

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT.

I am happy to say that the **150th Anniversary Celebration** at St. Ethelburga's was a resounding success with over 120 people turning up and overflowing the hall.

If anyone would like a copy of the Programme, please do contact BCS.

We were all delighted that Mrs. Hiroko Hirakubo was with us and stayed throughout the event, and also that Mr. Charles Coubrough, formerly a Lieutenant in the 7/10 Baluch Regiment, 17 Indian Division, taken prisoner in 1942, was able, despite ill-health, to see the Documentary together with his wife, June. I would also like especially to thank members of the former Burma Campaign Fellowship Group, disbanded in 2002, who were able to attend.



Charles Coubrough, John Evans, Philip Malins, John Pike

I am also grateful to Mr. John Pike CBE who read the most significant, appropriate and powerful message from Mr. Gordon. Graham MC Bar, which follows this Report. I feel that his message represents all of us, and I appreciate so much that it says precisely what I wished to convey.

My warmest thanks are also due to Mr. Saburo Takahashi for his support when the project started: to Mr. Angus Miyaji for his prompt help in designing and printing at short notice: to Mr. Simon Keyes, Director of St. Ethelburga's, for his continual support and for providing the equipment and other facilities.

I am also extremely grateful to Mrs. Hisae Hironaka, Mrs. Sachiko Fujita, Ms. Noriko Ogawa, Mrs. Ann Kobayashi and Ms. Reiko McKeown for their enormous help and work in the reception area, and to Mrs. Hiroko Sato who promptly helped at the reception desk in the morning.

Last but not least, are the young volunteers, Mrs Ai Zukawa, Ms. Ai Ishii, Mr. Masaomi Futagami and Ms.

Toshie Kaneko, who, in preparation, distributed our leaflets at the University Campus, at Military Museums, at restaurants and in the streets of the city. Without their help we could not have achieved such a big event

We received many wonderful comments and I would like to record one of them, from Joyce Arimatsu

“Many thanks for arranging such a wonderful event. It was the first time for us to attend any of your meetings and we found it a moving and informative experience. The speakers views were often touching as well as good-humoured, even when relating the most harrowing stories.

The entertainment given by the various dedicated musicians was a nostalgic treat, plus a beautiful finale to a marvelous day.”

Akiko Macdonald

A MESSAGE FROM GORDON GRAHAM.

Dear Akiko,

I greatly admire your initiative and devotion in bringing together such a distinguished gathering under the aegis of the Burma Campaign Society. I am sorry I cannot join you, but was glad to learn that some of my fellow veterans, Philip Malins among them, will be present. I know that they will speak eloquently on behalf of all who participated in that great, bitter drama.

I first met Masao Hirakubo in 1984, and remained in touch with him until his death. He was a man with the courage of his convictions, and refused to be rebuffed by those who did not agree with him. He demonstrated how the spirit of one individual can influence the views of many. I always felt a particular affinity with Masao because he was in the same part of the Kohima battle that I was.

If I were with you, I would ask you and your guests to consider this question: What can the Burma Campaign teach us about our world today? This question, to my mind, supersedes the challenge of reconciliation, which has now been met by those who were ready to meet it.

Now we should move on to deeper, less emotional questions, such as the folly and the causes of war, of which the Burma Campaign was an egregious example. It belongs to an increasingly distant past which is worth studying only to illuminate the present, and to point the way for the future.

Reconciliation should be seen only as a first step. The next step is to study and understand the events which made reconciliation necessary. If this is not done, the lessons of the Burma Campaign become irrelevant. It was, after all, only one corner of the vast Pacific war. But it was unique because it involved many nations — not only Japan and Britain, but the United States, China, India, Burma, and even Africa. In retrospect; one can see that it was a microcosm of our divided world, which is still divided today.

The generation which experienced the folly and tragedy of the war in Burma is now almost gone. If they have one wish which they all share, it is that there should be no more war. Former enemies speaking in unison have powerful voices.

With warm regards and best wishes,
yours sincerely,

Gordon Graham

**CELEBRATION OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ANGLO-JAPANESE TREATY OF AMITY AND COMMERCE.
AT ST. ETHELBURGA'S.**

**Sponsored by Japan-UK 150 and
The Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation**

The proceedings began with a Greeting from Simon Keyes, Director of St. Ethelburger's Reconciliation Centre, followed by an Introduction by Akiko Macdonald, Chairman of BCS and organizer of the Symposium. There was then a Reconciliation Interview Screening by Kyoko Miyaki of the Yomiuri Newspaper, which surprisingly enough showed that many of the young people involved did not even know about the war.

A Message from David Charles, Deputy Chairman of BCS, concerning his father, was followed by a Ceremonial Greeting Speech on behalf of Ambassador Ebihara and Consul General Kusaka, who both had to meet the Chairman of the Japanese Parliament, was read by Miss Kozuka, Senior Political Researcher in the Japanese Embassy.

The excellent Burma Campaign Documentary by Yuki Sunada, first screened, at the October 2006 Meeting in St. Ethelburger's was then shown again.



Philip Malins and David Charles



Simon Keyes and Akiko Macdonald

Tributes to Masao Hirakubo and British Veterans were then paid by Philip Malins, MBE, MC and Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato, and by Professor John White and Mrs. Akiko Macdonald, who read poems that they had written. In addition, the message from Mr. Gordon Graham MC Bar, referred to in the Chairman's Report, was read by Mr. John Pike CBE

This was followed by the solemn British-Japanese Joint Memorial.

The Lunch Break was succeeded by a Japanese Taiko Performance, and a short talk introducing East Meets East by Alice Kemp-Welch.

The Anglo-Japanese Mini-Symposium on Human Development, Restoration, and Social Development Since World War II then took place, the various papers being reported below in somewhat abbreviated form, following this brief survey of the Meeting as a whole.

