

“SS. ROOSEBOOM”

- **Sunk by Japanese submarine number I – 159 on 1st March 1942.**

[Version 1. 2.2: July 2011]

The “SS. Rooseboom” (in some records shown as the “Rosenboom’)was a Dutch steam ship of 1035 tons, built in 1926 by Rijkee & Co., Rotterdam and was owned by the KPM (translates to Royal Packet Navigation Co.) line in 1942.

The Captain on its last voyage was Captain M. C. A. Boon of the KPM line who had been promoted to the rank of Captain in 1938.

At the outbreak of war the ship was usually on the coastal run between Sumatra and Java. In February 1942 she was en route from Batavia, the capital of Java, to Ceylon when she was instructed to pick up evacuees in the port of Padang in Western Sumatra.

According to the site ‘mercantilemarine.org’, the ...KPM ship the ‘SS. Rooseboom’ left the heavily damaged port of Tanjong Priok (Batavia) on the 22nd February 1942. It states that “...her ultimate destination was Bombay via Colombo, but first she had to call at Emmahaven (Padang) to pick up a large number of military and civilian refugees...no-one knows exactly how many refugees were crammed on to that little ship but it was probably over 500...the ‘Rooseboom’ left Emmahaven on 27th February... with a number of women and children on board who had escaped from Singapore in the weeks prior to the Surrender...”.

She appears to have arrived on either the 25th or 26th February and left quickly on 26th or 27th February 1942 (depending on the source used for this date) from the port of Emmahaven at Padang.

Padang had become the last stop on the official escape route for people from Singapore and Malaya as the Japanese closed in around Singapore and the Dutch East Indies.

It is this researcher’s opinion that an estimated 250 – 500 servicemen, civilian men and women and a few children actually boarded the ship at Padang. It was torpedoed several days later in the Indian Ocean with only six survivors ever reaching land – including Corporal Walter Gibson, Doris Lim and four Malay or Javanese crewmen.

This left a legacy of pain for hundreds of families of servicemen and civilians who never knew what happened to their loved ones - most without any knowledge that a member of their family had actually boarded the ship.

This document is primarily an attempt to clarify who was actually on board and more precisely determine what happened , and when, to the ‘SS. Rooseboom’.

It is also intended as a respectful memorial to those who lost their lives on the ‘SS. Rooseboom’.

A harrowing story of the experiences of some 135 people who reached one lifeboat is told in the book “The Boat” (ISBN -10: 981-05-8301-X; first published in 1952 and republished by Monsoon Books Pte Ltd, Singapore in 2007) by the only European survivor, Walter Gibson. Of the 135 on board and clinging around the sides of the lifeboat only Walter Gibson, a young Chinese woman named

Doris Lim and two Javanese crewmen reached land in the Mentawi islands of Sumatra. They had been in the lifeboat for a month and according to Gibson had drifted over one thousand miles. Two other Malay or Javanese crewmen were also rescued from a raft in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Walter Gibson, in his book, stated that the ship was sunk at midnight on 1st March 1942 and had left Padang "... four days previously...". Alternatively, although he does not say in his book when the ship actually left Padang, he states that the torpedo struck the ship at ten minutes before midnight on the "...third evening ..." out of Padang. He says that the ship left at sunset, so by his account the ship appears to have left Padang on the early evening of the 26 February and was sunk on the night of the 28 February – just before the date turned over to the 1st of March!

In his official statement to British military authorities in 1946 Gibson signed a statement that the ship was "...proceeding from Padang in Sumatra west to Colombo on 27th February, 1942 ..." and "...the boat was sunk at 23.50 hours on March 1st 1942...".

In a document in the UK Archives (CO980/14) there is a short list of names of senior British officers on the 'SS. Rooseboom' which is headed "List of personnel sailing from Padang on 26 February 1942".

Richard Gough in his book 'Escape from Singapore' states that the ship left Padang on the evening of 27th February and was sunk four days later.

So the question of dates is debatable but the departure date of 26th February 1942 seems most likely.

The relatively small town of Padang had become almost overrun by services and civilians by the time one Rolla Edwardes - Ker, Singapore Royal artillery (Volunteers) arrived in the town at around the same time that the 'Rooseboom' arrived in port. He makes some interesting points about the number of men who had arrived in town and estimates (which appear to be incorrect) of the number on ships , he says "... there were two ships at the docks ready to embark the British and Australian contingent in Padang numbering 1018 military personnel and some 1200 civilians. The larger ship , the "Rosenboom"(sic) was supposed to take some 2000 military and civilians and make for Ceylon, the smaller ship , the "Domayer van twist" (sic) of some 500 tons, which was to take Australian and navy personnel and members of the Volunteer forces was to make for Java and, if necessary, for Australia after refuelling in Java..." I and the rest of the party were originally supposed to be going on the "Rosenboom" (sic) but Colonel Broadbent asked[us] to come on the "Domayer Van twist" (sic) . The ship was torpedoed not far from Ceylon...". The "Rosenboom" sailed after us with about 2300 on board..." [Researcher's note: this seems to be an extraordinary number of people which has to be seriously discounted!] ...we sailed at 04.00 hrs on the morning of 26th February...".So by his statement the 'SS. Rooseboom' must have left on the 26 February 1942.

Around the same time John Wagstaff, Signal Btn, FMSVF, arrived on the 25 February 1942 and notes"... in the afternoon we heard that a ship had arrived and would be taking people that night. This was good news although there was no hope of us being on it ... [then on the 26 February he continues] the staff at headquarters [had] pushed off on the ship that sailed during the night and the new OIC, a Colonel Wolfe-Murray, was fortunately a different calibre from his predecessors. One of his first acts was to call for fresh nominal rolls of all persons awaiting evacuation in Padang ... he

then arranged that priority would be given according to date of arrival in Padang ... Australians would be sent on ships bound for Java or Australia and British troops and civilians on ships bound for Ceylon or India..." [Then on 27 February 1942] "...in the afternoon we heard that another ship had arrived, this was the "Rooseboom" and moreover it would be sailing for Ceylon... when later on the warning order for this ship was posted the list included all except two of the British ORs who had escaped Singapore in the tongkang with us . The list also included a few 'high priorities' who had just arrived in Padang and but for these some of us might have been on the list. Among the priority passengers for the ship that night were Group Captain Nunn and his wife... it is tragic that the ship never reached Ceylon...". This places the departure of the ship on the 27 February.

