

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

Battle of Kohima 60th Anniversary Issue.

September 2004

Number 5

SECOND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF BCS. 10th June, 2004.

Chairman's Report.

After welcoming those attending, the Chairman remarked that "For a small Society, we have had another busy year". After rehearsing various events reported in Newsletters Nos 3 and 4 of September 2003 and March 2004, he went on to record the laying, by Japanese members, of a wreath in the name of BCS at the November Remembrance Service at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Yokohama.

The Chairman also spoke of the successful pilgrimage to Kohima and Imphal (See p.3) and expressed the Society's extreme gratitude to Philip Malins for proposing and executing to perfection the arrangements for the wonderful and moving visit to Sandhurst (See pp. 6,7). He also declared his intention of attending a further Kohima Memorial on 17th and 18th July at the British 2nd Division Reunion in York, as the guest of Maurice Franses.

He recorded with great sadness the death of Philip Daniel, whose Obituary is on p.8. In the Chairman's words "He was a strong supporter of our Society and actively participated in our events. His funeral, which some of us attended, was a marvelous send-off by the Catholic community of this country, of which he was a senior and much respected lay figure".

Drawing to a close, the Chairman said that his continuing aim was to try to involve younger people in the work of BCS in promoting reconciliation and that he would like to see this activity by veterans take place more often and in a more established format.

Constitution of the Burma Campaign Society.

The Constitution, as set out in full at the beginning of Newsletter No. 4 of March 2004, was adopted after a short discussion.

Committee Members, Officers and Membership.

Much to the regret of all those present, John Bynoe resigned from the Committee. He was warmly thanked for all his work as a Committee Member and for his unstinting support of the new Society. Dr. Keiko Itoh, who was not present, was elected in his place and subsequently gave her assent. All the other Committee Members and Office Holders agreed to stand again and were duly re-elected.

It was agreed that Committee Members in Japan, hitherto referred to as Email Advisors, should in future be called Email Committee Members, their Reports being read out. Given the short time available, it was decided that their content should be discussed at a later meeting.

Although out of a mailing list of about a hundred, only about thirty were paid-up members, the general view of the meeting was that the Hon. Secretary should continue to operate on the existing informal lines.

Accounts and Budget.

The Accounts, duly reviewed by John White, were presented by the Hon. Treasurer. After discussion of a number of issues, it was decided that, from next year the Membership Fee should be raised to £15 in the UK and 3,000 Yen in Japan.

A formal budget was not considered, but the meeting accepted that the income and expenditure figures were not expected to be markedly different in the coming year.

John White

ZEN-BIRUMA-KAI (ALL-BURMA SOCIETY).

On 30th May 2004, immediately after the dissolution of Biruma Eirei Kenshoukai, known overseas as the All-Burma Veterans' Association of Japan, its successor Society, Zen-Biruma-kai was founded. The name of the Society, its first President, Mr. Ren-ichi Misawa, the Draft of the Society's Rules, and the location of its Office at Mr. Shuichiro Yoshino's home address, were all decided.

The first regular Lunch Meeting was held on 9th June 2004, and the Society's Rules were approved. It was decided that the office would send out a Money Transfer Form and a copy of the President's letter of greeting. A person would be registered as a member on receipt of a remittance of 2000 a year.

On 20th June, a meeting to encourage Burmese friends was held at Kudan Kaikan from midday, and fifty-two veterans and bereaved families invited thirty-three Burmese students and seven Japanese students, and this was much appreciated.

The 2nd Monthly Meeting was held on 10th July and we heard the following reports:

1. On 31st May, a Memorial Ceremony was held, in the presence of Prince and Princess Mikasa, at Chidorigafuchi Unknown War Dead Cemetery, where 789 new ashes were added.
2. At the Soul Festival at Yasukuni Shrine, 14 lamps were contributed from Zen-Biruma and ABVAJ.
3. Mr. Toshihiko Matsumoto had passed away and his funeral was be on 12th July

Masao Hirakubo

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLES OF KOHIMA AND IMPHAL.

