice on research would be extremely useful to others and, judging by the number of enquiries that are posted on the various Facebook pages linked to the Far East in WWII, there would be interest in it. He then offered to come along to a meeting in Birmingham and go through his presentation for us. However, as Brian has commitments on Tuesday's he has now offered to break it down into the various stages of the research process that can go into the BAFEPOW news sheet and this June's news sheet sees the first one which sets the background for the future installments. Even though you may think that you have done all you need to do, Brian also covers various sites to use to further one's knowledge, how to store information and how to avoid the pitfalls that might befall you. I am also hoping that one of our members might also give us some help with advice on storing items belonging to our FEPOWs that will help preserve them for the future if she doesn't mind.

And so now I hand you over to Brian to introduce himself :-

Researching Far East Prisoners of War

I have been researching my family tree for more years than I care to remember, and I later included research into my wife's family as well. It was while I was trying to research the military history of my late father-in-law that I hit a stumbling block.

Alfred Thomas Hall was born in the Glamorganshire mining village of Pontlottyn in 1915. I knew that he had served with the 3rd The Kings Own Hussars, joining them in 1936. From many conversations with Alf over the years prior to his death in 1998 aged 83, I knew that he had served in North Africa with the regiment from August 1940 and moved with them to Cyprus in 1941. In January 1942 'B' Squadron of his regiment, including Alf, were selected to go to the Far East to meet the threat of a Japanese invasion of Singapore, and from here I began my search for more information.

Over the years, I had found a great deal of information about Alf's time in the Far East which included 3 ½ years as a Prisoner of War of the Japanese. During my searches, I hadn't come across any publication that gave a history of what had happened to the men of 'B' Squadron, to the extent that I decided to widen my research to include all of the members of the Squadron and their attached personnel. This led to me publishing a book which tells the stories of what happened to these men during their time as Far East Prisoners of War.

Do you have a relative who was a Far East Prisoner of War?

Do you want to know more about their time as a Far East Prisoner of War?

I do not claim to be a professional researcher historian or genealogist, but over the next few months I will be sharing with you my personal experiences of trying to document the lives and, sadly sometimes, the deaths, of the British Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen who became Far East Prisoners of War.

I hope that by the end of my series of articles, you will be more confident in researching and recording your findings.

In the beginning.....

In December 1941, Japan entered the war on the side of the Axis. Many thousands of Allied military died during the invasion of Hong Kong, Malaya, Singapore, the Dutch East Indies, the Philippines and many other locations in the Far East.

Many thousands more were captured and became prisoners of war.

And here we meet our first hurdle: You will find many sources during your research, many of which will contradict each other, especially in numbers or dates. If this piece of information is important to you, you will need to evaluate all the data available and make a judgement as to what information you can accept.

Most reliable sources will quote that 'about 190,000' allied military became PoWs, the majority coming from British, Commonwealth and American troops.

The figure for British alone is thought to be about 50,000.

It is this figure of 50,000 that we will be concentrating on. From this, around 37,583 returned home. 12,433 British servicemen died during captivity, a death rate of nearly 25%, a figure some seven times higher than deaths in German PoW camps.

However, that is an average and, for example, of those prisoners sent to Haruka or Ambon, the death rate was much higher at about 39%. The graves of casualties are scattered throughout the Far East. Those who have no known grave are commemorated at the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore.



Photo: Kranji War Memorial, Singapore

(to be continued!)

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHECKING THE ACCURACY OF INFORMATION – OOPS!

The importance of being able to check for the accuracy of whatever you discover during research is something that must be taken into account and now I have to apologise for two such errors that I made in last month's (May) news sheet. The first one was pointed out to me by Brian himself and it was to do with Barton Billy. He let me know that there was an error in the story and here is what he wrote to me :-

Thank you for the latest News letter, as usual, interesting and informative.

William (Billy) Clements was indeed a member of the 3rd Hussars, but he was captured in Java not Singapore. He didn't get sent to the Thai Railway, but was transported to Ambon in April 1943. He returned to Java on the infamous hellship the 'Maros Maru' in 1944 and was repatriated from Java in 1945. He is listed in Pam Stubbs book 'Unsung Heroes of the British Army' and is included in Les Stubbs list of 'The 1,000 Men of Liang'. His story is also told in my book 'The Forgotten Squadron'.

Sorry to be a little pedantic. I have emailed the authors of '100 Gloucester Characters', which I think was the original source for your piece, to offer the same correction.

With best wishes,

Brian

So it just goes to show that you can't believe all that you see on TV or read up about it on the Internet!

And that wasn't my only mistake for, without checking first, I took what a Mercian veteran that I know at my local RBL branch to describe why the drumhead is used in Remembrance services as being correct. He had been at the service at Cannock that Phil Bradshaw had been to and I showed him the photos that Phil had sent to me. He pointed to the drumhead picture and told me about it and I took it as being correct – my mistake! Fortunately Richard Coy spotted it and contacted me to point out that it was not a means of amplifying the commands to men during battles several centuries ago but is a means of providing a temporary altar for troops outdoors to hold a religious service.

