

Prisoners in Java

Accounts by Allied
Prisoners of War
in the Far East
(1942-1945)
captured in Java



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Contents

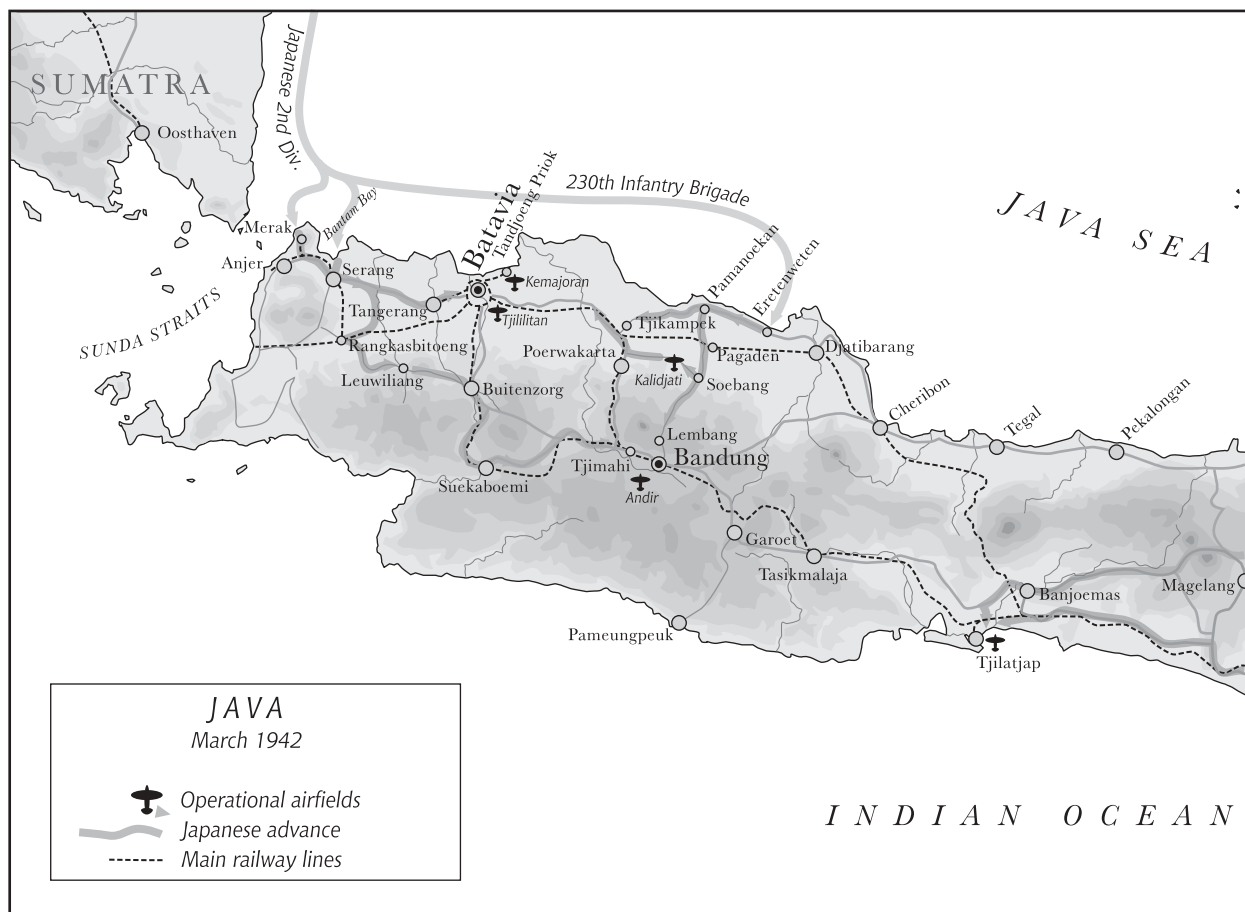
<i>Foreword</i>	<i>vi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>ix</i>
1 Outward Bound	1
2 Active Service: Malaya	19
3 Active Service: Singapore	26
4 Active Service: Sumatra	42
5 Active Service: Java	52
6 Into the Bag	72
7 Hellships and Transportation	90
8 The Camps: Java	110
9 The Camps: Singapore	176
10 The Camps: The Spice Islands	180
11 The Camps: Thailand-Burma Railway	213
12 The Camps: Borneo	216
13 The Camps: Sumatra	221
14 The Camps: Japan	238
15 Liberation	277
16 Homecoming	300
17 Retribution	314
18 Epilogue	316
Selected Bibliography	320
Index	321