To mark the occasion, BCS organized a joint pilgrimage in March to Kohima. The arrangements were entirely made by our Chairman together with Mr. Yoshino of the All Burma Veterans Association of Japan, whose members participated.

For all sorts of practical reasons; timing, long retention of passports for special permission to visit Nagaland and the need for advance payment of costs, it was hard to get British participation. In particular, Philip Daniel had to withdraw on doctor's advice, and BCS member Len Harrop, still resident in Japan, where he was formerly on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, represented British veterans.

Late in the day, help came from the British and Japanese governments, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave additional support for in-country traveling and guides in India and Burma.

Furthermore, the Chairman only received his Nagaland permit in Calcutta and Len Harrop's came so late that he had to travel on his own from Dimapur. Nevertheless, he arrived in time for the Memorial Service on 10th March, which, for the first time, thanks to participation by an Indian former member of the Indian Army, was a tripartite event. In the absence of the Bishop, the service was conducted by four of his clergy led by the Vicar General, whilst another filmed the occasion. This included a wreath laying, the Japanese party having had wreaths made in Calcutta. BCS and ABVAJ made a \$500 donation for the Cathedral's costs.

Finally the Japanese Consul General in Calcutta hosted a dinner for the whole party, thus concluding a most successful, and final, Joint British and Japanese Pilgrimage to Burma.

In London, the Anniversary was also marked by a Lecture, organized by the Japan Society, at which Masao Hirakubo and Philip Malins, Chairman and Deputy Chairman of BCS, were the Speakers and gave vivid and moving accounts of their first hand experiences as soldiers in the opposing armies. The historical context was outlined by Major General Ian Lyall Grant, formerly President of the Burma Campaign Fellowship Group.

The Lecture, which was very well attended, brought home to members of the Japan Society, interested in Japan, but not necessarily knowledgeable about the second World War or the Burma Campaign, the reality of the bravery and sacrifice of the individual young men on both sides, as well as the tragedy of that war.

Phillida Purvis

THE EVENING VIGIL.

Ten minutes to seven - the word goes around
The sun starts to redden, alight on a mound
of black cloud intruding on blue.

In mud-smothered clothes, men emerge from the ground
Stretch weary limbs with barely a sound
Then - quiet - for they're 'Standing To'.

With dusk, the sounds of the jungle abound
Cicadas and crickets - and some distant hound
Then quiet - 'are they listening too?'

Maurice Franses
Kohima, 1944

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP AND RECONCILIATION SUNDAY.

The symbolism of this year's ceremonies in Canterbury Cathedral, again conducted by the Dean, extended not only to the individual actions taking place, but to the structure as a whole.

Commemoration was the opening theme, with the laying of wreaths before the High Altar by Mr. John Bynoe, representing the Veterans of the Burma Campaign, and by the Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary, Mr. Seiji Kojima. Also in accordance with Japanese tradition, Mr. Tokuda, the First Secretary Political laid a chain of paper cranes.

Commemoration was succeeded by Thanksgiving in the form of Evensong, that immemorially repeated act of thanksgiving which formed the heart and centre around which the ceremonies of the day revolved.

Finally, Reconciliation, the third act in the symbolic trinity, took place when the Dean led the assembled company to the Compass Rose in the nave, where Japanese and British, and all those present, shook each other's hands in friendship.

On this occasion, Viscount de Lisle, Vice-Lieutenant of Kent, accompanied by the Viscountess de Lisle, represented the Lord Lieutenant, whilst Mr. Kojima, Japanese Minister Plenipotentiary, accompanied by Madame Kojima, came on behalf of the Japanese Ambassador, together with the Japanese First Secretary Political and his wife and three small and delightful children, and other members of the Japanese Embassy.