The Closing Ceremony was preceded by a lively sequence of Musical entertainment in which Michael Coxall played the Shakuhachi, or Japanese Flute, and Keiko Kitamura the Koto, with Koichiro Nakada singing the Shusen, or End of War, Blues:

Roderigo Montoya played the Tsugaru Jamisen, a Japanese string instrument, and Makiko Hiratsuka sang, accompanied by Atsuko Kawakami on the piano and Yuki Tashiro on the violin

Finally, before everyone joined in the singing of Home Sweet Home, the young Nakato sisters, Mokoto and Satsuki again displayed their astounding talents in spirited performances on the piano and the violin respectively and were as warmly applauded as they had been in 2007.



Rev. Kemmyo Taira Sato

From our Chairman down, we all of us owe them all a great debt of thanks.

John White

**THE ANGLO-JAPANESE MINI-SYMPOSIUM.
HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, RESTORATION,
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
SINCE WORLD WAR II.**

Papers were given by five Guest Speakers, who then contributed to a Panel and discussion chaired by **Professor John White**, former Vice Provost of UCL

I. WARTIME ORAL HISTORY

Ms. Tomoyo Nakao,
Associate Professor, Okayama University.

Tomoyo Nakao has, for several years, been travelling through South East Asia and elsewhere interviewing and recording prisoners of war and their families from many different countries. These first-hand oral records of their memories, and of their feelings then and now, are often poignant in the extreme.

Many of those whom she has recorded suffered greatly both during and after the Second World war. Many are still bitter in the extreme as they remember what they went through, and are still deeply scarred by experiences that still live with them from day to day and are the source of recurrent nightmares. They never can, and never will, forgive those whom they blame for all their sufferings.

Others have managed to some, or even to a great extent, to leave that now long distant past behind, and a few have actively, and with great courage, sought for reconciliation with their erstwhile enemies, some of whom they fought against as individuals caught up in the same great battles. One such, of whom all of us have fond personal memories, is, of course, the late Masao Hirakubo, together with the other veterans from both sides who joined him in the fellowship of the Burma Campaign Society.



Tomoyo Nakao

Apart from their intrinsic qualities and their impact upon all of those who have had the privilege of listening to some of them, such first-hand, individual human records will be a goldmine for future social and military historians as they try to recapture the realities of a rapidly receding past.

Editor's Note.

I apologize for the brevity of this entry, but unfortunately, despite repeated requests, no information regarding the precise content of this Paper has been received.

II. WARTIME LEADERSHIP.

Mr. Robert Lyman
Author and Former British Army Officer.

The war in the Far East offers a striking disparity between the qualities of British military leadership during the years of defeat (1941-43) and those during the years of victory. In contrast, the qualities of Japanese leadership declined markedly between 1941 and 1945.

In December 1942, Britain began with commanders unable to meet the challenges posed by the Japanese. Generally, they underestimated the enemy, failed to prepare adequately for logistical necessities, ignored military deficiencies in training and equipment, and showed considerable personal deficiencies or failings. They ignored advice, demonstrated poor moral courage, assumed that rank inferred a monopoly of intelligence,

paid insufficient attention to detail in operations, wilfully ignored realities on the ground in favour of their own preconceptions, and displayed a grotesque indifference to the welfare of their men. By 1945 Japanese leadership in general exhibited precisely similar failings and it is not fanciful to believe that Japan lost the war because of its failure in military and, of course, political leadership.

Experience in the Far East showed that successful generalship requires four essential characteristics: leadership, strategic sense, intelligent energy and originality. Possessing only one or a pair of these will never create what Sun Tsu lauded as a 'Master of War'.

The first quality of generalship is *strong personal leadership*, as shown by men such as General Yamashita, who captured Singapore in 1942, and subsequently by Lieutenant General Bill Slim, who commanded the victorious 14th Army in 1944-45. The importance of forceful, visible and dominating leadership cannot be overstated. Field Marshal Montgomery remarked of a commander that 'once he lets events get the better of him he will lose the confidence of his men, and when that happens he ceases to be of value as a leader'.



Robert Lyman

Leadership is also the measure of a commander's ability to inspire men to sacrifice their all — ultimately even their lives — for the good of the common cause, most especially when things are not going well. In perhaps the most succinct modern definition of all, Slim defined leadership as that "mixture of example, persuasion and compulsion that makes men do what you want them to do".

Generals must be seen, and be seen regularly, and be respected in part for the confidence and aura they display. The impact on morale provided by calm, unflappable commanders is considerable. The best generals build mechanisms to ensure that they are never seen to lose their temper or display excessive stress in front of their subordinates, a failure for which General Mutaguchi was notorious.

Lieutenant General Vinegar Joe Stilwell's self-portrayal as a hard-bitten, plain-speaking, no nonsense, fighting general required a degree of acting and stage management that Slim compared to Lord Mountbatten's perfect grooming, and said that "such things have their value if there is a real man behind them".

One of a commander's greatest skills lies in appointing subordinates whom he can trust to comprehend and deliver his plans, and to persuade their own subordinates to carry them out. Mutaguchi's failure lay as much in the distrust, even hostility, of his three Divisional Commanders, Sato, Yanagida and Yamauchi, as in his own unfettered ambition.

As Socrates noted, it is not enough simply to be a good leader under fire and a model of valour. Generals must also be able to plan and to contribute to the strategic, as well as to the battlefield aspects of warfare; must, in short, have *strategic sense*. Higher commanders need to understand the broader picture and wider context in which their operations take place, and to structure, plan and mount them to meet the requirements of that wider strategy.

