



Honorary Chairman - Mr Ron Mockford  
 Treasurer - Mrs Margaret Walton  
 Committee Members - Mr Keith Andrews, Mr James Whiskens

Vice Chairman - Mr Kenneth Coy  
 Secretary - Mrs Barbara James

***GREETINGS TO YOU ALL AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU TOO  
 - LET'S HOPE THAT 2021 IS A GOOD (BETTER & SAFER) ONE!***

### LOOKING BACK AT 2020

I have to say that 2020 was not the start of the new decade that we were anticipating twelve months ago. We had our first monthly meeting in January and soon after that we started to become aware of the concerns over a new virus emanating far away in the little known city of Wuhan in China. A month later we met up again but with fewer of us attending, March's meeting had only a few members venturing along and with the increasing news of the spread of the new 'Corona virus' this was the last time that we met and then we went into lockdown - the virus was named Covid-19 and the rest of the year you all know about only too well!!

Christmas and New Year were celebrated under tight restrictions as to how many people could meet up in their homes etc and, like myself and George, many decided that to stay on our own - our FEPOW were unable to celebrate those festivities with their loved ones for three, and in some cases, four years, so it seemed a small thing to do so that we can meet up once more in safety soon. Then we started to hear of the new Covid-19 mutation that has caused it to be increasingly easily transmitted. The good news was that a vaccine had been tested and passed for use and the immunisation programme has begun. A second vaccine which has an increased ease of use and many of us will receive it, so there is hope that we will be meeting up at the Holiday Inn again fairly soon! Many of you have kept in contact with me and I know how much you are missing meeting up and how much it means to be a part of BAFEPOW, we're a group of special people with a united link to the FEPOW, either as a descendant, a friend or because of an interest in their history.

So, looking back, what of our BAFEPOW plans for 2020?

All regular monthly meetings - cancelled for the foreseeable future

The AGM to be held at the Holiday Inn in July was cancelled/postponed until July 2021

The VJ75 commemorative lunch - cancelled/postponed - we still hope to celebrate VJ75+1 in August

The BAFEPOW trip to potentially the Secret Art of Captivity in Liverpool - cancelled

The Annual BAFEPOW Christmas lunch - cancelled

What were the effects on other FEPOW related events?

The Annual Service of Remembrance at the FEPOW Church in Wymondham was cancelled in May but hopes to go ahead this year.

The Researching FEPOW History Group exhibition - The Secret Art of Captivity - at the VG&M in Liverpool had to close sadly.

The annual visit to the Japanese Embassy, London in June for FEPOWs and their descendants was cancelled.

COFEPOW had to cancel/postpone the FEPOW Memorial Service at Lichfield Cathedral and the Evening Dinner on Saturday, August 15th and also had to cancel the COFEPOW VJ75 AGM, the annual VJ Day service at the FEPOW Grove and the VJ75 FEPOW Remembrance lunch on Sunday, August 16th. It is hoped that these events will go ahead in August and you should contact Chris Wills if you are interested in any of there so that they can see what interest there is.

The NWWFRA VJ75 service at St Martins in the Field (the FEPOW Church) was cancelled.

The November Repatriation Commemoration/VJ Day event in Southampton in November was cancelled/postponed.

The Remembrance Sunday service at the Cenotaph and march of veterans that COFEPOW members also take part in, was curtailed. The service was held and some wreaths were laid by dignitaries but there was no march past.

### **THE GOOD NEWS FROM 2020!**

After all the disappointment of cancelled events, the RBL, after a great deal of prompting, pressure and adverse publicity, put on a VJ75 Commemorative service at the Far East Grove at the NMA. In the presence of HRH Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, the BBC in conjunction with the RBL put on an outstanding commemoration to the Forgotten Army, the FEPOW, the participating Commonwealth Armed Forces. It was, in my opinion, the best commemorative service that I had seen and a few of our members were also lucky enough to be invited to be present. In the evening there was a commemorative programme from the Royal Albert Hall and that too was extremely moving and informative - let's hope the progress made towards increasing the public awareness of the war in the Far East will continue.

