NEWS FROM BORNEO

January 2022



Sydney Opera House. 2022 is a year of many anniversaries

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Hello everyone,

New Year Greetings to all of you and may 2022 be an improvement on last year, mercifully now behind us. The iconic Sydney Opera House is more generally associated with New Year's Eve fireworks but I have chosen the 'red poppies' image above, taken on 11 November last year, as the special image for this bulletin, as 2022 is a year of significant anniversaries.

For a start, 80 years ago on 8 December last, the Japanese invaded northern Malaya, an act of aggression that resulted in so much misery. The Americans, being Americans, think that WW2 is all about them, and constantly claim that Pearl Harbour was the first place attacked by the Japanese, citing 7 December as the date. Well, they conveniently forget about the International Date Line. Malaya was attacked at 12.30 am local time on the 8th, and Pearl Harbour 78 minutes later! The first casualties of the war were the crewmen of a Catalina flying boat, shot down at noon, 7 December, local time, over the Gulf of Siam.

The 80th anniversary of the fall of Singapore will be on 15 February, and there will be services in Australia held in Sydney at 11 am at the Cenotaph in Martin Place, and in Canberra. I can't find any mention of any other services elsewhere, so you will need to check locally.

As this is such a significant year in relation to the POW experience, it will be marked with a musical tribute, **POW Requiem**, the fourth of seven commemorative Requiems following on from

the *Gallipoli Symphony*, the *Diggers' Requiem* and the *Vietnam Requiem*. It will premiere in Canberra on Saturday, 29 October 2022 from 1- 4 pm at the ANU's Llewellyn Hall.

POW families are invited to have input into *POW Requiem*. I am on board as Honorary Consultant and Adviser to Chris Latham, Director of the project. The first 'gathering' will be in Sydney on 17 February. **IF you live in another state**, and would like to be part of the consultative process, **please let me know**. I will then arrange for you to be notified of date, time and place. I hope some of the Sydney Family will be able to accept the invitation below.

Invitation:

Chris Latham, Director of the Flowers of Peace and Artist in Residence at the Australian War Memorial invites you to a special consultation event. Our next in the series of national commemorative concerts, the *POW Requiem* is currently being developed for the Australian War Memorial as a gift to the nation. We would be delighted if you can join us for this, the beginning of a national stakeholder engagement process, where we explain the reasoning behind this upcoming concert, preview some of the music and obtain your feedback to ensure authenticity. This in turn, helps us to fine tune and shape the concert.

Date: 17 February 2022 12.30pm to 2pm (complimentary light luncheon served from 12

noon)

Where: Auditorium at the ANZAC Memorial, Hyde Park, Sydney

Please **RSVP for catering purposes by 7 February 2022** via https://events.humanitix.com/pow-requiem-consultation-invitation If you require any further information or have any questions, please call Joanne, General Manager and Veteran Liaison on 0438952263.

Remembrance Day was observed by many people this year. We were fortunate to have Willie Teo lay a wreath for us at Labuan War Cemetery, where Willie and friends took advantage of a covid 'lull' to organize a service at short notice. We had left a beautiful wreath there last visit, supplied by Hornsby RSL, in Sydney, so he placed it on the memorial in memory of the four Hornsby men, and all their comrades. The service made local TV news. Here is the link to a short youtube video clip made by Willie's friend. It is definitely worth watching. https://youtube.com/watch?v=8todUmD--Xs&feature=share



Willie with POW wreath



The Labuan memorial, Cross of Sacrifice

In London, Mark, married to Claire, whose relative Alec died in Borneo, was selected as part of the Metropolitan Police contingent to attend the service in Whitehall. Normally the Queen attends, but missed it for the first time ever as she had sprained her back. The medals Mark is wearing are his own, having served in the British Army before becoming a policeman. Lovely to see the traditional 'bobby' helmet! Not to be outshone by her husband, Claire, who specializes in WW1 historical research, wrote the story below as a tribute to a soldier from WW1, for Remembrance Day. The photo next to Mark is of the beautiful cemetery, where her hero is buried.



The View from a Hero's Headstone.

Captain John Leslie Green was a Cambridge-educated pre-War doctor serving in France with the RAMC but attached to his brother's Regiment, the South Staffordshires, on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. His brother, 19-year-old 2nd Lt Alan Edward Green, had been killed in action at Loos ten months earlier.