In Malaya in 1942, Lieutenant General Piggy Heath was a superb battle commander, but had little strategic sense, and his tendency to withdraw in the face of Japanese pressure entirely undermined Percival's strategy of the forward defence of Singapore. Stilwell was an inspirational battlefield commander, but a poor trans-national leader and badly suited for anything at a strategic level in Asia, other than the defence of American national interest. Likewise, Sato's strategic ineptitude at Kohima in 1944 by not advancing into the Brahmaputra Valley to seize Dimapur, wasted the chance, foreseen only by Mutaguchi, to strike a devastating blow against the British. But the failure was as much Mutaguchi's own, in that he did not effectively communicate his strategy to his subordinates.

Thirdly generalship necessitates significant levels of *intelligent or productive energy*. Generals need to think and move rapidly, and to act boldly and decisively on the battlefield, but that is not enough if there is a lack of intelligence or subtlety in deployment.

Fourthly, generals must possess *originality*. Sun Tzu taught that this was the basis of successful command. Yet many commanders in war display no original thinking at all, as was the case with General Noel Irwin in his botched campaign in Arakan in 1943. Being original is fundamental to out-manoeuvring an enemy both physically and mentally. It is important, General JFC Fuller observed, “to do something that the enemy does not expect, and is not prepared for; something which will surprise him and disarm him morally.” This is where, in 1941 through to early 1844 the Japanese held the advantage over their more ponderous and predictable British opponents.

Japanese generalship in the early years of the war was remarkably feudal in comparison with that of the British or Indian armies, which were professional and manned by volunteers recruited from a largely non-militaristic society. The principal duty for the Japanese soldier was obedience, in accordance with a complex set of closely entwined ideals that together encapsulated the idea of being Japanese and of being a *samurai*. These ideals encompassed Shintoism, nationhood, family, Emperor and *bushido*.

The desperate tactics required to throw men into the teeth of enemy fire to die depended entirely on this obedience. Soldiers who found themselves still alive after a failed attack were often so racked with guilt that they had failed to obey the Emperor’s orders that they took their own lives. The more difficult an operation became, the more the army would be encouraged to accept the need for the ultimate sacrifice. For this to work, soldiers were expected, indeed duty-bound, to obey their orders without questioning.

In Arakan in February 1944, Lieutenant General Sakurai urged the men of 28 Army on with the prospect of a glorious death crowning extraordinary earthly achievements, explaining that they would die and their bodies would lie rotting in the sand-dunes, but they would grow into grass which would wave in the breezes blowing from Japan.

For the Japanese, death was one way of rescuing an increasingly hopeless operational plan, and there was often little attempt to adjust the plans to fit the new circumstances, but rather to press on in the hope that the sacrifice of their men would bring about victory. Generals who bucked the trend were rare.

As the war went on, the British increasingly took advantage of this inflexibility. At Imphal, Slim relied on Mutaguchi clinging to his scheme long after it had been derailed by the vigorous British defence, and trusted that the latter’s unquenchable military optimism would mean that he would never accept that he was wrong. Such inflexibility represented a failure of command. Nevertheless, Japanese generals had plenty of physical courage and, for the most part, aggression, determination and commitment.

Japanese officers were sometimes respected by their men, but few, if any, to the same extent as was sometimes to be seen in the British and Indian armies. There were no ‘popular’ Japanese generals that could compare with Bill Slim or Frank Messervy.

Duty and obedience were seen in very different ways by the British and Indians. Tanaka’s and Mataguchi’s respective demands that their starving men should ‘consider death lighter than a feather,’ were inconceivable in the British and Indian armies. Even Churchill’s and Wavell’s Orders of the Day in Singapore to fight to last man were unprecedented, and not taken seriously.

As Slim remarked “everybody talks about fighting to the last man, but only the Japanese actually do it.” In the Japanese army, it was hardly felt necessary to order soldiers to die. That was their job; an integral part of the *samurai’s* code.

Slim himself, like Yamashita, experienced failure, yet both achieved remarkable success in battle, despite the odds against them. Yamashita in Malaya and Singapore by boldness and imagination, and Slim in India and Burma through the complete material, intellectual and spiritual rebuilding of his army.

The goal of Allied generalship was victory with the least expenditure of blood. In the British, Indian and American armies, the ability to persuade the led to follow willingly, as opposed to blindly, comes not from coercion, but from trust, and this is as true of the platoon commander as it is of the general.

Of Slim, who stood head and shoulders above his fellows, it could well be said that without him, given the pattern of British misfortune in 1942 and 1943, neither the safety of India, nor the recovery of Burma would have been possible. All too often, by contrast, Japanese generalship had, by 1944-45, deteriorated into a means for preserving martial honour in the face of defeat, inevitably leading to the arguably unnecessary deaths of soldiers forced to fight on against impossible odds.

Slim observed that the Japanese combination of obedience and ferocity would make any army formidable, and would make a European army invincible. But this ferocity could never make up for deficient generalship and a lack of flexibility and balance in the execution of command judgements. It was in this that the Japanese eventually failed.

III. LOOKING BEHIND THE STEREOTYPE: TWO ENCOUNTERS WITH JAPAN.

Dr. Ian Littlewood
Author and Lecturer,
Sussex University.

This talk is about two small private episodes, one in the nineteenth and one in the twentieth century, of no historical significance, but I think quite revealing. By chance they both took place in Nagasaki. They tell something about my own area of interest, which is how cultural stereotypes have overlaid western attempts to understand Japan.



Ian Littlewood

The first concerns Rudyard Kipling, often thought of as an apostle of British imperialism. He first visited Japan, as a young journalist, in 1889. Like most British travellers of the time, he arrived with a deep-rooted conviction of superiority. The British Empire covered half the globe and London was the biggest and richest city in the world. By contrast, the Japanese seemed like children — charming, mischievous, eager to copy the grown-ups, delightful in many ways, but belonging to an earlier stage of development. This version of Japan, made popular since 1885 by Gilbert and Sullivan’s comic opera *The Mikado*, was enthusiastically adopted by Kipling, and this is how he writes most of the time.

