Diary of Mr G. Brodie of Anglo- Oriental in Kuala Lumpur.

1942-45

Travelled from KL - Singapore
Singapore Muntok (Mata Hari)
Muntok
Palemberg
Pladjoe
Palemberg (jail)
Muntok (jail)

1945- Belalau

Note: References to Sir John Campbell

J. C. Brodie

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After several months of waiting and preparation it was not a great shock when the news came through to Kuala Lumpur that War had been declared on Japan by the Governments of Great Britain, and The U.S.of America. The Japanese advance south in China, and their penetration into Indo China, and the authentic reports of Japanese troop ship movements off the East Coast of Malaya, and generally the disposition of the Jap forces, and also the declared aims of Japan's agressive policy in the Far East, had caused considerable apprehension in Malaya as elsewhere, for several months.

The events which precipitated the war were however surprising. The dastardly attack on the American Fleet at Pearl Harbour and the cowardly and unexpected bombing of Singapore on the 7th and 8th December 1941 provided the sensation and cause.

The Jap landing which coincided with the mentioned assaults was part of the general scheme, and was the inevitable result of the troop ship manveuvring off the East Coast of Malaya. The fact that an increasing number of British Forces had been in North Malaya for some time, was evidence that an attack of some kind at that point was expected.

The unusual activity of the local defence forces added to the suspicion that something was about to happen. There was at that time a feeling of confidence that any attack on Malaya would be adequately dealt with and that any landing would be eventually frustrated. This optimistic outlook was largely born of the falsified reports of the strength of the British forces. However, this confidence was soon dispelled, and as the days passed it becam apparent that the Military and Air defences were not sufficient to stem the progress of the invader, this view being supported by the fact that the Japs had reached and occupied Penang.with little difficulty.

The news of the sinking of the H.M.S.Prince of Wales and H.M.S. Repulse on December 10th 1941 which followed so closely on the Jap landing, and advance in North Malaya from Thailand, came as a very painful shock to the Europeans and the loyal inhabitants of Malaya, and naturally shook the erstwhile confidence. Yet despite all these happenings hope was still high that the enemy could be held in North Malaya at least, assuming the arrival of reinforcements from the South.

It was soon obvious that such resistance was not possible, in that area. The rush of evacuees from all parts of North Malaya, converging in Kuala Lumpur, en route to Singapore, and the south, in increasing numbers, was sufficient evidence that the progress of the Japanese invasion had not been seriously resisted.

The bombing of the main towns in North Malaya such as Taiping, and Ipoh, and their subsequent occupation by the enemy naturally caused grave concern in Kuala Lumpur and preparations were hastily made to send all Europeans, unless those under Military supervision, to Singapore.

Accommodation in Kuala Lumpur was taxed, and the long train journey to Singapore was an uncomfortable experience for many.

The climax was reached when Kuala Lumpur was heavily bombed on Boxing Day '41, and the rush south received impetus. The bombing was mainly concentrated around the Government buildings facing the Selangor Club or 'Spotted Dog' and great damage was done to several of the buildings in that area, particularly the Postal and Telegraph Office which received a direct hit, and was totally destroyed.

A large proportion of the bombs fortunately fell on the open space or 'Padang' in front of the Selangor Club and deep craters were pitted near the 'Dog' itself, which received some damage.

One native quarter of the town was severely plastered causing a large number of casualties.

There had been minor raids previously, and one of these raids developed into a spectacular action between British fighter and Jap fighter planes. The British airmen were outnumbered, but succeeded in destroying 3 Jap machines. The British losses were also 3 planes of the Brewster Buffalo type, which were handicapped by comparatively low speed.

The raids gave the A.R.P. in particular an excellent opportunity to shew its mettle, and the various branches of the service rose tothe occasion. The previous training and preparations proved invaluable in such emergencies, and great credit is due to the organisor of the Passive Defence Services in Kuala Lumpur. The native members of the service showed great courage, [redacted] resource, and devotion to duty.

Following the Boxing Day raid the town was speedily evacuated by large numbersof the native population, who departed into the country and villages surrounding the town. It was impossible to get service at any of the hotels, and the position was worsening hourly.

Every phase of public life was at a standstill, and as parties of retreating British forces were already in Kuala Lumpur about this time, the outlook was serious indeed. The trains to Singapore were crowded, and the roads were packed with private cars and transport vehicles on the road south.

On the following day the Boxing Day raid, I was requested by Mr. H.A.Coates, Deputy Chairman of Anglo-Oriental (Malaya)Ltd., at that time to take charge of a convey of the company's documents records, plans, and valuables.etc, from the temporary office of the company at Golf View Road, Kuala Lumpur to Singapore, the route selected being the coastal one. This convey left at 4 p.m. and reached Port Dickson a few hours later, where the personnel of the convey stayed at Mr. Coates' house overnight. Next day, Sunday 28th December, after a refreshing dip in the sea, and having re-arranged the loading in one of the lorries, the convey left about mid-day for Singapore Via Malacca, and across the ferries at the Muar River - the scene of a great deal of fighting by the Australians later- and at Hirat Itam. A stop was made at Hirat Itam Rest House where we stayed the night. Next morning the convey proceeded on the final stage of the journey to Singapore, and reached the offices of the company at Robinson Road about 1 p.m. Monday 29th December 1941.
The journey south was pleasant and uneventful, and having been e equipped with the necessary road and petrol permits the progress was uninterrupted. The weather was delightful, and the scenery very fine.

Singapore was of course crowded by this time, but I was fortunate to be received at the home of Mr.J.Tulloch, Katong, Singapore accompanied by Gus Pierce a member of the convey from Kuala Lumpur. The house was adjacent to the Aerodrome, and I was soon to realise how close the proximity was. As about 1 a.m. Singapore experienced an unusually heavy raid, and there was no sleep or rest that night. The Japs were at this time about 300 miles north of Singapore, and were within easy bombing distance, and as they advanced south, capturing convenient aerodromes, the raids on the town became more frequent, and devastating.

Every day at about 9 a.m. and about 3 p.m. the town was raided from about the beginning of January until the capitulation. Of course there were frequent night raids also, all taking a heavy toll of the Chinese and natives of Singapore. It was the general belief based on reports official, and otherwise, that the Japs would be held in North Johore, or thereabouts, where additional British Troops had been assembled.

The absence of sufficient Air Craft to combat the methodical, and regular bombing by the Enemy was causing alarm in the city, and it was soon realised that the 'Nips' had full control of the air.

The excellent A.A.defences of the town were encouraging, but it was obvious that the British Land forces were helpless against the superiority of Japan's Air strength, which was a vital factor.

Many civilians were very optimistic about ~~the~~ the future, and could not appreciate the rapidly diminishing hope for the safety of the city.

There were far too many women and children in the city right up to the end, and arrangements should have been made to evacuate them without delay in the early part of January 1942.

There was every excuse for the folks to be optimistic about Singapore, as Government propaganda had repeatedly assured the inhabitants that 'Singapore would not fall; must not fall', until the Japs landed on the island on February the 8th when it was considered advisable to assure inhabitants that they were now in the hands of God. It needed little imagination or foresight to determine realities.

The Jap had progressed, they had command of the Air and adequate Military forces, with ample and suitable war equipment, augmented by the captured British material en route south.

There was one outstanding and shining light in the painful narrative relative to the fall of Malaya and that was the brilliant rear guard action of several regiments of the British Regular Army, supported by Indian troops notably the Ghurkas. The gallantry, courage, and fortitude of these regiments which fought brilliantly against the enemy overwhelmingly outnumbered, with a devotion to duty, characteristic of the finest traditions of the Army, will forever live in the history of Malaya.

They fought at a disadvantage all the long 500 miles down the Peninsula delaying the Jap advance in the 2 months of fighting from North Malaya to Singapore. The regiments referred to were the 2nd Batt. Argyll and Sutherland Highlander 2nd Batt. Gordon Highlande and battalions of the Surveys and Leicesters. The first named battalion specially distinguished itself, but lost a very high percentage of the officers and men. The inherent courage, dourness and fitness made them greatly feared by the enemy.

I was fortunate to meet a few survivors at a later date, and it is with great pride that I say that the battalion was largely recruited from South West Scotland and Renfrewshire in particular. Actually there were a few boys from my native town Renfrew. Tribute must also be paid to the gallant young Air Men who went up to engage the Japs greatly outnumbered and generally with machines inferior in speed and gun power. Again might be mentioned the magnificient defence of the A.A. crews, and the excellent searchlight personnel.

The medical and nursing staffs and First Aid posts were kept fully occupied with the steady stream of victims from the indiscriminate bombing of the city and did splendid work throughout. Their courage and steadfastness to duty was outstanding.

The casualties among the native population were very high, and it was no doubt the policy of the Japs to bomb the native section of the town to create panic and confusion. It does seem strange that Singapore was developed as a base in the Far East, when the island carried about 3/4 million natives, which always must be an embarrassment in the defence of the island.

Owing to the regularity of the bombing of the town proper it was decided by Messrs. Anglo-Oriental to remove their offices to a large private house at Nassim Road called 'Balaclava' and about 3 miles north of the town. A course which was adopted as a precautionary measure to safe guard the office documents, records, etc.

The feeling shortly before the Japs landed was that Singapore would stand a state of siege, at the worst.

The re-establishment of the Company's offices at this new position was justified as only on one occasion were bombs dropped nearby. There was ofcourse the usual frequent alerts and adjournments to the shelters, as the enemy planes appeared on their death mission over the city and harbour.

The affairs of the Company were conducted from 'Balaclava' and also arrangements for the embarkation of wives and officers of the company adjudged by the Malayan Government as eligible to depart were carried out expeditiously.

All the men had to get permits to leave, and it was painfully slow and sometimes dangerous procedure owing to the raids to get the necessary exit permits. It did not appear a very official document when obtained, as a very ancient Malayan Government Official (European) wrote out the whole permit in long hand, taking his time ofcourse, and looking important in his duties, and often sentencing by his decision some unfortunate European to 3½ years in an internment camp.

The permit could easily be copied or forged as no official stamp was applied. It was simply a small piece of paper.

As the Japs advanced and Singapore was definitely threatened it was decided that high civil officials should scrap minutes and memorandums, and assume responsibility without reference to higher authorities.

It is a fact that so grossly misinformed was the general populace, that it was not until the Japs landed on the island on February 8th 1942 that the inevitable was realised by a great number of Europeans, and by that time it was getting too late for even women and children to get away.

The enemy had only consolidated their position but had actually advanced steadily towards the town. Much has been written about the fall of Singapore, but it would have been murder to have attempted to stand up to the tremendous superiority of the Enemy in the air, which also guaranteed success in all phases of the fighting.

On Wednesday the 11th February 1942 when the Japs were just a few miles from the company's offices at Nassim Road, it was decided to vacate the premises now untenable, and proceed to Singapore, taking as many of the company's papers, records, etc. as possible and as our hasty retreat would allow.

As we departed artillery officers had selected a site on the higher ground in the garden, with good cover. It was now a matter of hours when the surrender of the city would take place.

The company's officers who figured in this enforced retreat were Mr. H.A. Coates, Deputy Chairman, Messrs. Latimer, Jevons, Jones and myself. It was with difficulty that accommodation was secured, but a night's rest was obtained residing at the Rex Hotel and as far as I knew no events disturbed my slumbers. On the following morning Thursday 12th February 1942, I went out to Nassim Road with Mr. Coates to collect a few documents, and we had a hot twenty minutes, as the gun in the garden had started operations to which the Japs were replying.

On the same day ~~and on~~ IN the afternoon, a message was received at the Rex Hotel where we stayed the night that 3 vessels were leaving Singapore that evening, and those who wished to get off could do so by applying for a permit at the Supreme Court, where a Justice would deliver the 'chit'. Neil Jones AND I decided that as our part in the proceedings was at an end, we would make application for the permits, and accordingly proceeded to interview the Judge. After a long wait which was lengthened by the fact that our permits were once again written out in long hand, without any duplicates being kept Neil Jones and I eventually got a 'permit' each. We collected one bag of luggage each, that was all we were allowed to take and drove down in a company's Ford V8 car to the Wharf. We left the car with dozens of others of all types which had been abandoned by their owners, and handing over our permits to a corporal who never looked at them we got down to the embarkation point. We found hundreds of women and children and men waiting shipment. There were also on the quay that afternoon 65 Australian Sisters all in uniform splendid representatives of the women of Australia.

Small launches and water boats were provided to take the people off to the ships. It was very unfortunate in fact tragic that so many women and children were in Singapore at that late hour, and

that arrangements had not been made for the early removal, or legislation passed enforcing their departure by the authorities.

The position in Singapore had been, and was quite out of hand, and there seemed to be a complete lack of leadership and guidance when such was most needed.

Sometimes I think that as there was no proper organised arrangements for the embarkation of the European women, children and elderly men, these were kept at a certain strength to stimulate the morale of the Asiatics.

Certainly the affairs of all the Military and Civil departments were chaotic. Great numbers of troops were walking aimlessly about the streets, and hundreds of Army Motor Vehicles were assembled all around St.Andrews Cathedral. No British planes were in the sky, and as the shelling of the city had now commenced, it was a strange and uncanny feeling one possessed and a melancholy sight as that historic city awaited its doom.

One bright spot in public service should be mentioned and that was the splendid help the banks of the city provided for their clients right up almost the end of the British control of the city.

The cable and Wireless employees also stood by their posts near to the fall.

The people waiting embarkation were gradually taken to the vessels lying outside, which were rather old looking and also coastal cargo steamers about 800 tons or thereabouts.

The ships were called 'GIANG BEE' 'VYNER BROOKE' and 'MATA HARI' and each carried some small armament as each had been fitted out for patrol work, and flew the white ensign.

