

**COMMEMORATION CEREMONIES  
TO MARK THE 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE FALL OF SINGAPORE AND ITS AFTERMATH  
IN SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND SUMATRA  
FEBRUARY 2012**



**PATRON: HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF NORFOLK**

[www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk](http://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk)



**Presentation of two Plaques to commemorate the Australian Volunteers  
and to thank the Australian public for caring for the Singapore evacuees.**

**L to R: Elizabeth Adamson, Rosemary Fell & Bill Adamson**

**COMMEMORATION OF THE 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE  
FEBRUARY 2012**

**REPORTS FROM CEREMONIES IN  
SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND SUMATRA**  
Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk

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**SINGAPORE**  
Report on Events

1. DINNER AT THE SINGAPORE CRICKET CLUB
2. MILITARY TOUR OF THE NORTH-WEST OF SINGAPORE
3. LUNCH AT THE BARK CAFE
4. COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT KRANJI CWGC
5. TOUR OF ADAM PARK

**AUSTRALIA**

6. SERVICE IN THE CITY OF STIRLING MEMORIAL GARDENS
7. MVG LUNCH IN PERTH WA

**SUMATRA**

8. RIAU ISLANDS TRIP
9. RETURN TO MUNTOK
10. RETRACING MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS IN SUMATRA



## SINGAPORE FEBRUARY 2012

Representatives of the Malayan Volunteers Group were present when Singapore commemorated the invasion of Malaya and Singapore, and the tragic results of the Surrender and Fall of Singapore on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, with a number of events. The following are the ones some of us attended.

### Friday 10<sup>th</sup> Feb

Jane, my sister, and I arrived in Singapore and stayed at the excellent and central YMCA. The present building replaced the old YMCA building which had a grim background during the war. After the war people would walk past on the other side of the road. Now it is a modern, cheerful and busy place.

### Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> Feb

We went to The Changi Museum so Jane could finalise a map of the POW camps in Singapore during WWII for the Museum. Although the research was not finished they had asked if they could print it and use it at some of the events. The staff were busy with many visitors. Some of these were from a visiting cruise ship but many were in Singapore for the 70<sup>th</sup> Commemoration. Jeya, Robin, Hugh and Anand were all most helpful – and we had a delicious lunch in the Bark Café.

### Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> Feb

We went to St Andrew's Cathedral for the 11.15 Service. While waiting to go in we met Margie Caldicott and discovered we were all Malayan Volunteers' descendants! (And BACSA members!). The Service was not quite what we expected, being rather a sales pitch for a Children's Charity. Afterwards we met an Australian family with their father, who had been in F Force. I commented to him that they had had the toughest time of all and thanked him for clearing the way for H Force, which my father was in. He said no-one had ever told him F Force had the worst time, or thanked him. Later at Kranji he laid a wreath. He was 93.

That evening Rosemary, Donald, Jane and I had been invited to the Singapore Cricket Club for the Veterans' Appreciation Dinner. Dr Henry Tung, George Prior and Sabeer Zain were some of the Veterans present together with their families. Many had been sent from Singapore to Bahau in Malaya as refugees. Among the guests was Lady Dalton the wife Air Chief Marshall Sir Stephen Dalton, together with members of the High Commissions, The Singapore National Archives staff, The Changi Museum staff and members of the Press. We were led into dinner by a piper playing "Highland Laddie", the tune played by the 'Argylls as they retreated across the Causeway to Singapore, and given a welcome talk of appreciation by Jeya. The Changi Museum staff then presented a slide show of photos, with an accompanying history, of the guests present who had actually been POWs or refugees in Malaya and Singapore, and of guests whose parents that had been POWs. During the proceedings, which included the playing of The Last Post and a Two Minutes Silence, we enjoyed a delicious dinner. Everyone was given two books about the Fall of Singapore and a specially mounted piece of the demolished walls of Changi Jail. It was an emotional, happy and very special evening.





### Monday 13<sup>th</sup> Feb

This was the day of the Historic Bus Tour arranged by Jane. It looked rainy but it held off. We all met at St Andrew's Cathedral and were led by Helena Yeo our Singaporean guide of Journeys Pte Ltd, Services.

For the four hour bus tour, we had worked out 18 sites in Singapore connected with the war. Everyone was given a set of pictures to do with each place, showing how the sites looked before or during the war. Helena, with great enthusiasm and much information, gave us a wonderful tour – which ran over time! But it was worth it,



although we did not see everything at the Ford Factory. It was also a shame that the bus could not go into the Sime Road area. However people could go another time by car or taxi if they wished to.

The 18 sites were: St Andrew's Cathedral; The Municipal Buildings, now called the City Hall; The Padang; The Civilian War Memorial; River Valley Road Camp and Havelock Road Camp; Tanjong Pagar Railway Station (now closed); Kepple Harbour, where Helena took us to the site of Krait and Jaywick; The Alexandra Hospital; The Old Ford Factory; Sime Road Camp; Changi Jail. We drove passed a number of the barracks, Selarang, Roberts and Kitchener, then on to Changi Beach Park, the site of the Sook Ching Massacre; St Patrick's School, which had been the Malayan Volunteers' Headquarters in 1941-42; Kallang Airport; the Straits Settlement Volunteer Force Headquarters on Beach Road and finally to Raffles Hotel, where Helena showed us to the Raffles Hotel Museum. Some of us had a very welcome cup of tea. Jane and I then walked the length of the Orchard Road looking at the shops, and had a delicious supper at one of the food stalls off a side street.

### Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> Feb

This was the day all the MVG members gathered together for lunch at the Bark Café, at the Changi Museum. This gave us the opportunity to meet and chat to each other rather more than we had had a chance to up until then.