Suddenly, however there is a different reaction, challenging this automatic assumption of superiority, when he enters a curio-dealer’s shop and in these spotless surroundings becomes conscious of his muddy boots. For the first time, he tells us, he feels “that I was a barbarian and no true sahib.” He consoles himself with the thought that he could kick the place to pieces, “but this only made me feel large and coarse and dirty.”

“What I wanted to say was, ‘Look here you person. You’re much too clean and refined for this life here below, and your house is unfit for a man to live in until he has been taught a lot of things which I have never learned. Consequently I hate you because I feel myself inferior, and you despise me for my boots because you know me for a savage.’”

“I feel myself your inferior”-- a strikingly unusual moment. It shows an English visitor suddenly seeing what he must look like, not from his own point of view, but from that of the Japanese. Just for a moment the natural order of things is turned upside down.

Of course, conventional attitudes soon reassert themselves, but not before we’ve had a chance to see how precarious, how arbitrary, our cultural assumptions really are.

What follows is well known. Within a few years, with the defeat of China and, more shockingly from a western perspective, of Russia, the Japanese were demonstrating that they were anything but comic opera figures. The popular image of Japan was rapidly revised into something more threatening, more hostile. By the end of World War II, images of the Japanese as brutal sadists, inhuman fanatics, alien madmen, were at their peak. And this brings in my second episode, which took place just a month after America had dropped the atomic bomb on Nagasaki, virtually destroying the city that Kipling had seen.

Among the occupation forces was an American marine called Victor Tolley who got lost one day. He tried to ask a Japanese child the way back to his base, but the child’s attention was caught by a bracelet he was wearing:

“He saw it and pointed. I opened it up and he saw the pictures of my wife and two small daughters. His face beamed. He started to jump up and down. He pointed upstairs where he lived. He said “Sister, sister.” — He motioned that she was pregnant

The little kid ran upstairs and brought his father down. He could speak English. He bowed and said, “We would be honoured if you would come upstairs and have some tea with us”. I went upstairs in this strange Japanese house. I noticed on the mantel a picture of a young Japanese soldier. I asked him, “Is this your son”. He said, “That is my daughter’s husband. We don’t know if he’s alive. We haven’t heard”.

The minute he said that, it dawned on me that they suffered the same as we did. They lost sons and daughters and relatives, and they hurt too.

Until that moment I had nothing but contempt for the Japanese. I used to hear all the horror stories. We were trained to kill them. They’re our enemy. Look what they did in Pearl Harbour They asked for it and now we’re going to give it to ‘em. That’s how I felt until I met this young boy and his family. His sister came out. She bowed. She was very pregnant. I’ll never forget that moment.”

Both these episodes seem to me to be the moments at which a real encounter forces the western visitor to re-examine cultural stereotypes, And we must, of course, remember that the west has no monopoly on stereotypes or on the prejudices they foster.

Prejudices thrive on ignorance and anonymity. George Orwell wrote of how, in the Spanish Civil War, seeing a fascist soldier running in full view, half-dressed, holding up his trousers, “I had come here to shoot at ‘Fascists’, but a man who is holding up his trousers isn’t a ‘Fascist, he is visibly a fellow-creature, similar to yourself, and you don’t feel like shooting at him.”

As long as people can be labelled with all the qualities we’ve been taught to hate — Fascists, Reds, Huns, Japs, Jews, Tutsis or whatever — the business of killing them is relatively easy. It is when the label slips for a moment that things get more complicated. A touchstone for this is that wonderful episode during the first Christmas of World War I when the British and German troops got together in No Man’s Land to exchange gifts, show photos of their families and for a brief space acknowledge how much their humanity gave them in common. No wonder the High Command gave orders that it should not happen again.

The apparent reason for herding over 110,000 Japanese Americans into camps during World War II, regardless of their loyalties, was to protect the nation against spies and saboteurs. But surely there was another, unspoken reason. If you’re presenting the Japanese enemy as an inhuman monster, it doesn’t help to have obviously very human Japanese buying groceries at the local store.

When we want to dehumanise people, the first thing we do is take away their names. Without any individual identity they can make little appeal to our imagination, little claim on our sympathy. And the reverse is equally true. When John Hersey wanted to bring home to Americans the real horror of Hiroshima, he spent little time on statistics. What he did was to take six individuals and, by focusing on the details of their daily lives, force his readers to look behind the stereotype and see the human being.

That, I believe, is in the end what cultural exchange can do better than anything else. It is only by imposing categories on things that we can hope to get a grip on a world that's infinitely diverse. But we also need to be aware of the limits of stereotypes. So easily they become an excuse for cultural laziness, a way of seeing what we expect to see; have been told we shall see. If we are to go beyond the old labels, beyond the judgements of the past, we need the imagination and the sympathy, like Kipling and like Victor Tolley, to see the human being behind the national stereotype. We need, in other words, to meet each other as individuals

IV. THOUGHTS ON PAST AND PRESENT.

Mr. Robert Graham OBE

Author and ex-Financial Times Correspondent.

I am a child of the conflict that saw Asia torn apart during the Second World War. My father, Major Ian Graham, was a professional army officer based in Singapore, and by the end of 1941 was on the staff of General Wavell, Supreme Allied Commander South West Pacific. My mother had joined him in 1940, incidentally travelling on a Japanese vessel, since Japan was still neutral. She managed to leave at the end of January 1942 on one of the last convoys bound for India. She had just learned she was pregnant. I was to be that child and did not see my father until I was nearly four.

When Singapore fell, General Wavell had already moved his headquarters to Java. But only two weeks after the debacle, he was ordered to move to India, as Java looked impossible to defend. My father volunteered to stay behind and help to organise what were soon preparations for Allied surrender.

He was held prisoner, first in Batavia and then in Singapore. From there, he and hundreds of other POWs were crammed into an ancient iron carrier, for the long, hazardous and harrowing journey, via Saigon and Taiwan, to Japan. Many died before reaching Moji on Kyushu in late November 1942.