Neil Jones and I got aboard the last landing boat which left, and after hailing in turn the 'Gian Bee' and 'Vyner Brooke' for accommoda tion, which could not be granted, as the Lifebelts were insufficient, the small water boat proceeded to the 'Mata Hari' on which we were allowed to board. It was an extraordinary oversight that no record was kept of the passengers leaving on these three vessels, or a record of the names of the people on each. This lack of thoroughness or duty, was to cause needless uncertainty and pain, which was to add to the tragedy destined to overtake two of the above vessels within 24 hours.

Perhaps this was typical of the handling of affairs in the city generally before the humiliating capitulation.

About 6.30 p.m. the 'Mata Hari with Neil Jones and myself and about 350 others got under way, and when darkness fell the 'Gian Bee' and Vyner Brooke' the other two ships in the small convey were not seen by us again. The 350 persons on board included 130 women and children 120 men (civilians) and about 100 service men, including about eight A. &. S Highlanders who were acting as stokers on the vessel, survivors of the H.M.S.Prince of Wales and H.M.S.Repluse, and Army and Air Force units all permitted to leave for Batavia. A number of Australians were also on board. It was an improvised crew, and the British sailors were amongst those who assisted.

About 10 p.m. the 'Mata Hari'hove to as atthat time the ship was steaming on the fringe of the Mine field protecting Singapore, and the captain was not too sure of his bearings. The anchor was dropped and we would then be about 20 to 25 miles off Singapore. The mine field buoys had special markings, but these were not distinguishable in the dark. In the distance the end of Singapore was in progress. Fires were raging along a considerabl frontage, and the continuous boom of heavy calibre guns, sounded throughout the night. It was indeed a sorry sight, to see proud Singapore nearing the end of British Administration and control.

There was no accommodation on board the 'Mata Hari' worthy of mention, and the oldest passengers were rightly given preferance of the few cabins which existed. Men and women were sleeping or accommodating themselves on hatch tops and on deck and below deck where possible, so it was a sudden change for many compared to the splendid homes most of them left behind.

At daybreak on fateful Friday the 13th February the 'Mata Hari' was under way once more, and everybody attempted to look tidy, and generally got reconciled for the expected few days discomfort to Batavia. Breakfast was issued from the galley, and as no plates etc were available, it was consumed in picnic fashion. Nothing untoward happened until 12.30 p.m. when the ship was at anchor attempting to hide amongst the islands from the possibility of attack from the air. However, the 'Mata Hari' had been spotted and suddenly 9 bombers appeared and dropped 12 bombs or thereabouts astern of the ship. It was bad aiming and a providential escape for us. Only one man was injured with a piece of sharpnel. The Japs did not continue the attack, and the ship weighed anchor, and proceeded to steam south. There were the usual frequent alerts, but the day and night passed uneventfully.

On Saturday morning it was decided to anchor in a wide shallow estuary, ~~and~~ for safety reasons, and in view of the fact that we had so many women and children on board. In the afternoon about 80 Jap planes passed over us on their way to Malaya, but they fortunately kept their formation. The day ended without incident, and at 6 p.m. it was decided to get under way again.

We had a reasonable amount of food on board, and there was no sickness, and everybody appeared to think that soon we should be out of the danger zone.

The wise procedure of steaming only by night was adopted, and it was hoped to get through the Banka Straits which lie between Banka Island and Sumatra before daybreak. This is the main shipping line from Singapore to Batavia, but it proved to be a bottle neck for shipping at this time and the comparatively narrow channel a trap to vessels leaving Singapore.

Shortly before the capitulation our Wireless on board had not received any official news. Friday the 13th February 1942, was a fateful day for the 'Gian Bee' and the 'Vyner Brooke' as both these vessels each carrying about 350 to 400 souls were sunk by gun fire and bombing respectively. Only about 1/3 of the complement of each vessel escaped in the lifeboats available and on Rafts, and as each ship had mostly women and children on board, terrible scenes were witnessed by the survivors many of whom I met later.

The Australian Sisters with whom we parted on Thursday the 12th February 1942, lost half of their number, including those who managed to reach land, and who were afterwards brutally and cruelly murdered by the Japs on a beach on the East Coast of Sumatra.

It seemed to be a desperate last hour move on the part of the authorities at Singapore to embark so many women and children on these shall ships with largely improvised crews, and flying the white ensign thereby exposing those ill manned and poorly armed vessels to the full fury of Japanese brutality at sea.

Naval intelligence had failed in this part of the world and it evidently was not known that the Japs, were concentrating in great force at Muntok, and the Banka Straits the same week-end as Singapore fell, and also attacking Palembang by way of the Mousi River.

The Japs had previously bombed Muntok and Palembang on the 14th February and had landed paratroopers at the latter place, where the had met with considerable resistance by a small Allied force, but which was not sufficiently strong to deal with the powerful Jap attack by land, sea and air. It was to be my fate to witness something of the strength of the Jap naval forces before another day was over. It was still Saturday evening the 14th February and the 'Mata Hari' was steaming south, with no indication of approaching trouble until about 11 p.m. I was sitting on a hatch top forward with Neil Jones, and Sir John Campbell of Malaya, when I heard a voice from out of the darkness of the China Sea and

particularly intelligible to me calling 'Can Ye no throw us a line we've been in the watter five hoors'. The ship hove to, and on getting the location, a line with a light was sent overboard. The same voice yelled 'For heaven's sake pit oot that licht, dae ye want tae get blawn oot the watter'. Meanwhile a boat had been lowered, and the men from the sea were brought onboard. They were five survivors of the Gun Boat H.M.S.Scorpion and included two officers. The ship had been sunk earlier in the evening and the voice I heard belonged to a young Dumbarton member of the crew. They had all hung together supported by their lifebelts, for several hours.

Any suspicion we had of Japanese being in the vicinity was now confirmed, yet the passengers did not seem to scent immediate danger. Three hours later at 2a.m, however, was to be the beginning of a long road of suffering and hardship extending over a period of 3½ years. At that hour a shot was fired over the bows of the 'Mata Hari' and immediately a searchlight illuminated the ship, which was signalled to stop. It was still uncertain to those on deck whether this interruption was an allied or enemy vessel, but those on the bridge knew otherwise, and signals and messages were interchanged. The women and children were asked to stand up, and they did and made as much of a show as possible. The service men crept round the other side of the ship out of sight. For some reason the Jap Commander decided not to sink us and we were ordered to proceed to Muntok, under the eye of the watchful Jap destroyer. We were very fortunate to have been allowed to remain on the surface, as from reports and personal narratives from survivors of many ships sunk about the 12th to 15th February indiscriminate sinking seemed to be the general plan.

At a later date it was estimated that about 2000 people lost their lives from these sinkings and the vessels involved were as follows :-

H.M.S.Dragon Fly H.M.S.GrassHopper H.M.S.Scorpion	River Gun Boats
S.S.'Vyner Brooke s.s.Giang Bee s.s.Funwo	The two ships in convey with Mata Hari.
s.s.Redang	
s.s.Kuala	
s.s.Tienkwang	
s.s.Limo	
s.s.Rompin	
s.s.Tanjong Pinang	

Some of the vessels were between 1000 and 3000 tons and a few of a few hundred tons gross.

In addition there were about 24 small craft including R.A.F. surface craft sunk in the attempt to get away from Singapore in the last hours of British Authority.

The vessels captured were as follows:-

s.s.Dymas
s.s.Mata Hari
s.s.Tapah
s.s.Siang Woo.

The 'Mata Hari' arrived at Muntok at about 6 a.m. and just before dropping anchor, we saw a sharp engagement between the destroyer and a small allied naval patrol boat - nationality unknown.

It was just day break, and the patrol vessel was apparently unaware of the Japanese operations in the Banka Straits. The patrol ship was set on fire and sunk in a matter of minutes. As soon as we reached a point near the beach, and dropped anchor, A boarding party came aboard from the destroyer, and put the engines out of action, smashed the wireless equipment and later took all the lifeboats away. The ammunition on the gun platform had previously been dumped overboard by the British Naval ratings on board. We were then left alone on our prison ship that day, except for a visit from a few Jap Naval officers who announced that we would require to remain as we were for about 14 days, as arrangements would require to be made to have us repatriated. It proved to be a long fortnight 15th March 1942 to September 1945.

A large number of Jap transports had collected in the Banka Straits at Muntok, and at the entrance to the Mousi River which connects with Palembang 50 miles up from the estuary. The transports were simply crowded with Jap soldiers and as Java did not fall for about a month afterwards, these operations 250 miles north had been carried out without observation.

Several fires were burning at Muntok which had been bombed the day previously. A dozen seaplanes were on the beach, and on the afternoon, a short air battle took place between two Dutch planes and several Japs, in which one Jap plane was lost. It dived into the sea a short distance from the 'Mata Hari', and we had to suppress our applause. During this period a naval cook prepared meals in the gallery, all of the tinned sort, but they were appreciated. The night was passed lounging about the deck, and in the morning of the following day- Monday 16th February all the service men, and male civilians excepting those with women relatives on board were ordered to prepare for disembarkation.

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Only one suit case was allowed per person, and there was a hurried disposal of wearing apparell, by those who had a surplus in which the service men benefited, many having few clothes.

The lifeboats came alongside again, and were filled with service men, and taken in tow by a captured R.A.F.motor launch on which 100 civilians were packed. It was a relief to get to the Pier at Muntok after a long slow journey in an overcrowded launch.

Assembling at the end of the long pier which projects about 1/2 mile seawards the whole contingent was marched along the pier each carrying personal belongings and then lodged in the store houses or 'godowns' at the wharf.

A number of women were there, survivors from ships sunk in Banka Straits and elsewhere, and among them, Neil Jones, and I recognised the Australian Sisters who had escaped from the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' and who had left Singapore with us on Thursday previously. As already mentioned they had lost half of their number, and they were now only 32 strong. We also got news of the disaster to the 'Giang Bee' and it was our first real intimation that the Japs had reached these parts in force, and had destroyed these and many other refugeeships. The women were very short of clothing, as most of them had lost everything in the hurried getaway from the sinking ships. Nearly all the lifeboats had been destroyed during the attacks, and survivors were picked up later from rafts by Jap naval vessels, after exposure to the sun and sea for almost 24 hours. They showed signs of their distress and hardships, being weakened by lack of food and sleep.

As we came off a vessel which had the good fortune to be captured and had some clothing to spare we passed such along to the ladies, who were very grateful for the garments irrespective of its design. Late that afternoon all the captives, men, women and children, were all crowded into the local native picture house which was in a filthy condition. Men and women spent the night, lying about on the seats or floor for all were tired out.

The Jap shock troops had previously been active, extracting by insulting means watches, rings, and anything they fancied from any of their captive charges.

One Australian gentleman Mr. Bowden, Trade Commissioner in Singapore was objecting to the methods of the Japs, and was taken away and has not been heard of since. Incidents like that will not be readily forgotten. Worst of all, the injured and wounded from the ships which had been sunk were also brought into the hovel of a place, and were attended to by the British and Australian Sisters and the few British doctors who were present.

The night was spent waiting for the dawn which the huddled mass of humanity gratefully welcomed. The grin of the gold toothed Japs was always an annoyance and provocative, but what could one do?. This was an appropriate initiation into tragedy of the years which followed with all the suffering, hardships and cruel starvation, which was to prove too heavy a cross for half of the unfortunates congregated there that night.

We got one meal that day consisting of a cupful of plain boiled rice and a little sugar.

Next morning the men, women, and children who had been left behind on the 'Mata Hari' joined the main body of the prisoners after having spent a comfortless night at the end of the long Muntok pier, without food or protection from the elements or privacy of any kind.

It was now Tuesday the 17th February 1942 and we had been prisoners for 2 days. There were some very old ladies amongst us, and one wondered when people are over 70 or 80 that they should have been allowed to get into such a predicament.

Early in the forenoon the Japs brought along a number of motor trucks, and began transporting their captives to other accommodation. The women and children and some men were sent to the Banka Tin Mining establishment which is usually a depot for the exchange of Chinese coolies employed at the tin mines. It was found to be a good and fairly clean place, but made for a certain purpose. The beds consisted of concrete platforms about 2 feet above the floor level, on which the prisoners slept. The women and children and hospital occupied one section of the premises. They were grossly overcrowded, and many had to sleep under the 'Pandopa' a large covered space which was surrounded by the main buildings.

The hospital part was allotted for the accommodation of the sick and wounded from the many sunken vessels was soon filled, and Dr. McKern of Penang assisted by Dr.West of Malaya and Dr.Reid, with a staff of trained sisters did splendid work in easing the suffering of the large number of patients, under extreme difficulties. Although there was a fully equipped hospital at Muntok the Japs would not allow the doctors to use it, in fact they destroyed the 'X' Ray installation.

One young R.A.F.pilot officer, who had both feet shattered, when on one of the shelled ships had to have an amputation operation carried out with the aid of a saw made by one of the prisoners from ordinary hoop iron. With such equipment it was not surprising that the young man died. About 15 people died during the short stay at this depot, one being of Mackay of the A. &. S.H.

I was not so fortunate to be sent to this place, and I was one of a number of 350 civilians, and service men who were sent direct to the Muntok Aerodrome to work there extending the Runway and filling in the long trenches which the Dutch Authorities had excavated to make the aerodrome inoperative.

On arriving in overcrowded trucks the Japs right away began searching our luggage presumably in the search for arms, wirless sets,etc. Our personal effects were severely looted, and most of us were relieved of Razors, Mirrors, Fountain Pens, Food, Cigarettes and in fact anything bright, or attractive looking.