On Facebook the compilation of 1000 photos of FEPOW/Forgotten Army veterans reached its total goal in time for VJ75, with the central photograph being of Captain Sir Thomas Moore in recognition of his great fundraising achievement and reaching his 100th Birthday. (*VJ Day FEPOW's Gallery - the new gallery dedicated solely to pictures of our FEPOW is still continuing to grow - if you haven't submitted a photo as yet, there is still time to do so*)

In Leicester, Shirley Barnes was instrumental in organising an exhibition about the FEPOW and the war in the Far East in conjunction with the local museum/council. A new monument to the FEPOW was also unveiled - well done, Shirley!



Many local commemorative services were also held around the country to mark VJ75 and then in November to commemorate Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day but with reduced numbers of people allowed to attend - We Will Remember Them, no matter what!

### **FEPOW, FEPOW WIVES AND WIDOWS**

The BAFEPOW committee decided that, as we had been unable to have our planned events and meetings for so long that we would like to use some of the funds to give a Christmas treat to Ron, our Honorary Chairman and also to our two FEPOW widows, Irene and Iris. We arranged for each of them to receive an M&S Christmas Hamper to bring some festive joy to them and to let them know that we look upon them with great affection.

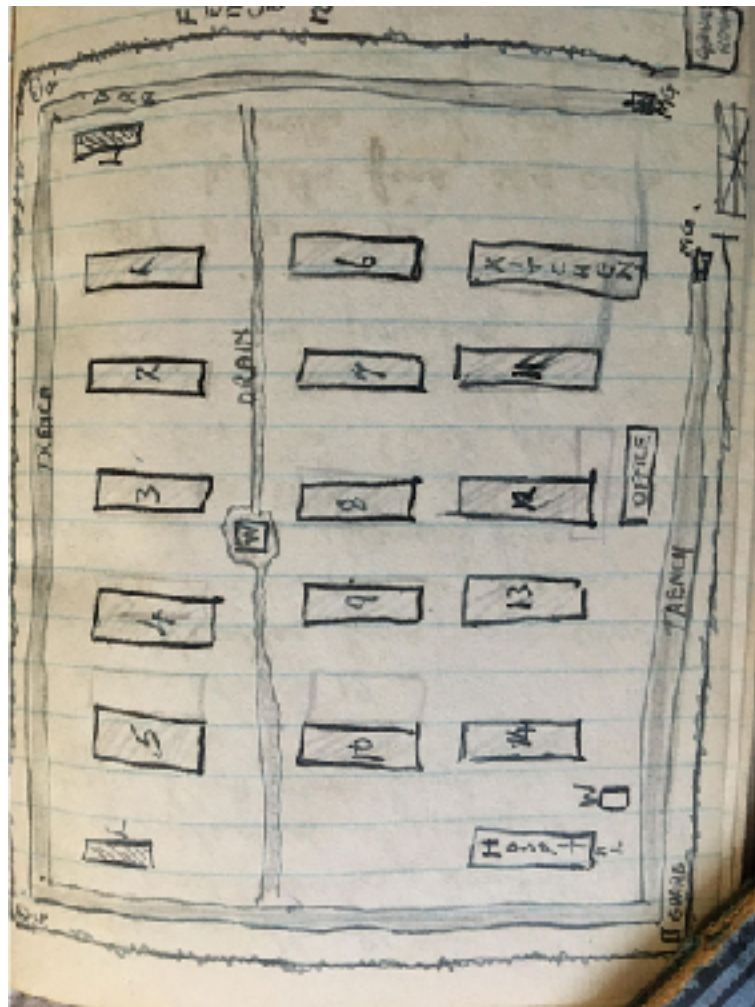
I have spoken to Ron a few times and he is as cheerful and resilient as ever, quite an inspiration. He expressed his gratitude for the Christmas hamper that brought him some extra festive cheer. I was also able to track down a contact number from Ken for Irene and have had several lovely chats with her and I will continue to keep in touch with her in the future. She was so delighted with her hamper that she asked her daughter to take a photograph of it which she posted to me. (On everyone's behalf, I would like to send Irene our best wishes and hope that she keeps well as she has had a few health issues

