

# THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

March 2004

Number 4

### CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS

The Chairman has long felt that there was a need for the reconstituted Society to have a detailed, formal Constitution, although a number of the senior members of the Committee considered that there was really no need for one in such a small group. Others, however, thought that after the generation of the founding members had retired, such a Constitution would be of use to those who were considering becoming members.

After much discussion during earlier meetings, the Chairman tabled a set of Draft Regulations for the Society at the Committee Meeting on 12th May, 2003. It was then agreed that members should forward any comments and suggestions to John White, who would produce a final Draft for discussion at the next meeting. Finally, at the Committee Meeting on 6th October, 2003, following further discussion and the carrying of a formal vote on an Amendment of the proposed Article 2, it was agreed that the Draft Constitution, as set out below, should be presented for approval at the next AGM.

John White

### CONSTITUTION OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN SOCIETY GENERAL PROVISIONS

- Article 1. The name of the Society shall be “The Burma Campaign Society” or “BCS” (“Biruma Sakusen Kyokai in Japanese”).
- Article 2. The Aims of the Society are:- To encourage reconciliation, honoring the war dead, and the spread and exchange of information about any aspect of Britain and Japan’s encounter during the Second World War, and matters arising from it, especially those related to the Burma Campaign 1941-1945.
- Article 3. Membership will be open, subject to acceptance by an Executive Committee, to all those, regardless of race or religion, who are interested in the aims of the BCS, and their families will be encouraged to attend all ordinary meetings and events.

### ORGANIZATION AND OPERATION

- Article 4. The governance of the BCS shall be through an Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be called within 75 days of the 31st of March, the end of each financial year, and attended by at least 10 members, motions, other than proposals for the Amendment or Revision of the Constitution, being carried by a simple majority of those present and eligible to vote.
- Article 5. There shall be an Executive Committee, elected by the AGM, consisting of a Chairman and Deputy Chairman, serving three year renewable terms, together with an Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and not more than six Ordinary Members elected on rotation for two year renewable terms, the first rotation being decided by lot. In the event of a vacancy the Committee may fill the unexpired term, pending confirmation at the next AGM.
- Article 6. The Executive Committee shall hold regular meetings and may appoint Co-opted Members for particular purposes, together with E-Mail Advisers, who may forward information, opinions and proposals to the Committee for discussion, all such appointments being referred for confirmation to the next AGM.

Article 7. Applications for Membership are to be made to the Honorary Secretary who may, at his or her discretion, refer the matter to the Committee, who may refuse or terminate Membership for due cause, such as criminal activity or actions contrary to the aims, interests or Constitution of the BCS, appeals from such refusals or terminations being referred to the AGM.

Members wishing to resign should inform the Hon. Secretary of their decision.

Article 8. The location of the Office of the BCS shall be decided by the Hon. Secretary.

### **FINANCE**

Article 9. Annual Membership Fees, Special or Extraordinary Membership Fees, Charges for meetings or events, and such other charges as may be deemed necessary from time to time, shall be set by the Committee and confirmed by the next AGM. The annual membership fees are not returnable and applications during the first nine months of the financial year, which runs from 1st April to 31st March, will be charged in full.

Article 10. Without revenue from Donations, the BCS is unlikely to be viable over the long term, and Bequests and Donations from members or from any other appropriate source will be greatly welcomed, but may, if necessary, be refused by the Committee for due cause, any such cases being reported to the AGM.

Article 11. The BCS shall not engage in general religious or commercial activities, but may earn income from projects directly concerned with the furtherance of its Aims.

Article 12. The Annual Accounts, compiled by the Hon. Treasurer, shall be scrutinized by an Auditor appointed by the Committee and shall be presented to the AGM for discussion and approval.

### **AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION**

Article 13. All proposals for Amendment or Revision of the Constitution shall be directed to the Executive Committee in the first instance, and after due consideration be referred to the next AGM, together with any recommendations, for discussion and possible enactment through a vote attracting a majority in favour of the motion of at least two-thirds of those present and eligible to vote.

