

## AN EXTRAORDINARY PILGRIMAGE

In February 2012, Margie and Stephen Caldicott joined the Malayan Volunteers Group in Singapore, and this is Stephen's account of the following 15 days – written primarily for family and friends. He started with a brief historical background.

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The 15<sup>th</sup> February this year was the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, after the relentless advance of Japanese forces down the Malayan peninsula. Margie's mother, Shelagh Brown, and her parents E A Brown and Mary Brown were living in Singapore (EAB had settled there in 1901), and the two ladies managed to board one of the last ships to leave before the surrender. EAB remained behind to play his part in the vain attempt to save Singapore, but instead had to spend the following 3½ years in one and then another of the many POW camps in Singapore. Unlike so many, particularly of his more advanced years, he did survive, and died in England in 1955.

Mary and Shelagh's fleeing ship, the *Vyner Brooke*, was one of 22 sunk by the Japanese, and, along with many other survivors, they washed up on the shores of Banka Island off Sumatra, c250 miles to the south of Singapore. Two groups became victims of notorious massacres, but most of the others gradually gathered in the town of Muntok on Banka. For the following 3½ years up to 700 women and children and up to 900 men were held separately, first for a brief period in Muntok, then successively in 3 camps in Palembang on Sumatra, another back in Muntok, and finally near Loebok Linggau in the centre of Sumatra.

Conditions were appalling, and the death rate gradually increased, one victim being Mary Brown, who died aged 67 during the 2<sup>nd</sup> stay in Muntok.

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For the first week of our trip Margie and I joined a number of veterans' groups gathered in Singapore to remember those awful days. For the second we made a select party of 4 who went on to Palembang and Muntok, to explore the sites of some of the camps and their associated graveyards, to present 4 plaques, and to give some material for 2 museums.

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We were greeted at Changi Airport by Jim and Jan Neubronner, distant relatives of Brown family friends and neighbours Guy and Olga Neubronner. Olga also survived the sinking of the *Vyner Brooke*, but died in Muntok in 1945. Jim and Jan drove us to our hotel; most welcome after an evening arrival.

Next day was Sunday, and it was a short walk to St Andrew's Cathedral for the main English language service at 8 am.



View from our hotel room at dawn, with the white spire of St Andrew's Cathedral at left, and the Marina Bay Sands Hotel – with its Skypark viewing platform – at right.

Here was the scene of EAB's choirmastership of the 1<sup>st</sup> half of last century, a choir in which Shelagh, her sister Barbara, and the Neubronners had all sung. We renewed acquaintance with some friends we had made on our visit 4 years ago, all of whom we saw again at various times later in the week.

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On Monday, by which time I had succumbed to a bug I had probably picked up before leaving home, Margie joined a trip to visit some of the key sites in Singapore's war. It was organised by The Malayan Volunteers Group (MVG) [www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk) to which we had become attached, and was excellently led by Helena Yeo, a professional tour guide and wife of the minister at the Orchard Road Presbyterian Church. The MVG was one of the smaller Veterans' groups in Singapore that week (the Australians were most evident, other Allied groups less so), and represents members of the various auxiliary military organisations in Malaya and Singapore before the War. EAB had reached the rank of Major in the Singapore Volunteers, but had retired from active service well before 1942.

Most importantly, we had felt that the MVG more naturally represented civilian interests than the purely military veteran organisations, as the various Malayan Volunteers were by definition part-time soldiers and full-time civilians.

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The next day the MVG had organised a trip to the Changi Museum, which we had visited 4 years ago. However, the main purpose was to have lunch together in the Bark Café at the Museum. MVG members had gathered from the UK, Malaysia, Singapore, and Australia (I may have missed out other countries), and they were a fascinating bunch to meet. We ate barbecued local delicacies, sitting in the open air but under a large roof to try and keep in the shade, with the sounds of the Air Show (see below) as accompaniment.

