

## 'RADJI BEACH', Banka Island

British citizens who died as a result of Massacre on 16 February 1942

[Version 1.0.0; February 2020]

By the morning of 16 February 1942 about 100 people had arrived on 'Radji Beach' including the passengers and crew of 'SS Vyner Brooke', a group in a lifeboat of the 'Z Advanced Ordnance Workshop' Royal Army Ordnance Corps ('ZAOW', RAOC) passengers and ship's crew from 'Pulo Soegi' and several crew from 'HMS Li Wo'.

During the early part of the morning it is well known that a group of about 15-20 women and children, lead by Mr Dominguez and his wife from Australia and accompanied by several walking wounded Royal Navy ratings were ordered to start the trek through the jungle to Muntok – so as to not slow down the main party when they left on the return of Lt Sedgmen, RNR, the First Officer of the 'Vyner Brooke' who had gone in search of the Japanese to advise that the group on the beach wished to surrender.

This left approximately 75-80 people on the beach including an estimated,

- Australian Army Nurses 22
- New Zealand naval officers 3
- British,
  - Civilians 10
  - Soldiers (RAOC) 25
  - RN /RNR sailors 20

What is known by few people is that about this time a group of “...*able bodied men*...” also left the group heading towards the Muntok lighthouse (see end of this paper).

About half the people who died in the massacre by Japanese troops remain unidentified – some will be listed in official and research documents as having died on or around the sinking of the 'SS Vyner Brooke' and some will have come from the 'ZAOW' RAOC group from the 'Pulo Soegi', whilst others will be on the list of casualties in the sinking of the 'HMS Li Wo'.

Known **British** victims on 'Radji Beach' are listed below – see the memorial documents on each ship for more details;

### **'SS Vyner Brooke',**

- **Thomas Betteridge**, B.1880, Lancashire and a Partner in the brokers Hallam & Co., Kula Lumpur.
- **Mrs. Carrie Rose Faraday Betteridge** – wife of Thomas for 50 years.
- **William Hay Pratt**, an engineer from Seremban, Negri Sembilan.
- **Mrs Kathleen Elise Waddle**, b. 1900 in Shepherds Bush, London and Headmistress of Raffles Girls School (either the whole school or just the junior school), Singapore and wife of Robert Alfred Waddle, an electrical engineer in Singapore ( see archived family film in Singapore National Archives).
- **Ernest Charles Watson**, b.1874, a Judicial Commissioner in Malaya and then a Barrister.

- and from the crew of the 'SS Vyner Brooke',
  - **Able Seaman Hamilton McClurg**, D/JX 204773, RN and ex 'HMS Prince of Wales' from Glasgow.
  - **Denis James O'Brien**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineering Officer aged 54 years (*this person 's presence amongst those massacred on 'Radji Beach' after the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' is more tenuous from the historical clues available*).
  - **Lt. (E) David Reith**, RNR, Chief Engineer, aged 67 years and from Aberdeen.
  - **(First Officer) Lt. William Sydney Sedgeman**, RNR, b.1911 aged 31 years, from Goodwick, Pembrokeshire, Wales.
  - EITHER **Robert Trew hitt** , and engineer on the Jasin Lalang Estate in Malacca (and a Volunteer CQMS in the Malacca Local Defence Corps) serving as 3<sup>rd</sup> Extra Engineer in the engine room of the ship OR **Captain Cuthbert Tyrwhitt**, ostensibly of the Cambridgeshire Regt but in fact with the 'Far East Combined Bureau' (which was the counterespionage unit, against the Japanese, of British Intelligence).