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## **DEDICATION OF CHANGI LYCHGATE AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM.**

After Singapore fell on 15th February 1942, British and Australian prisoners were held on the eastern tip of the island in an area known as Changi, where conditions were bad and many died, others being sent to work on the infamous Burma railway. In December 1942 the 18th Division Royal Engineers prisoners built a Lychgate at the entrance to the Camp Burial Ground. After the war the Lychgate was re-erected at Tanglin Barracks, Singapore and then, in 1971, shipped to England.

The Lychgate, wonderfully restored by the Royal Engineers, was erected by them at the entrance to the Far East Prisoners of War Plot in the National Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire. A Service of Dedication, held on 8th February, 2003 and conducted by the Reverend Ray Rossiter, President of the National Federation of Far East Prisoners of War Clubs, was attended by Philip Malins, Life Honorary Vice President of the Federation and Deputy Chairman of BCS.

Philip Malins

## MEMORIAL PLAQUE UNVEILING

The Plaque reads:

**1941 BURMA 1945  
YESTERDAY'S FOE  
IS TODAY'S  
FRIEND**

**The Burma Campaign  
Fellowship Group  
The All Burma Veterans Association of Japan**

**PLACED IN 2003 TO COMMEMORATE MANY  
YEARS OF RECONCILIATION**



The photograph shows the Right Reverend Right Honourable Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, beneath the plaque unveiled by him in the Church of St. Ethelberga, 78 Bishopsgate, London, on 14th October 2003, with Rex Wait OBE and Philip Malins MBE MC in the foreground.

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## JAPAN SOCIETY AWARD.

At the Annual Dinner of the Society on 2nd October 2003, Philip Malins, Deputy Chairman of BCS, received the Japan Society Award for his contribution to Anglo-Japanese reconciliation and understanding. The Award which was presented by the Duke of Gloucester, recognized the work which Philip has done, especially through his organization of an annual service of reconciliation at Coventry Cathedral and the establishment of the Japanese Section in the Grove of Reconciliation in the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire. Philip also played a key part in the successful bid to the government for a Special Gratuity payment to all Far East Prisoners of War and their widows.

Phillida Purvis

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## 'DEAR GRANDFATHER I AM IN LONDON' - Video Documentary.

**LETTER FROM YUKI TSUNADA written before the showing at the BCS Christmas lunch on 15th December, 2003 at the Oriental Club.**

Hello, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my great honour that my film will be screening on BCS Xmas party. I have to hesitate in saying it is 'my film' because it is actually 'your film'. Without your support, I could not make this film, so I want to say thank you again.

I had a great experience through making this film. At the same time, I thought that I would like to get some chances to show this film to other people, since I totally agree with the idea of BCS.

Luckily, as some of you already know, the film was screening at Imperial War Museum, London, for eight times in November and December. My professor at Royal Holloway College told me that he would take this year's class to the screening. That's good news. I hope that the class is not the only audience though.....I made an entry for a few film festivals in Japan as well. I hope that I can get some more chance to show the film in public.

I am currently working with Professor Matsui to produce document video about BCS. If you remember, he has been filming reconciliation ceremonies each year and made a trip to Burma by himself. I am editing those 30 hours footage into 20 minutes! I was pleased to be involved in BCS again, so I took his offer. I hope that the video will be useful. I have to get a regular job soon. I am wishing to have a production job. It won't be easy to find the job I want right away, but when the things are not going well, I will read letters from some of you and those will encourage me to move on.

There is a Christmas card from Mr. Daniel in front of my desk. I am feeling a bit of English Christmas here in Kyoto. I wish you all merry Christmas and a happy new year. And I hope to see you again in the future.

Best wishes,

Yuki Tsunada.

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## REPORT.