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Wednesday 15 February was the actual 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Surrender, and our MVG coachload were driven to the Kranji War Memorial in the north-west of Singapore Island, near the Causeway to mainland Malaya (now Malaysia). On the way we encountered the only real tropical storm of our visit, but, true to breed, it had subsided into a calm dry evening by the time we reached our destination.

The Remembrance Ceremony was organised by the Changi Museum and the National Archives of Singapore, and consisted of a number of readings, songs from an excellent boys' choir, the laying of many wreaths, and two very moving minutes of silent prayer by representatives of at least 8 religions standing side-by-side. Lord Green, a Trade Minister, laid a wreath on behalf of the UK government, and other countries sent their ambassadors or lesser dignitaries for the same purpose. Then the veterans' groups, including the MVG, laid their wreaths, the Australians outnumbering all the others.



*Inter-Faith Silent Prayer at Kranji*

Our hotel was full of Australians, and they had appeared late for breakfast that morning having attended their own dawn ceremony at Kranji.

There was a certain irony in that this was also the week of the Singapore Air Show (the largest in South East Asia), as much a military air show as a civilian one, and that Lord Green's visit just happened to coincide with that event. However, the posters for the Remembrance Ceremony did ask us 'to reflect on the contributions of those still safeguarding our security'. Singapore is a small country, with a Swiss-style military of which all males in the population are members. Many youth groups were present, and the people are very conscious of their geographical position surrounded by potentially unstable or partisan states.

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These events didn't take up all of the days mentioned, and even all of our days. We did have time for some 'tourism': tea at Raffles, eating out at Clarke Quay and at Chijmes, and visiting the Skypark at the Marina Bay Sands Hotel. We also had further meetings with Arasi, with Soolan, and with Dennis Ang (all from the Cathedral), with Kartini (National Library) – all of whom we had met on our previous visit - and with Jim & Jan Neubronner. But, just as my first few days were marred by a bug, Margie's last few were marred by swollen feet, which was one reason why we still haven't visited Chinatown. That detail apart, we had a full and fascinating week.

The one 'loose end' is the discovery that the small plaque in St Andrew's Cathedral recording the gift of a screen near the organ in memory of EAB and Mary Brown is barely decipherable, and we are hoping to rectify that in due course.

*P.S. There is now a new plaque on the pillar by the organ.*

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As mentioned above, 4 of us flew on to Palembang and then Muntok for our second week. We were to be helped by 2 groups of people locally with whom our travelling companions had made contact during their first visit last year.

Meanwhile 7 MVG members were to go by boat to Muntok and then Palembang, trying to retrace the 'escape' routes from Singapore that led to Australia or across Sumatra. We would meet up with them again for a day in Muntok.

We travelled with:

Anthony Pratt, a Film Production Designer from London, whose father had also died in Muntok, and whom he had last seen when he was only 4 years old. It was the diligent work of Anthony's solicitor friend Oswald de Sybel which led to the Kew archives, wherein lie all Shelagh's correspondence over at least 20 years with the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) and Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC).

Judy Balcombe, a doctor from Melbourne, whose grandfather had died in Muntok. She and Anthony had been put in touch with each other by someone who recognised their similar interest, and they jointly visited Sumatra last year. As a result Judy had 4 plaques made, approved by the Secretary of and paid for by the MVG, and these were to be presented during the week for display in Palembang (1) and Muntok (3).

We were blessed with their excellent company for the week.

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Early on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> February we four flew to Palembang, and had hardly booked into our hotel when we had to depart for our first engagement. This was a visit to the Charitas Hospital, a Roman Catholic foundation dating from the 1920s. We found that we were to be welcomed by a long line of medics, nuns, and

administrators – every hand had to be shaken! First in the queue was the RC Archbishop of Palembang, and next the hospital's Director, Professor Hardi Darmawan, who has devoted his medical career to this hospital. Then we sat around a large array of tables for some speeches, during which Margie presented the Archbishop with a copy of a certificate of baptism that his predecessor (later himself interned) had signed 70 years ago, and Judy presented the Professor with the first of her plaques.