Of relevance to efforts to ascertain who was actually on this ship is that in his story Wagstaff refers to the fact that of the approximately nineteen British "...gunner and sappers from Pulau Brani..." who joined them soon after their escape from Singapore , all - except the Lieutenant and Warrant Officer (who appear to have embarked on the ' Dumayer Van Twist ' from Padang) and two other ORs who remained at Padang with Wagstaff until boarding the 'SS. Palima' with he and his party of Volunteers – the "...gunners and sappers..." left on the 'SS. Rooseboom'. **This gives a clue to at least 15 or 16 men on the 'SS. Rooseboom'.**

In his book "Escape from Singapore (Mandarin, 1987, rev 1984) Richard Gough has some rare reports on those boarding the "Rooseboom" in Padang through the eyes of Colonel Warren.

Colonel Warren arrived in Padang to find it almost deserted apart from local residents going about their normal activities. He found that Brigadier Paris, Commander of the 11th Division was the senior British Officer in the town – he had taken over when Colonel Broadbent and his Australians had left for Java. Brigadier Paris "...was also about to leave for Colombo with 600 troops and civilians..." on board the "SS. Rooseboom".

Warren apparently went to the port at Emmahaven and climbed the ship's gangway to meet Brigadier Paris... he noticed that the Argylls had taken up firing points all over the ship, determined to fight off any air attacks with Bren guns and rifles. Every bit of deck seemed to be crammed with nurses, servicemen and civilians..." Warren then reported that as they talked "...a lorry drew up on the dockside below packed with nurses, wives, children, soldiers and business men – all in rags and dishevelled...". Amongst that group were Mr. and Mrs Nunn and Warren learned that they had been rescued from Pom Pong island where the "SS. Kuala" had been sunk. **This would answer the question of the fate of a number of the women, children and men who became unaccounted for from the "Kuala" even though they seemed to have survived the sinking of that ship. A somewhat speculative list of people who survived the sinking of the "SS. Kuala" but for whom no fate is recorded is attached at the end of this document – any information correcting or confirming names on this list would be greatly welcomed by the researcher.**

Brigadier Paris had been given permission to escape from Singapore and had done so with a sizeable part of men from the Gordon Highlanders in a launch called "Celia". This group stuck together in their escape across Sumatra to Padang with Major Angus MacDonald and Captain Mike Blackwood and for this reason all ended up on the "SS. Rooseboom"

Survivor Walter Gibson is reported to have told the War Office (CAS. P. W.) that "... there were 500 passengers on board, most of whom were soldiers but with some women and children from

Singapore who had previously been stranded on Pom Pom(sic) Island ...” and then in a written statement dated 3.1.46 to The War Office (CAS P.W.) he stated “...The “K.P.M. Rooseboom (sic)” was proceedingwith 500 on board (mostly Europeans – British Army – but also a number of **P.W.D. officials** from Malaya and some civilian women and children also from Malaya. (The women and children had been previously bombed on a refugee ship ex Singapore).... “.

“... A nominal roll of all personnel embarking [on the ‘Rooseboom’] was handed to H.Q. British Troops at Padang...” (CO 980/141). What happened to this valuable document identifying those 500-700 on board is unknown- it might have been handed to an officer leaving on the also ill-fated “SS. Ban ho Guan” which left a day or two later, or destroyed by the Commanding Officer responsible for Padang when it became an open city prior to the arrival of the Japanese forces on 17 March 1942.

Insofar as the sinking, it is perfectly reasonable if Walter Gibson made an error on the date – the trauma he went through in a lifeboat for 26 days without food or water most of the time and then his incarceration as a POW of the Japanese would have made it hard to remember exactly the sequence by the time he wrote the book in 1952.

He does appear to have been correct about the date the ship was actually sunk being 1st March 1942. In a book title ‘Axis Submarine Success of World War Two’ by Jurgen Rohwer (ISBN 1-55750-029-0; published by Greenhill Books, London) it is revealed that the author has obtained information from high ranking Japanese naval officers and amongst hundreds of tabulated entries confirms the following about the sinking of the “SS. Rooseboom”.

It was sunk by one of the very large class of Japanese submarines (‘Sensuikan’ class), specifically that numbered I-59 (later redesignated I-159) which had left Penang on 21 February 1942 under the command of a Lt. Yoshimatsu.

Interestingly it is also recorded quite specifically that the I-59 had actually clearly identified the “SS. Rooseboom”, this could have been either before or after torpedoing – given that it was the middle of the night we must assume that the submarine had been following the ship for at least a day to observe it in daylight to know its identity, or possibly it plucked some unrecorded survivor from the ocean and learned the ship's identity that way?

The I-159 had been patrolling the Netherlands East Indies and the north coast of Australia and had covered the invasion of the Celebes during January 1942 before being despatched to Penang. On its way it torpedoed the Norwegian freighter “Eidsvold” at Christmas Island and then on 25 January sank the “Giang Sen” in the Sabang Roads, taking some of her crew prisoner - as was the practice of many Japanese submarine commanders seeking information on naval codes and other information.

After leaving Penang on 21 February 1942 with the intention of “...raiding enemy communications SW of Sumatra...” the next record of the I-159 is the sinking of the “Rooseboom”. By 12 March 1942 the I-159 had returned directly to Penang.