Foreword

In spite of the swiftness of the advance of the Japanese armed forces down Malaya and their capture of Singapore, many of the Allied forces there were able to escape southwards to Java. British forces sent at that time for the defence of Singapore had therefore to divert to Sumatra and Java, hopefully to stop the further advance of the Nips (Japanese) in their intention to invade Australia. On 28 February 1942 the Nips landed on the west coast of Java and on 9 March the Netherlands East Indian army surrendered, thereby pitching tens of thousands of British Army, Navy and Air Force personnel 'into the bag'. Subsequently for three and a half years those prisoners were to suffer exhausting labour, vicious 'punishment', starvation, disease and

death in Japanese prison camps scattered all over the Far East.

When two atomic bombs rescued the tens of thousands of prisoners from the extermination that would have befallen them had there been any attempt to rescue them by Allied forces, the skeletonlike survivors were soon back in the bosom of their families, finding it impossible to describe the indescribable and unburden themselves of their torturing memories. And so it continued for year after year until chance contacts between erstwhile survivors proved so cathartic that small groups of FEPOWS burgeoned into large associations that were to meet at regular intervals.



Two FEPOWS, Bill Marshall and Bob Chapman who had been together in No. 4 Hut, Yawata, 3rd Branch Camp, Fukuoka, Kyushu used to attend the annual conference of the National Federation of FEPOW Clubs and Associations held in the Winter Gardens in Blackpool, to which their little embryo group named the Java Club became affiliated.

Thus it was that in May 1984 those two FEPOWS sent out the following in Newsletter No.1 to their small group:

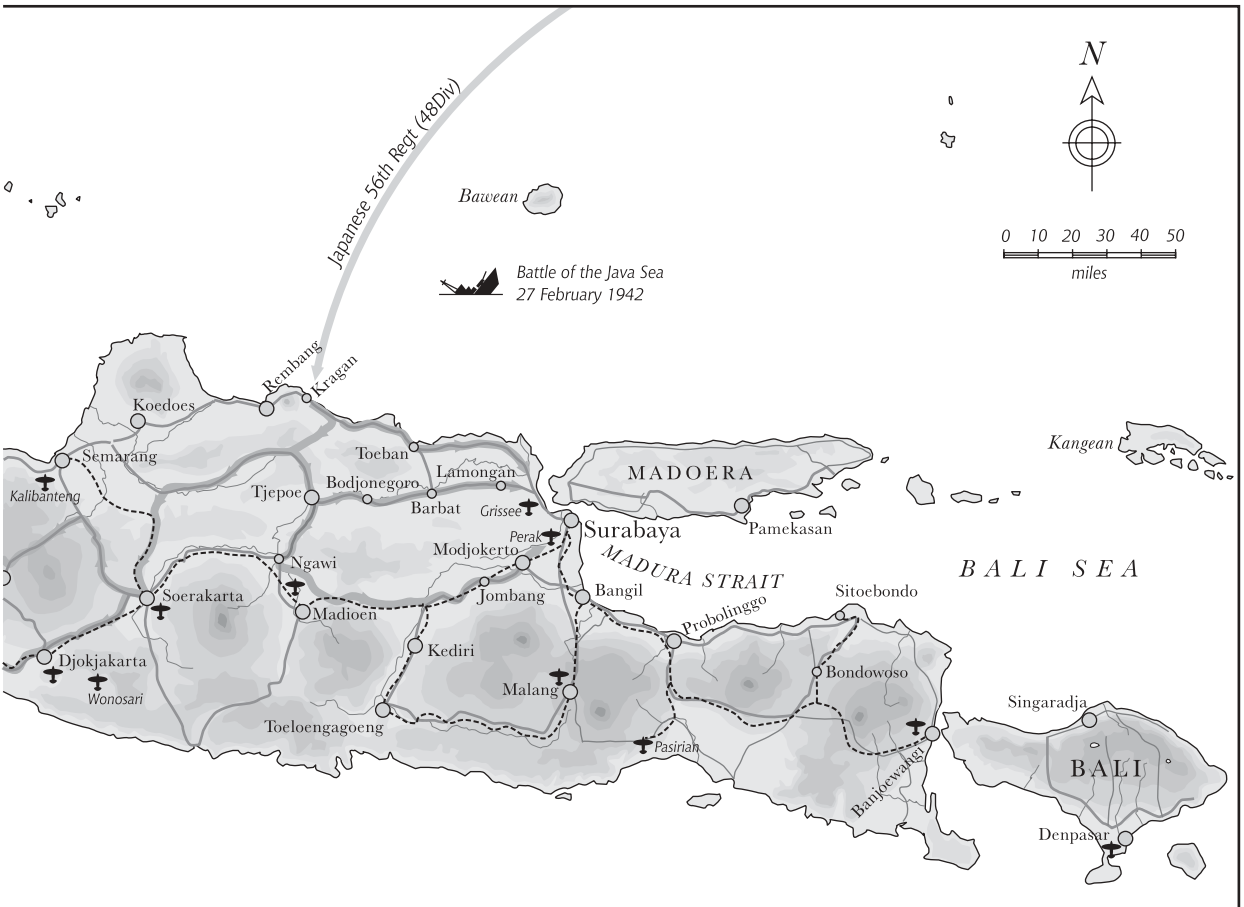
'If you have been busy living your life since the War and not had the time to keep in touch with your old comrades, no one blames you. We have all been doing the same thing, but the time has