*Judy Balcombe showing her plaque for the Charitas Hospital to the RC Archbishop of Palembang, before presenting it to Professor Darmawan on the left, with one of the Charitas Nuns looking on.*

The story surrounding the baptism certificate is part of one of the extraordinary stories within this wider story. A Mrs Stubbs gave birth to a baby (Maria Pamela Faye) in the Charitas Hospital in October 1942, and was duly offered a Dutch or a Japanese birth certificate, both of which she refused – being British! So the baptism certificate had to do duty until after the War, when she was able to obtain a 'proper' birth certificate. Quite by chance we met Maria and her sister Vilma (both child internees) at the Imperial War Museum North in 2009.

The story behind the plaque is that during the War the nuns tended the most seriously ill from the Men's and the Women's Camps, until the hospital was closed and they too were interned. It was good to see that the British military had already demonstrated their gratitude for these services by presenting their own plaque, on display in the old main entrance.



THIS PLAQUE IS PRESENTED TO THE CHARITAS CONVENT SCHOOL PALEMBANG SUMATRA IN REMEMBRANCE OF AND GRATITUDE FOR THE HELP AND ASSISTANCE RENDERED BY THE REVEREND MOTHER SUPERIOR AND SISTERS WHEN THEY OPERATED THE SCHOOL AS AN IMPROVED HOSPITAL TO THOSE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL NAVY, ARMY, AND ROYAL AIR FORCE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM WHO WERE PRISONERS OF WAR IN JAPANESE HANDS IN THE HOSPITAL 1942 TO 1943

Judy's plaque will be placed on the opposite wall, and the copy of Maria's baptism certificate will go in the nun's museum.

In loving memory of the men, women and children, internees of the Japanese between 1942 and 1945 who were cared for in the Charitas hospital, Palembang and with thanks for the bravery and skill of the nuns and doctors who cared for them.

'And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.'  
(Revelations 21:4)

Dedicated to their memories by the  
Malayan Volunteers Group, February 2012

After a small repast, the Professor proudly showed us round his hospital; it was no hurried visit, we were always treated as honoured guests and welcomed in all departments. Then the nuns took centre stage as they showed us their chapel, museum, and very impressive mausoleum that had been built since Judy and Anthony's last visit. We noted the panel with Sister Catherinia's name (she was a key figure in the Women's Camp), and also one recording the sad loss of 8 nuns in a road accident 3 years ago. In spite of this blow to their community they were constantly cheerful and friendly. The present nuns are almost entirely Indonesian, but 70 years ago most were Dutch. They bring a wide variety of skills and professions to the work of running a hospital (and in the wider community), from a laundry maid to a haematologist.



*Margie and 5 of the Charitas Nuns*

On our first evening we were collected from our excellent hotel by the Professor, who took us out to dinner at a favourite restaurant of his on a barge moored on the bank of the river Musi. Our parting at the end of the meal was a farewell to the first group of people who were to 'help' us that week – they had been delightful hosts and also most generous with gifts for each of us.



*Anthony Pratt, Judy Balcombe, Prof Hardi Darmawan, Margie, and I after a delicious dinner afloat on the River Musi.*

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This was our first visit to a non-European-style country, and this second week was to be full of expected differences and many surprises – it was certainly an exciting time, with plenty of new experiences for our senses.

One of the details of life in crowded Palembang we all remarked on was the traffic; in particular the number of scooters heavily-laden with up to 2 adults and 2 children, or mounds of goods, with generally only the driver wearing a helmet, if at all. We were fortunate to be driven around in air-conditioned comfort (Hospital cars in Palembang, and later Tin Mine cars in Muntok). If you think your own local roundabout/crossroads is impossible, then you haven't been to Palembang. And if we found white rice three times a day hard going, we only had to remind ourselves of why we were here, and how lucky we were not to have to separate the rice

from grit and broken glass before cooking it ourselves, and then sharing it in tiny portions without the other delicious accompaniments that we enjoyed.

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We had a quietish day on Sunday, only venturing as far as the neighbouring Carrefour (!) supermarket. However, we did have a preliminary visit in the hotel that evening from our guide for the rest of the week, Putu, and his wife Komang. They are a delightful couple, and brought their daughter (c. 3 yrs old) with them on the morrow.