It is not known whether the submarine had taken anyone prisoner from the “Rooseboom” but this possibility must be kept open because the Japanese submarine fleet had a practice of doing so and had established an interrogation prison in Penang for the purpose of extracting information from ship's survivors. It had a cruel reputation that was explicitly evidenced at the joint war crimes trial in 1946 (from trial transcript records in the US Archives in Washington and elsewhere) of a very large

group of Japanese submarine Commanders and crew, plus Vice Admiral Hisashi Ichioka to whom they reported. Witness testimonies by Masters, Officers and crew of British and Allied ships sunk by Japanese submarines tell a harrowing story of starvation, beatings, torture and executions at the Runnymede Hotel prison in Penang. Most of these Master and Officers had been taken prisoner from the crew of ships where the Japanese submarine had, after torpedoing their ships, spent several hours methodically ramming the lifeboats and rafts and machine gunning survivors in the water. The book "Blood and Bushido" by Bernard Edwards is a very good record of the depths of cruelty and inhumanity reached by Japanese submarine commanders during the War.

According to Japanese records the ship was sunk at 0150hrs on 1st March 1942 (which given that Japanese submarines operated on 'Tokyo Time' which is and would have been two hours ahead of 'Padang time', does explain the exact difference between Gibson's very precise statement of the time of sinking as '2350hrs' and the Japanese, presumably the submarine logbook, source timing of '0150hrs'); this is of course the best part of a day earlier than Gibson's memory of 1150hrs on 1st March.

The Japanese map coordinates for the sinking were N00degrees/E 87 degrees. In slight contrast British records state the position as thought to have been N00.15 degrees/ E 86.50, but how British authorities would have known that exactly is unclear. This most likely would have been the position at sea where the small ship "SS. Palopo" which left Padang after the "Rooseboom" and was also escaping to Colombo, came across an oil slick and picked up either two (or four depending upon the source used) Malay or Javanese seamen squatting on a small raft or box who were the only other survivors of the "SS. Rooseboom".

In the archived document WO106/2579B a report by Major G.P. Richards, 1st Btn Malay Regiment records how the "SS. Palopo" left Padang on 7th March 1942 and on 11th March picked up two Javanese sailors who had been floating on a piece of wreckage for seven or eight days after being torpedoed at midnight on 2nd or 3rd March. The ship is noted as the "SS. Beerbohm" (sic) and that it had 250 troops on board and a few civilians, including a woman and two children.

In another document (CO980/217, report no.14, p.452) a Mr. McKay in Australia records "...they were surrounded by much wreckage and many bodies seen: all too decomposed for identification...". As pointed out by Mr. Ted Crawford in his research on this event - after the ship went down the survivors were not very dispersed after even a week, let alone by the morning after; in this context it is interesting that the two Javanese seaman did not comment on seeing the lifeboat which was the subject of Walter Gibson's book "The Boat".

In his research Ted Crawford found the CO 980 141 file on the *Rosenboom* (36 documents) p.87 in which there is a report (undated) of the two sailors' interrogation in Colombo by a Lieut Rendle. The position was said to be 00°15'N 86°50'E approximately, about 2/3 of the way to Ceylon -- figures presumably derived from the *Palopo*. They said that the only lifeboats were destroyed in the explosion and there were no other survivors as far as they knew. They heard no cries for help or saw anyone else in the darkness and rough water. It was pitch-black dark, they were sleeping on deck and thrown into the sea, the boat went down immediately, they had got hold of wreckage and, finally, each separately came across a little kapok raft which they used and in the morning when they saw one another they paddled together. They then lashed the two little rafts together. They had no difficulty getting water for the 7 or 8 days as it rained heavily at least once a day and they managed

to collect enough of it in their palms to drink. The interrogator said the Javanese seamen were “good intelligent types”, decent men. He says they could see dimly in the night. He says they nearly all died of thirst. It is stated at the end of the interrogation that in the view of the local RN people it sounded as if the ship was not torpedoed but that the boilers exploded.

The facts are that by the time they were picked up by the “SS. Palopo”, the Javanese seamen had drifted along with much of the wreckage of the “SS. Rooseboom” - and, sadly, the remains of many passengers - some 31 nautical miles from the spot where the submarine recorded the sinking.

The set of coordinates recorded by both the Japanese and the Allies are interesting and suggest that Captain Boon was taking a longer but more cautious sea route to Colombo as opposed to a straight line between the two ports. He appears to have swung quite a distance south in his voyage probably, but unsuccessfully, to avoid Japanese submarines lying in wait on the direct route. The fact that the “Palopo” came across the oil slick and survivors also suggests that this was a route discussed amongst captains out of Padang (or determined by British authorities) since finding two men on a box in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean stretches the credibility of coincidence.

Sadly it seems that the Japanese had also worked out the sea route between Padang and Colombo.

By the researcher’s estimate the “SS. Rooseboom” had travelled some 750 - 800 nautical miles which at a speed of 14-15 knots meant that the ship must have left Padang on the sunset of 26 February 1942 as described by Walter Gibson – this is based on the calculation that a ship travels one nautical mile per knot of speed per hour - and was sunk after some 55 hours at sea at 0150hrs on 1st March 1942 at the coordinates recorded by the Japanese submarine.

To date this research has identified only some 53 out of the estimated 250-500 people on board.

If anyone has any other names or information relating to the sinking of the “SS. Rooseboom” or the people on board , the researcher, Michael Pether, 55 Te Pene Road, Maraetai, Manukau .2018, New Zealand – or email mncpether@xtra.co.nz – or phone New Zealand 09-5365490 - would be extremely appreciative of receiving such information, would treat it sensitively and would amplify this document appropriately.

Reference Sources;

- “Boat”/ “The Boat” – book authored by Walter Gibson
- ‘combinedfleet .com’ – website authored by military historians Robert Hackett (USAF Retd.) , USA and Sanders Kingsepp, linguist and researcher of Estonia.
- CWGC – website of the Commonwealth war Graves Commission
- Crawford, Ted – researcher, UK.
- Edwardes-Ker, Rolla – speech he gave in 1985 (Australian War Memorial archives PR87/138)
- “Escape from Singapore” – book by Richard Gough
- JM/Jonathan Moffatt – author and researcher , see also “Malayan Volunteer Group” website
- Mercantilemarine.org – website
- Rohwer, Jurgen – author of “Axis Submarine Successes of World war Two”, Greenhill Books, London ; ISBN 1-55750-029-0

- Rollofhonour.co.uk - website
- STA - archives of "The Straits Times" Singapore on the website of the National Library of Singapore
- Thehendrys.freereserve.co.uk – family genealogical website
- United Kingdom National archives files on the War Office (WO) and the Colonial Office(CO)
- Wagstaff, John – the story (unpublished) of John H. Wagstaff an engineer in the P&T, Singapore and in the Signals Battalion of the SSVF “ ‘Lucky Seven’ or ‘To Ceylon in Time for Tea’ – an Escape Story”.