I lost a number of useful and precious articles, but I was not so unfortunate as a young Dutch banker chap, who had a bundle of 12000 good Dutch Guilders taken, which is about £2000 sterling, and which was thrown into the general heap of loot. The Jap officers watched the raiding with encouraging grimaces and warned us that they would 'kill' if anything was not disclosed. After a cup of rice we joined the servicemen further along the aerodrome who had already been 'enrolled' for duty. At this time the aerodrome could only be used for light machines, and an emergency one only, and the idea was to improve it with P.o.W labour. At dusk we were all marched back over 2 miles towards the town to our lodgings carrying our luggage.

We were quite unaware ofcourse as to where we were going, but all ideas of comfort were dissipated when the motley procession was marched through the portals of the old Muntok Jail built 100 years ago, and in a disused state, the present use being a pepper store.

There were hundreds of bags of pepper on which the majority of the British prisoners slept. The prison had been shelled and bombed and there was a decided touch of the 'Ole Bill' accommodation about it. The place was in a filthy condition with a 1/2" water supply and no sanitation. In addition about 600 Chinese coolies occupied half of the place. They were of a very poor type having been pressganged from HongKong. Their habits were primitive and disgusting and out of the 600, it was difficult for the Japs to muster 100 men for work, so terrible was the suffering of these helpless Chinese from sores and disease. It was a daily occurrence during the time we were in this place to see 2 or 3 Chinese coolies unceremoniously carried away to their last resting place shrouded in old bags. Those who were about to die seemed to crawl out into the open, and unattended by the Japs or their countrymen quickly ended their miserable existence.

My billet at this prison was on a concrete pavement under a leaking roof, which was the general experience of the 'inmates', and the tropical rains shewed no mercy which did not brighten our outlook. I managed to wrench a wood shutter from a long prison window and on this I slept clear of the concrete. Neil Jones did likewise. Our daily routine was to be rudely wakened about 5 a.m. and to march off to the aerodrome to start work at 6 a.m.

I was in a section cleaning away the bush or wild shrubs to lengthen the aerodrome runway. The tools used were picks and changkols and article like a hoe. All the tools were of Jap manufacture, and with a little encouragement broke rather easily. I bagged five of these one morning, and the losses of equipment were so great, that it probably wasthe reason why the Japs altered the system of labour to 1/2 hour on, and 1/2 hour off. That was sufficient in the tropical sun anyway.

At 9 a.m. plain boiled rice was issued, about a cupful, and the same happened about miday, and that was all the food until our return to the jail when plain rice again was on the exclusive menu

This 12 hour a day work continued for a fortnight and it was of course an infringement of international code to engage civilians on war work of this kind. Suddenly all work atthe aerodrome ceased evidently the Japs had now secured air ports of greater value elsewhere.

Another week was spent among the amenities of this ancient edifice and I was able to spend more time with 8 Argyle & Sutherland Highlanders who were on the 'Mata Hari' and who had been through the whole campaign right down the Malayan Peninsula. I heard first hand news of their experiences. They lost considerably as we know and I understand some Renfrew Boys gave their lives in the famous rearguard action.

The Japs were greatly superior in number, and had suitable equipment for this type of fighting. Their mortars were always a menace but they did not like bayonet fighting and there was not so much of that as it was too costly. The Jap tactics were a series of infiltrating encirclements which caused the British forces to retreat continuously, being greatly outnumbered by the enemy.

During this week not being employed, we were able to give greater attention to our food and as Chinese food Vendors were allowed into the jail, after having bribed the Jap Guards we were able to purchase extras at a 'price'. As no body had had a decent meal since leaving Singapore three weeks before, food was in great demand, and the limited supplies of pork, goat, fish and cigarette were expensive indeed. The Argyll boys were adepts at getting a

meal ready and as they had no cash our "Kongsi" would contribute the dollars and the Argylls would do the rest providing stews with pork, and rice, and papajas,etc. On one occasion they produced quite a respectable 'Rolly Polly' the jam being made from a native fruit and the sugar flour being "acquired" from the Japs. It was rough of course but very much appreciated, andthe resources of the soldiers was commendable. Some of those regulars came from Paisley, Glasgow, Greenock, and Hamilton and they were men always useful but particularly in days of adversity. They were always cherry, and seemed to be able to overcome lots of difficulties.

On Sunday the 8th March the 350 ~~off the~~ Jail Birds were transferred to the adjoining Banka Tin Mining Depot already described, and we replaced a number of men, women amd children, who had already been sent on to Palembang. I was in this place a week, and altogether there were about 700 occupying the'premises at this time including a goodly number of women and children.

We were now getting accustomed to the treatment from the Japs, and knew what to expect to some extent, and realised that the prospects were none too good. The food in this camp was a limited amount of plain boiled rice three times a day with no extras of any kind. The hospital patients got exactly the same from the Nips, but by some means extra food was obtained form the hospital by private effort. Amongst the men and women in the camp were some who had previously endured great hardships on sea and land before being captured, but the outstanding narrative of courage and fortitude was that of Sister Turner a British Army Sister, who was five days on a ship's raft. She was on the s.s.'Tanjong Pinang' when it was sunk at sea and was the only person left of the 16 who were in that appliance originally, in fact she is the only known survivor from that ship.

Several detachments of service men had left this camp for Palembang and on Sunday the 15th March 1942 I was included in a group of 250 which comprised 150 civilians and about 100 service men for that destination. Palembang evidently was being prepared as a centre for P.o.Ws in southern Sumatra. We felt rather pleased to get away from Muntok, and little did we think that we should renew our acquaintance with the place in about 18 months time, and experience there the worst period of the captivity. Saying farewell to those who remained, about 3 p.m. the whole group was on the march to the long pier at Muntok about 2½ miles distance. The luggage fortunately for some was sent in advance, but a good ma prisoners lost their valuable belongings, having being pilfered by the Japs. The Nips had apologised for the very small craft they had arranged to convey us to Palembang on, but that does not always negative responsibility.

This was a small fishing trawler, which was attached to a smallest barge anchored near the pier. I got a position on the trawler, but the Japs decided that half the number should accommodate themselves on the flat barge for thenight. There was no sleep for anybody, in fact only standing room, and those on the barge had a rough time of it. There was practically no covering, and it was indeed fortunate that the rain kept off. During the early morning a gale sprung up, and the two vessels began to drift ashore, however, the diesel engine was started, and danger avoided.

At daybreak the barge party were brought on to the trawler and it was a perfect jamb. At 8 a.m. the journey to Palembang began, the Banka Straits were crossed, and a very weary day was spent going up the Mousi river, with its 4 knots downstream current. The ship was only making headway at 4 miles per hour and as the river penetrates through 50 miles of mangrove swamps, so prevalent on th east coast of Sumatra, the scenery was not inviting. We got to Palembang about 6 p.m. feeling very tired. On arrival there was a great deal of yelling by Jap officers, as they had not been advise of our coming.

The civilians and service men were separated each group going to separate camps. About 10 p.m. after a miserable waiting on the pier without food for over 36 hours, we were marched about 3 miles to an unfinished building of the school hospital type. There was nothing but bare walls, roof, and dirty concrete floor, very damp. I selected to sleep outside on the verendah and well after mid-nig lay down on my old black coat perfectly exhausted. I simply died, but awoke in the morning greatly refreshed but empty, it was now about 2 days without nourishment. Some of the older men were beginning to feel the effects and strain of this long ordeal. A few Malayan vendors came along selling bread, and other commoditie and there was a general rush to purchase which was interrupted by Japs removing the source of supply.

Sometimes later out of the goodness of their hearts the Japs issued Australian Biscuits, which were greatly relished. This was followed by some rice and fish mixture, and these small mercies greatly stimulated everybody including the older internees.

The day was spent making the camp fit for human habitation. As th Japs would not permit lighting of any kind we had to retire very early.

This accommodation could not be considered other than temporary, and we were not surprised to be informed that we were to be ready to march off about mid-day to "ideal conditions". It was rumoured that our destination was Pladjoe, adjacent to the oil

refineries the largest in the Netherland East Indies. These refineries produce high and low grade fuel, with all kinds of by-products and they were a great asset to the Japs throughout the war. At one period it was stated in a Jap paper that Palembang supplied them with 80% of the high Octane Spirit essential for aircraft. The plant was supposed to have been put out of action, but some production was obtained, invaluable to the occupying authorities otherwise 'Nips'.

The rumour proved to be correct and we duly arrived at Pladjoe. Having left our 'cottage hospital' we retraced our steps along the 3 mile tramp to the wharf and had the opportunity of seeing something of the town. The residential part was very agreeable with small and large houses of various designs, many features of Dutch architecture being visible. The native quarters especially along the many waterways running into the Mousi River did not appear too healthy. A great number of the houses are built over the water. The climate is humid, hot, and enervating. There were plenty of Jap officers ordering, and struting about with the usual pompous air full of temporary authority and countermanding orders with astonishing frequency. Their generally were bespeckled and they carried their swords always, and wore large brown boots. The swords, family heir looms were usually too long for their short legs and mostly trailed in the 'glaur'. They did not appear as shock troops, to be a formidable bunch but with all their so-called dash, one could discern a pronounced inferiority complex, which was to react with spite and malice against their captives.

We were ultimately embarked on a queer sort of river barge over crowded of course and transported down the murky waters of the Mousi river to Pladjoe. The vessel tied up at a wharf near a harbour workshop, behind which were stacks of oil piping of varying diameters. Beyond this was the Pladjoe golf course, and house, and adjoining was a very large hut, all of which was allotted to the 165 new arrivals in other words "US".

These quarters were very good, but they had been erected by the British Authorities to billet the defence forces, and A.A. crews who had been there for some months, and who got away when the Japs captured Palembang.

The first lot of Jap paratroopers who landed on the initial attack on Palembang were wiped out as they dropped on the aerodrome but the penetration of the town up the river, with strong supporting troops forced a retreat.

We got settled in our new accommodation, and although somewhat crowded it was fairly comfortable, as there were beds of a kind for most.

Next day the Japs called for 100 workers to unload cargo boats which carried miles of oil piping and oil recovery machinery. We worked from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. with 1½ hours off at mid-day for nourishment and rest. The hours really were much longer as the parade before and after work was always a long drawn out affair. The Jap officers and N.C.Os would count and recount and usually could not arrive at the correct number. They had simply no idea of figures and baffled themselves with the most elementary calculation, to the silent amusement of the internees. It was a common daily occurrence to have face slapping incidents and the cane was also used frequently for no reason whatever. The food supplied by the Japs was poor in quality and quantity, and when working at the wharf the internees would contact native workers from whom food was purchased, which was very acceptable. We were able to buy a little bread which was Sir John Campbell's department, and occasionally there was an issue of plain biscuits from captured British Army Stocks.

It was hard work slaving all day, and men of all ages and professions were engaged in this labourious work. The cooking was ofcourse done by the internees, and couldnot be commended as European life in Malaya was not conducive to knowledge of the culinary arts. However, it was an effort at least.

Every Malayan Industry and business was represented in this, Almost wholly British prison camp, and many men who had spent 30 years in rubber production, tin mining, oil refining, and shipping, etc. were included in the 165 prisoners.

We had not been 2 weeks in the camp when two of our members died of dysentry. They were Mr. H.L. Johnson, Manager of The Federal Dispensary, Kuala Lumpur and Mr. M.L. Wynne, Chief of the Singapore Police, and their bodies were cremated as ordinary burial was impossible in this saturated low lying country.

I contacted dysentry myself in this camp and less than a fortnight I lost 4 stones in weight.
The Golf Course House was used as the hospital. There was no British doctor in the camp. The Jap doctor was indifferent, and could not be relied on, and his visits were few and far between. I was expected to go into this place but refused, as the hospital smelt like a lethal chamber, due to the abnoxious fumes from the Japanese disinfectant. The cruel neglect of our sick in this camp was a pointer to our future treatment. The Nips said that we walked about with too much pride and dignity for sooth and that they were determined to make us feel our position. All their attempts to humiliate us failed which further increased their propagated hatred and animosity against us.

Our Commandant, Mr. W. Benrice generally called us gentlemen when addressing us on parade, but there was one of our number "Bloodstain Jackson" who thought that by our appearance and conditions of living we were more like sanguinary slaves.

The work done at this camp was useless and I always thought the Japs were a bit optimistic in attempting to develop the oil industry in Sumatra to any great extent. Actually apart from the partial restoration of oil production at the refineries no new developments was nil. Theyhad not the confidence of the natives and no evidence of the necessary organising and administrative abilities. Altogether we were in this camp for about a month and on Wednesday 15th April 1942 we were, after being ordered to shave, on the move again, bag and luggage, and this time we were again shipped in a small vessel to Palembang and housed in the local Asiatic Jail. My knowledge and experience of jails was now quite expansive, but home country jails are preferable including the new reform treatment. Already a number of our men were feeling the effects of the unaccustomed labour and unsuitable food and we had six stretcher cases of dysentry mostly. I was very weak myself at this period, and just able to crawl along the streets of Palembang towards the 'Diggings' or new 'Rest House'. It was raining, dark, and miserable and I shall never forget the weary and melancholy aspect of that effort.

On reaching the jail we were paraded for inspection, during which procedure the Nips kindly relieved us of some useful articles in our 'Barang' - Luggage- but found to our great surprise that the camp was very well organised. There were about 200 in the jail, 180 Dutch and 20 British. The Netherland community were collected from Palembang and district and the British were the men who had left Muntok earlier with their women folk and from whom they had now been separated. For some it was the last farewell. Among the prominent Netherlanders were Mr. Orange, Resident of Palembang, Mr. Hilderbrant Burgomaster and many town officials, and local business men. Dr. Hollweg was in charge of the camp of the little hospital assisted by Dr.West and for my trouble he supplied two

doses of opium which cleared up my dysentry completely. I was fortunate indeed.