Yuki Sunada, whose grandfather fought in Burma comes to England and takes a journey into the past talking to veterans of the Campaign. Her 28 minute Documentary made at Royal Holloway College was the winning entry in its class at the Imperial War Museum Student Film Festival and Competition in 2003.

In July 2003, Yuki, a Rotary Scholar at Royal Holloway in her middle twenties, came to my home accompanied by a Chinese fellow student, Qi Zhao, with a camera. I had agreed to her request to interview me on film for her course at the College. She had read the book which I have written describing my war experiences in Southern Burma and Rangoon Jail. Much to the amusement of my wife, who after two hours came to my study to investigate, they sat at my feet — she with a tape-recorder, he with a camera — while she questioned me from my book, which I had open before me for reference.

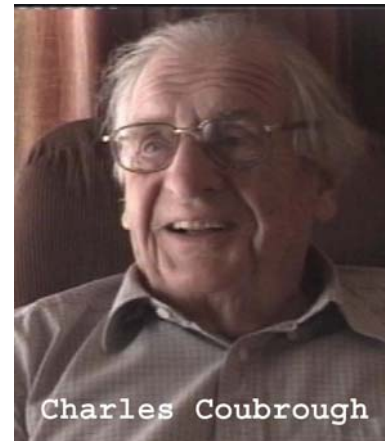
Several weeks later, when I had almost forgotten about it, I received a tape of her film. It was very different from what I had expected, but it was most enjoyable and impressive. I found that she had interviewed other members of the Burma Campaign Society. Masao Hirakubo and Philip Daniel described incidents in the war in Burma interspersed with footage of archive film from the Imperial War Museum. Each described how his attitudes had changed towards the enemy and how he now worked hard to promote friendship and reconciliation between the British and Japanese people.

The film shows me briefly discussing a few of the more dramatic moments of my capture and its immediate aftermath, and then concentrates on the episode when a number of British officers refused an offer to broadcast propaganda in Japan. This offer was contained in an arrogant, chilling document handed to each of them in their solitary confinement cells on 13th August 1942. I described the steps taken by the Japanese Commandant to deal with this defiance. Much of my description has necessarily been cut out and edited, but there was one omission which was due to lack of clarity on my part. Before the verbal intervention of Captain Colgan, ‘the regular officer from the Inskillings’ to which I refer, Major Loring, the second of ‘the two senior officers’, was badly battered by the Burmese. Yuki Sunada’s editing did not take away any of the salient details of the episode. In particular, nothing which I said about the conduct of the Japanese Commandant has been omitted. It is there for all to see.

I hated the Japanese at the time and say so on the film. I go on to describe how and why my attitude changed over the years.

The theme of Yuki Sunada’s Documentary is that reconciliation has replaced the bitterness of the war years between many British and Japanese veterans who fought each other in Burma. This theme is strengthened by the pictures of the British veterans, wearing full medals, climbing down from their aircraft at Kohima in 2001, and of the service at the Cathedral there, with British and Japanese mixed together. Most moving is the visit to the Arboretum in Staffordshire when, to the measured comments of Philip Malins, the camera plays on the five Japanese maple trees and five English maple trees planted together so that, when the leaves fall in the autumn they will fall intermingled as a continuing symbol of total reconciliation.

There are a number of features which impressed me, such as the excellence of the photography, the skilful editing, the imaginative use of Imperial War Museum archive film and also of old photographs, and the clever contrast between the war scenes and the present peaceful activities of the participants, such as my wife and I sitting in our garden — Darby and Joan, a friend suggested — and above all the piano music always at the right time.