He spent the cold winter at Shimonoseki, known as Camp Fukuoka Six, where officers and men were forced to work in an open-cast coal mine. He then spent two years in a camp for officers at Zentsuji on Shikoku and finally moved to another mining camp at Miyata on Kyushu.



Robert Graham

This last camp was the worst, with a brutal, fanatical commander who, apart from mistreatment of prisoners, refused to accept the idea of Japanese surrender, creating enormous confusion after the August 15th 1945 surrender agreement. There was strong evidence to suggest that he had planned to place the prisoners in a mine shaft and then machine-gun them.

My father was among the first group of POWs held by the Japanese to reach home. En route for Okinawa they passed through Nagasaki, where they saw the terrible destruction by the second atomic bomb. They went on by boat to Manila, San Francisco and Vancouver, and then by train across Canada, reaching Southampton at the end of November. Much of the next four years was then spent in Swiss sanatoria recovering from tuberculosis. He was declared unfit to continue his chosen Army career, but lived on to the age of 89, being for many years

Secretary of the Zentsuji POW Association.

He rarely spoke of his experiences. From little things said, I knew he had suffered terribly in a way that left him permanently scarred. Sometimes, when asked what he did during 'The war', he replied with British irony "I was a guest of the Emperor." He told me that on one of the Emperor's birthdays, their camp commander said that they would receive a present from him - a banana each. A very good account of the Japanese prison experience was written by one of his companions, John Fletcher-Cooke, entitled *The Emperor's Guest*.

When my father died, I found a notebook he had kept in prison. Hunger was a permanent obsession. Every Red Cross parcel was recorded — only three being let through in the first eighteen months of captivity — and also every letter he received, the first only reaching him in March 1944, though sent by my mother in August 1942. For two years she did not know if he was alive or dead. Most moving in the notebook was a list of things he 'longed for.' - things which reminded him of being able to live like a civilised person — things as mundane as 'a chair to sit on.'

The most interesting question to ask is 'Why did so many like my father keep these experiences to themselves.' Here are some of the reasons.

Firstly, the main, objective reason was that British public opinion in the post-war era paid little attention to what had happened in the Far East, apart from glorifying the Burma Campaign. The independence of India and Pakistan was in the forefront of people's minds. The humiliating fall of Singapore was an episode best forgotten, especially for professional soldiers like my father. Unlike other theatres of war, there were no popular heroes, and the surrender of Japan had been brought about by American might in the Pacific.

Secondly, most POWs had had no prior contact with, or knowledge of, Japan, and Britain's imperial ambitions had stopped at China. Thus it was difficult to understand and establish points of contact with their Japanese captors, save at the most basic level. It was difficult for British officers to realise that they were despised and humiliated because their Japanese counterparts felt that they should have fought to the death or committed *hara-kiri* rather than surrender.

Interestingly, one of the first books my father bought on arrival in England was '*Behind the Japanese Mask*' by Sir Robert Craigie, British Ambassador to Japan (1937-1942), who was interned for eighteen months and who wrote a most balanced attempt to understand the Japanese.

Thirdly, the sheer distance between Britain and Japan made it easier to isolate the wartime experience, whereas, say, in the case of Germany, revisiting was easier, and there was infinitely greater familiarity with German culture.

Fourthly, at the personal level, I think POWs were happy just to have survived and to rediscover a normal life. In the case of my father, I think that because he was not involved in active conflict, he took his fight to the camps and was never a cooperative prisoner. It was very hard for him to take the broader view of Sir Robert Craigie: "Behind the mask of inscrutability; beneath the courteous reserve; despite the treacheries of politicians, the trickeries of big business and the revolting cruelties of military and police, I believe the Japanese nation to possess fundamental qualities of kindness, courage, loyalty and self-abnegation which should offer a good basis on which to build the new Japan."

It is worth noting that that books by, or about, Japanese POWs mostly started appearing a quarter of a century after 1945. Fletcher Cooke started writing in 1969, having deliberately never looked at his prison diary. At that time he made a trip to Japan to visit his former camp sites

Today, with the passing of the years, it is easier for my generation to look back and understand the extraordinarily complex ties which now bind nations together, whether by trade, culture, security, climate change, cuisine or tourism. But there is still a great deal of work to be done in banishing national stereotypes and coming to terms

with the past.

As a journalist, having interviewed innumerable international leaders, I am still struck by how many have such a poor grasp of the history and culture of those they are dealing with, let alone being able to speak each other's languages. How often misunderstandings arise as a result. Anglo-Saxons, for example, expect direct answers to direct questions. For others this can be seen as an unsubtle, confrontational approach.

The way we look at history so separately also needs to be re-examined. For the British, every schoolboy knows that 'The Peninsular War', under Wellington, was a conflict to contain French ambitions in a far-off corner of Europe. In Spain it was called 'The War of Independence', liberating Spanish soil from French invaders.

Today, all developed countries have the tools to have a better, more balanced understanding of their own history in the context of world history. I firmly believe that a nation that does not confront its past honestly, weakens society's ability to confront the future.

France and Germany, two countries that have fought three wars in the last 150 years, have, since 2000, embarked on an interesting experiment. The two governments have sponsored a project to write a common view of their European history for use in schools. The writing started with the least controversial period; Europe post-1945, but is intended to cover the turbulent relations going back to 1800. Even so, there were conflicting views to reconcile. The Germans regarded US aid as vital for reconstruction, and its diplomatic and military presence as a shield against Soviet expansion. The French saw it as representing self-interested imperial power.

The emphasis on learning a balanced history in schools is vital, given the sensitivity of how nations are depicted in each other's school text books. The Chinese and Koreans, for example, object strongly to the content of Japanese school texts.