come now, when to breathe the air of nostalgia is a tonic. It is now late in the day and the shadows are getting long, but before they fall we can rekindle the old relationships born in adversity.

By chance and search we have now come into contact with at least sixteen of our company in the UK and two in Australia. If you are aware of any others, please send their addresses to the writer and contact will be made.'

Thus was the beginning of the wider *Java Club* which was initially made up of fourteen FEPOWS of the 'Hut 4' origin and which had its first reunion in Coventry. It has subsequently brought together FEPOWS captured

Map of Java 1942.
(BRIAN J GREEN)





The Far East 1942-45.
(BRIAN J GREEN)

in Java but later spread across camps throughout the Nip-occupied territory. In recent years it has greatly expanded to include their relatives (widows, wives and children) and in 2007 has a membership of 207, of whom 95 are FEPOWs. It has thus become a 'living and breathing' association, publishing, through their quarterly newsletter and Journal, (*The Java Journal*) stories, items of FEPOW interest, appeals, etc. Such entries have been inserted, like Cromwell's portrait, 'warts and all' and as Bob Chapman pointed out in April 1991, it prints 'what is sent'. 'What arrives goes into the newsletter without prejudice ...' Of course the

face-to-face meetings at the Annual Reunion, held for at least the last twenty years in Stratford-upon-Avon, have been the main source of the powerful nutrient glue that has kept the Java Club thriving so happily.

And now, 65 years after our incarceration, we have a single book representing the quintessence of nearly twenty years of the quarterly journal, a true memorial to all those who suffered and died under the Nips in those distant lands.

Professor Emeritus Leslie J. Audus
(Ex. RAFVR)

Acknowledgements

This book has been produced solely by the families and friends of the members of the *Java 42 Club*. They have given freely and unstintingly of their time and their skills and we would like to thank them.

Margaret Martin lives in Portslade, Sussex with her husband John. Her father, Frederick George Freeman, was a FEPOW but, in common with so many ex-prisoners, did not discuss this time with his family and it was not until after his death in 1987 that Margaret found papers detailing his incarceration by the Japanese. Discovering the COFEPOW website, Margaret was soon introduced to Amanda Johnston; she put Margaret in contact with Joe Fitzgerald, who remembered being with Fred for a while as a FEPOW. Joe, in turn, introduced her to other FEPOWs at their annual conference in Stratford-upon-Avon. Bill Marshall asked Margaret to edit the articles from their *Java Journal* and to produce them for publication. It has been an honour for Margaret to complete this in memory of her father.

Brian Green is a freelance book designer who lives in Bookham, Surrey with his wife Jenny. He is the nephew-in-law of FEPOW Gunner Alfred Rush and joined the *Java 42 Club* to further his research into his uncle's story. Brian's association with this project is in memory of his much loved father-in-law, Walter Rush, Alf's younger brother, who took such an interest in the research and died in 2004 aged 95. Brian is also a member of COFEPOW and is one of the nominated research helpers with a particular interest in the Royal Artillery regiments.