The Roman Catholic clergy were well represented and the Bishop of Palembang was among the jailbirds. There were also seafaring men, captains and officers and prominent men in the oil industry.

The place in which we were now incarcerated was built about 1870, and was as all jails are, solidly built. The walls were exceedingly high, outside the line of the prison buildings, which contained the cells, or 'Homes' as one Jap officer put it. The area of this jail was .75 acres and deducting the built up space, about .35 of an acre was leftforthe movement and exercise of about 350. The place was designed for about 1/3rd that number of Asiatics with the usual concrete platforms forming beds I slept for nine months on a wooden door placed onthe concrete f which was very damp and musty.

We were not long in this jail when the Japs released 3 Czechs who were with us, and a number of Malays. They also took from the camp Captain Garsten, Baddeley, Chamberlain, all mercantile sea officers who had been captured from the ships sunk. Mr.Scott of the British Ministry of Information, Singapore, and Mr. K. Morgan were also removed and I understand suffered great hardship and cruelty at Singapore for a very long period before being finally imprisoned in Changi.

Our Camp commandant was a Netherlander Mr. Van Der Vliet who was ideally suited for his difficult job. He had a commanding personality, tall, and fearless in his dealings with the Japs. He seldom asked the occupying authorities for anything, but used his own methods, and he delivered the goods, taking advantage of the weakness of our 'Hosts' at every opportunity. He was thus able to get a good deal of extra food into the camp, and with the Jap allowance of rice which at this time was plentiful, we were quite well off. As this was April 1942 and the enemy had over run the Netherland East Indies, Malaya, Borneo, The Phillipines, and all the islands in the Pacific.

The Nips, excepting on a few occasions left us more or less alone within the precincts of the jail. They being on the ascendancy allowed us the liberty of having engineering and general subject lectures, cabarets, sing songs, competitions, and other forms of amusement and diversion.

A library was arranged in charge of Mr. Harold Lawson, which was

an invaluable asset to camp life. We were able to obtain from the Palembang Public Library, on payment to the Japs a large selection of Books in English and Dutch, which added to the number.

Also
Some of the internees had been able to acquire quite a good Number of books which were added to the library. Reading was a great mental stimulate and transcended one's thoughts above all the confinement, and general hardship of prison life. Although severly overcrowded it was the happiest of all the camps in our long experience of Japanese Domination. I was now quite clear of dysentry, again thanks to Dr.Hollweg and I was able to take my share of camp duties, and actually began to put some weight on again.

The cabarets which were staged by various groups in the camp lacked nothing in originality and some really good shows entertained the 'jailbirds' on several occasions. The conditions and circumstances forced talent to the surface and the British, Netherlanders, Indoneasians, Eurasians thus inclined worked together to uplift the spirit and morale of the internees. Most of the instruments were made in the camp by the internees, and it was a great experience to practice with our fellow prisoners. We were all on level terms in this predicament. The band produced excellent music and livened things up. Even our 'Hosts' did not hesitate to listen in. A few attempted compositions of their own, and I contributed in this respect two Scottish character songs 'Hame Again' and 'Bonnie Jean' which appeared to please. The engineering section under the title of the Palembang Jail Engineering Association with Mr. J.Drysdale as chairman provided weekly lectures which covered a wide field of engineering knowledge. The Secretary, Mr. A.M.Wright- who died later at Muntok-kept excellent records of the Association proceedings and his work must be commended for its thoroughness. Mr.W.Penrice of Singapore was British Representative in the camp management and occupied this position until his health failed at a later date. Despite all efforts to assist the weak, death took its toll, altogether we lost 6 British and 5 Netherlander in this camp. At this time the most serious cases of illness were allowed by the Japs to be taken to the Charitas General Hospital in the town, which treated Allied Men, Women and Service Men. The hospital was under the able direction of the tall and handsome Dr.Tekelenburg, one ofthe most famous surgeons in the Indies. The hospital was closely guarded, and there was little liberty for the patients. The food was very poor, but could be augmented by individual purchases, outside the knowledge of the Nips, who severely punished any vendor within hospital boundaries.

Dr. Tekelenburg performed many major operations and earned the gratitude of the British and Netherlanders for his great ability, and in saving many lives in the camp. It was with deep regret and

with a feeling of intense horror that we found on being liberated that this great human benefactor ~~was~~ had been slowly and cruelly done to death, after being sentenced with the Mother Superior of the hospital to a long term of imprisonment for alleged rebellious activities.

Dr. Hollweg; also had a vile experience in Jap hands, as he with others were kept in solitary confinement and subject to extreme privation.

Dr. West the British Doctor at this time took charge of medical affairs in the camp and rendered splendid service to all. The medical supplies were always far short of requirements and the Nip "medicine men" seemed quite unperturbed at the growing distress among the internees. The kitchen staff at all times deserved the greatest credit for their excellent work. They overcame great difficulties and with a splendid knowledge of the native foods they put on the Menu very wonderful meals - comparatively.

Mr. Beissel who superintended the kitchen must be given great praise for his skilful guidance of this very important and vital department. As stated the accommodation was overtaxed and 7 men (including myself) occupied a cell originally intended for 4 Asiatic prisoners, which was typical of the arrangements.

Morning and evening there were the customary roll calls, which were usually long duration owing to many mistakes in reaching the correct number. The Japs were a most peculiar people, never consistent or reliable in their dealings with the camp and always cunningly suspicious of our ordinary movements. However, I was able to make a plan of the Jail and all the details of the over-crowding are shewn, and particulars of the layout of that ancient look-up. I also made maps of the Netherland East Indies, Malaya, for reference, and to indicate the significance of the latest rumour. Those maps were often referred to as the rumours were many and varied.

Fortunately the water supply to this camp was quite satisfactory, and was obtained from a huge storage tank on the top of a tall rectangular building about 80' high. As this tank supplied the town it must hold many hundreds tons of water, and as the structure below accomodates the Muncipal Offices it is rather an unique arrangement.

As it was so necessary to live above our environment every possible avenue of interest was exploited within the limited confines of the jail walls.

The normal day was spent in reading, writing, sewing, carpentry, pipe making, washing when soap was available. Soap was also manufactured using wood ash as an ALKALI, together with some caustic soda and oil - coconut.
A news sheet called 'Hot and Less Hot' after the manner of the 'Chilli' issue was in circulation once a week. Mr.W.H.MacDougal, a U.S.A.Pressman was Editor. Some brillant cartoons illuminated the news and camp incidents.

I spent some time preparing a lecture for the Engineering Association and sketched on some good paper which I acquired at a good price, all the different types of dredges I could think of. Ofcourse everyone available had to do duty in turn at the kitchen preparing the vegetables washing rice, or chopping up chilli which was a great adjunct to the meal. We were able to purchase a considerable quantity of brown beans twice a week, and these were always a popular addition to the "tiffin" or mid-day meal and a general favourite although they are very like the 'Horse' bean at home.

About July 1942 the Nips intimated that they were building a new camp about 2½ miles from Palembang, in the outer suburbs of the town, and demanded a working party of 100 men each day to clear the ground.

The possibility of getting out of the jail as a diversion was welcomed and being a working party only the younger men were selected to go. The work was soon completed, and the native contractors erected the buildings which were not completed until the end of the year. The parties still continued to walk out for several months, and it was a strange concession as nothing was don In view of this the older men of the camp were allowed out and the exercise and a certain amount of contact with the natives was possible. We were able to exchange Straits dollars this way, but the rate was against the British being 2½ to 4 Guilders only for 10 Straits dollars. Food was bought and news from the outside world sought, and given by certain friendly natives.

The women's camp was passed en route about 400 yards from the road, they were always out in force whenthe working parties passed, and there was general recognition of friends and relatives. Later demonstration by either side was prohibited as the Nips thought some code was in progress, merely by the people waving to each other.

The women occupied a number of bungalows, and adjoining garages, etc. and although grossly over crowded appeared to be in good health generally. Like the men they were but a few months in internment and had not yet reached the point where the general decline started, and they had yet some of their normal health and strength in reserve.

The new men's camp was about 5 minutes walk from the women's camp, and constructed of rought deal planks and attap roofing and round poles. The floor was plain earth. We could see that the Jap propaganda was very persistent, and they seemed to take every opportunity of commemorating any of their military successes as they fell due each year. Those celebrations usually took the form of hundreds of native children walking in procession with cheap Jap flags in abundance while weird bands played.

An attempt was made to create a carnival spirit, and sports meetings contributed to the events of ~~this~~ days. On the road to the new camp we passed the site of a 'Hari Besar' - big day - and outside the Japs had painted and erected in wood a large Union Jack. The effigy of an Australian soldier in Aussie uniform was crucified to the St.George cross of the flag. Beside this was a figure of a Japanese soldier releasing the 'Digger' from his unfortunate position. The tableax was endeavouring to portray a new future for Australia and how the Japs 'had' or would liberate Australia from the subjugation of British oppression and substitute the benevolence and protection, of the very honourable the Mighty Nip Emperor and his gang. The whole display was empty and typical of the crudity of Jap propaganda and ludicrious to us, especially as the figure of the Jap was twice the size of that representing the poor Wee 'Digger'. We were now full cognisant with the Jap officers and their cannon fodder, and could not recognise anything substantial of super race qualities in the physic or mental ability of these 'Sons of Heaven' ~~and~~ On one occasion the Jap sent in on the Emperor's birthday an amount of 'Saki', their national alcholic beverage, and a egg-duck-for everybody. We drank the old boy's health with a 'vengence'. ~~and which we partook early in the piece faded out~~ later The Japs killed all the ducks, and therefore, no birds ~~were~~ available to deliver the goods.

Not to be outdone by the Japs, we had our own anniversary celebrations in the Jail, and on the 31st August, the Netherland Community celebrated Queen Wilhelmina's birthday in grand style - comparatively. Recognition had previously been graciously given to the National Days of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and Australia.

On St.Andrews Day 1942 the Netherlanders prepared a special fruit salad, which had a native alcholic content added. It was a reminder of other days, and very thoughtful of our Netherland friends but it was a Pitiful substitute.
A St. Andrews Society had been formed in the camp in 1942, and Mr. Ritchie of Ritchie & Bisett & Co.Singapore, was the first Chieftain. There were 36 names on the roll and all were Scottish born except 4. The Society had a little ceremony arranged, but the weather put an end to outside ambitions; modified celebrations were held in my cell, where most of the Scots foregathered and with a few songs and stories the occasion was one to be remembered.

In comparison with the conditions in other camps those in Palembang Jail were good. The health was maintained by the very fine efforts of the medical and the kitchen staffs and the morale was stimulated by the organisation of lectures, concerts, competitions. The reading library was anexcellent asset tothe members and its importance was recognised.

The year 1942 passed with many hopes unfulfilled, and the outstand general regret was the Japanese refusal to allow correspondence with the outside world, or to get letters from home which we all knew would be in abundance.

X'Mas Day was celebrated, and the Japs allowed the camp to accept gifts from the women's camp, and the dispatch of gifts from the men's camp. For this occasion the occupying authorities may be thanked, but everything was going well for them at this time,and they could suffer some patronage. New Year's Day did not pass unnoticed, as it is a great day with the Netherlanders as well as the Scots.

The culinary ability of the kitchen staff was wonderful on both days. The various religious denominations had the freedom of holding services each Sunday and on X'mas and New Year Days.

The church of England, the Netherland Protestant church, and the Roman Catholic church organised their respective services. The Rev.A.V.Wardle padre of the Seamen's Mission in Singapore conducted the C.of E. services and officiated at the funeral services of the Protestant Community in the camp almost to the end of 1944. Mr. Wardle died on 4.1.45. at Muntok.

A camp choir was formed under the able leadership of Father Bakker, and it was a real delight to listen to the choral music so ably conducted. Father Bakker died in 1945 at Belaloe but he interested himself in this very important feature of camp life right up to his regrettable passing. His own compositions were excellent and his choir also rendered appropriate hymns at most of the funeral services, which at a later period were almost daily occurrences.

Our living in this jail camp was brought abruptly to an end and on the 16th January 1943 we were removed to the new quarters on the outskirts of the town which had been built previously. Our number of about 350, was to our surprise augmented at the last moment by about 200 Netherlanders, all men normally engaged in the great oil industry near Palembang and in Southern Sumatra. They included chemists, geologists, engineers, all highly skilled men in their professions. They were a great acquisition to the camp, although their unexpected arrival caused a reduction in the pre-arranged sleeping space.

The first week it rained all the time, and the place being new was a perfect quagmire. It was a rather depressing week, and the construction faults of the camp were readily exposed under these conditions. There was a great lot of work to be done to make this camp habitable. Bunds had to be made to protect certain blocks from flooding, deep wells were dug to augment the poor water supply, and the nasty job of effectively operating the septic tanks had to be done. Paths were made, and small gardens laid out at certain points, a small recreation space was also arranged.

One part of the camp buildings was fitted out suitably for religious services, lectures, and cabarets, etc. Dutch and English language lectures were in full swing, and an attempt was made to provide something of interest for everybody. It was always necessary to keep the thoughts of the camp members above the squalor and congestion, and inconveniences of camp life, and the very noticable deterioration in the quality and quantity of the food.

On March 15th of this year(1943) werwere allowed each to send a Post Card with 25 words of writing home. This was a big day and brightened our hopes that some correspondence might be on its way to the camp from our homes and elsewehere. We did get a mail about April '43 in the form of 1942 X'mas cards from the women's camp, which was almost within earshot, but with the usual Jap 'efficiency' the cards took 4 months to reach us.

The Jap guards in this camp were always out for trouble, and later discontinued lectures, amusements, and even food on the slightest pretence.