As a sidelight on the theme of people understanding each other, I happen to live much of the year in Southern Spain, near Seville. Close by, is the small town of Coria del Rio on the banks of the Guadalquivir. Here you can find one of the oldest, if not the oldest, continuous Japanese presence in Europe. In 1614, a delegation, led by the *samurai*, Hasekura Tsunenaga from Sendai, arrived in Seville via the Philippines and Mexico. The delegation was mostly composed of Christian converts on the way to visit Rome, but they also wished to establish Japanese trade with Spain. Returning from Rome, before embarking for home, most, if not all, decided to remain in Spain. They settled in Coria del Rio, where they assimilated, and the local inhabitants gave them the name of 'Japon'. In a 1995 census over 700 people bore this name in the Seville area. Indeed, these Japanese had become so assimilated that no one bothered to research their story until, in 1992, Spain celebrated the 500th Anniversary of the discovery of the Americas.

Here again, this celebration highlighted another example of historical differences. Several Latin American countries were reluctant to admit that their Spanish colonisation was something to celebrate.

We all need to look at ourselves in the mirror.

V. THE NEW HATOYAMA GOVERNMENT AND THE FUTURE OF JAPAN.

Dr. Tomo Kikugawa PhD
Author and Former Politician.

On 30th August 2009 Japanese politics underwent a sea change. The almost uninterrupted fifty year rule of the Liberal Democratic Party ended with a landslide victory for the opposition Democratic Party of Japan. The reason was that after fifteen years of downturn, following the successes of the 1970s and 1980s, they failed

to turn the tide. This was largely because of the ‘iron triangle’ system, which they themselves had created, in which politicians, bureaucrats, and industries cooperate and look after each other’s vested interests.

Mr. Hatoyama, the new Prime Minister, after only a month in office, is still in the honeymoon period, and he has set himself some very stretching targets in a wide-ranging set of fresh policies. For example he promised at the United Nations that by 2020 carbon emissions would be reduced by 25% from 1990 levels — a move applauded by other countries. It remains to be seen what will actually be achieved by an administration truly committed to moving Japan forward.



Tomo Kikugawa

The Democratic Party of Japan promised to take away the power of the bureaucrats and give it to the politicians, and claimed that in turning from ‘concrete’ oriented to ‘people’ oriented policies, they will divert large funds from construction projects to people’s welfare. Mr. Hatayama’s success will depend on how he tackles these two main objectives, neither of which es easy.

In the past, the bureaucrats devised policies and initiatives and explained them in the Diet, negotiating, compromising and implementing them. Without their input, government will be very difficult and, while seeking to reduce their power, the new administration will need their help. As we all

know, turkeys don’t vote for Christmas.

However as the landslide victory in the Lower House is big enough to withstand the four year tenure, and a large win is likely in the Upper House next summer, the bureaucrats will not antagonize the administration, but try to cajole and curry favour with their new masters. Such tactics will be difficult to deal with. Even British politicians, traditionally suspicious of civil servants, struggle to discern what the country really needs and what the bureaucrats want.

Welfare, the second objective, will again be difficult, with the national debt at almost 180% of GDP, compared with Britain’s 65%. A rapidly ageing population, a very low birth rate, and poverty, due to the gradual collapse of lifelong employment, all need to be tackled. This is a huge task.

Basing his party’s ideas on the British experience, politicians have been put into Government Departments and are now trying to lead the Ministries in Japan. They, instead of the bureaucrats are now trying to devise policy and have set up the National Strategy Bureau, which will be very similar to the British Cabinet Office.

The problem is that those politicians do not have Red Boxes, the ministers’ special briefcases, which they are required to read and approve after their day’s work, and which epitomise their commitment to their ministerial duties. The workload can be enormous and Japanese ministers, who have not been committed in this way, might get a nasty shock, and even ask to bring the bureaucrats back

In foreign policy, Mr. Hatoyama seeks a more equal partnership with the US. He also wants closer ties with China and East Asian countries, since China’s GDP will overtake Japan’s next year and the two economies will become more closely linked. The problem is that open markets — Japanese markets being criticised last year by Lord Mandelson, on a visit as EU Trade Commissioner, as being too closed — together with deregulation, are now being forced on Japan, which will have to find a way around these difficult issues.

Despite the new administration’s need for time, and probably more experience, in order to achieve their aims, my view is that Japan’s greatest asset is its people, who have enormous potential. The workforce is reliable and disciplined, and strong social networks have kept crime low. I think that if Japan looks to other countries, including Britain, and adopts the best of their systems, it will succeed. After all, it rebuilt after the Second world War, as did Britain, and I am certain that Japan will be able to do this again.

BURMA: THE GREAT WITHDRAWAL

I arrived in Rangoon, by boat from Calcutta, newly commissioned and aged twenty-one. Having marched past the Schwedagon Pagoda and slept in a railway cattle truck to Martaban, there was just time to cross the Salween River to Moulmein before news came that the small forces at Kawkereik, near the Thai-Burma border, had been ordered to withdraw. It was the beginning of the invasion of Burma in January 1942. As Pearl Harbour had only taken place a month before, we were still plugging holes, a process in which I had a small part.

Although Armoured Corps trained, I was posted to Divisional Service Corps HQ, which did not know what to do with such an arrival. So the Burma withdrawal campaign became, rather unusually, my own individual operation, doing what one could as opportunity arose, until, at last, I got a job in April 1942, in North Burma, when the General's ADC was wounded in the leg and had to be replaced.

So down to the Moulmein jetty again, where there was a sad sight indeed; the casting into the Salween of the Moulmein Club's stocks of scotch, cases of it. Unfortunately, too occupied for even one bottle, we embarked on the half mile ferry to the Martaban side, when we quite unexpectedly came under fire; a first for me, but not much, compared to the London blitz, I thought. Searching the sky for a skilfully flown aircraft with an obviously very good bomb sight, someone said that we were being mortared from the opposite bank.