Recreated passenger List:

Interestingly, although there are clearly quite a few people listed on the CWGC website who died in the sinking of the "SS. Rooseboom", only four are actually listed under the 'Cemetery' heading of "SS. Rooseboom" and therefore specifically linked to this terrible event.

ACWORTH – Lt. Col. Ackworth (sic) ,A.A. & QMG 11 Div Certain (CO 980/141); mentioned in "The Boat" as J.P Acworth , Indian Army, since 1916 and who had served in France in the 1914-18 war as well as the Frontier campaign with the Poona Horse. Much of his service was on the staff in India. (Boat); Lieutenant – **Colonel John Pelham Acworth**, #AI/387, aged 44 years, 12th Frontier Force, Indian nationality, husband of Jean Craig Acworth of Newcastle, Co. Down, Northern Ireland – he died on 3.3.42 (CWGC); according to "The Boat" Colonel Acworth died on the seventh day which would have been the 7.3.42.(Boat)

AITKEN – **Cpl. Victor Aitken**, #2867159, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders – he had escaped from Singapore on the launch "Celia" with a large group of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris

BLACKWOOD – mentioned in "The Boat" as Captain Mike Blackwood (Boat); **Captain Frederic Michael Ponsonby Blackwood**, aged 23 years, # 74706, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, son of Col. F. A. Blackwood, DSO and Mrs Blackwood , he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

BOON – **Captain M. C. A. Boon**, of the KPM line , captain of the "SS. Rooseboom"; he survived the sinking and died in the lifeboat (see account in "The Boat")

BRENNER – **Pte. George Brenner**, #2867145, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, he had escaped from Singapore with a large group of Gordon highlanders and Brigadier Paris on the launch "Celia"

BROWN – **Sgt. Percy William Brown**, #2876136, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, he had escaped from Singapore on the launch "Celia" with a large group of Gordon highlanders and Brigadier Paris

CHOPRA – in his statement to The War Office Walter Gibson recollected "Lt. Col Chopra , I.M.S. ..." as being on board the ship; **Lt. Col. Divan Chand Chopra**, OBE., # M/5875, Indian

nationality, Indian Medical Service, husband of D. C. Chopra of Lahore , Pakistan, he was qualified as M.B., Ch. B., he died on 1.3.42 (CWGC)

CORRIE – mentioned in the book “The Boat” as Major Noel Corrie of the Engineers (Boat); there is the record that **Major Noel Howard Wyatt Corrie**, #56625, Royal Engineers, he died on 2.3.42 (CWGC)

CRAWFORD - 2nd Lt. Donald Torrance Paterson Crawford 2nd Battalion FMSVF /General List /1st Mysore Infantry, Assistant Planter ,KMS Rubber Plantations, Kedah, lost at sea 28.2.42 [and wife] (Jonathan Moffatt); **Second Lieutenant Donald Torrance Paterson Crawford**, General List, attd. 1st Btn, Mysore Infantry, Indian State Forces, he died on 28.2.42 (CWGC) which would appear to be an incorrect date in the context of what is known of the sinking – **it may be that they were on the “Ban Ho Guan” ???**

CRAWFORD – Mrs Crawford (see above)

DAVIS –Roger Owen Wingfield Marchant Davis ‘Towkay’, b. 1907, educated Worksoop College, to Malaya 1928 as Police Probationer, FMS. Wife Elsie & son evacuated to Durban , SA., .By 1941 FMS Assistant Commissioner of Police, escaped to Sumatra, one of the ‘17’, lost on Rooseboom (Jonathan Moffatt); also mentioned in “The Boat” as Police Assistant Commissioner Roger Davis (Boat); **Asst. Superintendent Roger Owen Wingfield Marchant Davis**, Federated Malay States Police, husband of Edith Elsie Davis of Langton, Martravers, Dorsetshire died between 1.3.42 and 31.3.42, awarded the Kings police medal for distinguished service 1.1.38 (CWGC); it is possible that Roger Davis was alternatively killed in the sinking of the “SS. Ban Ho Guan” which left Padang after the “Rooseboom” bound for Tjilichap in Java.

DENT – Major Richard Dent is recorded by Walter Gibson as being in the lifeboat (WSWG); **Major Richard Clinton Wilkinson Dent**, #AT/353, Indian nationality, 2nd Btn, 12 Frontier Force Regiment, son of Major General Wilkinson Dent, CB., CBE., DSO., and of Florence Mabel dent (nee Moojen) , he died on 4.3.42 ; he attended Sedburgh School from 1922-1926 and on that school’s roll of honour it is noted that he was 34 years of age when the “Rooseboom’ was sunk.

DEVONSHIRE – **Geoffrey Edward Devonshire**, born 1910 at Southend-on-Sea, Essex. Educated merchant Taylors School, London. To Malay in 1929 as a Police Probationer, FMS and by 1940 had become Assistant Superintendent of Police SS: Singapore. Lost at sea 28.2.42 (JM); it is possible he was on the “SS. Ban Ho Guan “which was sunk on that date.