One young British lad had carved a 'V' on a tree in the camp grounds. This was made much off and the ceremony of obliterating the work of the optimistic youth was very impressive. The Jap Gestapo searched all our baggages and I was fortunate to escape detection as I had maps of Sumatra, Banka Straits, the Netherland East Indies. I must confess I was relieved when the raid was over.

The camp management by devious means was able to buy a little extra food, to supplement the Soya Beans, Gablik (Tapioca Flour) and KangKong vegetable which grows like a weed. Stinking fish dried in the sun was considered a tit bit, and so it was, but for fish my thoughts flew to Loch Fyne and Aberdeen. Anything can be called fish after what I have seen and eaten in Sumatra. I was able to keep my weight about the 8 stone level up to this time. Those seriously ill were transferred by ambulance to the Charites Hospital as formerly once a week, and as patients were returning each week there was quite a deal of excitement to contact the recovered internees for the latest news and/or rumours. About 10 Netherlanders were taken away from camp in August and these included Mr Orangi, Dr. Hollweg already mentioned. After many months of hardship these two gentlemen and a few others got back, but most of those taken away died as a result of treatment and torture.

In July Baron Von Aspek replaced Mr. Van Der Vliet as Camp Commandant, although the British section favoured the retention of the old commandant. The new chief proved to be a very capable leader, and he had a great deal of humiliation to suffer at the hands of the Japs including face slapping, etc.

In September news came through that Italy had capitulated, and that the country had been largely overrun by the Allies. Previously news papers in Japanese and Malay were smuggled into the camp, and we had some indication of the events in North Africa, Russia and of the attacks on the Jap held islands in the Pacific. It was beginning to be realised that the Americans were going for the seat of the Pacific trouble via the Phillippines, namely Tokio, and that they would ultimately cut the Japs off from areas occupied by Jap forces. Quite a large number of British internees did not share that view and could evidently not realise the overwhelming superiority of American manpower, production, organising ability and the all power-ful determination of the U.S.A. people.

It was my contention that the Yanks would not be satisfied until they had occupied Japan and subjugated the Sons of Heaven completely.

On Tuesday the 7th September a very small mail arrived in the camp but we got some grains of news from the outside world. Our activities in the camp were being greatly restricted, and the Japs decreed that we were not to meet in groups, or smoke while walking about.

On the 13th September 1943 the total number of men patients in Charitas Hospital arrived in the camp, with Dr. Tekelenburg, the hospital being now disbanded, and all the other patients, women and service men being sent to their respective camps. The doctor was only a few days with us when he was taken away and we never saw him again. There had been rumours that we were leaving this camp shortly, and it was no great surprise to be informed that half of the camp had to be ready to move off - somewhere - on the 15th September. Only one day's notice had been given, and there was a general scrimmage to get things tied up. I was among the 1st lot to leave.

Before going the party which chopped wood for the women's camp chalked the news of our departure on some pieces. By this means the women knew we were on the move. It was the only intimation they got.

It was always a strange coincidence that we generally moved from place to place at the middle of a month. We had to be up very early in fact there was no sleep, as everything was packed. About 4 a.m. we got lined up, and marched off shortly afterwards carrying personel belongings to the wharf a distance of about 4 miles. At the wharf the old ferry boat from Penang called the "Bagan" was waiting, and we were embarked on it for some unknown destination. We were here joined by about 60 Netherlanders who had not yet been interned. There was a fair amount of room, but no food was provided, and on occasionslike this never expected. It was learned that Muntok was our destination, and after about a 12 hours trip we got ashore on the old familiar long pier, which we again traversed with belongings.
down the Musi River and across the Banka Straits

It was not of course known what accommodation had been arranged and we were all packed into motor lorries, and carried off through Muntok. You can well imagine my thoughts when the truck pulled up outside the old Muntok Jail, with which I had association - never to be forgotten - eighteen months previously.

There it was and as I again walked through the portals of this old prison, it took a bit of courage to keep ones heart up.

The jail had been tidied up and repaired, but it was going to be greatly overcrowded and we found that the space allowed per man was 26" by 6'-0" for sleeping and living in, and storage of belongings. Ofcourse there was no bedding only the bare concrete floor, and to soften the blow each man got 2 cheap straw mats to lie on.

The Japs provided the ingredients for a meal which our tired kitchen staff prepared, but most of the men had had enough of an irksome day, and even the meal was not greatly relished. Most people lay down and quickly passed out until morning. The next two days were occupied in attempting to improve our accommodation and preparing for the remainder of the internees from Palembang. The cell I was allocated to housed about 60 and this place was designed to house 35 Asiatics about 80 years ago. My fellow prisoners in this block as it was afterwards designated were mostly British and included Dr. Haines and Mr. W.G.C.Blunn well known Kuala Lumpur and Malayan people. Everybody fit had a job to do in the camp and after the arrival of the people from Palembang, the management committee had everybody available on a job. The young and stronger of the internees were engaged on working parties, and wood chopping. I at this time was a 'Korveyor' a kitchen obligatory worker, preparing the food, chopping up vegetables, and Obi Kayu roots. The food to begin with was better than at the previous camp, but the Japs always had things looking better at the beginning. The kitchen chief 'Korveyor' Beissel, by various means got extra food into the camp, but this was a precarious arrangement, and actually the extra supplies did not endure for long.

The first death in this camp was of Sir John Campbell, Bart a well known Malayan gentleman and one who had an amazing career. He was colonel in a Highland Regiment in world war 1 and he held the D.S.O.with Bar. M.C.& Groix de querre. He was engineer, gold prospector, pearl hunter and sailor. His passing was a great loss to the camp.

As time went on further additions to the camp arrived until about 730 were packed into the 1½ acre prison. These people came from Bencoolen Djambi, and Tanjong Carron, all towns in Southern Sumatra. Space was now at a premium and inconveniences were growing. The Sanitary arrangements were primitive with no privacy whatever. Amongst the internees who had arrived at different periods, were some very fine musicians, and a very godd band was formed with those players, and those from the previous camps.

Extra instruments were made in the camp and one amusing and very effective adjunct tothe band was a huge bass fiddle, about 7'0"high, the strings being obtained from old tennis rackets.

On the 30th November 1943 I,now Chieftain of the Jail St. Andrews Society assisted by Andrew Carruthers, Bill Attenborough and Van Arkel staged a St:Andrews night concert, which was enjoyed by our fellow prisoners. It was about the last of the concerts as the Japs were tightening up on our activities. They thought perhaps that we were still much too energetic. Special permission had always to be got, and no entertainment was to include talking, only singing and band music. They did not seem to realise that in playing National Airs of the Allies we were really cultivating an 'anti Nippon' atmosphere. The talented band was a great blessing to the camp and it was really a delight to listen to it under a moonlight tropical sky,studded with brilliant stars and playing the classical and popular music of what seemed to be afar of days.

To amuse myself I started on the work of making a small model yacht for Cecil Starkey's young son, as it was a good mental exercise. After arranging the details, and particulars as if it were a large one the job was to get suitable wood from the firewood pile. It was ribbed and planked eventually and completed with sails. As it came up to specification I started on a larger one for Iain, this time I decided to cut it out of the solid, and selected a very large piece of wood about 4ft long and about 1ft square which was in the firewood pile. It was part of the Senna Tree from which medicinal leaves are obtained. My wood chopping friends Nobby Clark and Amby Marning roughly fashioned the log to a rough shape and it weighed over one cwt at this time. With the famous native 'Parang' or chopper which I got on loan from 'old Dumas' an old Dutch soldier I got busy and gradually-for time was not urgent- shaped the wood to the designed form. I had very crude tools for the purpose, all camp made and had to make a special chisel for cutting the interior out of the model. After about 3 months concentrated work the yacht was finished with sails complete, made from an old white shirt which I got at a price, as such garments were very scarce. I was greatly assisted by enthusiasts who daily watched the progress with small pieces of brass and screws which they kindly contributed.
The model was finished off in the proper shape at 30" long and 4½ lbs in weight ex lead and I have it safely with me as a very valuable momento of camp life. I have already referred to the St. Andrews night concert, and I must write something about the St. Andrews Day celebration on 30th Nov.1943 at Muntok Jail.

All the members of the Society were present except Sir John Campbell for whose death we held a two minutes silence in respect of a great colleague. Mr. Ritchie the Chieftain for 1942-43 was at this time in hospital with Dr. McKern. A small ceremony was arranged and I had the great honour of being appointed Chieftain. Our guests were Mr. Orangi, Baron Van Asbek representing the Netherland Community, Mr. Hammett the British camp leader represented the 'Sassenachs' and Dr. West represented Ireland and Mr. Jackson was the Welsh delegate. There were the usual toasts drunk in coffee, and the Haggis. 'The Chieftain o' the pudding race' had a 'puir' substitute in Obi-Kayu, fried in palm oil to form a cake. However, the spirit ofthe day was not missing.despite the austerity and surroundings, but this was the last of such occasions as before another year had passed the health of the camp had collapsed and further on you will read of how our enthusiam and spirit were for many reasons incapable of celebrating anything in view of the tragic happenings in 1944.

The end of the year 1943 was approaching, and the daaths in the camp since our arrival in September were four which although regrettable was not considered a high mortality when our general conditions of living in this jail were reviewed. Up to this time no news had been received by the main body of the British from their homes and it was getting on for 2 years since we were captured.

At X'mas and New Year ~~Days~~ the kitchen staff with Beissel in command put up a remarkably good tiffin (lunch) on each of these days. A small pig had been purchased by the kind permission of the 'occupying authorities' on each of these occasions. It was served as a sauce and the flavouring was delicious with chilli, Obi Kayu peanut sauce and small fried fish, it was really a great treat and enjoyed by all, but ofcourse our food values had dropped The Jews in the camp got a double helping of fish in lieu of pork.

The usual religious services were held, and for two brief a period a festive atmosphere prevailed, and the hopes of the camp ran high for a better time in the New Year. The year 1944 on which we had now embarked was to be the worst year of our captive expereince, and little did we know or think it would be possible to lose so many comrades in affliction in such a short period.

Before the end of January the rations-so-called- had been considerably reduced in quality and quantity, and something new to us as a basic food was introduced. It consisted of a very poor quality of Tapioca flour obtained from the Obi Kayu root or tuber - Obi Kayu meaning wood potato - and mostly used in the early stages of refinement as a basis for cheap textiles to stiffen the fabric or material.

This concoction was served morning and night and if you think of poor starch or Bill Posters Paste you have some idea of the substance known locally in these parts as 'Ongle-Ongle'. This was served plain, morning and evening and with a 200 grammes rice issue at mid-day with a small spoonful of Fish and some vegetables.

It was plainly evident that 'Nippon' was now exposing the real meaning, and object which their treatment policy had in view, and they had some considerable success before the end of the year. The effect of this food and the living conditions sowed the seeds of much future trouble in the camp; and Beri-Beri and Malaria and Skin diseases were becoming more prevalent.

After 4 or 5 months on this diet, the failure of health of the camp had reached am alarming state. The loss of weight all round the camp was distinctly noticeable. The doctors had arranged to have everybody weighed each month up to about this time on balance scales used in the kitchen. The average reduction per month per man varied between 1 and 2 Kilos which meant that the average drop was 2¼ to 4½ lbs per month. In terms of tons it was equivalent to about 1 ton of human flesh being wasted away each month.

These averages were always given to the Japs, as a case for the issue of better and more rations, but early in 1944 the Japs replied by taking away the scales and the average could not be registered, but we knew the loss of weight had increased. Fortunately a number of internees had managed to remain fairly round and had some energy. This was all mobilised for camp use, and an increase of a few grammes of rice to the workers each day was necessary to keep those machines working for the general benefit. I joined the hospital staff at the beginning of March and my duty was to sterlize by boiling in water to which soap had been added, all the patients clothes and soiled bandages, and each day I had a quite a big 'washing' as the saying is. I need not say that the job was far from attractive yet as I volunteered to assist I could not refuse any 'appointment'. It was also a strenuous job and as the trouble increased, so did the sterlizing and at the end of May when the hospital was transferred to the Banka Tin Mining Establishment, with which I was familiar in early 1942.

I had a 12 hours day which lasted three months. The above premises were included in the camp, in order to accommodate about 200 internees from Punkol Pinang which is on the east coast side of Banka Island, and the chief town. The hospital was on the side of the Pandopa an open roofed-in area and the Punkol Pinang people occupied the other wing. These men had been in

close confinement for over 2¼ years, and one could hardly realise it possible to be hold so many thin legged men together. Very few were over 50 Kilos about 8 stone, and perhaps up to this time had been a great deal worse off than we had been. Their number included many prominent Netherlanders, and about 50 R.C.Fathers and Brothers were among the 200 prisoners. As their condition was very poor it was not long until many of them reached the hospital.

The new hospital accommodation consisted of five wards each about 40' long by 20' wide, and the beds were ~~the~~ concrete platforms about 2' above the concrete floor. The buildings were quite good but ofcourse had no hospital appointments. The premises had to get a name anyway and were called 'Hospital'. Each ward had 25 patients, and very soon after opening each ward was filled to capacity. The wards were arranged one each for Malaria, Dysentry, Beri-Beri, Sores and Ulcers, T.B. etc.and one for the older men in the camp who required a certain amount of attention. Malaria was rampant in the camp at this time and with insufficient 'Obat' medical supplies toeash the recurring fevers the condition of a great many weakened, and other forms of disease and trouble attacked them.

The Japs were asked repeatedly for food and medical supplies, but only a small percentage of the needs of the camp were received. Doctor Paddy West, his assistants and the staff had a hard task.

I had now joined as a ward attendant and I carried out these duties right up to the days of liberation. My experiences in this hospital I shall never forget. Many men had all three troubles together, and with Beri-Beri and Dysentry added to Malaria the patients required a great deal of attention.

