

Tributes to Dr Bill Frankland by Friends of Millbank

2. Nat Roocroft RN (4 April 2020)

I knew Bill whilst deployed as a Medical Officer in the Royal Navy; we initially worked together remotely in 2016 on a medical history paper analysing the research by Flight Lieutenant Nowell Peach into Burning Feet Syndrome, conducted whilst also a FEPOW during WW2.^{1,2} Bill's first-hand experience and insight was invaluable, and it was a real privilege to publish the work with him.

Following my deployment I was fortunate to be able to spend an afternoon with Bill, talking about his experiences as a Medical Officer many years before, and comparing to my own. Although separated by many years, and faced with very different challenges, it was fascinating to find out that some aspects of the job had changed very little in 75 years! As a junior Medical Officer I found this both inspiring and meaningful, and something that will influence the rest of my career.

Members of Friends of Millbank may be particularly interested to read the medical history paper mentioned by Nat Roocroft, on Burning Feet Syndrome in FEPOWS, co-authored remotely with Bill Frankland when he was 104 years old, see reference below. Three other co-authors were Emily Mayhew, Geoff Gill and Meg Parkes, all of whom have delivered talks to Friends of Millbank.

Bill had particularly enjoyed interacting with Nat who was just embarking on his RN medical career and was serving on board RFA Argus at the time.³ They remained friends, last meeting when Nat told him all about his experience of being part of the official RN presence at the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore on 11 November 2019.



Surgical instruments used by FEPOW in captivity, including Nowell Peach's homemade tendon hammer inscribed with 'Java 1942'. (Image from Roocroft's paper)

¹ Roocroft NT, Mayhew E, Parkes M, Frankland AW, Gill GV, Bouhassira D, et al. Flight Lieutenant Peach's observations on Burning Feet Syndrome in Far Eastern Prisoners of War 1942-45. QJM 2017;110(3):131-9. <https://academic.oup.com/qjmed/article/110/3/131/2681817>

² Friends of Millbank may wish to listen to Flt Lt Nowell Peach RAFVR himself and get a feel for his sense of humour. He recorded oral history interviews in 2007 – 2008 for the Captive Memories project of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, one of which describes the recycling of barium in Java hospital camp. <https://www.captivememories.org.uk/alfred-nowell-hamilton-peach>

³ Friends of Millbank will be interested to learn that RFA Argus deployed to the Caribbean on 1 April 2020 in preparation for the hurricane season but also to be on hand to support British Overseas Territories as necessary during the current coronavirus pandemic, as part of Operation Broadshare.