DOUGLAS – Lt. Col. Douglas IAOC SOME 11 Div ‘Not Certain’ (CO 980/141); also mentioned in “The Boat” as Lt. Col Douglas of the Indian Army Ordinance Corps (Boat); **Lt. Col William Abbott Gale Douglas**, nationality Indian, aged 41 years, #818/1A, Indian Army ordinance corps, husband of Mary Evered Douglas of Lilliput, Dorsetshire, AMI Mech, also served in the Devonshire Regiment , he died 4.3.42 (CWGC)

FALLOWS – **Mrs. Sally Fallows**, wife of Mr. A. E. Fallows of the PWD, lost at sea 2.3.42 on the “Rooseboom” (JM); no record on the CWGC website but Cpl Walter Gibson did testify that there were on board the “Rooseboom” “...a number of PWD officials from Malaya and some civilian women and children also from Malaya...” also “...wives and children of PWD officials...”(SWG)

GEDDES – **Alexander A. ‘Eric’ Geddes**, Asiatic Petroleum Co., Miri & S’pore, wife Jean Sheila, lost on Rooseboom (MVG); this is confirmed in a family genealogy website (thehendrys.freereserve.co.uk – “Children of Alexander Williamson and Jane Glen) where it is

recorded that Albert Alexander Geddes had WW1 service in the 14th Battalion, London regiment, Prince of Wales Own Civil service rifles and had married Jean Sheila Geddes, they had moved from the UK to Miri, Sarawak where he had obtained a job as an Office Assistant, later becoming Labour Superintendent at the oil fields and refinery.. it seems that Jean was evacuated in 1941 when the oilfields were closed down (possibly due to the Japanese threat) and Albert later moved to Singapore, later evacuating across Sumatra to Padang where he boarded the "Rooseboom". Jean is reported to have died in hospital in London on 29.10.58; "...in recent interviews ... Mr. SHAW of Asiatic Petroleum Co. stated that Mr. GEDDES of Sourabak Oil Fields embarked on the S.S. ROOSEBOOM at BATAVIA late in Feb 1942 prior to its call at PADANG..." Lt. Gen. C in C Land Forces SEA (CO 980/141); in 1946 the Missing Persons Bureau listed him as presumed dead "... Mr Albert Alexander Gedes (sic) who was reported to have been on the Rooseboom..." (STA 29.5.46)

GIBB – A/Sgt. Kenneth McRae Gibb, #2876221, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders – he was from Elgin and had escaped from Singapore with a large group of Gordon Highlanders on the launch "Celia" and Brigadier Paris

GIBSON – Corporal Walter Gibson, #2977142, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (author of "the Boat")

GRAY – Lance Corporal Jock Gray, Argylls, from Falkirk (Boat); **Lance Corporal John Gray**, aged 22 years, #3322704, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, son of Alexander and Jemima Gray of Seacliff, East Lothian, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

HAMILTON – Sgt. Robert Hamilton, #2979694, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (JM); Serjeant Robert Hamilton, aged 25 years, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, son of Charles and Margaret Hamilton of Glasgow, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC); he was mentioned by Walter Gibson as having been in the sole surviving lifeboat (WG)

HARDIE/HARDY – mentioned in "The Boat" as Drummer Hardy of the Argylls (Boat); actually Private Albert Hardie, aged 24 years, #2979976, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, son of Margaret Hardie, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

HEATH – Warrant Officer Class II (Armt. S.Q.M.S.) William Frank Heath, # 7624249, 1 Ordinance Field Park, RAOC., was lost on the "Rooseboom" between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42, aged 26 years, husband of Marjorie Beryl Heath of Erdington, Birmingham (RollofHonour.co.uk)

HEATHCOTE – Major Heathcote Gen. List (Movement Control) Singapore 'Certain' (CO 980/141; would appear to be Captain George Henry Heathcote, # 154879, MBE, RASC, husband of Joan Heathcote of Chandlers Ford, Hampshire, he died 2.3.42 (CWGC)

IVES – Lt. Col. Ives RAOC or IAOC Malaya Command 'Certain' (CO 980/141); Lt. Col. Augustus Harry Ives, # 70684, Cdg 10 Sect, RAOC, he died 2.3.42 (CWGC)

KAUFFMAN / KAUFMANN – Bernard Maurice Kaufmann, MA. B. London. Educated City of London School and Christs College, Cambridge University. WW1 service with the Middlesex regiment and Machine Gun Corps. Twice wounded 1918. He worked for the Asiatic Petroleum Company, Singapore during 1920-42 and was Hon. Secretary Oxford & Cambridge society of Malaya and the Treasurer of the Tanglin Club. He lived at 20 Pierce Road, Singapore and his wife Stella had evacuated to Durban, SA. She was living in London in 1951.(JM); "...in a recent interview ...Mr. Shaw of Asiatic Petroleum Co., stated that ...Mr. KAUFMANN of Asiatic Petroleum Co. ...embarked on the S. S. ROOSEBOOM at Batavia late in Feb 1942 prior to its call at PADANG... Lt. Gen. C in C Land Forces SEA (CO 980/141); in 1946

the Missing Persons Bureau, Colonial Office, Singapore listed him as presumed dead "...Mr. Bernard Maurice Kauffmann, reported to have been on the Rooseboom..." (STA 29.5.46); **Bernard Maurice Kauffman**, aged 46 years, M.A. , Freeman of the City of London, of 20 Pierce Road, Singapore, husband of Stella Kauffman, he died 28.2.42 in sinking of Rooseboom (CWGC)

KEMP – L/Cpl. William Kemp, #2876320, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, he was from Aberdeen and had escaped from Singapore in the launch "Celia" with a large group of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris.