Charles Coubrough

## THOUGHTS ON IMPHAL-BISHENPUR.

The twenty-four guns of the 129 Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, were dug in for ten weeks at Bishenpur, some sixteen miles south of Imphal, to provide the main support for the infantry of the 17th Indian Light Division (The Black Cats) in resisting the principal Japanese assault to capture Imphal from the South. The demand for support was, at one time, so intense that, of the six guns that were available in our Battery, each was firing on a different target at the same time. I estimated, at the time, that the eight guns in our Battery fired a total of sixteen tons of shells per gun over this period. With their long line of communication, there was no way that the courageous Japanese infantry of 33rd Division could receive anything like the same support.

After the end of hostilities, acting as a driver based on Mokpalin in South Burma, I learned to respect the discipline and morale of General Honda's men in the area. Sad that they had been led into a war, by other leaders, that they could not hope to win.

Our two great nations, former allies, have at least this much in common: we both lost an Empire in World War Two.

### DEATH OF AN ARMY . . . . . IMPHAL. JULY, 1944.

### GUNS . . . . .

All day they rumbled in the South,  
The night sky lit with distant fire.  
The crofters high on Nippon's slopes  
Will wait in vain for son or sire.  
Frustrated all their pride and hopes,  
An army sunk in monsoon mire.

Reluctant leaders call a halt?  
Devoid of hope they die in vain.  
Admit they've gambled, and have lost?  
Withdraw and save those that remain?  
Or soldier on, nor count the cost,  
All squandered for so little gain.

From muddy foxholes, dug-outs damp,  
Eight weeks we countered their attack.  
Now, one by one, we slip away,  
Behind the line to bivouac.  
We bathe and rest for just a day:  
At dawn the guns will call us back.

A letter home ... but what to write?  
Of July meadows, flowers that dance ...  
And sheep that graze in English fields ...  
Birdsong the summer woods enhance ...  
(At home)  
There is no news ... or so it seems.  
We thank you, Lord, he's not in France.

To Japan, Imphal was a total disaster. In Britain it passed unnoticed.

Nov. 2002

Recent estimates put the losses of the Imperial 15th Army of Japan in the battle for Imphal at about 100,000, a high proportion by disease and starvation; relatively few prisoners were taken.

April 2003

Pat McEvoy

## THE BRITISH COMMONWEALTH FORCE (BCOF) AND THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN.

At a **Discussion Meeting** on 14th October, 2003, **Ian Nish**, Professor Emeritus, London School of Economics took the Chair. He had learnt Japanese at the Army School of Japanese Studies, Simla, attending courses on the Japanese War, the British Way and Purpose, and how to deal with the Japanese on arrival in Japan. In October 1946 he was sent by sea to Japan from Singapore, together with Chinese due for trial in Shanghai and Japanese officers en route to prison in Tokyo, whose composure he admired. His first duty was mainly translation. The Australian Commander of BCOF decreed a non-fraternization policy, which was widely ignored outside the main cities, natural relationships prevailing as in the United States zone. Civil control continued, but the Japanese Government's rule was subject to the authority of General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCARP), and overseen by the American Military Government. The policy was to establish democracy on the US model and act in a detached and benevolent way.

As the civilian population had been told to resist invasion with their lives, there were the strongest grounds for bitterness and hatred, but instead the Japanese people co-operated with immense success with the Allied Occupation in rebuilding the country. He himself had helped to verify that the first election was free and fair and was then employed on Field Security work, in looking for arms caches, reporting on demonstrations, interviewing returning ex-servicemen, and carrying out anti-black market raids.

It was generally agreed that MacArthur's rule was lenient, humanitarian and liberal, the 1946 Constitution, which he approved, enduring without major amendment to the present day. The speaker believed that it would stand as one of the more generous occupations of all time. Opinions were divided on the British Commonwealth participation with 36,000 troops, but although making little input into policy, the British presence helped to ensure a place at the peace table and indicated continued interest in Far East trade.