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February was the first of our 3 really amazing days. With Putu and family as guides, we visited the sites of the Women's and Men's Camps, and the Prison in which the men 'lived' while building their camp. Pre-War maps, maps with earlier Post-War research marked thereon, and modern maps are all recognisably showing the same streets, but Indonesian names have replaced the Dutch street names, and there have been many other changes. To walk up and down Irenelaan and 2 neighbouring streets, to see some bungalows that would have stood 70 years ago (amongst other more modern ones), to talk to people who live there now, to see where No 9 and its Garage would have stood, to actually see what we had read about and talked about for so many years, was not only amazing but also very moving. Here we were free to come and go as we pleased, even if we were 'being nosey' and aware of being a source of interest in return; in contrast Shelagh and her fellow internees were confined in a way that we can't really imagine.



*Anthony, Stephen, and Judy investigating the lane at the centre of the Women's Camp April 1942 to November 1944. It was hard to identify houses that might have existed 70 years ago – certainly No 9 (in the garage of which Shelagh lived) has been replaced. The open drain on the left is mentioned in a number of diaries, and is typical of what we saw in Palembang.*

Here, in 'Garage No 9', was where the music-making began. Do try and see *Paradise Road* if you haven't yet: it is a fictionalised version of the Women's efforts at bringing some humanity into their lives.

For lunch we were invited to Komang's parent's house in the suburbs of Palembang, where Komang and her daughter live while Putu is away at work in Muntok. This was where my own inability to sit on the floor, let alone whilst eating politely, was really put to the test. And then we went on out into the country east of Palembang to visit Putu's parents in their house. In both places we were so humbled by their hospitality and generosity. Both families came from Bali, as part of the government's Transmigration Programme to even out population inequalities within Indonesia. Putu's parents were in effect given a patch of raw jungle and told to 'get on with it' – they had built themselves a lovely house and their own Hindu Temple in their garden.

*(On the next page)*

*Left: lunch in Komang's parent's house. I (bottom left) have never been able to pose like Komang or her father. Note the fish, from their pond, and the delicious duku (fruit) looking like new potatoes.*

*Right: Putu (right) and family and his parent's Hindu Temple.*



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On Tuesday we caught the 0700 ferry to Muntok, a high-speed hydrofoil boat. We were accompanied by Putu, who was going back to work after an unexpected long weekend at home – what an excellent guide he had been. For the first 2 hours we wound our way down the dirty brown Musi, passing a few large ocean-going ships and many of more traditional design. There was no high ground visible, just low flat jungle, a few small settlements, and a couple of larger towns. And then we were in the Banka Strait, with the island straight ahead. From where the water suddenly became blue instead of brown took us another hour.



*My trick at the wheel; Anthony also had a go.*

Our 3-hour journey, in air-conditioned comfort, bore little resemblance to the journeys the prisoners made between Muntok and Palembang. They had been batted down in dark dirty airless holds, for at least 12 hours of unbearably hot discomfort.

We were also very conscious, crossing those waters, of the devastation wreaked there 70 years earlier on 22 of the ships fleeing Singapore. So we approached the prominent lighthouse of Muntok in a subdued frame of mind, quite unlike that of any of the many landfalls we have made in the past.



*Approaching Muntok. The current pier is to the right of the lighthouse, with the old pier and town c 2 miles further on. The survivors of the various shipwrecks landed all along the coast to the left (North) – Radji Beach is c 5 miles in that direction.*

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After a quick trip to our accommodation on the Tin Mine estate, where we were greeted by our MVG 'boat people', we were all whisked off on a tour of some of the important sites – to us – in Muntok. Mr Muhammad Rizki, the manager, and a number of his employees including Putu, have a great interest in the heritage of Muntok, and are to reopen the old Tin Mine HQ building (the Tinwinning Building) as a museum to that industry since the 1700s. A part of the museum will tell the story of how over a thousand foreigners were washed up on their shores in 1942, and were incarcerated there and on mainland Sumatra. So these people were the second group to help us during the week, driving us around most royally in a cavalcade of cars, and generously looking after us in their rest house.