lately.) Iris, my dear Mom, who has been in lockdown at her Care Home since March, has been finding the lack of visiting and separation very difficult. I was finally able to visit her but it wasn't ideal as she had great difficulty hearing me through the perspex barrier. I did, however, manage to arrange a visit so that I could take her BAFEPOW hamper for her and she was delighted and very appreciative of the kindness of her BAFEPOW friends for thinking of her. I have kept a few non perishable items so that she can enjoy them in the future when lockdown is safely lifted.

(I have also spoken to Ann Coy who had been undergoing treatment but is now feeling much better. James Whiskens has also, sadly, been unwell and was recently in hospital - hope you feel much better very soon, James!)

**FEPOW RESEARCH IS LIKE A JIGSAW - THERE ARE ALWAYS A FEW PIECES LEFT FIND AND TO FIT IN!**

So many of us never quite complete the whole story of our own FEPOW's time as prisoners and then, quite unexpectedly, something crops up and another piece of the jigsaw turns up. I had known that my Dad, Eric, had been sent from Saigon to Phumi to work on the construction of an airfield. While reading through a tribute about a FEPOW on Facebook for the latest Gallery of FEPOW Heroes, I noted that he had been in several camps including Saigon and 'Fumie'. I wondered if he had just spelt it phonetically and if this could be the same Phumi camp that my Dad had been moved to from Saigon for a short time. I took the opportunity to contact his daughter who had put the information on Facebook. She very kindly answered me and agreed that it could be possible that her dad, Edwin Kearsley, had misspelt the name of the camp. She has a handwritten account by him of his time in this camp and also a hand drawn plan of the hut he was kept in. She very kindly forwarded a copy of his report on the camp, a transcript of an interview he gave on Radio Shropshire. The account of how the prisoners attempted to sabotage the building of the runway fitted in with what my Dad had told Mom about mixing the concrete in the wrong ratio so that it would give way and various other ploys. And so another piece of the jigsaw seems to have emerged and has been fitted into the mystery that is the site known as Phumi (Fumie) and below is the plan of one of the huts that they were kept in that Edwin drew.



**NEW WWI MEMORIAL INSTALLED IN LIVERPOOL**



I came across this new memorial that has been unveiled at the Maghull Station North and it is to remember the men who returned from the ‘front’ suffering from shell-shock and who were heading to Moss Side Hospital in Maghull, Liverpool for treatment. It made me think of the many FEPOW who suffered PTSD after repatriation although the problem was not recognised as a medical condition until some time later. I am glad that there is a memorial to those who suffered so much in WWI - I wish there was one for our FEPOW whose condition post repatriation has never widely been fully appreciated. The fact that this memorial is in Liverpool seems very relevant to our FEPOW too with the connection to the Liverpool School Of Tropical Medicine and the Researching FEPOW History Group for its research into the FEPOWs both during captivity and post repatriation. The hospital was later renamed as Ashworth Hospital but I managed to find out more about its origins:-

*Moss Side Red Cross Military Hospital (RCMH) began life as a very grand house built for Thomas Harrison, a Merchant trading in Africa, and his family in the 1830's. He died in early 1840 and by 1872 the family sold the estate. Rex Harrison, the actor, was a descendent of this family. It was purchased in 1878 by the overseers of the Liverpool Workhouse - The Liverpool Select Vestry and was initially used as a convalescent home for girls and then only boys. By 1911 after various plans for the building had been turned down, it was decided to develop the home as "a colony for epileptics" of which there were 300 in all. The Mental Deficiency Act of 1914 came into being and more people found that their*

*conditions put them under the care of that Act. By July 1914 the partially extended hospital and estate was sold to The Lunacy Board Of Control as a State Institution For Defectives - but, before this could be implemented, the hospital and estate was taken over by the War Office with the approval of the Home Secretary.*