**Masao Hirakubo**, a Japanese Infantry Officer, said that when he was repatriated from Burma in July 1946, he was in poor health, his weight down from 74 to 40 kilos, and he was busy with family and friends and in finding food. He was among the one-third of its pre-war employees to be re-engaged by his company which, like all such trading firms, was restricted to shipping, since all export and import business was carried out in the name of SCARP. He knew that BCOF was responsible for Hiroshima and Shikoku Prefectures, but had no contact with it. He had been astounded to hear the announcement of the attack on Pearl Harbour and felt then that Japan was a lost nation.

He introduced **Bernard Smith**, who was in BCOF and had a wonderful year in Japan, finding the people friendly and working hard to rebuild. It was no surprise to him that Japan developed into a first rate country.

**Peter Bates**, a BCOF Intelligence Officer, said that, with supporting troops and an air component, the Force comprised Brigades from Britain, India, New Zealand, and also Australia, which would have preferred its own organization, but was, by 1948, the sole remaining unit. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 later revived the importance of bases in Japan. The Japanese said that they feared their own police more than BCOF, which did much showing of the flag, with many parades and guards, and helped the population with food, supplies, clothing and shelter. The duties were not onerous and the Force was withdrawn in February 1947 after processing 700,000 returning Japanese servicemen.

**Lt. Colonel Patric Emerson**, a regular Indian Army Officer from 1937, said he commanded all BCOF Military Police in part of Honshu round Okayama and in Shikoku. The Japanese were poorly off for food and clothing and he organized a big raid on the black market which then went underground. The Military Police, not the Japanese, handled Koreans, who caused little trouble, and the Indian Battalions policed themselves. In December 1946 British troops helped in rescue operations after an earthquake did enormous damage. He subsequently went back to India, but returned seven years later as part of the Australian Army in Korea and was wonderfully received in Japan.

In discussion, **Rex Wait** asked why the occupation was so much better than that of Iraq and **Ian Nish** replied that very careful planning was the answer. **Peter Dean**, a prisoner in Japan, said that returning Japanese troops accepted their position and were highly disciplined. As people in his area were destitute, US aircraft dropped supplies of food and clothing.

**Phillida Purvis** suggested that the post-war retention of the Emperor resulted in a lack of debate about the war in Japanese society, which might not have happened if his son had taken over. **Peter Dean** thought that if the Emperor had later abdicated, it would have been easier for young people to confront the past, and **Ian Nish** commented that Britain, being a monarchy, was in favour of retaining the Emperor, but that the decision seems to have been left to MacArthur.

**Masao Hirakubo** said that there had been no hatred of the enemy from the beginning and the Japanese fought on the order of the state. **Akemi Solloway** asked whether MacArthur encouraged people to become Christian and **Ian Nish** replied that he had opened the door to missionary societies, while **Peter Bates** said that he thought that MacArthur had performed like a colonial governor, well suited to the situation.

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## JAPANESE CEMETERY MEMORIAL SERVICE.

The Japanese Cemetery within the Hendon Cemetery was made by Dohokai, associated with the Japanese residents in England, in 1936. Its inauguration was attended by the Ambassador Shigeru Yoshida, late Prime Minister of Japan. After the Second World War, it was rather neglected until support came from the Japanese General Consulate. Since the Japanese Residents' Association in the UK was formed in 1996, the Cemetery has been regularly cleaned and maintained by volunteer members of the Association.



A Memorial Service, conducted by the Rev. Professor Sato and attended by Ambassador Orita, Mrs. Orita, and the Deputy Mayor of Hendon, was held on 4th October, 2003.

Masao Hirakubo

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## THE KOHIMA EDUCATIONAL TRUST.

On 19th April, 1944, a few hundred ragged, exhausted, wounded or dying British and Indian soldiers came down an Indian hill. For two weeks barely 1500 men of the Royal West Kents, the Assam Regiment and the Assam Rifles, assisted by the Punjabis and Rajputs of 181 Indian Brigade, had held back some 13,000 Japanese infantrymen until relieved by 2nd British Division.