Our first and brief stop was at the landward end of the now-demolished pier, from where we could see 3 buildings used as 'holding' accommodation in the first few days; the Pepper Warehouse, old Custom House, and Cinema.

We set off again, and at one point I thought we had caught up with some sort of incident, as there were officials standing about and directing traffic. But no, we were the 'incident' – we swept round a corner and through the gates of what turned out to be the Regent's Residence. (This republic still uses the term 'regency' for one tier of local government; the closest equivalent of a Regent would be a Mayor). And what a welcome we had; garlands for Judy and Anthony, dancing girls with a live band, followed by lunch eaten under the portico, and finally speeches. Everybody was beautifully turned out in either traditional costume or smart government uniforms, except of course for all we scruffy and travel-weary tourists.



*Anthony enjoying the attention of 2 young ladies.*



*The band is on the left behind the dancers.*



*We were all given bags containing a silk shirt and 2 T-Shirts.*

Our next stop was at the Prison, which is still in use. 500 Men, Women and Children gathered here early in 1942 for 2 months, and 960 Men returned in September 1943. Here were the greatest losses from the inhumane conditions – 270 had died by the time there was another and final move to Belalau near Loeboek Linggau in central Sumatra in March 1945. Judy's grandfather died here on 2 August 1944. Anthony's father was one of a number deemed too ill to travel, and was left behind in Muntok to die on 1 May 1945.



*L to R: unkn, Anthony, Mr Rizki, the Regent, Judy, unkn. outside the Prison in Muntok.*

In loving memory of the civilian men and boys interned in Muntok by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945.

They experienced sickness, starvation and often death but they showed great care for one another and courage in the face of such adversity.

'Who would true valour see, let him come hither'  
(John Bunyan)

Dedicated to their memories by the  
Malayan Volunteer Group, February 2012

We visited the site of the Women's Camp from Nov 1944 when c 650 Women and Children moved from the old Men's Camp in Palembang. There was the well, now almost dry, surrounded by many crowded houses and huts – we were of intense interest to all who now lived there. And nearby was another plinth already prepared for a plaque. The Regent made another speech, telling the present residents that family members of these foreign visitors had lived here, and that we were all one family now. Suddenly Margie found the microphone in her hands! Her genius was to ask the children if they would sing, as a demonstration of the freedom that the voice and music enjoy and an example of the activity that uplifted the Women's spirits, and so they sang their national anthem.

This is where 76 Women died in less than 5 months, including Mary Brown on 17 January 1945, Olga Neubronner on 2 March, and many more Singapore friends.





In loving memory of the women and children interned in Muntok by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945.

Civilians and army nurses were held captive here, experiencing hardship, ill-health and often death. They cared for one another and shared the very little they had.

Despite the squalor, they sought beauty in song.

'As blended voices filled the air  
the soul could soar to worlds more fair,  
escape from prison bounds.'

(Margaret Dryburgh, camp internee)

Dedicated to their memories by the  
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This was the emotional culmination of a very long, busy, and moving day.

This village within 'Greater Muntok' still lacks running water, although there are plans to provide it soon, and we thought that contributions for that scheme or towards the local school nearby would be an appropriate way to commemorate the link. There are plans to set up a Friends of Muntok website.

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Wednesday was the day marked 'Detective Day!' in Margie's wee notebook diary. We set off for the site of the former Dutch Cemetery, in which those who died in the Men's Camp were buried, and to which those who had died in the Women's Camp were moved after the War. Margie was recently reunited with copious lists and plans accumulated by her mother Shelagh, who had tried so hard to get positive responses from the FCO and CWGC for so many years. Armed with these we spent a long time wandering around the site – now covered by houses and a petrol station – trying to reconcile reality and theory. The trouble is that, as the Dutch lost control to the Indonesians, various groups of peoples' remains were removed (mainly to the Dutch War Cemetery in Jakarta), but British civilians – with a very few possible exceptions – were left, as the CWGC only dealt with military personnel. The intervening years saw the remnants of the Cemetery deteriorate, with nobody taking any responsibility.