John and the men he was charged with caring for were attacking Gommecourt Wood that terrible morning, but it bristled with implacable machine guns and protected by impenetrable barbed wire entanglements.

Hit by flying metal himself as he moved forward, he spotted a fellow officer, Captain Frank Robinson, badly wounded and hung up on the barbed wire, unable to move. Any second, he would be hit again. Determined to save his friend, John got himself to Frank under a welter of bullets and shrapnel and used all his draining strength to pull Frank free of the vicious barbs, dragging him into the scant cover of a shell hole. Here, bleeding uncontrollably himself, John dressed his friend's wounds.

Seeing now that Frank was helpless and that he would have to somehow get them both to safety, John now climbed back out of the crater, the enemy machine guns never letting up, shells and hand grenades falling like rain around him, and dragged Frank out after him.

John now picked up the dead weight of his friend and began to carry him towards the British line, towards home. Frank was hit again; John kept going.

As the screws turned ever tighter, maybe Frank now also represented his little brother he couldn't save, all the Boys he couldn't save. Eventually, he stumbled and laid Frank down to fumble a field dressing onto the new wounds but, finally, the German bullets found his head and 26-year-old John fell for the last time.

The man he had fought so hard to save was eventually rescued and treated but died from his wounds two days later.

Captain John Leslie Green was buried at Foncquevillers, the imprint of the Victoria Cross he was posthumously awarded carved into his headstone, and here he lies in this beautiful place, still looking after his Boys.

Unsung Heroes: Claire's hero was awarded a Victoria Cross for gallantry. This month also marks the 80th Anniversary of the terrible fighting that took place in Malaya, from Muar and Parit Sulong, when two vastly outnumbered and depleted Australian battalions were confronted by 10,000 crack Japanese of the Imperial Guard. The retreat from Bakri to Parit Sulong must be one of the greatest fighting retreats of WW2, an action that saw the 2/19th Battalion's Lieutenant Colonel Charles Anderson awarded the Allied army's ONLY Victoria Cross of the Malayan Campaign. January 22 also marks the anniversary of the massacre of 107 Australians and 35 Indians, all badly wounded, who had been left behind in ambulances under the protection of a Red Cross flag, when the Australians were forced to break out of an encirclement and escape through the jungle. I still have about 20 copies of *The Bridge at Parit Sulong*, (last ones in existence) if anyone wants to know more about this amazing story. Cost is \$45 posted. They are selling for up to \$80 second hand!

Which brings me to another hero, whose story I came across. His name is Hugh Syme.

In 1941, this modest laconic Australian arrived in war-torn Britain with several Royal Australian Naval Reserve Officers to deal with unexploded bombs and land mines. Over the next 21 months Hugh, aged 22 and grandson of the founder of Melbourne's *The Age* newspaper, performed acts of personal heroism that saved thousands of lives. Working alone because he felt it too dangerous to expose others, he carried out 19 mine recovery and disposal operations.





Hero Hugh Syme

George cross (left) and Victoria Cross (right)

For his outstanding courage, Hugh Syme was awarded the George Medal twice (for acts of outstanding bravery) and also the George Cross – the highest valour award for non-combatant bravery and equal to that of a Victoria Cross. By 1943, he was our most decorated RAN Officer. The first George Medal was awarded for his coolness in dealing with ten mines, one of which

exploded when it was being turned to expose the fuse. In June 1942, he was awarded a bar to his George Medal for the disposal of a particularly dangerous parachute mine, lodged under eight feet of heavy clay near an anti-aircraft battery and water reservoir. Burrowing down, he found that the fuse was on the other side. He then tunnelled completely around the mine and defused it in appallingly cold and wet conditions, withdrawing the fuse by hand, an extremely risky procedure, usually done from a distance using cords.

His George Cross in 1943 was for the series of 19 defusing tasks (one per month). Back in Australia he established an Australian Mine Clearance Section at HMAS *Cerberus*. In 1953 he was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Coronation Medal, a non-military medal presented by the sovereign as a personal souvenir. Additionally, Syme was offered a knighthood by the Queen but modestly declined the honour feeling that he deserved it no more than those he had served with.'