Beri-Beri is usually caused by lack of Vitamin 'B' and the patient swells up to an enormous size. Normally it can be treated and cured if so desired, but under the conditions of our living, with the almost complete disregard by the Japs of the needs of the sufferers, there was never a great deal of hope. The body seems to rot away, and terrible putrifying ulcers appear on the legs. When that did happen the end was near. I had six hours each day or night on duty, and for a long period assisted in the dysentry ward where two attendants were kept fully occupied. It was a very dangerous ward, and although the Jap doctors visited the hospital at long intervals they never entered any of the wards, except on a few occasions with masks on. The other wards had one attendant only for the six hour shift, and the duties of all attendants included obtaining the food for each patient under his care.

The patients lived for their food, it was the only real hope of survival and the meagre and unbalanced meals were eagerly consumed by those convalescent and allowed all that was going. The dysentry patients only got soft boiled rice specially prepared with a sprinkling of sugar. From that ward scores of men were carried out and scores of times it was part of my duty to carry the remains to the mortuary, assisted by other attendar Rough coffins were usually prepared beforehand for it was realised now that frequency of death was to be expected. The attendants had the ~~pleasure~~ duty of placing the dead in their coffins and at night time it was an uncanny job and strangely it happened so often that death occurred at night.

The procession in the blackness of a tropical night with no moon, and guided only by a small storm lamp to the mortuary, and carrying very often someone specially known was a task indeed but one to be practical, although at times I almost thought I was callous. It was also an unfortunate duty which had to be carried out and it was so very necessary to bury the dead as soon as possible. I often thought of the relatives of those poor fellows.

It was rather a strange coincidence that as soon as the more commodious hospital was opened the death rate began to increase rapidly..

The following are deaths per month from June to December 1944 :-

June 13, July 23, August 21, Sept.14, Oct.30.,Nov.58,Dec.33, Total 192.
That was a very high mortality rate, and represented a rate of (400 per thousand per annum.
Our camp population at the beginning of June was about 900.
Funerals were almost daily, and in the month of November as many as 6 were buried in one day when the peak was reached. The Japs were callous and indifferent and one got no real satisfaction in dealing with them. They shewed no reverence at the simple funer services held in the 'Pandopa'.
The coffins were carried to the cementry by bearers, usually close friends of the deceased, or the strongest men in the camp. I had this sorrowful duty to do on many occasions , and as it wa about one mile to the cementry it was also a physical test specially under the mid-day sun. Normally the Japs allowed abou 15 to go with a single funeral. Only when the number of coffins was over 3 did they provide conveyance which was a man hauled truck. The graves were dug by camp working parties. In the midst of all this trouble there was one thing which cheered the camp up immensely and that was the arrival of a fairly large mai from home on 19th September which most of the British participa

For the most of internees, and also in my case it was the first news from our relatives for 2½ years, so you will realise the joy of hearing direct from home.

I had Post Cards and short letters from Australia and Scotland. It was a great time for most of the hospital patients, but for many it was the last letter from their loved ones they would receive, and they knew it. A few days previously we had been allowed to send our third Post Card home. The letters we received had been years in transit but the glimmer of the outside world and home, the familiar hand writing and the inference in the communications to war news was heartening.

American Red Cross parcels had also arrived in September 1944, but were severly pilfered by the Japs. Every package was opened and we estimated that what was intended for one person was issued by the Japs for distribution amongst six to eight. However, we got a taste of civilised food such as Corned Beef, Fish, etc, and real cigarettes, all reminding us of our former glory. The medical supplies also pilfered were as issued greatly appreciated by the doctors and patients.

I kept remarkably good health during this tragic period in the camps history and except for 2 rather severe bouts of Malaria, which I got over. My weight, however, was about 7½ stone, but that was a slight increase in the lowest weight I recorded, i.e. 94 lbs - 6 stone 10 lbs. The main thing was to keep ones feet, and I must say I had a surprising amount of energy for my weight, but it was all needed in the work of the hospital, when patients swollen up with Beri-Beri had to be lifted, and attended to. The patients were usually very mentally alert right up to near the end of their existence, but a few did suffer from mental trouble due entirely to the effects of malnutrition. It was pitiful to see men in various stages of decay, awaiting the call and surviving to see so many of these fellow sufferers taken away knowing only too well that very soon, that would be their own fate. Many were very brave in their sufferings, and on the whole the fighting spirit was admirable, and a great reprimand to those in better health who had fallen in morale, or who were inclined to complain.

In September 1944 the Japs removed our popular Dr. West to Palembang and later 3 Netherland doctors from Punkal Pinang arrived

At this stage the camp had forgotten about cabarets, concerts or in fact any form of amusement, as with the exception of about 12½% everybody was a patient of some kind. The few fit were fully engaged in camp duties, and in providing the means of

sustenance for the remainder who were too weak to help in the general affectiveness of the camp. By this time there was a growing shortage of all camp requirements, food, medical supplies, and everything necessary for running the camp. Even nails for the coffins were unprocurable and the attachments were fashioned from barbed wire. Sometimes firwood would be severely rationed, or there would be a severe water restriction reducing the efforts of the kitchen staff and bringing into use old jail wells that had not be constantly used for years.

Bandages for the hospital were at a woefully scarce and old clothing of any fibre or colour sufficed for that purpose. It was all so crude and difficult to say the least of it and we were living at a lower level than the lowest Chinese coolie.

Vermin were very persistent in the camp, and bugs, lice, and other insect troubles including of course the ever present mosquito at night time.

I often placed a little ill-spared sugar under my bedding or bags to attract the ants whose presence kept the bugs at a distance for a time, the ants being the lesser evil. No clothes, bedding, boots, shaving material were issued or made available by the Japs for our use, and it was getting near 3 years of captivity. The native wooden shoe called 'Trumpah' was used by nearly all the men for years and they were all made in the camp by a few who employed themselves in that occupation. Further no cooking utensils, cups, or cutlery were provided, and all sorts of utensils were used for the purpose of collecting food and eating therefrom. The cooking utensils in the kitchen were made from old oil drums, some skilful workers making these to suit the purpose. Cocoanut shells were very prominent among the glaxy of dishes a receptacles used.

The food at not been improved and it is safe to say that during the whole of 3½ years of captivity only about 7 lbs of fish and meat (combined total) were consumed by the average individual internee. For instance one day a poor looking and inoffensive turtle 20 lbs in weight was dragged along to the kitchen to provide a fish course for 700 internees.

It was the definite and calculated policy of the Japs to remove us, eliminate us, without in their estimation losing face. It was cunning and cruel and there is nothing worse than slow starvation and the subsequent troubles.

The Japs did give us in September 1944 an issue of 4½ Japanese guilders -Banana Money- a month, but the purchasing value was

very nearly nil. The money could only buy about a pound of peas or equivalent if available - and the food position was not materially changed by the gesture of philantrophy.

The Jap guards were constantly being changed and we were shrewed enough to discover that this was a deliberate move to cover up the charges of guilt of their cruelty and neglect which would inevitably be brought against them. They knew that now their fate was getting doubtful by the continued successes of the Allies in the Far East Europe and in Russia. We were getting some indication of the turn of events by rumours and by the Jap press reports.

A Sergeant Major for a long time was put in charge of the camp but he could do nothing without reference to the captain commandant - one Capt.Seki- for Southern SumatraCamps whose prolonged absence from the camp often made the food or medical supply position serious in the extreme.

With the great increase in sickness the initiative and private enterprise of the internees gradually diminished and it was difficult at one time to get someone to cut one's hair even at 20 cents.

In the "good old days" in the camp the more resourceful and practical of the internees,made all kinds of rough furniture from the firewood, when it was plentiful and chairs, rough beds and stools, using rough sacking to complete the articles, which were very useful to the possessors of such luxuries. High prices were paid in the camp for old bags and sacks by those who had the guilders to spare. No bedding was supplied to the hospital, and none was ever expected, and the great majority of the patients had only bags to sleep on and for a covering. Mosquito nets were not supplied either and the absence of this necessary protection, added continuously to the number of patients In normal times in the camp Barber shops, Tooth Brush, Wooden Shoe repairers, Tooth Paste and Pipe manufacturers were active,as also were the Tailoring merchants, watch repairers, Opticans and bookbinders who endeavoured to preserve the much worn library. The books were also sterlized by various methods after use in hospital, and also to get rid of the vermin pests.

I preferred to remain 'non literary' at this period and in any case enthusiasm for reading had fallen away due to defective eyesight which was now much in evidence. Dental treatment did not exist although a dentist in the camp Mr. Harley Clarke, made a heroic effort to attend tothe increasing requirements of the prisoners using a variety of crude instruments. In one instance he managed to reshape a pig's tooth to replace a lost tooth in denture.

The educational welfare of the boys - 30 all told - in the camp had also been given every attention and a Netherlander Netherlander Van der Wettering, school inspector in Java who with few assistants conducted classes under great difficulty in English and Dutch. Arithmetic, Matematics and other subjects were added to the curriculum. Excellent work was done in this direction. A pipe organ had been partly constructed in the previous camp, using an old piano keys which had been acquired by an enterprising 'scrounger'. But the camp was now tired and worn and it was a really depressing sight to amble across to the jail section of the prison and see forms wandering about the sunbaked quadrangle, looking thin, haunted and haggard, with little flesh on the sometimes large frame and reduced almost beyond recognition with continuous bouts of malarial fever. There was little hope of getting sufficient quinine to ease or repel any one attack far less a complete cure. Atabrin was never supplied. Jap officers very often of high standing would visit the camp and never would concede to the repeated requests of the management for an interview, to find ways and means of improving the health and condition in the camp generally. No letter was ever replied to in writing. Verbal assurances were given but never kept. There were heaps of apologies from the 'honourable sons of Nippon' but no promises were ever fulfilled to any extent. On the days when a high officer attended the jail to inspect us, we would be paraded a considerable time before the appearance of the dignitary. We were invariably told to keep well, and keep our 'homes' in good order. It was all so negative, even comic, yet so tragic and devoid of realism. The officer was usually accompanied with a sword trailing retinue of brown botted subordinates whose boots were tanned of various hues. I wonder if they realised that those fierce looking weapons or swords symbolic of their military pride would one day be thrown into the general heap of war relics and used as amusing souviners by the conquerors. The Japs always appeared well rounded off, with no suggestion of want and they seemed to enjoy every minute of their temporary overlordship.

On the 11th January 1946 we received a small mail from Great Britain only and it was greatly welcomed, as in addition to family news there were some very ingenious methods of conveying War News ot us, which the Japs had overlooked. For instance one post card stated that so and so was home on leave from Normandy, and another stated that the street lamps were now lit in a certain town in Scotland. The inferences from such statements were obvious, and we pounced on every item, with optimistic speculation for the future.

On Burns night 25th January 1945 we got news of a heavy raid at Palembang from the big air craft carriers of the British Navy operating off the west coast of Sumatra.

This was heartening. Before leaving Muntok I would like to say that the women's camp from Palembang also reached Muntok in November 1943, and they too had suffered very heavily from all forms of sickness. Their camp was not a great distance from ours yet very few communications were allowed. There were many cases of women not having the sad news of their husbands death in the men's camp for 3 to 4 months and thesame consideration applied to the men. Often it was by mere accident or chance that such sad news came through. The women were often in our thoughts as we knew the Japanese attitude to all women and particularly Allied Women. The women doctors in the camp including Dr.Thomson of Edinburgh and an efficient staff did nobl work under the usual prevailing difficulties of shortages of food and medical supplies. At a later date we were to meet them and hear the news from the survivors. The Muntok camp was a tragedy to both camps and hundreds of graves provide the evidence of the callous and barbaric institution of the Japanese authority

It was at those camps that most of the internees disposed of all their valuables including gold rings, watches, etc. in order to get the means to purchase extra food in different ways. Sentiment could not stand in the way of the possibility of existence, and very few people got out with anything of any value.

January death roll was 22, and among those who died was Padre Wardle of the Seamens Mission, Singapore. The continuous decline in the health of the young and as well as old in the camp could not be averted, and it was recognised that no one could say with confidence that they would see the day of liberation. Such treatment was bound to culminate in disaster. We had been for 3 years living without the proteins and/or vitamins,so necessary for health, strength and energy with only 7½ lbs of meat and fish(total) and no fats to any extent except cocoanut and palm oi The palm oil was not considered edible by the natives in pre-war days. The period of complete exhaustion had arrived for a great number of our fellow suffers. We the British had over estimated the cultural attainments of 'Nips', sufficient at least to harbour them in a civilised sphere in pre-war days. One thing might be said in their favour, and that is that they might not be so bad as the Germans, who ought to have known better. It all leads one to think 'where are we' and 'wither are we going'.

Personally I shall have no truck with the Japanese or their goods which are mostly of a shoddy, and artifical finish. They are <u>no</u> our equals, and I used to think when Burn wrote 'a mans a man for 'a that' he would hardly have included the Japs in that category.

It had been rumoured for some time that we were to be moved again, and it hardly be thought possible to move a camp with so many invalids and weakened personnel. We did not know where our destination was to be some thought Singapore, others Japan, Batavia, and curiously, few thought that we would again visit the mainland of Sumatra. However at short notice the date for our departure was announced and the camp was divided into two detachments for transport. I was detailed for this group as a hospital attendant, and had five semi invalids to look after on the voyage. All these men died at our next camp in the last few months of captivity. They were Mr. Hammond, chief representative of the P.&.O.Singapore, Mr. Kendall and Mr. Phillips, Van Buren and Mr. Gasper of Kuala Lumpur.

We left our camp at mid-day onthe 26th February 1945, with as much baggage as it was possible to carry. I had my precious yacht and looked altogether I am sure a queer object and a packman in every sense of the word. Our wee bits of furniture, stools, etc. the Jap allowed us to take, but the 2nd party were not so fortunate.