The City of Canterbury was once more represented by the Lord and Lady Mayoress and the Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone again came on behalf of the County Town of Kent. Lord Weatherill, Patron of the International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust and Member of the Burma Campaign Society, the Committee of which was represented by John White, was present, together with Lady Weatherill. Mr. Graham Matthews, together with his wife, on behalf of the Headquarters of the British Legion; Senior Members of Christ Church University College, Canterbury and of Chaucer College, a Japanese University College, attended. Last, but not least, among the distinguished gathering was the splendidly independent Bill Rose, ex-Prisoner of War in Burma and now ninety-two years old.

Our warmest thanks go out once more, not only to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, but also to John Bynoe. It is only through his inspiration and untiring effort that these gatherings have taken place.

John White

RECONCILIATION SUNDAY AT COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

This year, Ambassador Masaki Orita and Madame Orita brought a party of 23 members of Embassy staff, including nine children. The Bishop of Coventry, the Right Reverend Colin Bennets welcomed everyone and Canon Andrew White, Co-Director of International Ministry, explained the significance of the event.

Phillida Purvis, in English, and Masao Hirakubo, in Japanese, read passages from the Beatitudes and Rev. Professor Kemmyo Taira Sato recited the Kohima Epitaph in English, for the first time in an English Cathedral.



Wreaths were laid by the Ambassador, Deputy Lord Lieutenant Sir Adrian Cadbury, the Lord Mayor of Coventry, and jointly by Philip Malins, Satoru Yanagi and Leslie Dennison, an 89 year old ex-prisoner of the Japanese. Nearly one hundred British and Japanese, including Ryugo Matsui and Tomoyo Nakao, who, like Captain and Mrs. Yanagi (for the eighth time) had come especially from Japan, shook hands in reconciliation.

At Evensong Madame Orita and Philip Malins read the Lessons and Canon White, who had flown in specially from Baghdad, where he is spending much time working for Iraqi reconciliation, preached the Sermon.

Cradled in her father's arms, was an eight weeks old Japanese baby girl, so tiny, so precious, so innocent, a symbol of our hopes for peace, who hopefully will live on into the next century in a world free from world war.

Philip Malins.



Members of the Burma Campaign Society and Indian Army Association at Sandhurst

COMMEMORATION AND RECONCILIATION AT THE ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST.

On Monday, 17th May 2004, a Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battles of Kohima and Imphal and an Act of Reconciliation were held in the presence of the Japanese Ambassador and the Japanese Military Attaché. A hundred and two BCS Members and Members of the Indian Army Association were able to take part, together with relatives and friends, and including many former members of the Academy Staff and Officer Cadets, of whom, at 94, Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Gray was the oldest.

After coffee in the Indian Army Memorial Room, a Welcoming Address from the Commandant, Major General Andrew Ritchie CBE, and a Response from His Excellency Masaki Orita, the company proceeded to the Old College.

There, on the Indian Divisions Memorial, a wreath, borne by a Pakistani Officer Cadet, was Jointly laid by Masao Hirakubo, Honorary OBE, aged 84, the Chairman of BCS, and Lieutenant Colonel Patric Emerson OBE, aged 86, the Honorary Secretary of the Indian Army Association and a Sandhurst Cadet in 1937-38.



Following lunch, there was then a Ceremony in the College Chapel. The Senior College Chaplain, Rev. Robert Mitchell welcomed the party and prayers were said by Rev. Philip Brownlees, Chindits, and Rev. Professor Taira Sato.

Finally, Masao Hirakubo recalled that he was only able to be present because, after the Battle of Kohima, for the first time in the history of the Japanese Army, his Divisional Commander disobeyed the Army Commander and ordered them to retreat and save their lives.

Philip Malins MBE MC, Deputy Chairman of BCS, not only conceived of the idea of such an occasion, but carried out the lengthy negotiations required to bring it to fruition, and was deeply involved in its meticulous organization.