Lacy Scott

Poise was slightly recovered on seeing a fine locomotive and its long troop train apparently without a fireman or driver, because, as an ex-steam-engine schoolboy, I knew very well that we could do without them. However, they were sheltering under the boiler, so we got them onto the footplate, set the cut-off to full forward, opened, closed and re-opened the regulator in the proper and now long forgotten manner, and preceded to Kyaikto.

This, and all the subsequent, lighter side of life is nothing, of course, compared with the serious battles being fought all the time by the organised Battalions of the 17th Division, British, Ghurka and Indian, first around Thaton, and later throughout the three months of a successful withdrawal to India.

At Kyaikto, the Divisional HQ had dossed down in the now deserted local school, a nice little brick building, somewhat symbolically set apart from the bamboo bashas of the village. Being at a loose end, I walked in and said "I am Armoured Corps (it was a very infantry Division), is there anything I can do? Yes. Come and defend the Divisional HQ (or words to that effect). There are three armoured cars coming up from Rangoon. In the meantime, here's a jeep for messages and liaison."

On the way to the Sittang, we were amongst the West Yorks holding our east flank at close quarters. We had first been visited by Blenheims with Thai markings, and then by American Kittyhawks from Rangoon, who had been told that there was a great target between Kyaikto and the Sittang. There was. But it was us.

I had never seen cordite puffs from in front of the wing before, but provided you see him first and get behind something, you can wave as he goes by, in the hope that he might recognise an English face. But no such luck.

At dawn, now at the Sittang, it was soon pretty serious and close. A Burma rifleman came running down a hill indicating that the Japanese were on top of it. I was grateful for the offer of his Bren gun and magazines and let him go on his way. I then walked a few hundred yards through the jungle up to the high ground at the bridgehead, through which was a deep railway cutting leading to the bridge itself. There, the 4/12th Frontier Force was holding the line. They charged, and that was that for the time being. But Major Manekshaw, who was probably i/c the 4/12th, or that bit of it, was shot through the liver, one of the most painful of wounds. His Sikh Subedar helped a lot by having an injection at hand. Manekshaw got out all right and became Chief of the Imperial General Staff India after the war. I never got back to my Jeep. Having slept in it, I left it in front of the tent of the Army Directorate of Medical Services, whose occupant was then captured, but who, I believe, survived the war.

The Sittang runs north and south, and the Japanese, coming from the east, and having been checked, deployed fighting patrols to probe the bridgehead. This was D-shaped, with the river forming the vertical line of the D. I had taken up a position, with my newly acquired Bren, on high ground at the top of the D, overlooking the half-mile wide river and bridge, and noticed that some mules crossing the bridge were being shot. I wondered where from, when the military sense of one Japanese patrol fatally deserted them. A Burmese fisherman suddenly ran straight into the river from his basha on stilts on the river bank, just below me, clearly in panic, poor man. Instead of letting him go, and keeping their location secret, the Japanese patrol, now obviously concealed in the basha, shot him, and he sank beneath the surface.

The perimeter was larger than my little bit of it with the 4/12th. It was held throughout until day three, when sleep announced that the limit would soon be reached. Brigadier Hugh Jones was on the bridge when we walked across, timing his order to blow as best he could, with news of the Japanese fighting their way along the cutting. A few minutes later one section of the bridge was removed with a nice thump. Then silence, because everyone was now defined. Either you were over or, like the Duke of Wellington's, further north, you were not.

Later, patrolling with three armoured carriers, I met Williams, a school acquaintance, leading some of them out. They must have swum or made some good rafts.

When I woke up, the first Zeros came, good fighter planes. In order to pay the diggers who maintain railway embankments, a cone is left so that the amount of earth removed could be measured. Provided you were on the other side of one of them, you could take cover behind it and then nip round and fire at the Zero as it went by. I was using tracer, which one can see, and I seemed to get a hit or two, because the tracer dropped out at the other side. But the Zeros were not noticeably bothered.

The arrival of the promised armoured cars was magnificently historical. They were three Lawrence of Arabia, solid tyre Rolls Royces from the first war. Their turrets, rotated manually from within, had long since jammed. They had two holes through which you could push a vintage, water-cooled Vickers machine gun, but from a jammed turret there was little prospect of aiming at anything.

The Major from Rangoon in charge of them told me that the armour plate would just keep out the Japanese 0.28 solid shot, but the points glowed as they nearly came through. A little later, the cars were shot through the radiators before there was time to wind the front doors closed. But, being Rolls Royces, they spurned the ordinary vehicle's need for water and scornfully withdrew, to reach their final rest at last.

By this time, with the three Ford V8 armoured carriers which I had acquired for patrolling and the movement of higher ranks, I was suddenly summoned by the G1, who told me to drive one to Rangoon with a letter. The pace of events was quickening, and we had just received a message from the great man himself:- "Have tried to persuade Curtin to divert Australian Division to you but needed at home. Fight on."

It was a simple run to Rangoon, where Siriam, the oil depot, was soon to be destroyed, filling the sky with black smoke. I gave the envelope to General Hutton in his nice, off-duty house. He was most charming and gave me a very welcome whisky and a mosquito net for the night with a punkah inside it. On reflection, I have since thought that the message must have been:- "General Alexander is coming. Take the last boat out."

Shortly afterwards, at Taukchan, a fork in the road leading to the right and the Sittang, where we had come from, and left to North Burma and India, there, indeed, was General Alexander sitting in his soft vehicle, while we preferred to find a ditch during the various air attacks. Alas, not poor old Bose, the Field Cashier, who, with the faith of his nice Bengali nature, ran to hug a tree. But at three feet it was all flying about. Poor chap. He had just said to me "I've got a chicken. Lets have a nice curry."