LIM – Doris Lim

LUNGLEY/LANGLEY – "...It has also been learned that the wife and daughter and two grandchildren of Mr. G. LUNGLEY c/o Messrs FRANCIS PECH & Co Ltd, 5/7 EASTCHEAP LONDON E.C. 3. Were on board ..." Lt. Gen. C in C Land Forces SEA (CO 980/141) – therefore Mrs Lungley was on board; also '**Mrs. Ethel Maude Langley**, wife of George Langley, with her daughter Margaret Whiteridge [born 1916] and 2 grandchildren (Jonathan Moffatt); there is no record on the CWGC website of her death;

MACDONALD – Major MacDonald A. & S. H. 'Certain' (CO 980/141);" ... in a recent interview [with] Mr. Stuart of Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank it was stated that: Major Angus MACDONALD – Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders ADC to Brig. Paris. Embarked on S.S. ROOSEBOOM at PADANG and must be presumed drowned. Lt. Gen. C in C Allied land Forces SEA ... (CO 980/141); **Major Charles Angus MacDonald**, aged 29 years, #56135, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, son of John and Daisy MacDonald of Tayorloan, Argyllshire, he died on 2.3.42 (CWGC); Major MacDonald's full name was Charles Angus Moreton MacDonald and he had been born at Largie Castle on the Kintyre peninsula in Argyll on 22 June, 1913. His father died when Angus was only eight years of age and he was sent to boarding school and then Winchester College. He was a keen athlete and especially insofar as rowing. He then went on to Oxford University, Magdalen College to study History and graduated also from their Officer's Training Corps. After Oxford he joined the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders regiment as a regular officer and was commissioned into the 1st Battalion. In 1937 he joined the 2nd Battalion of the Argylls and was sent to Secunderabad in southern India. By 1939 he was Adjutant of the Battalion and in that year he moved with the Battalion (under the strict but inspired command of Colonel Ian Stewart) to Singapore where they trained in jungle warfare and earned the reputation of being the best trained unit in Malaya. There is a famous photo of Angus and RSM Sandy Munnoch following Colonel Stewart through the swamps of Singapore. In April 1941 Angus was promoted to the rank of Brigade Major of the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade – which consisted of the 2nd Argylls, the 5/2 Punjabs, and the 4/19 Hyderabad. When the Japanese invaded Malaya this Brigade moved to the north to back up the failing 11th Indian Division and during the next few weeks distinguished itself in many battles. They nearly met with disaster at Slim River and were routed by the Japanese who brought tanks into their midst very early in the morning of 6 January 1942 Many officers and men were killed taken captive or lost in the jungle (a few escaped to Sumatra at that point) so by the time the Battalion withdrew to the Singapore causeway there were only 200 men left out of an original Argylls Battalion of 860. When the Japanese landed on Singapore island on the 8 February the remnants of the Battalion made a brave stand in the island's north-west and later blocked a tank column attempting to enter Singapore city. On the day before the Surrender to the Japanese Angus was ordered to

escape Singapore with Brigadier Paris, Michael Blackwood, Sgt. Willie MacDonald and Stewart's batman Drummer Hardy. They took a harbour Board launch, the 'Celia' and navigate towards Sumatra's Djambi River, finally crossing Sumatra and reaching Padang. (Mary Gladstone niece of Angus MacDonald)

MCDONALD/MACDONALD – Sergeant Willie MacDonald , Argylls (Boat); Sgt William McDonald, 2979495, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (JM); in his statement to the War Office Walter Gibson recollects that Sergt William MacDonald, A. & S. Hldrs (Killed by an explosion at the side of Gibson) was on board the ship..." (WSWG); **Sgt. William McDonald**, #2979495, aged 30 years, 2nd Btn, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

MCGREGOR – A/Sgt. **Ronald Alexander McGregor**, # 2875459, Headquarters company, Gordon Highlanders – he had escaped from Singapore in the launch "Celia" with a large group of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris

MCNALLY – Pte. **John McNally**, # 7681724, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, he was from Ladywood, Birmingham and had escaped from Singapore on the launch "Celia" with a large group of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris.

MACKENZIE/ MCKENZIE?– mentioned in "The Boat" as **Warrant Officer Mackenzie** of Indian Army Ordinance Corps (Boat); however the researcher can find no record of this person on the CWGC website under the names Mackenzie or McKenzie.

MURDOCH – in his written statement to the War Office, Walter Gibson recalls that Pipe Major Murdoch, Gordon Highlanders was on the ship (WSWG); in fact this was **Sgt. James Murdoch**, #2872442, aged 32 years, 2nd Btn, Gordon Highlanders, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC); he had escaped from Singapore in the launch "Celia" with other sergeants from the Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris.

NUNN – Reginald Lewis 'Rex' Nunn, DSO 1918, b. 1892 Tenterden, Kent. Educated Brighton College. WW1 service: 2nd Lt. to Major, Royal Engineers. Then waterworks engineer, Trinidad & Tobago 1921. Resident engineer Georgetown, British Guiana. To Malaya in 1930 as Deputy Colonial Engineer SS. and Acting Director of Public works SS and Adviser, Public Works, Malay States 1932-33. Official member of the Legislative Council SS 1935. Director of Civil Aviation, Malay 1935. Director of the PWD SS and Adviser, Public Works, Malay states 1935-42. Group captain RAFVR, and OC MVAF 1941-42. He organised the evacuation of many PWD personnel from Singapore (JM); and evacuated with his wife on the "SS. Kuala" which was bombed and sunk at Pom Pong Island; Gp. Capt. Nunn in Public Works 'Certain' (CO 980/141); mentioned in "The Boat" as having helped his wife through a porthole in the ship after it was torpedoed , but he went down with the ship (Boat); **Major Reginald Lewis Nunn**, DSO, Director of Public Works, Singapore died on 1.3.42 in the sinking of the "Rooseboom" (CWGC)

NUNN – Mrs. Nunn 'Certain' (CO 980/141); She was a former opera singer and had been Hon. Organiser of the MAS., Malaya (JM): she had evacuated from Singapore with her husband on the "SS. Kuala" which had been bombed and sunk at Pom Pong island in the Indonesian Archipelago; there is quite some detail in the book "The Boat" of her being pushed by her husband through a porthole of the "Rooseboom" after it was torpedoed and surfacing to eventually get on the sole life boat (Boat); Mrs. Gertrude Nunn, aged 49 years, of 198 Mt Pleasant Road, Singapore, wife of Major Reginald Lewis Nunn, DSO she died on 9.3.42 after the sinking of the "Rooseboom" (CWGC)

PALMER – Lt. Col. Palmer RE (AQMG0 Malaya Command 'Certain' (Co 980/141); mentioned in "The Boat" as Lt. Col. R. E. Palmer of the Indian Army; in fact more correctly **Lt. Col.**