We were taken from Muntok pier to a smallest cargo steamer, and entered the ship through a side opening on to a tween deck. There we stayed with only a few hatch cover off so much overcrowded that one had no room to lie down. The hospital cases brought with us were also in this hold. Fortunately the kitchen rose to the occasion again before leaving and everybody got three days rations already cooked. There was Nasi Goreng, (fried rice) Obi Balls 4 off - native potatoe fried in palm oil - a few peanuts, and cocoanut scrappings fried.

The hold was extremely hot and water was issued sparingly, and in this condition we existed to 6 a.m. next morning, when the ship moved off. It was soon found that we were heading for the old familiar Mousi River, and that Palembang would then be our destination, before proceeding somewhere else. The journey up this awful river which penetrates the miles of mangroove swamp so extensive on the East Coast of Sumatra was very uncomfortable.

We had no sleep the previous night, and by mid-day our rations were nearly exhausted. The atmosphere was stifling, and the hospital patients suffered greatly. We were not allowed on deck during the day and this part of the weary journey ended at 6 p.m. when we arrived at Palembang, ~~and~~ we were immediately entrained in the very small native compartments and luggage vans of the railway stock in these parts. One had to sit upright all the time, and it was impossible even to dose off. About mid-night the air raid sirens broke the silence and there was excited movements amongst the Japs. However, no raid transpired, and we sat all huddled together all night.

The previous evening on arrival the Japs presented each of us with a small loaf, very difficult to masticate, or digest, yet it appeased the hunger. I cannot say exactly what the ingredients were, but it certainly was a rubber like substance.

The shutters of the train were kept down all the time, and we were unable to view the green country en route from Palembang where we left at 6 a.m.

We now knew that we were going to Lahut and thence to Loebock Linggua, and afterwards by truck to a rubber estate at Belaloe about 15 miles further on. We were fully twelve hours in the journey from Palembang to Loebock Linggua, and again stayed overnight in the train at the terminus. The hospital patients had a painful experience. At day break we were all loaded in trucks, very much over crowded and standing room only and whisked off to our new quarters inthe coolie lines of a rubber estate, which we reached about 9 a.m, very tired, and nerves only to keep one going. Some new huts had been erected for our use, the ordinary construction of rough poles, Bamboo slats for sides, and attap roofing of native grass.

One very large new hut was reserved for the hospital, but it was a very poor outfit, earth floor, poor sanitary arrangements bad lighting at night, - oil lamps which we made for use with palm oil was all that was available. It was rather cool at nights as it is about 1000' above sea level. This place was supposed to be the best of all camps a land flowing with milk and honey ~~in~~ but actually the vital necessities it was worse than any experienced. There was plenty of space as the barbed wire boundar fence was a good distance from the 'apartments'. There were many rubber trees within the compound, and areas suitable for gardens which were later developed.

The kitchen staff prepared a tiffin in a partly finished kitchen, soon after our arrival, and it was the first meal for 3 days. It remarkable how little the human body can exist on, ofcourse we had always the warmth of the climate in our favour, although on the other hand there was the constant danger of infection.

As a member of the hospital staff I had plenty to do, getting the premises made as suitable as possible and preparing my own habitation. The second party arrived in about a week, and brought the remainder of the hospital patients except fifteen who were far too ill to travel. They were left behind at Muntok in charge of Dr. Lentze a Netherlands doctor and a small staff.

A small river about 15' wide ran through the camp grounds from

which water for the kitchen was obtained, and at lower points downstream bathing places were arranged. We all had a gruelling experience in the three days journey, but did not suffer any fatalities.

The women's camp from Muntok arrived at premises in the same estate, about a month or so after the men, and were about 1 mile and half distance from us but the actual proximity was not known until near the days of our liberation. They lost seven of their number during their 3 days ordeal who were buried at sea by the Japs without reverence or ceremony.

The party left AT Muntok with Dr.Lentze arrived two months later but only two patients were with them the others having passed away at Muntok. The food which had started at quite a high level in our estimation rapidly deteriorated, and very soon we were reduced to two meals a day, consisting of rice, or maize, old and weevil infested - and some vegetables, actually a few carrots on occasions. Chilli was fortunately always on the menu, and it was a great life saver, not only assisting in making the meals palatal but it contained a small portion of protein content. Meat and fish were unobtainable but later the Japs allowed Dr.Kampschurr with a companion, to go out shooting at night time in the jungle near by, with a rifle each and two bullets. It was dangerous shooting, but the doctor managed to secure much needed flesh. He bagged about 3 wild bears, 3 deer and about half a dozen wild pig in these expeditions,over a period of several months. The 'bag' was always shared with the women's camp which numbered about 500, our number had now been reduced to about 550 so even a whole wild pig or bear when dressed and weighing about one cwt did not provide a great deal for over 1000 hungry internees. The usual method of serving was to cook the meat all diced and in the form of a sauce, which was done for equality in the distribution. Needless to say both camps enjoyed these tit bits, and there were joyous expressions and a satisfying anticipation onthe days, the doctor called for a party to bring in the nights results. He has to be warmly thanked for his courage, and willingness in undertaking a very dangerous, but necessary exploration. At times the more daring of the young men in camp would on the moonless nights, stealthily get through the barbed wire fence and past the guards and other obstructions to contact with the native villages "Kampongs" and semi wild jungle to secure what they could in the way of food. As the natives were desperately in need of clothing, we got fairly good returns for 'old duds' and better still if the article was not patched, but such clothing was scarce and hard to part with. Quite a number of these parties made sorties at night and the food brought in by them at great risk

of course, was a useful adjunct to the rations and possibly saved many lives. Many of these courageous young men were caught, and suffered beatings, and imprisonment usually a month in a sort of a dungeon with only one meal a day of rice and water. ONE DIED FROM THE TREATMENT RECEIVED Ofcourse they were breaking the rules of the occupying authorities but under the circumstances it was quite lawful to try to live. The river was a great blessing to the internees as a dip in the fresh water was health itself. The very weak were assisted to the waters and sponged and washed. It was even a ardous task for some of the poor fellows to dry themselves.

An extraordinary incident happened on the 5th April when a very fine Japanese Military Band visited the camp to entertain us. I must say that the music was delightful and it was hard to believe that the same breed could respond to the art of fine music, ofcourse music hath charms to sooth the savage beast.

About the month of May the British and Netherlanders were separated by the Japs, for no apparent reason, and a new ward for the dysentry patients called the 'isolation ward' was erected away from the living quarters. It was near the river and at a point when the river intersected the boundary fence. I worked mostly in this ward with a companion Charlie Herridge, and it was usually the fatal ward for any patients brought in. Being isolated it was dangerous for infection, yet Charlie and I escaped the worst

Some of the Roman Catholic Clergy were also on duty in this ward a Baloloe as at Muntok, etc. They suffered heavily, losing about six Fathers and Brothers on this work. The hospital was a very primitive affair, earth floor with hard wood plank supported on round posts as Beds for each patient. It was so necessary to get all round the patients to attend to their requirements.

When the river flooded there was 18 inches of water all over this isolation ward, and as the beds were about 30" off the earth floor it was a very alarming situation for the patients. The attendants waded through all this in the performance of their duties and after the waters receded the place was a quagmire and the ordour none too pleasant. I had earlier acquired heavy boots and I looked more like a agricultural labourer 'A Son of the Soil' than a sick attendant. This was typical of Japanese administration which always shewed a complete lack of foresight. Some of the internees spent a good deal of time fishing in the river with great expectation and with crude equipment. A number of biggest fish were caught, but the majority were of the 'Baggie Minnow' variety. However, it was a flavour of fish for the successful.

I managed to secure about 80 beautiful butterflies which I preserved in skin with creosote

The early initiative for construction had long since vanished from the camp, due to lack of energy, and will power, but a number left pottering at the gardens, and cultivated a moderate amount of vegetables. Onething I rather amused my colleagues by doing was to cut the bark of a rubber tree and sole my boots or shoes with the natural 'Lytex' which flowed freely from the tree, owing to the long period without tapping. The lytex ran right on to the footwear and it was spread evenly and dried very quickly in the sun. Repeating this process until a thickness of 3/16" was reached quite a useful wearing surface adhered to the boot.

Private cooking occupied the attention of most of the captives, and anything cookable was converted to something which provided bulk if not of much food value. There was always the acute shorta of medical supplies to contend with despite the repeated requests from the doctors. One serious operation for a Hernia was carried out by Dr. Kramer and successfully too, under the most primitive conditions. The patient was given not too powerful anesthetic, and with the use of manual surgical appliances and safety pins all sterlized the operation was performed. The stitching was completed with the aid of ordinary sewing cotton (Clarks). The elderly and toygh old Netherlander got over his trouble, but it was a daring experiment.

Blackwater fever shewed its appearance in this camp and Cerebial malaria was a most extraordinary trouble. It seemed always to attack the strongest men in the camp and in less than a week they were gone. Tropical ulcers were awful to look at, and the vile odour from the open sore required a stout heart and strong stomach. The dressing staff had some very dangerous work to do attending to such patients. At Belaloe we lost about 122 of our number in the five months and up to the time of our liberation. This was over 25% of our total number in the camp at Belaloe. Really we were getting near the end of resistance, and had the Atom Bomb not hastened Victory, many more of our fellows would have perished. Over the whole period 109 British died out of a total of 196 which is 55.60% an exceedihgly high percentage, and represents the real truth of Jap methods and treatment.

Some happy moments relieved our minds when mails arrived from Great Britain on the 1st April and the 17th June. We were always very sorry for our Netherland friends whose communications from Java or Holland were almost too few to mention. We were allowed by the Nips to send yet another Post Card of 25 words home about March 1945. This was the fourth and last during our captivity, and of these only the first sent on 15th March 1945 reached home after nine months on transit, so that only one Post Card was received by those at home during the whole 3½ years captivity.

There is one ordinary member of the hospital staff who worked so consistently at a job, very few would volunteer for, whose work is worthy of a special mention, Mr. M.J.V.Miller known as 'Dusty' to everybody on the British side, for over 3 years ~~Mr. Miller~~ spent many hours each day washing the hospital patients' soiled clothing, and sometimes under the great difficulty of an adequate water supply. This work was done so regularly that it was taken for granted, but it was of the greatest value and essential to the patients welfare.

The four Netherland doctors, Dr. Lentze, Dr. Kramer, Dr.Kampschurr and Dr. Boreman were active and had they been given access to any proper medical supplies would have saved a great many lives. Dr. Hollweg was at this time incapacitated, being elderly, his previous experiences of privation were beginning to wear him down, but he survived the camp life.

The camp lost Dr. McKern of Penang, who died on 16th June 1945, and he like many others had battled bravely in hospital against hardships and adversity to near the very end of the incarceration, only to die when liberation was in sight. The last of the British community to pass was Mr. J.W.Jackson, of the Singapore Harbour Board who died on the 2nd September 1945 about a fortnight after we had heard of the peace being signed. Mr. Andrew Carruthers, a young man who took a leading part in all camp entertainments died the day before Mr. Jackson, and it was sorrowful to witness his passing, with his young wife beside him. Mrs. Carruthers, who had been in the women's camp all the 3½ years, and she had just a few days with Andrew who had been in hospital several month There were many tragedies like that, terminating a long weary journey of anxiety and distress.

Although peace in the Pacific was signed on the 15th August 1945 it was the 24th August when the Jap Commandant - Capt. Seki - informed us that he had an important announcement to make at 2 p.m on the afternoon of that day.

Previous to this we had indications that events had occurred which had altered Japan's hopes for victory if there ever were any

Rumours of the intensive bombing of Japan, and also the news of the Atom bombs having been dropped were given to some members of the camp by the native guards recruited from Southern Sumatra. These guards called 'Hi-Hos' by the Nips were disbanded, about the middle of August, and also the fact that some British and Netherland camp prisoners were released rather suddenly aroused the suspicion that we were nearing the end of our captivity.

The news that the war was at an end was taken calmly by the internees, and the camp management immediately arranged for a party of workers to visit the women's camp next day to assist

them by doing the heavy manual work.

Despite Seki's statement that he would continue in control of the camp until Allied Officers arrived the management made it clear to him that they would assume responsibility for the administration of camp affairs, to take effect immediately.

Next day women and children arrived in the men's camp and there were many affectionate scenes, as families were re-united after the long and anxious separation of 3½ years.

It was found that the women had even a worse experience than the men, when one consider the duties they had to perform, particularl in the Belaloe Camp. Besides all the ordinary tasks of camp life, they had to fell the trees for firewood, dig the graves for the dead, and make the coffins also. There was also the very humiliating job of carrying water for the Jap Officers whose quarters were not very far away.

It was a great day of joy and gladness for those who were united, but there were men and women in each camp who had lost those who were near and dear to them. For those the day of liberation was marred by sorrowful memories.

From then onwards there was daily contact between the two camps and there was an interchange of entertaining as far as possible. British and Australian Nursing Sisters were in the women's camp and they had lost a great many of their number since leaving Singapore in February 1942. For instance only 24 of the 65 Australian Sisters were alive on the day the camps were able to make contact. The British Nursing Staff also lost about 40 trained sisters in the sinking of the various ships about the time Singapore fell.

The 'Kongsie' or group of six of which I was a member had the great pleasure of entertaining and being entertained by the eight British Sisters who had survived not only the sinking of the ship in which they had left Singapore, but the 3½ years of hardships, and trial.

The women were really wonderful and seemed to have possessed an unconquerable and amazing spirit throughout those years of cruel captivity.

On the day before the declaration of peace by the Jap commandant, who did not of course admit defeat, a sudden and unexpected increase amounting to 100% in the camp rations was intimated, and it was generally anticipated that some very import events had occurred to force such a change in the Jap attitude

towards us.

