

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

BRIGADIER ARTHUR SHAKESPEAR

Papers, 1934-42

Reel M1198

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Filmed: 1981

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Arthur Talbot Shakespear (1885-1964), the son of Colonel Arthur Bucknell Shakespear, was born at Plymouth. He was educated at Cheltenham College and the Royal Military College. He was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1906 and promoted to the rank of captain in 1914. He was stationed in Ireland and Malta and during World War I he served in France and Belgium, where he won the Military Cross. After the War, he served in Egypt and Gibraltar and was promoted to major in 1922, lieutenant-colonel in 1929 and colonel in 1933.

Shakespear arrived in Singapore in October 1933 and left in 1937. Holding the local rank of brigadier, he was the Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master General in the Straits Settlements. He acted as General Officer Commanding (Malaya) in 1935. He was Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master General in Gibraltar in 1940.

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Note: The quality of the film is poor and readers need to adjust the light levels in order to read the documents in their entirety.

Papers of Brigadier Arthur Shakespear relating to the Straits Settlements and Malaya, 1934-42.

1 Album of newspaper cuttings, photographs and invitations, 1934-36.

The photographs at the beginning of the album were taken on the voyage from England to Singapore in 1934. The later photographs mostly depict street scenes and social events in Singapore and Malaya, and also Ceylon, which Shakespear visited in 1936. In particular, the photographs and cuttings refer to the celebrations of the King's Silver Jubilee in 1935.

2 Notebook listing calls made and received, 1934-40.

The notebook lists the names of people whom Shakespear visited, or who visited Shakespear, in Singapore (1934-37), Richmond, England (1938-39) and Gibraltar (1940).

3 Letters, 1935-38.

Sir Shenton Thomas (Singapore) to Shakespear, 18 April 1935: invites Shakespear and his wife to be on the official dais at a ceremonial parade in celebration of the King's Silver Jubilee.

Royal Society of St George. Menu and program of festival banquet, Raffles Hotel, Singapore, 24 April 1935.

Sir Shenton Thomas (Singapore) to Shakespear, 18 Dec. 1937: visitors to Government House; news of the General [William Dobbie]; looks forward to returning to England in 1939.

Clerk of Councils (Singapore) to Shakespear, 19 May 1937: sends copy of Oaths taken by Shakespear as a member of the Executive Council of the Straits Settlements.

J.D. Boyd to Shakespear, 7 June 1937: no prospect of employment for Shakespear on termination of his appointment in Malaya nor of promotion to rank of major-general.

War Office to Shakespear, 5 July 1937: termination of his appointment as Assistant Adjutant and Quarter-Master General in charge of administration, Malaya; he will be placed on half-pay list.

Rev. Maurice Farren (Singapore) to Shakespear, 24 July 1937: inspection of churches at Tanglia and Changi; amazing improvement in furnishings.

War Office to Shakespear, 1 Jan. 1938: approval given for Shakespear to have honorary rank of brigadier on his retirement.

4 Extract from *Royal Engineers Journal*, 1937.

An extract from the *Royal Engineers Journal*, Oct. 1937, with a letter (20 July 1937) from Shakespear concerning the old Royal Engineers Mess at Changi.

5 Diary of Shakespear, 1934-35.

The diary begins on 14 September 1934, when Shakespear was preparing to leave England, and ends on 13 January 1935. It describes his voyage from Southampton to Marseilles, Port Said, Aden, Bombay, Colombo and Penang and his arrival at Singapore (12 Oct. 1934), his impressions of Singapore and Malacca, travels in the Malay Peninsula, the Raffles Hotel, the Alexandra Barracks, social life in Singapore, sporting events, visits to the theatre, church services, events at Government house, and visitors to Singapore, including Lord and Lady Baden-Powell. There are numerous references to senior military and civil officers in the colony, including the governor, Sir Shenton Thomas, and the harbour master, Sir John Alleyne.

6 Papers concerning Lieutenant John Close, 1941-42.

The papers comprise roneoed copies of letters and documents concerning the life and death of Lieutenant John Close, who was killed in December 1941 fighting against Japanese forces at Kota Bahru, Kelantan. They include extracts from O.D. Gallagher's book, *Action in the East* (New York, 1942) and Ian Morrison's book, *Malayan Postscript* (Sydney, 1943). There are also extracts from letters to Close's father, Sir Charles Arden-Close, from Major A.G.L. Close (Malaya), Brigadier Warren Willey (Malaya), Capt. George Gibson (London), Major F. Page Gourlay (Fort Swettenham, Selangor) and Lieutenant-General E.F. Norton (Quetta).