This tradition dates back to the 1700s when regimental drums were stacked in layers to create a temporary altar and it may be draped with regimental flags on which the chaplain could place a Bible and other ceremonial items. It also originally provided a vital spiritual gathering point for soldiers preparing for or returning from battle to reflect, remember the fallen and to seek comfort. Nowadays it has gone from being a practical necessity to being a much respected ceremonial tradition here in the UK and it is a key part of the Festival of Remembrance Service that is held annually at the Royal Albert Hall.

AN INTERESTING ITEM FROM BILL DALE

Last month when ANZAC Day was being commemorated, I was pleased to hear from one of our Australian members, Bill Dale, who is the secretary of the Ex-Prisoners of War and Relatives Association (Victoria) Inc. After ANZAC Day 2025, Bill sent me some photos of the march he took part in and I included his memories of that event in the May BAFEPOW news sheet. This year he told me about the Red Cross flag that he carries in the parade as it has an interesting history.

100th Anniversary Red Cross Flag

Back in 2016 our Red Cross flag turned one hundred and I decided to put together a booklet detailing its history. For those of you who do not possess a copy below is what I put together.

The Malayan – Singapore Campaign

During the last days prior to capitulation on the 15 February 1942 to the Japanese, the Red Cross flag was flown from St Andrews Cathedral in Singapore town. The Cathedral had been transformed into a Main Dressing Station, the pews were removed and replaced with mattresses from the Adelphi Hotel opposite the Cathedral. On the 17 February 1942 orders were given to evacuate the patients in the Cathedral to the Australian General Hospital at Katong, with 2/9th ordered to Selarang Barracks at Changi to start a hospital for the incoming troops.



The patches on the flag are repairs made due to damage caused by bullets and shrapnel during its time in WW1. The flag was also used throughout the Malayan- Singapore campaign in WW2.

(This is just a snippet from Bill's very interesting pamphlet that he produced which tells the history of this special flag – he has sent me a copy of it and I am very happy to email you a copy if you would like to read it – and below – to round off ANZAC Day – is a poem that I hope you will find quite touching)

A POEM ENTITLED 'ANZAC DAY'

I saw a kid marchin with medals on his chest.
 He marched alongside diggers marchin six abreast.
 He knew it was ANZAC DAY – he walked along with pride.
 He did his best to keep in step with the diggers by his side.
 And when the march was over the kid was rather tired.
 A digger said "Whose medals son?" to which the kid replied.
 "They belong to my daddy, but he did not come back.
 He died up in New Guinea on a lonely jungle track."
 The kid looked rather sad then a tear came to his eye.
 The digger said "Don't cry my son and I will tell you why,
 Your daddy marched with us today – all the bloomin way.
 We diggers know that he was there – it's like that on ANZAC DAY."
 The kid looked rather puzzled and didn't understand.
 But the digger went on talking and started to wave his hand.
 "For this great land we live in, there's a price we have to pay.
 And for this thing called freedom, the diggers had to pay."
 "For we all love fun and merriment in this country where we live.
 The price was that some soldier his precious life must give.
 For you to go to school my lad and worship God at will.
 Someone had to pay the price so the diggers paid the bill."
 "Your daddy died for us my son – for all things good and true.
 I wonder if you can understand the things, I've said to you."
 The kid looked up at the digger – just for a little while,
 And with a changed expression, said with a lovely smile: "I know my daddy marched here today – this, our ANZAC DAY,
 I know he did – I know he did – all the bloomin way."

LEST WE FORGET!

LASTLY – THE REMEMBRANCE SERVICE HELD AT MADINGLEY ON 24/05/2026

We were again very fortunate to have our member, Tony Truett, doing the honours on our behalf by attending the annual service of remembrance at the American War Cemetery, Madingley, Cambridge. This a very auspicious ‘by invitation only’ event with 113 wreaths being laid there this year. This memorial event commemorates the Ninth American Airforce who were described by British Historian, Roger A. Freeman who grew up in the area during WWII as “By its very nature an itinerant force” “It was nimble, and could move rapidly from site to site, in tactical support of ground echelons”

Tony has shared the following photos from the event:-



Our wreath in place on the memorial



The American bearer of our wreath

Tony had a most pleasant surprise when the American service man who had been the bearer of the BAFEPOW wreath with him in 2025 was there too and they recognised one another. This young man’s grandfather was a Japanese POW in the Philippines which was quite a significant coincidence. They had a chat and Tony learnt that this will be the last time that this young man will be at the service as his tour of duty is coming to an end and he will be returning to the States. Tony took the opportunity to proudly present him with a BAFEPOW VJ80 badge as you can see in the photo below and we now have an American link! Many thanks to you for what you do on our behalf, Tony!



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