#### **'Pulo Soegi'**,

- **Craftsman Arnold Wilson Atkins**, # 7646, 'ZAOW', RAOC aged 32 years.
  - **Lt. Stephen Day**, SSRNVR, b.1909 at Barton – upon – Irwell, Salford, Manchester an Assistant with Sandilands, Buttery & Co, Penang and aged 33 years.
  - **Staff Sgt. Thomas Hurrell**, #7610705, 'ZAOW', RAOC aged 37 years.
  - **Private George Cecil Kinsley**, # 7654688, 'ZAOW', RAOC (the serviceman bayoneted on Radji Beach and whom Vivian Bullwinkle cared for in the jungle - he died soon after in Muntok POW camp from his wounds).
  - **Cpl. William George James Sherrington**, #7624357, 'ZAOW', RAOC aged 26 years.
  - **Sgt. Archibald Skimming**, #7634180,'ZAOW', RAOC aged 29 years.
- Plus, another estimated 15 officers and men from the 'ZAOW' RAOC who had been aboard the 'Pulo Soegi'.

**RESEARCHER NOTE:** extending previous knowledge, we now know from wartime notes secretly taken and hidden in POW camps by Private Hal Richardson, an Australian journalist serving in the AIF and also a POW in Muntok and Palembang, that some of those people present on 'Radji Beach on the morning of 16 February who lost their lives at the hands of the Japanese that day did not all die at the time of the massacre either on that beach, or in the adjacent cove or in the sea. A group of British servicemen had left the Beach independently and headed for Muntok lighthouse just before the arrival of the Japanese. The reality is also that with the onset of the massacre men and women – the men from our knowledge of the people on the Beach were almost certainly British - ran for their lives along the beach and up into the jungle cover as the Japanese started bludgeoning, bayonetting and shooting the victims.

Firstly, insofar as those actually attacked during the massacre, we know from Leading Seaman Wilding, RN from 'HMS Li Wo' who swam ashore at Radji Beach several hours after the massacre that he found a "... man..." in the "... fringe of timber..." above the Beach on which the nurses were killed - he had been bayoneted and his intestines were spilled but he was still alive and only able to gasp "... Japs .." to Wilding, who then moved on to the next cove where he found survivor Eric German who had also been severely bayoneted. Wilding then met up with Cpl. Seddon, Royal

Marines, from the sunken tug 'HMS Yin Ping' and then walked up to the fisherman's hut (presumably the one at 'Radji Beach' ) where they found a "... *white man, doubled over also bayoneted who said he had been in the massacre...*" with three dead Royal Navy ratings. The two men then walked inland and after some time on the jungle trail came across a "... *European lying with his back to the broad base of a kapok tree. He was like a deflated sack... slumped in a pool of blood... he had been on the beach but feigned death... but now could go no further...*". There will have been more people who died away from the Beach after the massacre.

Secondly, insofar as the group of servicemen who were present on Radji Beach, but left just before the Japanese arrived, Pte. Hal Richardson, AIF, continues in his monograph in the Australian War Memorial Museum that he learned during his interviews in POW camps from one 'Victor Spencer' (this was Leading Seaman Victor Spencer, DSSX 23078 aged 25 years from Hull who was ex 'HMS Prince of Wales' and then 'HMS Li Wo' – and who died later as a POW on 24.7.45) who had come ashore at Radji Beach, and with others had "...*gathered wood for the fires that warmed and cooked for survivors...*" and had then with "... *other able bodied men...*" had "...*struck out for the lighthouse a mile or so along the beach...*". This group then turned inland but encountered a squad of Japanese soldiers when they "... *reached a tar road...*" and Spencer says he was bayoneted and struck unconscious, when he came around he found that all the others "... *were lying around, shot and bayoneted...*". Spencer then walked off, but soon encountered another badly wounded sailor "... *Leading Stoker Hadley who had served in REPULSE then LI WO...*" whom "... *was in pain from his wounds and could not move without assistance...*" – it seems that Hadley might also have been on Radji Beach - this was **Leading Seaman James Bruce Douglas Hadley**, DJX 142890, RN aged 23 years from Coventry who died soon after in POW camp from his wounds.

The 'Radji Beach' massacre victims died in a chaotic and dispersed situation that extended along the coast and inland – their unburied remains still lie on Banka Island along with the remains of many hundreds of bodies of British civilians and servicemen which washed ashore on the beaches of Banka Island during the weeks of mid-February 1942. .

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12 February 2020