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Title	Identifying and collecting primary sources of information in the archives and libraries in England, New Zealand, United States and Singapore to reconstruct the details of daily lives of the civilian internees at the Changi Prison and Sime Road Camp during the Japanese occupation of Singapore, 1942-1945: Issues and challenges
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**IDENTIFYING AND COLLECTING PRIMARY SOURCES OF INFORMATION IN THE ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES IN ENGLAND, NEW ZEALAND, UNITED STATES AND SINGAPORE TO RECONSTRUCT THE DETAILS OF DAILY LIVES OF THE CIVILIAN INTERNEES AT THE CHANGI PRISON AND SIME ROAD CAMP DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION OF SINGAPORE, 1942-1945: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES.**

*Paper presented at the SEALG annual meeting / EUROSEAS Conference, Lisbon, 4 July 2013 by*

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**Abstract**

During the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia from 1942 -1945 there were hundreds of British, Dutch and American internee camps located throughout Southeast Asia although very little is known about these camps due to the lack of primary and secondary sources of information, except for the European internees in Singapore. The author has uncovered sources of information that can be found in books, journal articles, oral history, maps, paintings and drawings, photographs, diaries, colonial and military records, theses and newspapers published in the prison camps, national archives, missionary archives and personal records to enable him to reconstruct the daily lives of the internees throughout their internment. This article will demonstrate how to locate and itemise each of the sources of information located in many libraries, archives and universities in Singapore, New Zealand, England and the United States. The construction of a preliminary and partial bibliography of these sources of information will raise issues of collection development, access to information and copyright, particularly, if an institution plans to digitalise the materials as a heritage collection.

**Introduction**

During the Japanese occupation of East Asia and Southeast Asia from 1941 to 1945 hundreds of civilian internment camps were created in Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China, French Indo-China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Republic of the Philippines, Burma, Singapore, Sumatra, Java, West Borneo, and the Celebes. There were approximately 114 predominantly Dutch civilian camps in Java, of which 30 remained when the Japanese surrendered. In Sumatra there were 93, of which only nine existed at the time of liberation. In Hong Kong, the bomb-damaged prison warden quarters' quarters at Stanley Prison housed 2,500 predominantly British men, women and children caught in the British colony. In Singapore, Changi Prison, built on the east coast of Singapore Island, housed the 3,000 to 4,000 predominantly British men, women and children who were caught when Singapore surrendered. In May

1944 the Changi internees were moved to a former RAF barracks in Sime Road, when they remained until they were liberated (Archer 2004, pp. 5-7). The history of the Japanese occupation of Southeast Asia, including Singapore, is an important junction in the history of many Southeast Asian countries for it provided opportunities to seek independence from Dutch, British and French colonialists. Many theses, books and journal articles have been written about the Japanese occupation of Singapore. However, very little systematic and detailed studies of the experiences of European or Western internees experience were conducted until recently by Archer (2004). There were also studies about the experiences of Prisoners-of-War in Singapore by Havers (1999).

From 8 February to 24 June 2012 the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore held an exhibition about "Images of Internment: the eye and art of William Haxworth". The exhibition selected about 40 of his 300 odd drawings and painting he produced during his internment at Changi Prison and later, Sime Road Camp during the Japanese occupation of Singapore from 1942 to 1945. The drawings and paintings depicted the lives of the mainly male internees in "organised sports, bathing parade by the sea, gardening, chess, card games, concerts, plays, mock parliament, church services, lectures, classes and reading". Prior to internment, Haxworth was Inspector of Police assigned as Financial Officer, Police Department, Straits Settlements (Anon 1934, p. 10).

While it was laudable for the NLB to organise this art exhibition as part of the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle for Singapore, 1941-1942, the prolific and vivid works of Haxworth do not, strictly speaking, represent the daily lives of the internees since for most of the time, the men, women and children internees led separate lives. The women, girls and children under ten years of age, consisting of about 14 per cent of the civilian internees as shown in Table 1, were housed in Block A of the Changi Prison complex. They appointed their own leaders and organised their daily activities, and except of rare occasions, were physically and socially separated from the male internees. The rest of male internees and boys aged 10 years and above were housed in Blocks B, C and D (Thompson 1990, pp. 29-30).