Photograph of part of the Dutch Cemetery in Muntok, taken an unknown number of years ago.

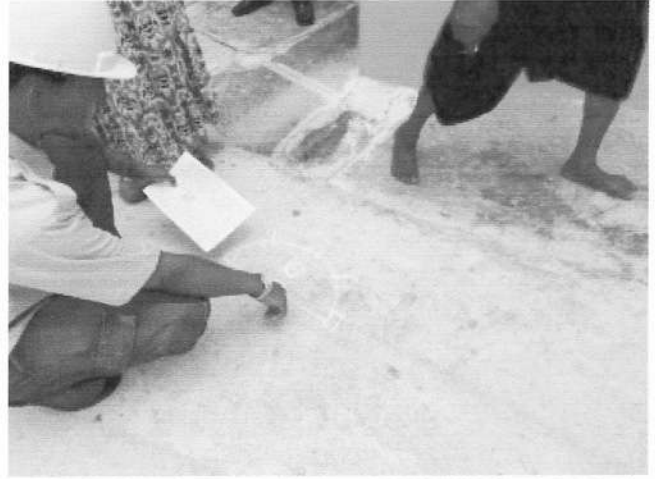


The site of the Cemetery now. The lane (shown right) separated 4 equal-sized areas, 2 on either side. The Women were buried in the front left area, where the Pertamina petrol station is, and the Men in the area behind, now occupied by houses.

And so I spent a long time looking most suspicious taking lots of photographs of the petrol station from all angles (Mary Brown's and Olga Neubronner's graves would appear to have been in this part of the Cemetery), and Margie with the rest of our 'troop' engaged with some of the local residents. A wall was identified, a tape measure produced, diagrams drawn in chalk on the ground, and tales of ghosts having been seen shared. Both Judy and Anthony were able to work out approximately where their forbears' graves would have been.



*Hot work.*



*Putu explains a copy of the Dutch authority's plan of the Cemetery from c 1954 to a current resident of the site.*

But are they there now? During the construction of the petrol station 30 years ago human remains were found, and were reburied communally in the Catholic Cemetery.



*The grave (centre front) in the RC Cemetery with an inscription stating that (in Indonesian):  
**'Here rest 25 English Allied Military .... Reburied at Muntok Catholic Cemetery 19 March 1981'**  
 It appears that this inscription must be incorrect, and that the remains are those of British civilian women – but which?*

In the afternoon we saw some more of Muntok and its surroundings, as well as returning to the Cemetery to explore behind it. Again we were intruding on people's privacy, but after initial suspicion they were most friendly and helpful, recalling the Cemetery of old and visits by other interested parties in the past.

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That evening we met Mrs Rizki and 2 of her boys aged c.8 and c.10; there is an older boy aged 14 away at boarding school in Jakarta. Before leaving home we had visited our local Roman Palace at Fishbourne, and had bought for the boys a book from which one cuts out and makes a model of a Roman Villa. 24 hours later

they interrupted our evening and proudly showed us their handiwork. We were quite humbled to realise what a success our present had been. Every time we met the boys we were treated to the charming and deferential greeting of having our hand drawn to touch their bowed forehead.



*Mrs Rizki, with her 2 younger boys displaying their handiwork, and Mr Ababakar the photographer on the right.*



*Margie, Putu, and Judy.*

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The next morning we were able to revisit the town and take more photographs of the Pepper Warehouse, old Custom House, and Cinema. They are now in various states of decay and were un-entered by us, and the Cinema is now used as a birds' nest soup 'factory' – we saw the swifts continually flying in and out. We also visited the Roman Catholic Priest to see if he had any records. Unfortunately he is new to Muntok, but did phone his HQ in the Island's capital, without producing further information.