Forgotten Bunker: Before we move on to other things, Singapore is now a very modern city and many of the wartime relics have been lost, so I was surprised to discover that this wartime bunker, hidden by jungle vines and foliage, still exists. It is on my 'to do' list next trip, if I ever get back there!



The Scholarship Girls: The girls will soon resume their studies after the Christmas break and we hope that their education is far less disrupted this year! We also say farewell to Archdeacon Yong, Rector or St Michael's, who was responsible for our girls' welfare. He sent the following message:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your commitment and dedication to the Hostel Ministry. You have been a blessing not only to the hostel girls, but also to the bumiputera [indigenous people] in Sandakan through some special projects.

I am honoured to have the privilege to serve in St. Michael's Church in the past 8 years. Currently, my family and I are in Penang. I have enrolled to a post-graduate program at a Theological Institution in Penang.

Thank you for the partnership and friendship.

God bless, Yong

Buy-a-Smile update: We are still marking time with the planned hare-lip operations but, just before Christmas, we received an SOS. The admission to hospital on 23 December of one of our former patients, Jahra, who has had partial cosmetic surgery to her hare-lip, allowed our surgeon to take advantage of the situation for further work and reconstructive surgery on her cleft palate, which will allow her to eat and talk properly. She lives on a remote oil plantation near Ranau, where her father works. We had funds in the kitty to also provide transportation for her parents to be with her at the hospital. Here she is before the hare-lip surgery, and afterwards. (You can see that she needed further surgery to reduce the size of her upper lip). I have not included the photo of the cleft palate as it is very confronting. Needless to say, her life will be so much better now. We also have a baby awaiting surgery in Labuan, which we hope will happen before too long.



Before hare-lip correction. Jahra has now undergone further surgery Next patient on the list.

Jahra's father sent a message of thanks to all involved in supporting the Buy a Smile project. I would like to say thank you very much especially to all who have helped and provided assistance to pay the cost of the cleft lip and palate surgery for my child Jahra. May God the Almighty give us good health and longevity and ease our wellbeing.

Adventures in Sabah: Although our good friend in Sabah, Tham, does not have any trekking groups because of covid, he has certainly not been idle. He has been exploring some of the wilder parts of Sabah, tracking down the site of an old colonial outpost, at a place called Rundum. It was the site of the first ever District Office, built by the British in 1910, where Murut tribesmen (head hunters) from Keningau, Tenom and Nabawan, led by Ontoros Antanom, attacked the Chartered Company's outpost in 1915 in what became known as the Rundum Rebellion. The uprising was the result of taxes imposed on the indigenous communities by the British, as well as the forcible recruitment of natives to build roads in the area.

Tham first heard of Rundum and the rebellion in fourth grade in 1978 when an Indian teacher asked 'Does anyone know anything about the famous warrior Ontoros Antanom in the Rundum Rebellion? No one had, because there were no accounts of the rebellion in the history books.

Tham thought about it over the years but access was very difficult, and the idea of trying to find it was placed on the back burner. Until last year!

Tham made news last June when, after tramping for miles into the interior armed with a very old photo, he located not only the site of the old District office, but also a heap of relics!





The site today

The old photo used by Tham to pinpoint the site.

If anyone is interested in going to Rundum, please contact Tham! He has told me it is a pretty arduous journey, so I think I may give it a miss.



Rundum villagers have erected a banner showing the location of the British North Borneo Chartered Company garrison.

It is hoped that, by creating adventure tourism in the area that the pristine forests will be saved from logging.

Also down in Murut territory, in the south of Sabah, Tham located a memorial to Corporal Korum, whose name should be familiar to you. He was Mata-mata 142, a policeman, a key member of the underground and one of Sandakan's local heroes, who helped the eight officers and men escape from Berhala Island to the Philippines, and spent the rest of the war spying on the Japanese. He also joined an Australian special operations team in the last few weeks of the war. He was awarded an MBE as well as a King's Medal for Bravery.



Members of Tham's team

pose with Korum's relatives at the memorial, during his recent expedition.



Korum's nephew Philip proudly displays a photo of his uncle, dressed in an Australian army uniform, during his time with special operations. Korum (right), during the war (I can see a family likeness.)