**Table 1: Camp register of men, women and children internees on 29 April 1942.**

	Men	Women	Children	Total
Interned on February 17, 1942	1,197	145	37	1,379
Interned between February 17 and March 6, 1942	1,001	204	18	1,223
Interned after March 6, 1942	163	20	6	189
	<b>2,361</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>2,791</b>

Source: Miller and Wade 1942, p. 2.

Moreover, there were three known amateur male artists, R. W. E. Harper, Bert Neyland (Hayter 1989) Charles Jackson (Thompson 1990), whose works were published in two published diaries and a book of poems respectively. Harper was the Chief Police Officer at Batu Pahat, Johore (Anon 1941, p. 10). His illustrations accompanied a book of war poetry, *Mural ditties and Sime Road soliloquies*, written by C. C. Brown in 1948. Brown was the British Resident in Pahang (Anon 1937, p. 9). Bert Neyland worked in the Malayan Postal Services. He began drawing cartoons casually in 1935 and when his first work was accepted and published by the *Sunday Times* in Singapore, he continued on his new "hobby" (Anon 1952, p. 4).

There were three known women artists whose drawings and paintings were published as part of their diaries. Almost all of their images recorded the lives and activities of the women internees. Gladys Tompkins, a nurse from New Zealand, deposited her paintings to Alexandra Turnbull Library, and teacher Mary Thomas donated her drawings to the Imperial War Museum. The collection and arrangements of the known list of men and women artists would provide a more comprehensive picture of the internees' lives at Changi Prison and the Sime Road camp. Table 2 shows a list of female artists and where their works are located.

**Table 2: List of female internee artists, 1942-1954**

Women artists	
G. D. Iris Parfitt, school teacher	Published in <i>Jail bird jottings</i> .
Gladys Tompkins, nurse	Alexandra Turnbull Library, New Zealand
Mary Thomas, teacher	Imperial War Museum.

### ***Published diaries***

One of the most important sources of information are the published and unpublished diaries of the men and women internees. Possibly one of the earliest published diaries with sketching and drawings was Iris Parfitt's *Jailbird jottings*, published in 1947, two years after the Japanese surrender. However, the other four women's and five men's published diaries appeared from 1977 onwards.

Gladys Tompkins (1977) only began to publish her diary when she was in her early eighties and was about to go blind. Thomas Kitching's (2002) diary was a transcript by his 68 year old son and George Peet's (2011) diary was edited by his granddaughter, Emma Peet. It could be that the authors did not wish to dwell into their past experiences as civilian internees which may explain why the diaries were only published 30 to 60 years later. Thus, the process of reconstructing the detailed and comprehensive lives of internees can be made possible only after the diaries were published recently.

**Table 3: Published diaries of women and men internees**

<b>Female authors</b>			
G. J. Iris Parfitt	1947	<i>Jailbird jottings</i>	Text and drawings
Gladys Tompkins	1977	<i>Three wasted years</i>	Text and paintings
Freddy Bloom	1980	<i>Dear Philip: a diary of captivity</i>	Text
Mary Thomas	1983	<i>In the shadow of the rising sun</i>	Text and drawings
Sheila Allan	1994	<i>Diary of a girl in Changi</i>	Text
<b>Men authors</b>			
E. J. H. Corner	1981	<i>The Marquis: a tale of Syonan-to</i>	Text and map
T. P. M. Lewis	1984	<i>Changi the lost years: a Malayan diary 1941-1945</i>	Text and map
John Hayter	1989	<i>Priest in prison: four years of life in occupied in Japanese-occupied Singapore 1941-45</i>	Text and drawings
Thomas Kitching	2002	<i>Life and death in Changi: the war and internment diary of Thomas Kitching (1942-1945)</i>	Text
George L. Peet	2011	<i>Within Changi's walls: a record of internment in World War II</i>	Text