George Archdale Palmer, # 18178, MID, of the Royal engineers and husband of Phoebe van Someren Palmer (nee Taylor) of Winchcombe, Gloucestershire , he died on 3.3.42 (CWGC)

PARIS – Brigadier Paris 'Certain' (CO 980/141); **Brigadier Archibald Charles Melvill Paris**, MC., #6515, aged 52 years, of the Oxford and Bucks Light infantry, Commanding the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, husband of Ruth Norton Paris of Folkstone, he died on 3.3.42 (CWGC)

PENDREIGH – **Pte. William Pendreigh**, # 2987012, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders (JM); Private William Pendreigh, 2nd Battalion, Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, aged 25 years, and son of Robert and Agnes Pendreigh of Hawick, Roxburghshire – he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

PETERKIN – **QMS James Moir Peterkin**, #2871383, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, from Aberdeen; he had escaped from Singapore on the "Celia" with other GHs and Brigadier Paris, Major Angus MacDonald and Captain Mike Blackwood of the Argylls.

ROBERTS – **Mrs. Louis [Lalla] Roberts**, wife of Mr. F. B. 'Barrel' Roberts, merchant, Nestles Milk Company, Ipoh who was a Changi and Sime Road internee(JM); "...in a recent interview ...Mr. Shaw of Asiatic Petroleum Co. stated that ...Mrs. F. B. ROBERTS wife of F. B. ROBERTS , Nestlé's Milk Co., Representative at IPOH. ...embarked on the S. S. ROOSEBOOM at BATAVIA late in Feb. 1942 prior to its call at PADANG ... Lt. Gen. C in C Land Forces SEA (CO 980/141); the researcher could find no record on the CWGC website

SAVAGE BAILEY –Mrs Kate Edith Savage-Bailey was the widow of Arnold Savage-Bailey, CBE, a well known Singapore solicitor who was killed in an accident in Singapore on 1.4.35: they lived at Tanglin House, Raffles Library Museum; she was the mother of actress Dulcie Gray and had left Singapore on 11.2.42 on the "Kulit" for Sumatra; "...in a recent interview Mr. SHAW of Asiatic petroleum Co. stated that ... Mrs. SAVAGE BAILEY , Librarian of Raffles Library Singapore ...embarked on the S. S. ROOSEBOOM at BATAVIA in late Feb 1942 prior to its call at PADANG... C in C Land Forces SEA (CO 980/141); in 1946 the Missing Persons Bureau, Colonial Office, Singapore listed her as presumed dead "...Mrs. K.E. Savage Bailey of Raffles Library who left Batavia on the Rooseboom which was torpedoed. Mrs. Savage Bailey was reported drowned..." (STA 29.5.46); **Kate Edith Savage-Bailey**, aged 55 years, wife of Arnold Savage-Bailey, of Tanglin House, Orchard Road, Singapore, she died on 28.2.42 (CWGC)

SEY – **Sgt. John Sey**, #2876336, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, from Alford, Aberdeenshire – he had escaped from Singapore on the launch "Celia" with a large party of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris

SHIRLAN – **Sgt. Henry Shirran**, #2876219, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders, he was from Aberdeen and had escaped with other Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris from Singapore on the launch "Celia"

SMITH – **Sergeant Hector Smith**, #2876242, Headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders – who had escaped on the launch "Celia" with other men from the Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris; he was from Aberdeen

THORNE – Lt. Col. Thorne G.C. Norfolk Regt. Comdg. Cambs. 'Not certain' (CO 980/141); **Lt. Col. Gordon Calthrop Thorne**, #13944, DSO., twice Mentioned in Despatches, aged 43 years, of the Royal Norfolk Regiment, also Commanding the 2nd Btn. Cambridgeshire Regiment,

husband of Pamela Thorne, he had been MID in the 1914-18 war, he died between 2.3.42 and 3.3.42 (CWGC)

TOPP – CQMS Edward Argo Topp, #287 3868, headquarters Company, Gordon Highlanders – he had escaped on a launch named “Celia” with a large party of Gordon Highlanders and Brigadier Paris, Major Angus MacDonald and captain Mike Blackwood of the Argylls

WHITERIDGE – Mrs. Margaret Whiteridge (born 1916) plus two children. (JM); no CWGC record: she was the daughter of Mrs. Ethel Maude Lungley recorded above; Margaret Lungley had married Gordon Whiteridge while he was British Vice-Consul in Batavia,, he was then posted for a few months to Medan in Sumatra and early in 1942 when Batavia was being bombed by the Japanese Margaret, with their two young children sailed from Batavia in a Dutch ship the “SS. Rooseboom” for Colombo. Gordon waited for two weeks in Colombo until two Malay survivors arrived with the devastating news that the “Rooseboom” had been sunk two days out of Padang. The loss of his family was the tragedy of his life (Obituary to Sir Gordon Whiteridge)

WHITERIDGE – child of (later) Sir Gordon Whiteridge and Mrs Margaret Whiteridge

WHITERIDGE – child of (later) Sir Gordon Whiteridge and Mrs Margaret Whiteridge

WINTON – CSM Andrew Winton, #2872532, Gordon Highlanders , Head Quarters company who had escaped from Singapore on the “Celia” with Brigadier Paris, Major Angus MacDonald and captain Mike Blackwood of the Argylls

WOOLLCOMBE – Lt. Col. Woolcombe (sic) 2 G. R. “Not certain” (CO 980/141); in his statement to the War office Gibson recollected a “...Lt. Col. Woolcombe, Gurkas (sic)... “as being on board the ship...” ; **Lt. Col. Geoffrey Harley Douglas Woolcombe**, Indian Nationality, 2nd King Edward VII’s Own Ghurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles), # 75/IA, aged 43 years, he also served in the 1914-18 war, son of Gerald and Mary Woolcombe, of Newton Abbot, Devon – he died 28.2.42 (CWGC)

Unidentified passengers;

“Dirk...” the Chief Officer of the “SS. Rooseboom” and his wife - “...a large, stout, fair-haired woman of thirty or so, dressed in a blouse and skirt and carrying a handbag...” – as recorded in “The Boat”

‘One woman with three children...’ – in his statement to The War Office Walter Gibson recollected “...One women with Three children...” as being on board the ship.