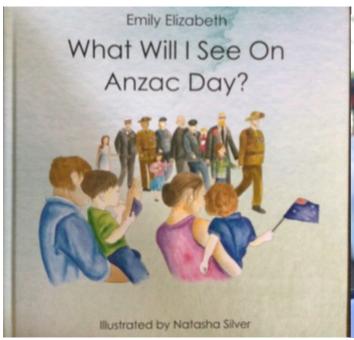
When Tham is not exploring he is trekking into the jungle, the most recent excursion being to Mt Trusmadi, Sabah's second highest mountain. If you are interested in pitcher plants, which abound there, and think you might like this adventure, here is a photo of what to expect!



New book: I am often asked about books suitable for very small children that explain Anzac Day. This endorsement smacks of blatant nepotism, and it is, but I am pleased to announce that our granddaughter Natasha Silver, who is an officer in the RAAF and has just graduated from the Australian Defence Academy, was engaged to illustrate such a book!

Aimed at pre-schoolers, it is called *What will I see on Anzac Day?* Natasha, who is a talented artist, has chosen a naïve style for her water colour illustrations, to appeal to small children.

Here is the cover, and a photo of the artist herself! The book is available on line (https://www.smallhandsearlylearning.com/resources) or from the Australian War Memorial.





Last man standing: The name Jim Ellwood will probably not mean anything to most of you, but I have included news of his death in November, just two weeks before his 100th birthday because, as far as I know, he was the last man still standing who worked behind the lines in WW2. Not in Borneo, but in Timor. He was a signaller, and was captured by the Japanese. Those of you who have read my books *The Heroes of Rimau* or *Deadly Secrets*, will know who he was. Here is a photo taken on a freezing day in Canberra in the middle of winter, about three or four years ago, when I last met up with him. He was one of nature's gentlemen.



Covid claims a friend: I am sorry to report the death of Madam Mairon in October from complications arising from covid. With her husband Philip, a local hero, and their family, she joined us in Sandakan and at Kundasang War Memorial for services. She contracted the virus on her routine visit to the local hospital for dialysis (she was diabetic) and deteriorated at a very rapid rate. She was 81 and some of you may remember her - a very charming lady.



I was surprised to learn that her burial was taken out of the hands of the family, and that she was buried by the state, with no mourners allowed save her granddaughter, who is a nurse. She attended wearing full protective gear.

Good news: Abednigo Chow, a Sabahan who has a great interest in war history and has made various models for the Kundasang War Memorial over the years, has been awarded an Illustrious Order of Kinabalu for his research work by the Governor. Congratulations Abednigo!



Last Post Ceremony: A few years back I was asked to submit names of 8 Division soldiers, including POWs, to be honoured at the Last Post Ceremony at the War Memorial on Singapore Day, 15 February, each year. I picked names across a wide range, and one was that of Dead End Kid, and mate of Billy Young, Private Harry Longley, who is to be honoured this year. You can watch it live-stream, at 5 pm, or later, on the AWM website.

Harry was a bit of a tearaway. Under age, for a start. As I have yet to hear a profile prepared by the AWM staff on any of 'my boys' that is entirely correct, here is one that I can vouch for, and one that I hope gives you an idea of the larrikin that was so much part and parcel of Harry Longley!

Harry Longley was born in 1923, the son of a well-known grazier, Ernest Longley and his wife Kathleen, of Longaroo and Windy Top Stations at Cavan, near Yass. Harry was working on the land when he decided to enlist in the AIF in WW2, inspired no doubt by his father's service in WW1, when he was awarded a Military Medal for bravery. Between the wars, as Lieutenant Longley, Harry's father commanded the 7 Light Horse in the militia (army reserve).

Falsifying his birthdate to 1919, the year before his parents were married, Harry enlisted in the army in July 1940, despite his very youthful appearance. He arrived in Singapore in August 1941 with 27 Brigade and was posted to HQ Company of 2/29 Battalion. His unit went into action in January 1942, and was badly mauled in bitter fighting at Bakri and Parit Sulong.

Harry, who became a POW when Singapore fell, teamed up with another teenage tearaway, Billy Young, also in the 2/29th Battalion. The pair scarpered from their working parties in Singapore whenever possible, and at one stage, while working on the Bukit Batok memorial, managed to have a five-day holiday when there was a mix-up with the guard detail. Harry's antics did not pass unnoticed and in July 1942 he, and his mate Billy, were sent on B Force to Borneo, along with their other high-spirited friends, where they were assigned a hut at the far end of an Other Ranks' block, giving rise to the name 'Dead End Kids', a title conferred by disapproving officers.