In the afternoon we discovered that 2 high-speed canoes had been laid on to take us to Radji Beach where the Australian Army nurses were massacred. It was a lovely calm day, neither too hot nor bright, and we were dropped off to walk for about ½ a mile along beautiful beaches separated by low rocky headlands. In spite of the beauty and the company, it was hard not to recall what had happened here 70 years ago. Shelagh's party would have landed on a similar beach, but possibly even further along the coast.

*Tropical beachwear, courtesy of the Timah Tin Company.*



*One of a number of wrecks on the beach, with the Australian Army Nurse's Memorial under the trees to the left of Muntok Lighthouse*

However, this expedition brought home to me a detail that I hadn't fully realised – and the refugees from Singapore didn't fully realise – that they were overtaken by the Japanese forces invading the Dutch East Indies. That the Japanese had no idea of what to 'do' with this extra group of humanity is borne out by the inconsistent treatment meted out for the next 3½ years, treatment that was negligent at best.

That evening's activity was the one interrupted (see above). Mr Ababakar, a member of the heritage group that had given us so much of their time during the week, showed us part of a photographic collection he is gathering of Muntok and area in the last 100 years. Of particular interest to us were some photographs, including aerial ones, showing the old pier. As a photographer he is following in his father's footsteps.

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On Friday we had to return to Palembang by ferry, for another night in our hotel, before flying to Heathrow via Singapore on Saturday. We had one more experience to fit in on our way to the ferry, and that was a quick visit to the Tin Mine, part of the nationalised tin producing industry. We really only had time to see the shed where the ingredients – various grades of dredged and mined sand – are mixed, the shed where the cast ingots are weighed and bundled into equal-weighted pallets (see below), and the display room full of samples of each stage of the process. If you have ever done any tin soldering, the chances are that the solder came from Muntok, as it is the World's largest tin producer. Mr Rizki and his staff are proud of their factory and its product, but I'm glad I don't have to work in that heat, especially with hard hats and masks.



*Tin Futures on the World's markets, probably worth an interminable number of Indonesian Rupiahs (£1 = IDR 14,863.22 at the time of writing), with some ingots in the background.*

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Yes, it was hot, only 2° South of the Equator (Palembang is 3° S, and Singapore c 1° N), but we enjoyed lots of air-conditioning, weren't out in the Midday Sun much with the Mad Dogs, and were able to make use of shade most of the time. In Singapore pedestrians wait under the shade of buildings for traffic lights to change. Our last full day in Palembang, when we visited Putu's families, was the only one that turned grey and wet.

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We had set out in high hopes of solving a mystery, of establishing beyond doubt where the remains of Mary Elizabeth Brown, Olga Neubronner, Colin Douglas Campbell (Judy's grandfather), and Donald Frederick Pratt are buried, and of being in a position to - in due course – realise Shelagh's ambition to have a proper memorial to these people and their friends. We obviously haven't got there yet, but perhaps we are a little the wiser after such an amazing experience.

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*The words on Judy's 4<sup>th</sup> plaque, presented to Mr Rizki for display in the Tinwinning Building when it is reopened as a Museum. This is an excellent summary of our feelings after our Extraordinary Pilgrimage. Shelagh had left us with feelings of great sadness about Muntok, but we have come away with happy memories.*

In loving memory of the men, women and children who suffered at the hands of the Japanese between 1942 and 1945.

Many were bombed and drowned in the Bangka Straits, others were killed after landing at Muntok while many suffered from deprivation, disease and death in internment.

Their friends cared for them in the camps and in the Tinwinning building hospital wards but many died and were buried in Muntok, in Palembang and in Loeboek Linggau and are now at rest.

'These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,  
washed marvellously by sorrow' (Rupert Brooke)

Dedicated to their memories by the  
Malayan Volunteers Group, February 2012

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Four MVG members have already had their accounts published with the most recent MVG Newsletter, and I am most grateful to them for the evidence against which I can check details and spellings in this account. We are also most grateful for other people's photographs, sent so quickly by 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology, some of which I may have used without individual acknowledgement.

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Stephen Caldicott

Hambrook April 2012