Many FEPOW did receive help after repatriation to help them to adjust to their return to civilian life but not all were able to avail themselves of this. It was the recognition of the problems that many of them were encountering that led to the establishment of the FEPOW Association. The Birmingham Association was one of the very first with the work started by FEPOW like Pat de Paeztron. Phillip Toosey in Liverpool also saw the need for support, both financial and for mental health and he was instrumental in furthering the welfare available to help many FEPOW adjust to normal life. Their experiences as POWs was not one that the majority of people could understand or appreciate, so it helped many of them to adjust by meeting up with fellow POWs who had been through the same trauma and who possibly could/would not talk about it to their loved ones or others.

I was pleased to see that the January COFEPOW Newsletter had included the article that our treasurer, Margaret Walton, had written about Pat De Paeztron for the BAFEPOW VJ75 Newsletter. With Margaret's permission and also the permission of Pat's family, I had sent it to COFEPOW as it followed on from Pam Stubbs article in the September issue on the Bromsgrove Burma Star Monument where there is a bench dedicated to Pat. We remain very grateful to Rob Ward, a local resident, for the wonderful restoration job that he did to this bench last year.

#### **MUCH RESPECTED AND BELOVED FEPOW ACHIEVES HIS CENTURY**

It was a great pleasure to send 100th Birthday Greetings via Facebook to Bob Hucklesby when he celebrated his 100th Birthday on Monday, 4th January. Bob has contributed greatly to many FEPOW events, attended RFEPOWHG conferences, taken part in FEPOW history research, served as the President of NFFWRA, spoken on behalf of his comrades, and featured in the BBC VJ75 Memorial Services both at the NMA on BBC One on the evening of VJ Day.

Thank you, Bob, for all that you have done and we hope you had a really happy day!

Another FEPOW reached his 101st Birthday recently:-

Len Gibson - while serving his country in the Second World War, Mr Gibson was a member of the 125 Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery when he was captured by the Japanese. Nearly 200 of the 125 Regiment died during captivity and now, Len is the lone survivor. He had a fall recently but is making a good recovery and we wish him well.

#### **VJ75 REPORT FOR POWS HELD IN TAIWAN**

I came across the Winter 2020 newsletter for the 'Not Forgotten', the official newsletter of the TAIWAN P.O.W. CAMPS MEMORIAL SOCIETY which may be of interest to anyone who had a FEPOW that was held in a POW camp in Taiwan. It is still of interest to look at anyway and to appreciate how VJ75 was commemorated in August 2020. I have pasted the link to it below that was on the COFEPOW Facebook site:-

<https://buff.ly/3oVvPty>

#### **ROLL OF HONOUR**

Albert Wakley sadly passed away on 09/12/2020 aged 100 years. Known as Bert, he was captured in Java and then held in Borneo. He had been the secretary of the Southampton FEPOW club for twenty years until it was disbanded.

**BAFEPOW IN 2021**

Monthly meetings - until lockdown has been lifted, and we have possibly been vaccinated successfully and it is safe to travel, we have postponed all monthly meetings. As soon as possible beforehand we will let you know when we can start meeting again. We do hope that the Holiday Inn will be able to provide space for us again.

The AGM - if possible this will be on Tuesday, July 13th.

VJ75+1 - if possible this will take place on Tuesday, August 10th.

The Annual BAFEPOW Christmas Lunch - should take place on Tuesday, December 14th

BAFEPOW trip - possibly to the NMA but no decision as yet about the destination or the date - please do let me know if you have any other possible places to visit

The BAFEPOW News Sheet is put together and distributed by Barbara James. If you have any items or messages for inclusion, please do send them to me.

If you just want a chat, do ring me, I think we have all missed being able to meet up at our monthly meetings during the pandemic.

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**WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW, WIVES AND WIDOWS**

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

Mrs Margaret Martin, Java Club, by phone:- 01273 424686 or by email:-

[margaretmartin1944@sky.com](mailto:margaretmartin1944@sky.com)

Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA, phone :- 07818599303 or by email:-

[enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk)