At Sandakan, The Dead Enders took enormous risks, slipping constantly under the wire in search of food for their still growing bodies. Harry, whose good mate was Aboriginal boxer Jimmy

Darlington, managed to stage a riot with the help of the other Dead End Kids, allowing Darlington, undergoing torture at the airstrip for punching a guard, to be released from his severely restricting bonds, thereby saving his life.

In late May 1945, Harry was one of 536 POWs sent on the 2nd death march to Ranau. He survived the four-week ordeal to be one of the just 183 who staggered into the remote Last Camp, 8 kilometres south of Ranau. While labouring in the camp area for the Japanese, Harry collapsed on 5 July from malaria and starvation. His mate Keith Botterill, who was passing by on a working detail, propped his nicotine-addicted friend against a tree and put a cigarette in his mouth before going on his way. Shortly afterwards shots were heard.

Post-war, the bodies of prisoners buried in the first POW cemetery at Last Camp were recovered and reburied in Labuan War Cemetery. No remains were identifiable, as the graves were unmarked and all ID tags, made of a type of compressed cardboard, had long since rotted away. Harry, the Dead End Kid, lies in a grave marked 'Known unto God'. He was just 22 years old.



Harry Longley, Dead End Kid. Lest we Forget.

Something special: About three or four years ago, Neil and I paid a visit to the priest at the Catholic Church of St Peter Claver in Ranau, to tell him about the death march, and one POW in particular. He was Ronnie Sullivan, a devout Catholic, who went on the 1st death march. A member of a rice-carrying party, based in Ranau, Ronnie, stricken with malaria, passed out at the foot of a steep hill, while returning to camp from Paganitan. He and his companion, Alby Alberts, who had also collapsed, were bayoneted by the Japanese.

Years ago I isolated the spot where the two men had died and, knowing how deeply religious the Sullivan family is, was amazed to find that a small Catholic church has been erected close to where Ronnie died. So, with the hope of maybe having the priest agree to some kind of shrine/memorial being erected there, Neil and I, with translator in tow, paid a visit to the main church in Ranau. The priest was very interested in the death march story and said he would get back to me. For some reason or other I didn't hear another word. (He spoke no English, and I know only a few words of Malay, and the little church is not in constant use). However, and I don't know if our visit was the catalyst, the church community has recently erected a beautiful shrine, Our Lady Of Lourdes, in the grounds of the 'mother church' at Ranau, opened by the Archbishop of Kota Kinabalu just before Christmas. It was front page news in the Daily Express.

Shrine in memory of Death Marchers, after sightings

Clarence Dol

ANAU: A shrine in memory of the some ooo Allied troops who died during the orces Death March from Sandakan to anau in the closing stages of World War wo was inaugurated here on Dec 16.

The Our Lady of Lourdes Death March rine as it is called was unveiled and essed by Archbishop Datuk John ong at St Peter Claver Ranau Catholic surch.

Wong urged those present not only to atemplate the beauty of the shrine, but o to pray that Our Lady of Lourdes incede for all, especially the souls of ose killed just like what Christians do en by asking the saints to pray and incede for them.

SPCR Rector, Rev Fr Nicholas Stephen, I the purpose of the shrine was to pray the souls who perished during the mese Occupation and also the souls of se who had never been prayed for.

Only six survived with help of locals one committed suicide in Australia

and Fr Francis Tsen were moved to this monument or shrine because we know all over the world that if there are victims of war, we only erect a memorial. But no monument specifically to pray for their souls.

"Decades after the Second World War, many souls were killed unprepared and that is why their souls are not calm. And as a Catholic, it becomes our responsibility to pray for those who have gone, especially those who have gone restlessly," he said.

He cited the Bible where the Maccabees tell of soldiers who died in battle found with amulet attached to their bodies. Therefore, rites are carried out to purify the souls who have died," he said.

Fr Nichoas said the Catholic Church encourages parishioners to pray for souls in purgatory. "This is our responsibility as human beings who are still alive, because those who are in purgatory cannot pray for their own souls.