**Unpublished diaries**

There are also many unpublished diaries of the internees deposited at the Rhodes House Library, Oxford (Kennedy 1987, pp. 159-160), Imperial War Museum (Michiko 2008, pp. 214-216), Department of Documents and the Royal Commonwealth Society (Archer 2004, pp. 255-256). This information, listed in Table 3, should be added into the bibliography of the Japanese occupation of Singapore. The last known bibliography on this subject entitled, *From Singapore to Syonan-to 1941-1945: a select bibliography*, was compiled by Perumbulavil and Heng (1992) and published in 1992.

**Table 4: Selected examples of known unpublished diaries and papers**

Women internee		
	<b>Description</b>	Location
Mrs. K. M. de Moubray <sup>1</sup>	Typewritten diary	Imperial War Museum
Constance Sleep <sup>2</sup>	Diary, 1942-1945	Rhodes House Library, s130
Freddy Bloom <sup>3</sup>	Papers	Changi Camp
	<b>Description</b> (Men internee)	<b>Rhodes House Library, Oxford</b>

K. R. Blackwell <sup>2</sup>	'Malay Curry' 1921-1944	MSS Ind Ocn s90
W. L. Blythe <sup>2</sup>	Papers, 1942-1945	s116
A.E. Fawcett <sup>2</sup>	Personal memories	r1, r2
J. Hodder <sup>2</sup>	Diary and statement 1942-1945	s52
Eileen Niven (Mills) <sup>2</sup>	1942-1945	s99
A.M. Duncan Wallace <sup>1</sup>	Diary of a civilian internee in Singapore	Cambridge University Library
W.F.N. Churchill <sup>3</sup>	Changi, Sime Road	Department of Documents: Far East, Internment, Civilians, Second World War
Dr. M.E. Hopkins <sup>3</sup>	Changi Camp	Department of Documents
E. A. Ross <sup>3</sup>	<i>Singapore diary</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM papers Addenda
A.M. Duncan Wallace <sup>3</sup>	Papers of A.M. Duncan Wallace	(RCS) BAM XII/17
T. Kitching <sup>3</sup>	<i>Diary of events as seen by Chief Warden</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM XII/1/1
C.E. Collings and others	<i>Impressions of Changi civilian internment camp</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM XII/5/11
John Weekly <sup>3</sup>	<i>Documents and records concerning Civilian Internment Camp Singapore</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM XII/5/15
H.P. Bryson <sup>3</sup>	<i>Eating rubber seed and other internment memories</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM XII/5/19
Mrs. Muriel M. Reilly <sup>3</sup>	<i>War diary, 8/12/41-13/2/42</i>	Royal Commonwealth Society Library (RCS) BAM XII/5/24

Sources: <sup>1</sup> Michiko 2008, p. 214; <sup>2</sup>Kennedy 1987, pp. 159-160, <sup>3</sup>Archer 2004, p. 256.

### **Oral history**

In 1986 the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) published a catalogue of oral history interviews of 175 persons who lived through the Japanese occupation in Singapore. However, only three were related to the internees live at Changi prison and Sime Road camp as shown in Table 4 below. The Imperial War Museum (IWM) has also collected the interviews of some of the internees about their internment. Table 4 shows a list of three known interviewees. There could be more at the Imperial War Museum or at other

locations. The collection of oral history interviews may encounter two issues. Most of the interviews were taped and there may be a need to convert these tapes into digital format. Furthermore, not all the interviews were transcribed. It may be easier to read the transcript rather than to hear the interviews if the speech or sound quality is not very clear.