Although Sandhurst maintains a reciprocal programme for the exchange of Cadets with the Japanese National Defence Academy, the occasion was particularly memorable for the fact that this was the first time in its history that a Japanese Ambassador had ever visited the College.

John White

OBITUARY.

PHILIP LOUIS DANIEL KC*SG, KGCHS, FCMI. **Knight's Cross Polonia Restituta.**

Philip Daniel, a founder member of the Burma Campaign Society and of the Burma Campaign Fellowship group, died at the age of 84 on 12th, March 2004.

In spite of increasing mobility problems, Philip attended every single event of BCS, except where prior commitments intervened. His contribution at meetings was always energetic, enthusiastic and interesting. He not only drew on a wealth of fascinating tales from his wartime service in India and Burma in the Royal Artillery and on the Supreme Allied Commander's Staff, but from a lifetime's colourful activity as one of this country's leading Catholic laymen.

Philip, who was adopted by relations when his parents died young, was educated at the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School in London and at the London School of Economics, where he graduated with a First before joining up for service in the Far East. He most enjoyed his work making films for contemporary use on what was happening in Burma, and later generations, together with the Imperial War Museum's Archive Department, have been grateful for it. After the war he embarked on a career in the Civil Service which was to bring him a range of responsibilities, mostly in Agriculture, Food and Transport in the Economic Planning Board.



But it is for his many activities outside his work, to which he, as a batchelor, dedicated himself, that he will best be remembered. Above all, he promoted the importance to the Catholic Church of its lay members, through membership of Catholic organizations in England, including the National Council for the Lay Apostolate. At various times, and sometimes for many years, he served as a Committee Member of Pax Romana (23 years) and as a Council Member of the Catholic Union of Great Britain.

He was President of the Newman Association; Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Catholic Union; Founding Member of the Student Cross, the week long Easter pilgrimage to

Walsingham which, to honour a pre-war pledge, he never missed. He was Archivist of the English Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre; Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School; Governor of the Digby Stuart College and Council Member of Keston College, monitoring the treatment of Christians under communist regimes.

He was awarded a Polish Knighthood for his work in providing aid to Poland during the Cold War. He also supported the Christian community in the Holy Land and was appointed Knight of the Holy Sepulchre and, in 2001, Knight Grand Cross. For his services to education and the Catholic Union, he was appointed a Knight of St. Gregory, and later Knight Commander with Star. Finally, Philip was a member of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners and a Freeman of the City of London.

We shall never forget Philip for his strong support of reconciliation with Japan and his encouragement of the work of BCS; for his sincere interest in everything, his lively sense of humour and, above all, his great humanity.

May he rest in peace.

Phillida Purvis

RECONCILIATION CEREMONY AT THREE WHEELS.

Saturday, 14th August.

The annual Ceremony at Three Wheels was attended by the Japanese Consul General, Kenji Hiramatsu, and the Consul, Hiroshi Shimoi, together with Shuichi Tokuda and Chiho Nakamura. Among some thirteen BCS Members present were Masao Hira Kubo, Philip Malins, John Bynoe, Pauline Martin, Akemi Solloway, Ryugo Matsui and Lucien and Sachie Chocron.

The Ceremony was again conducted by Rev. Professor Taira Sato, who gave a memorable address on Harmony within Diversity.

Satoru Yanagi, who fought in the front lines against the victorious Americans in the Battle of Guadalcanal and then in Burma in the final desperate stages of the campaign against the British, had now, on the sixtieth anniversary of the Battle of Kohima, returned from Japan for the eighth consecutive year to assist, together with his wife Yuko, in the struggle for reconciliation initiated by Masao Hira Kubo and devotedly carried forward by such British counterparts as Philip Malins, John Bynoe and the late Philip Daniel.

To be magnanimous in victory is far easier than to be magnanimous in defeat. But now, on both sides of the conflict, physical bravery in war has been, amongst a memorable few, succeeded by moral bravery in peace. It is to such brave men that the Burma Campaign Society owes its existence.

