

The morning after arriving in Yangon I arranged for a tour of the Yangon area to meet various veterans. Our first veteran visit was to **Hla Tin**, 96 who is on the navy list. Hla Tin had two sons who both died in their sixties. His wife is also deceased and he lives in a house with his daughter, son in law and granddaughter. He has lived there for 35 years



Next we visited **Saw Tha Say**, 87 who served in the Burma Electrical & Mechanical Engineers. Saw Tha Say is completely bedridden and can hardly speak but is well cared for by his relatively wealthy family in their large house. They were extremely hospitable and insisted on serving us a late and substantial lunch. The family business is in fish farming in the Yangon and Awerawaddy regions. Saw Tha Say said that he was very pleased to see us and thought the British had forgotten him!



Then it was on, deep into Innsein and a change of scene to visit **Saw Sunday**, 96 who is also on the navy list. After the war Saw Sunday worked as an immigration officer and has lived for the last 70 years in the same ramshackle house with his sparky wife, Hilda, 91.





Ray Po, 97 was the next on our list that day. Ray, who was an RAF engineer, is also completely bedridden and virtually unable to talk but he did look intently at me and became animated when shown a photograph of him as a younger man in the 1970s. His daughter was looking after him when we visited and she speaks fluent English.



We then moved on to visit **Saw Brain Gyaw**, 86 who served in Upper Burma with the Royal Artillery in 1946. His commanding officer was Major Oliver. Saw Brain was recruited in Patheingyi and also operated in Meiktila, south of Mandalay.



The final visit of the day was to see **Saw Teddy**, 93 who wears very thick glasses and is, apparently, on the blind list. I have no records for the blind list. Saw Teddy attended the VJ Day memorial in Yangon and said he very much enjoyed the day. He would like a DVD of the event. Saw Teddy served for 7 years in the Signals Corps. at Maymyo working alongside (and senior to) Saw Berny, who is well known to H4FA. Their British Supervisor was Sergeant Collins. After the war Saw Teddy worked for Burma Railways. He has two daughters, Linda and Susan. One daughter was in the house when we visited and she speaks fluent English, having lived in Singapore for many years.

The following day, I had arranged a taxi to drive us to, and around, Pathein. It was a very long day of around six hours in each direction along single carriageway roads. Day hire cars are disproportionately expensive in Myanmar, probably because of the lack of self-drive car rental opportunities in the country. No matter the views were lovely and the veterans well worth the long day.

First we went to see **Saw You Nah**, 91 (navy) and his wife **Naw Cherry**, 89. Saw You Nah was on ship 8339/ML3887 which was caught in a cyclone. After leaving the navy in 1964, he became a high school English teacher. He lives in a respectable urban house and tends to his fruit trees well.



We then moved on to see **Saw Linn Maung**, 90 at his rural house. Saw Linn Maung is very young looking and still active. He was in the 2nd Karen Rifles and his commanding officer was Captain Kelvin. Saw Linn Maung's wife was present but remained asleep, to all intents and purposes, during our visit. After the war, Linn Maung worked as a hospital orderly and continued the struggle for independence in Prome.



The next visit was to **Saw Than Kywe**, 90 who was in the 1st Karen Rifles. His salary was 60 Kyat per month (1 sack of rice cost 2 Kyats, by way of comparison). After his service he became a farmer outside Pathein. He had 12 children of which 9 survive, the youngest being his daughter Lucy aged 40.



Lastly, that day, we took a journey through the rice paddies and jungle tracks on the back of motorcycles dispatched to fetch us from the village of **Saw Golder**, 89 of the 2nd Karen Rifles and his wife **Naw Moore**, 90. Saw Golder is much subdued now with severe kidney problems but his wife is the centre of village life; very talkative and jovial. Saw Golder served from 1946-47. Saw Golder was given 120,000 Kyats for medical expenses.



The next day I took the bus to Toungoo.



The first visit of the day was to **Saw Pa Oh** who I last met as a sprightly 90 year old in 2013. Saw Pa Oh is now much frailer, has had a bad fall which resulted in a broken leg and his hearing and eyesight are slowly failing him. Nevertheless, he is still very active mentally and was very pleased to see me (when he eventually realised who I was). Due to a family wedding his large, extended, family were staying in his house. They were all curious to see what was going on and sat behind me as an audience. Saw Pa Oh's is

clearly still quite an important family. Saw Pa Oh has been regularly harassed by the Burma Army since 1983 and, if fighting was going on in the hills, spent a week each year in prison from 2001-2011. This was to put pressure on younger, more active members of his extended family. Saw Pa Oh has 40 grandchildren ranging from 18 months to 35 years old.



Next Kevin took me to visit **Saw Tha Din**. He is now a shadow of the feisty man I met in 2013 even deteriorating since attending VJ Day last August. Saw Tha Din spends much of his time in a filthy bed and seemed a little vague. However, when I asked Kevin to remind him who I am, he reached into a cloth bag to his side and pulled out the photograph of Colonel Peacock which I had distributed on my last visit. I found it incredible that he had kept it so close to him or, indeed, that he had kept it at all. He, too, has broken a leg and

is taking medicines for it.



The following day we started early and drove, initially on the Toungoo - Mawchi Road, past a Burma Army checkpoint and into the countryside to the south of the road. First we visited **Saw Ba Win Aung**, 93 Burma Army Signals, Service No. W/142, wife **Naw Kwe Mu** (deceased). This gentleman speaks good English and is still, mentally, very active.



Next we drove to see **Saw Enoch Paul**, 95 BRNVR (navy list). Saw Paul speaks excellent English, is very cheerful and sang us a couple of navy songs from the war! He joined the navy aged 18 and was in Rangoon when, on 23rd December 1942, the Japanese bombed the city. He remembers an entire group of friends in a gun pit wiped out by a Japanese bomb. "All gone, flesh on the walls". "When we were alive we were in hell because everything had gone bad". He also went to Bassein where the Japanese attacked and killed several friends.

Saw Paul was a boxer in the navy. He would like to dig a well for his village which, he claims, would cost about 200,000 Kyat.



From there we went to see a very frail and bedridden gentleman named **Saw Hardy**, 99. He is looked after by his daughter who talks a great deal. They live in a poor village deep in the countryside of paddy fields, maize crops, watermelons and jungle. Unable to sit, he needs to be fed lying down. He would like to die but believes it a crime to take ones own life. He has 3 sons and 3 daughters and talked a lot about Force 136. He remembers Major Butler and appears on my list of personnel for Mongoose

Blue area, Operation Character.



Finally we met **Saw Aye Maung**, 91 and his wife Daw Sein Pyint. He greeted me with "Peace so we meet". He came to VJ Day and is a friend of the family who were driving me around. He has 2 daughters and 3 sons. He was blinded in the left eye by an accidental gunpowder explosion in the war. He served with 1st Karen Rifles in the Chindits and then 3 months in Force 136. He likes Beltel nut, which he calls "bad man's chocolate".