A few days later we were inundated with supplies of tinned foods, consisting of meat, and fish, and Australian butter. The latter must have been 3½ years old, and it was in very excellent condition. We also received 2 sets of Jap uniforms per man, boots, blankets, and underclothing from their stocks. In addition to this quite a large supply of British Red Cross gifts were received. These had been dropped by parachute some miles fro our camp which was rather difficult to locate.

We bartered with the natives from the surrounding 'Kampongs' the clothing mentioned above, as very fewliked the idea of wearing a Jap uniform. At first the natives were hard to convincethat the Japs were 'Habis' - finished - but as soon as they found there new freedom, they came into the camp to trade their products for the clothing, of which they were in desperate need. A Jap tunic would fetch 3 chickens or 30 eggs, andit was very easy to get good supplies of Pork, fruit and vegetables of all kinds in exchang for the clothing. There was also a few issues by the Japs of 4 yards of British made material for each person and as some piece were of floral design, the native women were particularly interest The poor souls had very little clothing for years, and were eager to replenish their 'wardrobes'. All this food after a 3½ years interval was new to us, and to be suddenly supplied with a surfeit rather stunned us, and one had to be careful not to feed or choke the machine to excess. Mr. Tussenbrook now in charge of the kitchen had to ease of supplies now owing to the 'glut'.

The Japs had been forced under the terms of surrender to immediately supply the internees with necessities. Medical supplies were also handed over, and also mattresses for the patients. All this available of goods and supplies rather stagger us, as our sense of values had almost disappeared. It was almost incredible that a short time previously some of the internees been eating rats, frogs, banana skins, etc.

Onthe 5th September a mail was received from Australia and Great Britain.

On the 6th September two Netherland paratroopers dropped at Bencollen, on the west coast of Sumatra contacted the camp and wirlessed Colombo details of the camp conditions, etc. Following the arrival of two Dutch Paratroopers as vanguards of the liberating force, and on the 12th September Major Jacobs and a corporal of the British Army visited the camp, and it was a grand sight to see the British representatives, walking ahead of a dozen or so Jap Officers, who gait had lost a great deal of its former pomp, and possessiveness. They were now significant in their insignificance.

On the 13th, 14th and 15th Liberators dropped large supplies of necessities and this additional Manna from Heaven secured us against want for rest of our sojourn in camp.

The medical supplies were very ample and suitable. The captain of the first Liberator British to visit us dropped a personal message to the camp, wishing us well, and assuring us that as soon as possible we should return to civilisation. The names of the crew, very representative of every part of the British Commonwealth were also given. The note finished with a humorous query 'What do you think of the New Labour Government'. It was the first confirmation news, that a party government was in power. British Doctors, and orderlies had also arrived to repor and make arrangements for our removal elsewhere.

Soon after the surrender on August 15th 1945 the Allied authorities had acted promptly, and had landed in a few days, paratroopers at ma places in Sumatra near where the camps were situated. In ten da all the camps had been visited. Major Jacobs told us that other camps in Sumatra were worse than ours particularly where 1200 survived out of a total of 4000. The treatment of the women in that area had been vile beyond words.

About 16th September the first party of women including the Australian sisters left for Singapore, and from then until the 19th September parties from each camp were sent to Lahut for transport to Singapore by the R.A.A.F.Dakotas. The machines, about 3 each day and carrying about 40 each soon had the British back in Allied hands. Any Netherland patient who wished to trav was also given an opportunity of getting away and a good number were glad to take advantage of the offer. I was in the very las detachment to leave the camp at Belaloe.

About mid-night on the 19th September Stewart Andreson and I wit 5 stretcher cases in an open truck got to the rail head and afte seeing our patients as comfortable as possible in the special compartments arranged for them, we strolled about the station at Loeboek Linggua until the train left for Lahut at 4 a.m. on Thursday the 20th.

Our Dutch friends had waited up to see us off the previous night and wished us well. I wondered if, and when, I should meet thos companions in suffering and distress again. The British in the Camp in my opinion must always be indebted to the Netherlanders particularly for the very vital part in negotiating the supply o extra food and being responsible for the preparation of all the food, under great difficulties. It might be opportune and interesting to mention some of the native vegetables, fruits and preparations which we contacted in camp experience. I never realised before that the there were so many different kinds of

rice - Ryst - in shape, flavour and colour. Even jet black rice is procurable and very good too. The favourite was 'Kampong' or village rice, which had a real 'mealy' natural flavour and not meddled with, by the various so called refinement operations.

Here is the list of some of which too infrequently graced the menu. The home equivalent is given where possible also those items purchased by the camp management are marked with asterisk.

	Sawi	vegetable
.x.	Carrot	(very seldom issued)
	Bayam	Spinach
	KangKeong	coarse native vegetable
	Timun	Cucumber
	Labu	Pumpkin
.x.	Papaja	Papaya
	BangKoeang	Turnip
	ChineseCabbage	very good but rare
	Nanka	Jack Fruit
	Taugi	(Cress)
	Obi Keladi	Sweet potatoe
.x.	Ketjap-Katyap	(Ketchup)
.x.	Klapper Oil	(Cocoanut oil)
.x.	Kachang Idjo	(Small Green Peas)
	Gablek	Sun dried Obi Kayu
	Ongle-Ongle	Tapioca flour (unrefined)
.x.	Pisangs	(Bananas)
	Maize	(Very old weevil eaten)
	Soya Beans	(Very poor quality)
.x.	Palm Oil	
	Obi Kayu	(Potatoe tuber)
.x.	Gula Java	
.x.	Garlic	
	Nasi Goreng	Fried Rice
.x.	Kachang Tana	(Ground nuts)
.x.	Trassi or Balechan	(Prawn Paste)
.x.	Tamarinde	(ginger root)
.x.	Chilli.	

Tobacco was available nearly all the time of captivity, but as Sumatra is a tobacco country and little export trade there was always an excess. It was not always cheap and generally was the plain leaf, without much attention given to blending or manufacture. It was also very strong, but a great soothing influence to men in the camp.

Paper was unobtainable, but special native leaves and straws were substituted combustible containers.

Well we arrived at Lahut about 10 a.m. and about mid-day left for the aerodrome, where a Dakota awaited the party, the last one to leave.

At 12.30 p.m. we were in the air, and had shaken truly the dust of Sumatra from our feet, and on the first part of our homeward journey after an almost incredible experience. The journey to Singapore was very pleasant and none of the passengers or patients shewed ill effects. I had the opportunity of seeing from the air the east coastline of Sumatra, where the many tragedi occurred 3½ years previously. About 4 p.m. after 2½ hours in the air we landed safely at Singapore Airport. We were met there by welfare officers and parties of 'Tommies' who assisted us into special cars for conveyance to our accommodation. It was a grand sight to see the Airport filled with Allied machines and men of every race almost - except the Axis - busy at their several dutie They must have thought us a weird bunch, thin haggard, and haunted, and ill-clad, and so we were.

The Royal Australian Air Force, must be thanked and praised for so quickly getting these special rescue service operating in so many parts of the Far East and bringing to Singapore thousands of P.o.Ws and civilian internees.

The scene at the Airport was the first sight of Allied Air Strength, and we were amazed at the size of the great long distanc machines which had merely been conjecture in camp.

The welfare and Y.W.C.A. organisations could not do enough for us and all the attention and human kindness was an incomparable contrast to the cunning cruelty, barbarism and villiany of the Japanese.

I with a few companions were accommodated at the Rex Hotel, and dined at the famous 'Raffles' Hotel, we had many happy reunions with old friends from other camps in the Far East. The same stor was told that everywhere the same methods of Jap oppression had been applied, with an inhuman record which will always be a stain on Japanese character for all time.

My stay in Singapore was destined to be a short one for I was sent home on board the 'Highland Chieftain' the name rather touched me with a number of my old camp companies on Sunday the 23rd September 1945. I had the opportunity previously of visiting the main centres of Singapore, and it was not damaged as much as I had expected. The town was clean in appearance, but very few shops were open, or had been open for years. The banks were operating to some extent and had evidently recovered or retained most of their records.

The natives were happy, and seemed relieved at the passing of the black shadow of Japanese occupation. The Chinese in particular had suffered very heavily at the hands of the Japs, in Singapore.

The 'Highland Chieftain' with 250 civilians internees and 800 Australian P.o.Ws and with a 'Pommy' O.C.Troops left Singapore on Monday 24th September for Australia via Darwin.
The conditions and attention on board were splendid and the trip to Sydney was a very happy and memorable conclusion to the captivity. It was difficult to believe that we were passing through the seas which had been so long under enemy control.
We touched at Darwin, and Thursday Island and passed through the Great Barrier Reef where the scenery is magnificent. On Thursday the 14th October the Highland Chieftain sailed into Sydney Harbour at 5.30 a.m. and everybody was up to get a glimpse of the harbour and bridge, and city which had been but a memory for years. Many of the P.o.Ws had been in the Siam Railway Camps and quite a number had lost limbs as a result of enemy neglect and cruelty. It was amazing how quickly the men recovered from the effects of their captivity and how a few weeks or months, of good food and living conditions improved them physically and mentally also. The soldiers were disembarked first, and they got a great welcome from the people assembled to meet the ship. The civilians followe and it was grand to touch Australian soil again.

When I met the family I could not have recognise Janette, Iain and little Margaret had they not been with their mother, for they had grown up so much in the four years of separation. I got home and found Nana well, but I was greatly shocked to learn of the death of my Father on 15th October 1942, and of Andrews death on 2nd January 1944, and of having lost so many cousins and friends at home.

During the captivity I had kept a private record of all the particulars of the British internees and a complete list of those who died and also of the Netherlanders who died. This was found very useful to the Malayan Investigation Burreau in Sydney, who were able to pass on information to the known relatives and friends of the living and also of the deceased internees.

All the foregoing is a simple sketch of my experiences under the 'occupying authorities' in Sumatra. There is perhaps much more I could write about, but that is better kept from print, and I dare not enlarge on such facts and details. I am but one of the thousands who endured hardships at the hands of the Japanese and one of those who escaped 'when cruel men against us furiously rose up in wrath to make of us their prey".

J.C.Brodie.

Kuala Lumpur, 18th Nov.1946.

During the years that passed in these conditions, one was certain to become reminiscent, and think and talk of the past. Everyone I am sure surveyed their whole existence from the earliest days one could remember, stories of boyhood escapades and adventures, sporting events and World War 1, and 'work-a-day' experiences were related and retold.

Home life, family affairs and agreat variety of domestic chatter would give interest and entertainment, and some men would be forever proclaiming the virtues of their wives, and who would blame them for that. Camp affairs were also discussed with keeness and vigor, and criticism of the management was not absent.

Looking backwards, however, the resultant effort of all concerned was commendable, and the few indiscretions can be readily forgotten. Sometimes I would join a group engaged in some discussion and in a remarkably short time, subjects from the classics of the ancient Greeks, right down to the personalities who illuminated the old vaudeville stage, would receive attention.

Politics were not greatly in mind, perhaps it was the result of the complete unity of the British people to fight to Victory, and partisan affairs were not of substantial moment. The glorious epic 'The Battle for Britain' in which the R.A.F. excelled was certainly something to build one's hopes on, the retreat from Dunkirk, and the struggle in North Africa, and the resistance to the incessant bombing were reminders of the calibre of the British people. The young men and women of Great Britain and the British Commonwealth and of the Allies were relied on to keep the Nazi gang from fouling the statutes of liberty and freedom. It was also declared certain, by the farseeing, that Japanese ambitious in the Far East would ultimately meet with disaster.

It was hoped that another generation would not be inflicted with a grandsons war otherwise the social structure considered as civilisation today must certainly collapse. These are a few camp thoughts and impressions. I was determined during the ordeal to keep alert to work and keep fit enough to get out. To relinquish one's hold on one's self was a victory for the Japs. I brought to bear all the mental forces I could muster to defeat defeat. I thought so much of what it meant to get out, and see all at home, and hear from all in Bonnie Scotland, and elsewhere. I felt I had something yet to live for, and my interest in living was not going to end. I wrote from memory for instance Burns Cotters Saturday Night' Epistle to a young friend, 'To A Mouse' To a Daisy' with few ommissions. I thought of what Burns wrote of himself "He'll hae misfortunes great and sma' but aye and hert abune them a'.
I recalled passages from Scott, Shakespeare, and those who have left us a heritage, which lifted me right out The squ'alor of my predictament.

If you can wait and not be tired by waiting
If you can think and not make thoughts your aim
If you can meet with triumphand disaster
And treat those two imposters just the same

and

If you can force your heart, and nerve, and sinew
To serve your turn long aften they are gone
And still hold on while there is nothing left within you
Except the will which says to them 'Hold On'.

Better still in the silent moments the Great Creator was revered and I can say assuredly that I have learned from experienc the blessings of Almighty God. We had ample opportunity of studying the starlit sky, and it was easy to remember that the 'The Heavens declareth His Majesty' and the firmament His handiwor

I could also remember many paragraphs from my early biblical training such as 'They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint, and I did feel, that if I should be destined for freedom again it was because I was taught to remember my Creator in the days of my youth. I had time togive silent thanks to all the old influences of teachers and friends who taught me by precept and example the way of life. I gave thanks to my parents for their guidance, and control and for a strong body and a healthy mind. I often thought of Scotland, my native town, and my ain folk, and of all my old interests and activities with vivid recollectior and in lighter vein perhaps it was an inspiration to sing "Keep right on to the end of the Road". That is just a flash shall I say of the thoughts which guided me through and I felt if I did triumph spiritually over the degradation and evil intent of the enemy that I might also say truly 'Blessed are the uses of adversity'.