John White

BURMA — THE JAPANESE INVASION IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT.

At a **Discussion Meeting** on 15th March at the Nippon Club, the Speaker, **John McEnery**, author of *Epilogue in Burma 1945-1948*, served in the West African Artillery in the Arakan, and following the ceasefire in April 1946 was posted to HQ Burma Command, Rangoon, as a Staff Captain in the Administrative Branch.

He described how Britain took effective control of the country from 1885 to 1941, a total of only 56 years, when great progress was made. Railways, roads, schools and a university were constructed and an area the size of Wales was drained. It was administered by Indian Civil Service personnel with Indian police, and there were some 500,000 Indian traders.

In 1931, Burma and its defence were separated from India, but Britain undertook that Burmese development would keep pace with that in India. It exported rice, petroleum and teak. The 1931 census gave the total population as 14.6 million, of which 9.6 million were Burmans and 1.4 million Karens. The Army of four battalions of Karens, Chins and Kachins contained no Burmans. The period 1931-41 saw an uneasy calm with the Karens, Chins and Kachins supporting the war and the Burmans problematic.

The Japanese invasion of Burma in January 1942 was accompanied by the Burma Independence Army, mushrooming to over 9,000 men, but disbanded for indiscipline by the Japanese in July 1942. A new, disciplined Burma Defence Army, again about 9,000 strong, was formed and trained by the Japanese. The Japanese formally granted Burma independence on 1st August 1943, the Burma Defence Army becoming the Burma National Army led by Aung San. By early 1944, he realised that the Japanese were likely to lose the war and the BNA joined the British on 27th March 1945 and were used for mopping up operations.

Without question, the Japanese invasion acted as a catalyst for nationalism in South East Asia, bringing independence, after much fighting and loss of life, to French Indochina and the Dutch East Indies. It almost certainly hastened Indian independence.

It is difficult to argue that it also hastened Burma's independence directly, given the 1931 undertaking. It gave Burmans their own army and restored pride, but caused polarization between Burmans and Karens. It introduced the threat of force into Burman politics, resulting in a rushed independence programme with a shortage of trained and experienced personnel. Burman Army units in the Japanese tradition saw strength as a means of political power. In retrospect, the military dictatorship which followed was possibly inevitable.

Philip Malins

THE CHIN LEVIES.

At a **Discussion Meeting** on 8th July 2004 at the Nippon Club, **Dr. Desmond Kelly**, drawing on his book, *Kelly's Burma Campaign. Letters from the Chin Hills*, spoke of his father, Norman Kelly's wartime experiences as a Deputy District Commissioner in the Burma Frontier Service, based on Tiddim in the Chin Hills 160 miles north of Imphal.

When the Japanese were some fifty miles away in May 1942, he himself, as a seven year old, together with his mother and sister, had trekked on foot for three weeks through the mountains into India, leaving behind his father who had played his full part in organizing the building of the famous Tiddim Road up which the 17th Indian Division were to retreat in 1943 and Slim's 14th Army was subsequently to advance.

Having spent years traveling round the Chin hill villages as Magistrate and Judge in an area with some thirty dialects and no written scripts, he was widely known and trusted. Hearing of possible disaffection in the face of the coming Japanese assault, he went to meet the Chin Chiefs and Headmen on the 14th 15th and 25th April 1942, and his rousing address persuaded them not to desert the allied cause and led directly to the raising of the Northern Levies.

When, despite being a lone civilian amongst Army Officers, he took up his new role as Zone Commander, Tiddim, leading the muzzle loader equipped Chin Levies operating with the Burma Rifles, he proved to be magnificent in the type of guerilla operations behind enemy lines in which he subsequently became involved.