The Naga people of Assam gave unstinting help to the Division in turning the tide of war in the far East at the subsequent Battle of Kohima. It was their country which was ravaged, through no fault of theirs, by the contending armies of the Second World War. It therefore seems the Newsletter should draw attention to the existence of the Kohima Educational Trust. Its primary purpose is to give educational assistance to the Naga people of Assam and so to perpetuate the respect which we owe to them and do something to repay a debt of honour.

Correspondence and donations should be sent to: The Secretary  
The Kohima Educational Trust  
1 Dalby Mead  
York  
YO31 9BH

John White

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## REVIEWS

*The Book of Tea.* Okakuro Kakuzo, Charles E Tuttle Co. 1906.

*The Book of the Samurai, the Warrior Class of Japan,* Stephen R. Turnbull, Bison Books, 1982.

Although these two books were written in 1906 and 1982, respectively, I believe that they complement each other. *The Book of Tea* was written by a Japanese man who sought to explain his heritage, through the metaphor of tea, to an Occidental audience newly receptive to Japanese ideas due to the recent Russo-Japanese War. In his own

words,” (the Westerner) was wont to regard Japan as barbarous while she indulged in the gentle arts of peace: he calls her civilized since she began to commit wholesale slaughter .....” He goes on to say of teaism that “Our home and habits, costume and cuisine, porcelain, lacquer, painting” our very literature “ all have been subject to its influence. No student of Japanese could ever ignore its presence.”

*The Book of the Samurai* is written by an Englishman with a good understanding of the history and heritage that inspired the author of *The Book of Tea* . I had the good fortune to have Stephen Turnbull as a dinner guest a couple of years ago and was able to discuss with him the Japanese history he recounts in his book. It is a sensitive study of the Samurai from their origins, as a result of the Taiho land reforms of AD 702, to their demise, on the defeat of Saigo Takamori’s Satsuma Rebellion on 24th September 1877. Read together, these two books provide a window into one part of the Japanese mind. I recommend them to Japanese and non-Japanese readers alike.

Akemi Solloway

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## COMING EVENTS 2004.

**Thursday, 4th March, 3 pm: An informal tea-time meeting** will be held at 19 Norland Square. This will be a chance to hear about the remarkable work of Mrs. Yoshiko Tamura and Mrs. Taeko Sasamoto, who will be visiting the UK for a week as part of their research in uncovering details of the lives, and deaths, of the POWs who are buried at the Yokohama War Graves Commission Cemetery at Hodogaya If you would like to come, or know anyone who would be interested, please contact Phillida Purvis, 020 7221 6985.

**Monday, 15th March, 6.00 - 8.00 pm: A Discussion Meeting** on Burma at the end of the war will be held at the Nippon Club. The speaker will be John McEnery, who served with South East Asia Command until 1947.

**Wednesday, 7th April, 6.45 pm: A Lecture on the Burma Campaign** will be held by the Japan Society at the Oriental Club, Stratford Place, as part of its monthly series, to mark the 60th Anniversary of the Kohima-Imphal campaign. The speakers will be BCS Chairman, Masao Hirakubo, and Deputy Chairman, Philip Malins, who will speak from their own experiences of the war. All BCS members are welcome.

**Thursday 10 June, Lunchtime: Annual General Meeting of BCS.** Full details will be sent out nearer the time.

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**Errata:** In the article on *The International Friendship and Reconciliation Trust in the September 2003 Issue of the Newsletter*; the Right Hon. Lord Kingsdown KG was erroneously referred to as Lord Kingsdown KC.

In the September 2003 Newsletter, the report of the talk given last May by Sadao Oba about the treatment of Japanese Surrendered Personnel, his statement that all Japanese POWs but those in the USSR and Communist China were repatriated by 1946 was incorrectly recorded as saying that all such prisoners were repatriated by that date.

**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 2004 Issue should reach me at the above address by 31st August at the latest.**

Edited and Produced by John White & Lucien Chocron

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