Amanda Johnston is a freelance translator and lives in Hythe, Kent, with her partner Ted and sons Theo and Stefan. The daughter of RAF regular, Flight Sergeant Eric 'Johnny'

Johnston, an ex- RAF Halton apprentice, who died in 1989 having had little opportunity or inclination to speak of his experiences as a FEPOW, Amanda's curiosity was kindled in the late 1990s when she found amongst his papers a list of camps and locations where her father had been held prisoner. It is thanks to surviving FEPOWs contacted via the Java Club and other FEPOW organisations, that she has been able to build up a picture of Johnny's time spent in the Far East. Amanda has had the privilege of helping to proofread and edit the accounts included in this book, and is delighted to have been part of this interesting and essential project to record personal recollections of an important piece of 20th Century history.

Lesley Clark lives in Ongar, Essex with her husband Gary. Her father, William Ellmore, was called up in May 1941 and became a prisoner of the Japanese. He never spoke of his experiences and it was after his death in 1989 that Lesley decided to research her family history. It was through this research that she became a member of the *Java 1942 Club*. She loves to be involved in their reunions, having fun with her new FEPOW friends and helping to raise awareness of the sacrifices previous generations have given for our benefit.

Mike and Meg Parkes live in Hoylake, Wirral. Five years ago Mike indexed Meg's two books 'Notify Alec Rattray...' and '... A. A. Duncan is OK'. These were based on her father's FEPOW diaries. Capt. Andrew Atholl Duncan, 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was a Cipher Officer, attached to HQ staff and held captive in Java and Japan. Meg and Mike were responsible for the creation of the Java Memorial windows in the FEPOW Memorial Building at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, and are co-founders of the Researching

FEPOW History Group which organises biennial conferences attracting internationally-renowned speakers for the benefit of amateur and professional researchers.

The editors would like to thank them both for their skill and experience in producing the comprehensive index, which is such an important element of this book.

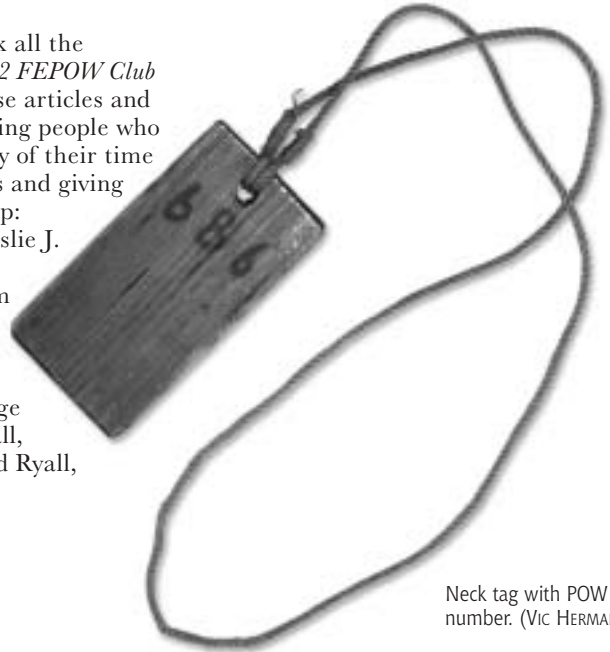
We would also like to thank Jon Grimshaw of Big Drum Communications, Meg's brother-in-law, for his work in designing the cover of this book.

We would like to thank all the members of the *Java 42 FEPOW Club* who have donated these articles and particularly the following people who have given unstintingly of their time checking these articles and giving us their invaluable help:
Professor Emeritus Leslie J. Audus, Joe Fitzgerald, Derek Fogarty, William Franklin, Jim Fraser, George Housego, Terence Kelly, Edward 'Mac' McDaniel, George Michaelis, Bill Marshall, Jonathan Moffatt, Fred Ryall,

Ngairé Scales, Fred Seiker, Leslie and Pam Stubbs, Roderick Suddaby, David Tett, John Watts, Syd Whitehead and Frank Yerbury.

I especially want to express my gratitude to Brian Green, of Green House Design, who has given so much advice, encouragement and so many hours of his time in helping us towards the point where we can present this book in honour of all the ex-FEPOWs who have contributed their writings over the years.

Margaret Martin, 2007



Neck tag with POW number. (VIC HERMAN)