**Table 5: Oral history interviews**

Interviewee	Description	Location
Edward Ivor Parrish (Manager) <sup>1</sup>	4 hours 23 minutes (no transcript)	National Archives of Singapore
Gordon Scott (Chief accountant) <sup>1</sup>	3 hours 18 minutes, 82 pages	National Archives of Singapore
Arthur Alexander Thompson (student) <sup>1</sup>	3 hours 37 minutes, 135 pages	National Archives of Singapore
Mrs de Jonge <sup>2</sup>	Tape (62/0/7)	Imperial War Museum
Mrs Guy <sup>2</sup>	Tape (64/76/6)	Imperial War Museum
Mrs Colley <sup>2</sup>	Tape (6229/11, Reel 1)	Imperial War Museum

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Tan 1986; <sup>2</sup>Michiko 2008

### ***Camp newspapers and other publications***

At the first stage of the internment, British-born *Straits Times* news editor Harry Miller and Australian, Guy Wade, edited and produced the men's camp newspaper, *Karikal Chronicle*. It was replaced by the *Changi Chronicle* after they were interned at Changi prison (Archer 2004, p. 105). By and large, these newspapers reported about the daily happenings at the men's camp, including organised sports like cricket, football, boxing and volleyball. A complete set of these newspapers are kept in the Royal Commonwealth Society Library as listed in Table 5.

In the women's camp, the *POW WOW* newspaper was created by Freddy Bloom (Archer 2004, p. 156). Before the war, she worked as a journalist on the Malayan Group of Newspapers (Bloom 1980, p. 11). It is full of hints on sewing, cooking, health, fashion, 'make do and mend' and entertainments. Regular items include internees' birthdays, bridge and mah-jong lessons, cross words, poetry, humour and stories. Puzzles for children also had a regular place (Archer 2004, p. 156). The Imperial War Museum holds a complete set of *POW WOW* (Michiko 2008, p. 216).

**Table 6: Newspapers published by the men and women internees**

Newspapers published in the men's camp		
<i>Karikal Chronicle</i> <sup>1</sup>	1-14	Royal Commonwealth Society Library
<i>Changi Guardian</i> <sup>1</sup>	1-262	Royal Commonwealth Society Library
<i>POW WOW</i> <sup>2</sup>	Complete set	Imperial War Museum

Sources: <sup>1</sup>Archer 2004, p. 256, <sup>2</sup>Michiko 2008, p. 216.

## **Maps**

The internees sketched or drew maps detailing some aspects of their internment. Lewis's (1984, p. 97) map showed where he buried his diary at Changi Prison, which he later retrieved after the war. His map also indicated Blocks A to D where the women and men lived, the camp kitchen, exercise yard and the garden. Thompson's (1990, p. 32) map showed where the camp's library and "theatre" were located. H. E. MacKenzie's map located at the National Archives of Singapore (NAS) drawn with a draughtsman-like precision, showed the location of the football ground where the camp's league matches and know-out tournament were played.

## **Conclusion**

Among the many internment camps for the Dutch, British and other Europeans as well as Americans located in Java, Shanghai, Hong Kong and the Philippines, the Singapore internment camps at Changi Prison and Sime Road camp had a distinctively unique history and heritage in Singapore and the history of internment in Southeast Asia due to the following reasons:

Firstly, the men, women and children were allowed to organise their lives and activities among themselves. They went on in their daily lives conducting schools, adult classes, concerts, indulging in recreational reading, sporting activities, bridge, mah-jong sessions and creating separate language, religious and community libraries that other internment camps did not have or experience.

The reconstruction of the detailed daily lives of the internees was made possible because of the availability of several published diaries, sketches, drawings, paintings, oral history tapes and transcripts and camp newspapers deposited in the NAS, IWM, RCS Library, Cambridge University Library, Rhodes House Library, Oxford and the Alexandra Turnbull Library in New Zealand.

What has been known and published is only a small part of a larger picture. For example, there are many more unpublished diaries not known to researchers. This raises many issues. Which institution in Singapore should identify the whole collection and begin building a detailed and full bibliography? How to go about accessing these different types of information? What are the copyright issues? How to catalogue these items? It is desirable and possible to digitalize all the known items? The author hopes that solutions to all these issues can be found through networking with librarians and archivists.



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