“...some wives of P.W.D. officials ...” – are recollected by Walter Gibson as being on the ship Walter Gibson in his written statement to The war Office records that there were **“...3 F.M.S. police officers ...”** in the lifeboat – which means that in addition to Asst Superintendent Davis there were **two other FMS police officers** , which gives more weight to **DEVONSHIRE** above being on board(WSWG)

A young C.Q.M.S. (from Ordinance or Engineers) also mentioned as C.Q.M.S. of the 18th Division –“...he was only about twenty one but he had a timbre and a toughness that was lacking in the others...” – from “The Boat”

A Colour Sergeant of the Gordon Highlanders – “... a little dried up nut of a man who had served for fifteen or sixteen years in the Far East, and who was known as “Tich” to all of us ...” – a survivor in the lifeboat , mentioned in the book “The Boat”

John Wagstaff, Signal Btn., FMSVF records that he and other Malayan Volunteers were joined in their escape from Singapore in a tongkang by **“...nineteen gunners and sappers**

from Pulau Brani... one officer including a Scottish Private “Jock” who was in charge despite there being an officer (a Lieutenant and a Warrant Officer)...” – the Lieutenant and the warrant officer from this group left on a ship to Australia on 25 February before the “Rooseboom” departed so there may be a record of their escape and the names of some of these men ?

“a group from another regiment, five of them,...they had been stationed somewhere on some island near Singapore... before the Rooseboom had sailed they had been heard to speak of getting a small boat and sailing over to Dutch territory together...- from “The Boat’ “...a youngster of the Loyal regiment...” – from “The Boat”(p.58)

Also Walter Gibson in his written statement to the war Office recollected that the following were on board the ship (in addition to those reaching the life boat) – “...officers and men of the following units (names not remembered)...

Recce. Corps

R.Corps Signals

Royal Artillery

R.A.O.C.

R.A.S.C. Gordon Hldrs

F.M.S. Volunteers

“Survivors from the “SS. Kuala” - Given the report of some people from the “SS. Kuala” being definitely passengers on the “SS. Rooseboom” (after the earlier sinking of the “SS. Kuala” at Pom Pong Island) - the researcher has appended this speculative list of people who have not been otherwise accounted for as any of internees, deaths in the sinking of the “Kuala” , or people who lost their lives in the sinking of the “SS. Tandjong Pinang” (after being picked up from Pom Pong island) or evacuated from Padang by other means for the record and we would appreciate any feedback on the known fate of these following people to clear them from involvement from the “Rooseboom” story;

Mr. & Mrs. G. Barclay and their son – they are reported to have reached Padang and left on 1.3.42

Miss Beswne

H.H. Blair

Sub Lt T. S. Brand

Miss S. Brent

Lt. Briggs

Broad – an Officer on the “Kuala”

Miss E. Bullen

Miss M. S. Chan, GH.

Ms. R. Cherry

Cobb – an Officer on the “Kuala”

C.H. A. Cosmack, Ipoh

Davis – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Deldridge – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Miss Dennison

Miss Domby

Eastwet – an Officer on the “Kuala”

Mr. & Mrs. Eoh Se Doh plus two children

Miss J. Franklin

Godfrey – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Mrs. Sophie Gowans

Matron (Miss) C.H. Hardy/Hardie

Harburn

Hearst – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Mr. J. Hitching

Mr. Houston, Chartered Bank

Hsu Cheng Hsin

Hudson – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Miss Jones (Perak)

Mrs. Kerr, nee Fowler-Wright

Miss Key, teacher, Penang

King – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Miss Lien

Sister (Miss) Grace Lim

Miss Lydall, child, Padang

Lutiff – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Mrs McCandish (Dennieson)

Nurse (Mrs) J.B. McDonald

Sister G.H. McKinley - ...18 hours Davo...”

Miss L. D. Morden

Murray – seaman on the “Kuala”

Miss Northey – Dutch Censors Office

Nurse Oswald

Mr. R. R. Roberts – Public Works Dept

Miss Rose Seow

Sister (Miss) Seong Siew

Mr. C. C. T. Sharpe – appears to have been Charles C. T. Sharpe, Botanist, Botanical section, Rubber Research Institute who had actually evacuated on the “Tien Kwang”

Miss B. Sim, General Hospital, MAS.

Ms. Sleigh and three children – this could be Helen Sleigh, b. 1912 , wife of Arthur William Sleigh who was a horse trainer at the Singapore Turf Club and who lived at 20 Coronation Parade(he was a Changi and Sime Road internee) and their children Harry and Violet plus one other child?

Mr. D. B. Smith – Public Works Department

Mrs. Soong Siew Ling

Mrs. Stallworthy – whose husband worked in petrol rationing (other records say Hilda Stallworthy evacuated on the “Empress of Japan”)

Sister L. Stephens – possibly Mrs. Lillian Stephens, Municipal Welfare Officer, whose husband was Sgt John Stephens, RA, and a POW

Storey – seaman on the “Kuala”

Miss Sutherland - of Adelphi Hotel

Nurse T. C. Syn

Misses Tan (two women) – dental, IMNS

Dr. Tan Su Lan & son

Mr. & Mrs. Tang Yong Pang

Ware – a seaman on the “Kuala”

Wareham – an Officer on the “Kuala”

Miss P. Warnett

Miss Annie Weir – General Hospital

Mrs. Wildy – “...husband Brigadier Acc Acc...”; *this may in fact be Mrs. Joan Wildey who was lost at sea in the sinking of the “SS. Tandjong Pinang” on 17.2.42?*

Capt. Williamson – *this could be Captain T. W. Williamson, # 13961, FMSVF, who is recorded as being evacuated to Padang in February 1942 and then reached India and became an Aerial Surveyor in Zambia and then Malaya*

J. L. Wilson – Singapore

Wong Kam Hung

Miss Yee Sin Heng – Woodville Hospital

Yuens – APC, 2nd Engineer.