Dr. Kelly gave a fascinating account of the fighting round Fort White and the Battle of Stockade 3, and of the events leading up to the eighty-six day siege of Imphal; of the vital role played by Dakotas in the air and mules upon the ground; of the re-crossing of the Manipur River by tanks, one of which was driven onto Kennedy Peak; of the recapture of Fort White, and of the activities of the two Chin armies of some two hundred men each; and, not least, of the strain of his father's separation from his family as, with a price upon his head, he helped to gather information and harass and delay the Japanese.

Eventually, owing to the intolerable stress, his health gave way and he was invalided out in November 1945, promoted from Major to Lieutenant Colonel.

A lively discussion, in which many of those present took part, followed Dr. Kelly's talk, among the topics raised being the distinction between the attitude of the largely unpoliticized Hill Tribes, with whom a Treaty had been signed in 1892, and the educated and commercial classes in the Burmese plains and cities.

John White

THE BATTLE OF TUPHEMA.

The right Advance Unit, mainly consisting of the 1st Battalion, 58 Infantry Regiment, aiming for Tuphema, arrived at Kossemei, 8 km east of Tuphema before sunset on 29th March 1943. From there we could overlook the Imphal highways.

The villagers were sipping rice juice, not eating rice. A cup was offered to me, but it was not to my taste and had a strange smell. Sergeant Major Yagi said it was unrefined sake. Everybody seemed happy with it, but it did not interest me as I did not drink alcohol.

Throughout the night innumerable lights were streaming towards Imphal and I was nothing short of amazed at the enemy's great supply capability.

Expecting severe fighting next day, I ordered the Battalion to sleep early in order to restore their fighting ability.

The next day, March 30th, was heavily blanketed in fog; no visibility. Miki Company started at 7 am as the spearhead Company, expecting to encounter the enemy at Tuphema. The fog on the mountain was not easily dispersed. At around 10 am, we saw at a glance in the clearing fog that the enemy's armored unit was taking a rest and their cooking smoke was rising up. Recalling Oda-Nobunaga's night attack at Okehazama, I decided to attack the enemy at once without missing the opportunity.

My units turned to run to get a superior position on the expected battlefield. We completed the deployment 1 km from Tuphema junction and the encounter in the jungle began.

The enemy, who suffered a surprise attack, could not give full scope to their ability as they were obliged to fight in single file on a road with the valley walls rising up very steeply on both sides. The enemy seemed mainly to retreat towards Imphal, and partly to Kohima, by sunset, leaving four light tanks and about thirty jeeps behind.

During this battle, the Commander of 2nd Company, Lieutenant Ishikawa dashed in front towards the enemy, but was killed by an automatic weapon. Lieutenant Ishikawa, a graduate of the Kyoto Martial Art School, was Champion in a Kendo Competition in Central China, but could not withstand a bullet. The Commander of 3rd Company, Lieutenant Miki fought courageously after receiving first aid for wounds to his chest. It was a matter of great regret that we lost more than twenty dead or wounded.

Major Tokuji Morimoto,
Commander, 1st Battalion,
58 Infantry Regiment.

Trans. Masao Hirakubo

The Forgotten Army Remembered. www.saga.co.uk/circles

The disk of Saga 105.7 Fm production in association with Radio XL, broadcast on Remembrance Sunday, 9th November 2003, is a documentary dealing with the Burma Campaign. There are contributions by Viscount Slim and many Indian and British veterans, including Philip Malins, and all the profits raised go to the Burma Star Association.

John White

COMING EVENTS.

Monday 11th October, 6.00 - 8.00 pm: A Discussion Meeting will be held at the Nippon Club and Dr. David Steeds will give a talk on *The Chinese Contribution to Victory over Japan in the Pacific*.

Editor's Note.

For comments, criticisms, and questions concerning the Newsletter, please contact John White, 25 Cadogan Place, London, SW1X 9SA, Tel/Fax 0207 235 4034. Material for inclusion in the March 2005 Issue should reach me at the above address by 28th February at the latest.

Edited and produced by John White and Lucien Chocron

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