But then the tank men came, the 7th Hussars and the 2nd Tanks, instead of the Australians. My own Corps at last. One of them noticed me as one of theirs and said "Have the Japs got any tanks? No", I replied. "Then the war's over" he said. Alas, it was not the Western Desert, whence they had come. But they, with their Honeys, combined with the solid morale of the infantry, saved us. They finally ran their engines without oil after the last action at Schwegin in North Burma, where we ran out of road and track and had no way to cross the Chindwin

River. The seizing bearings made quite a noise. Even the enemy seemed to think it was a signal for half time.

Then we walked out. A Jeep had come from somewhere on the other side of the river and I ran General 'Punch' Cowan up and down the trudging columns, slowly and respectfully. They had done well, and in a week or so marched the hundred miles to Palel and Imphal.

But we were not there yet. Shortly after Sittang, some forward troops heard the enemy cheering. They had good reason. We had lost the Repulse and the Renown, by Kamikazes flying down the funnel, someone said. A bad moment for us. We had gone south-west from the Sittang bridge to Taukchan before we could turn north. The Japanese took full advantage. Coming from the east, for the next two months they cut the road all the way to India, which is another long story.

The first road block came at once, just north of Taukchan. I said a cheery goodbye to my old best friend at school, now in the Engineers, whom I had just met, as I had been ordered to go and break through. I can't remember who it was with such a dread of three little Ford carriers that he gave me such an impossible order. Perhaps there was a bit of a panic that here was General Alexander, waiting to get through to the north to take command of the entire eastern war, who might get shot or taken prisoner. However, the Honeys, the 10th Baluch and the Gurkhas were already there breaking the road block. So I mainly watched, hopefully without dishonour. On reflection, it was rather odd that General Alexander ever came in via Rangoon, when we could have told him, if asked, better take the plane to Calcutta.

Much later, at Taungwinjee, all that anti-aircraft fire, as seen in London, without any apparent effect, was at last rewarded. An Indian Bofors, or something similar, got an amazing direct hit on the left engine of a bomber at about three thousand feet. It was slightly awesome to watch the pilot make no attempt to land, which he could easily have done, despite some smoke from the engine, or get out, but instead, dive his plane in a perfect curve to the vertical, until he hit the ground. But a gunner should never dance for joy. The other bomber came back and took out the battery very accurately, and only those not dancing saw him leave.

And so it went on. Near the end there was a joke that General Cowan rather liked. How we picked up Elephant Bill is a mystery, but there was a truck driver who pressed the starter to give the elephant a helping hand when it was pulling him out. Apparently he and the 15cwt were never seen again.

My final chance encounter is lottery level. Having flown home on short leave three years later, all the way in a faithful Dakota, I was in Piccadilly Circus on VE night, when Donald Underwood, the ADC wounded at Schwegin, hove into view out of the celebrating masses. Both of us were now Captains 'non-substantive', I dare say, if I had bothered to look. My best wishes to him. He must now be in or beyond his ninetieth year.

(ex) Captain D G Lacy Scott,
8th King George V's Own Light Cavalry,
Indian Army

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE.

As the number of Veterans inevitably decreases year by year, I hope to collect as many of their war experiences as possible so that we can archive them on the Website, enabling those who are interested to have easy access. We would like to save as many of their stories as possible to present to future generations and to different races and nationalities. Everyone who went to war has a separate, unique story to tell and we would like to present reminiscences, not only from Britain and Japan, but from those of other countries who were involved in the Burma Campaign.

So if you have any documents, wartime photos, newspaper articles, or other memorabilia that you would be willing to let us have, or even borrow, for publication on the Website, please do send them to us at the address at the end of this Newsletter.

The work of collating the nine boxes of material left by Masao Hirakubo into a coherent Archive has been going ahead, thanks to Professor Ryugu Matsui. Since the work could not be completed in one go, we decided that, after sorting the documents into numbered folders, we would photo-scan the bulk of them.

Prof. Matsui commented that the number and variety of documents and photographs meant that they were worth making into exhibitions. I think that this a splendid idea, and any material relating to other veterans which you send me could also be included.

Film Shows.

I would very much like, if possible, to screen Japanese war-related films, since I think that if British people could see them it would increase an understanding of Japaan in many ways.

My reason for thinking this is my experience last November, when I was invited by BBC 2 Radio to participate in the airing of a debate on World War II on *Jeremy Vine Live*. I was up against an anti-Japanese, activist Town Councillor, Barbara Pagett, from Lytham St Anne's, who opposed the idea of twinning with a Japanese town called Hayashima, near Hiroshima. She actively disliked Japan and the Japanese because of a story that she had heard as a child about Japanese cruelty during the war.

Her arguments against establishing a friendly relationship between Japan and her own town were spread throughout the country and aroused sensational controversies. This turmoil was also regarded as 'Racist'. The Telegraph and the Guardian and others wrote about it in their papers, as well as on their websites. The well-known critic and Telegraph journalist, Gerald Werner, fully and openly supported Councillor Pagett's views, and so did many others.

I received forwarded e-mails from people still harbouring animosity, and there are some young people, who did not even go to war, but who still have an antipathy towards Japanese people.

Reconciliation, I would like to stress, is a long-term process and will take many, many years. If we stop trying to understand each other and each other's culture, traditions, politics, national and social behaviour and core values, reconciliation will never be achieved.

After thinking long and hard about this, my conclusion is that for greater understanding all round, we should look back at our history and at the causes of World War II. If we do not know about both British and Japanese history, we will never understand each other, achieve reconciliation and form a true friendship.

Akiko Macdonald

COMING EVENTS.

The date of the next AGM will be announced as soon as possible

Editor's Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter, please contact John White, 25 Cadogan Place, London, SW1X 9SA, Tel/Fax 020 7235 4034. Material for inclusion in the September 2010 Issue should reach me at the above address by 31st August at the latest.

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