"Like Santa Monica, who told her son, Saint Augustine after his repentance. She said, let her body be buried in the cemetery of the saints, does not guarantee her salvation, but only the prayers offered in the Holy Mass can save the soul," he said. Moved by compassion when remembering these unsettled souls in the other realm, Fr Nicholas and Fr Francis took the initiative to erect the shrine. Many had experienced sightings of the apparitions of Death March soldiers around Ranau area, he said

Fr Nicholas expects the shrine would also be a landmark for Ranau, where visitors from Britain, Australia, New Zealand and others whose relatives were killed can come to visit this shrine while praying for the spirits of their fathers, grandfathers or ancestors.

"It gives them hope, because unlike other memorials where they honour and commemorate those who have gone, here we pray for the souls as well as the souls who have gone with no peace so that they go in peace.

"The souls who have been purified in purgatory will then pray for their families who are still in this world," he said.

Also present were St Peter Claver Ranau parish priests Rev Fr Maxmilliano Hontor, Rev Fr Ned Columba Moujing and Parish Council Chairman Verus Pinol, among others.

As you can see from the above - it is not a memorial. We have plenty of those. It is a shrine where people can pray for the souls of those who died, POWs and locals alike. It is all under cover and features three plinths – two with prayers, and one with the logo designed originally for Tham's trekking site, and still featured on mine. Sabah tourism has also made use of the image on various leaflets etc. Our designer added the words Ranau and Sandakan, which didn't quite work, as the figures, although aesthetic for the design, are going the wrong way so, when Tham had his website revamped, the original was replaced. I kept it for my web page on the death marches. Naturally, I am very pleased that the church has reproduced the image on the shrine. Tham rode to Ranau on his motor bike through a storm to send me the following photos.









PRAYER FOR RELEASE SOULS FROM PURGATORY

Eternal Father, I offer
Thee the Most Precious
Blood of Thy Divine Son,
Jesus, in union with the
Masses said throughout
The world today, for all the
Holy souls in purgatory,
for sinners everywhere,
For sinners in the universal
Church, those in my own
Home and within my Family.
Amen.

*** Prayer of St. Gertrude ***





Wording on panels

As you can see, no expense has been spared on this shrine, from the ornate gates to the actual construction and the various plinths. There is also a large stand nearby, stocked with votive candles, so that visitors can light one if they wish. We will be incorporating a visit to the shrine for our Anzac Day and trekking groups. A big thank you to Tham for braving the weather to send these photos in time for this bulletin!

LATE news: I mentioned earlier that Archdeacon Yong has left St Michael's and moved on to other things. His replacement is Archdeacon Lidis Singkung, who was ordained as a Deacon at St Michael's in 1987 and has now gone full circle, right back where he started. His home church, where he was ordained as a priest in 1988, is Holy Cross Mission at Kuala Sapi, the village that sheltered escapee and one of our six POW survivors, Dick Braithwaite! Lidis studied for his Bachelor of Theology at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, and is now Rector of St Michael's, as well as Archdeacon of the East Coast area of the Sabah Diocese. His

former parish was Telupid, in the heart of death march country and

which trekkers will know well!



Lidis, who is Dusun, the same ethnic group as our Scholarship girls, is married to Grace and has three daughters - Gabrielle, Amanda and Clare. He speaks English, Malay and several local ethnic languages, including Dusun.

The Trustees of the Sandakan Memorial Scholarship Trust look forward to forging a close relationship with Lidis and warmly welcome him to the ever-expanding 'Sandakan family'.

Get togethers: The Sydney Family managed a get together at the end of November for the first time in a year. Let's hope that 15 February service at the Sydney Cenotaph and the next scheduled get together, the last Saturday in March (the 26th), at Dooley's at Lidcombe, 12 noon, don't get cancelled because of you-know-what! NOTE: Victorian Friends - you need to check with the RSL at Bendigo to ascertain if your usual service is on in March.

Well that's all the news for this edition. I am surprised that I managed to find enough to fill it!

Please send in any items for includion in the next bulletin or if you want to let other family members know about some event or other matter of interest.

Until next time, please stay well! To end on a light note, here is the Opera House in party mode.

All the best for 2022, Lynette (and Neil)