It was a very happy occasion. Later in the afternoon Jane and I and others went to the National Library to see the exhibition 'Images of Internment: the Eye and Art of William Haxworth' which also showed other POWs' drawings and cartoons and a very interesting exhibition of the Battle of Adam Park. Near the entrance to the exhibition was a 'Field of (Royal British Legion type) Red Poppies' planted into a large sloping green-painted board. A Singaporean cheerfully walking by said it was for St Valentine's Day. It was a delightful comment



### Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> Feb. The 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Surrender of Singapore in 1942

The Service at the Memorial to the Civilian Victims of the Japanese Occupation, on Beach Road at the end of the Padang started a 9 o'clock and was very well attended. There was an excellent School Military Band and many beautiful wreaths were placed by dignitaries and representatives of all religions. Many survivors of those days in Singapore were present. And many Veterans from Australia were there who had already been to the Kranji Cemetery for a 7am Service.

Jane and I later spent a few hours at the Peranakan Museum and the National Museum.

At 3.30 pm we all gathered at St Andrew's for the coach to Kranji Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. On the way there we drove through a real Singapore monsoon downpour. But at Kranji Singapore came up trumps with a dry and beautiful evening. The Remembrance Ceremony was held to coincide with the time of General Percival's surrender at 6.10pm – on that Sunday, the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1942. The Service was made up of prayers and poems, songs from the Raffles Institutes schoolboy choir, and wreath-laying by dignitaries and representatives, including Rosemary for The Volunteers, and The Last Post and Two Minutes Silence. We all had seats right up near the front and next to the choir, so we could see and hear everything. Lord Green of Hurstpierpoint and Air Chief Marshall Sir Stephen Dalton represented Britain and laid wreaths.

After the Service everyone gathered on the lower lawn for something to eat and drink. All were given copies of



Jane's Map of the Prison Camps of Singapore, which had been handed to the Changi Museum on the Saturday. They had printed and laminated enough copies for everyone at the Ceremony to be given one. It was wonderful to see them all holding copies of the Map, so beautifully reproduced by the Changi Museum. It was an emotional day with so many people to remember.







#### Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> Feb

We met at 9.30 at Adam Park. Our instructions were to wear sensible shoes, sun block, mozzie cream and a sun hat – so we were rather expecting a jungle walk. Instead we were taken by Jon Cooper to walk through a beautiful estate of black and white two-storey bungalows with lovely gardens. Jon explained the whole battle sequence that had taken place in and around these houses and something of the people who had lived there. It was such an eye-opener to the sorts of close fighting there had been during those last days.

Jane and I then walked to Cluny Hill and the Botanical Gardens, especially to see the orchids. Our father had gone this way to the Mount Pleasant area where his unit had surrendered on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 1942.

#### The Conference

Other MVG members attended the afternoon session of the conference held at the Supreme Court Auditorium on "The Causes and Impact of the Fall of Singapore." The first speaker after lunch was Historian, Author and MVG member Romen Bosc, who has written extensively on WW2 in Singapore. He was followed by Kevin Blackburn and Karl Black who discussed the Fall of Singapore as viewed by the Australians (betrayed by incompetent British leadership), the British (an ignominious defeat) and the Japanese (victory shamed by the atrocities which followed). The last speaker of the day was Jon Cooper, who fired up a rather jaded group of schoolchildren with enthusiasm as he gave an animated talk about his battlefield archaeology - rather as he had inspired us in the morning at Adam Park. The Conference was very well organised by the Changi Museum and National Archives of Singapore. Those MVG members who arrived in time were able to enjoy a cooked lunch and tea before the end of the Conference at about 6p.m. Thanks were given in person to Jeya, Director of the Changi Museum, by several members, for the many events which had taken place during the week, and for the part played by the Museum in organising them.

#### Friday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb

We visited the Asian Civilization Museum – another excellent Museum.

#### Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> Feb

Jane and I went by MRT and bus to Johore Bahru to find the police barracks where our mother had waited for an evacuation ship, and to the railway station where our parents met on New Year's Eve 1941-42, as our father went back up-country. That evening we had supper at the Tanglin Club with an old planter friend of our parents.

#### Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> Feb

We visited the Battle Box and the site of one of the oldest of Singapore's Cemeteries on Fort Hill. At the National Museum we saw the Farquhar Exhibition of paintings of Malayan animals and plants dated 1774-1839.

#### Monday 20<sup>th</sup> Feb

We left Singapore after spending the morning at Changi Museum.

I had thought this would be my last farewell to Singapore. But in three and a half years time in 2015 Singapore will be celebrating the end of the war – in September 1945 – another Anniversary of Remembrance.

Marilyn Hywel-Jones



MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP AND MALAYA BORNEO VETERANS WA INC  
HELD A JOINT COMMEMORATION CEREMONY IN PERTH, WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA FOR AUSTRALIAN CIVILIAN EXECUTIVES CAUGHT UP IN THE  
"FALL OF SINGAPORE" IN 1942.

On Thursday 23rd February 2012, over a hundred people gathered at the City of Stirling Civic Gardens Memorial in Perth, Western Australia, to witness the dedication and unveiling of twin plaques honouring the service of expatriate Australians who had been living and working in Malaya and the Straits Settlements pre-War. The men and women who had volunteered or were called up to serve within the Federated Malay or Singapore Volunteer Forces and numerous Auxiliary bodies for the Defence of Malaya and Singapore during 1941-'42 and were either killed-in-action or became prisoners of war..

These Australian servicemen and women had not before received any known official memorialised recognition of their service in Malaya here in Australia, counselling public of their having fought with British, Malay, Chinese, Indian and Eurasian men who, with the Malay Regiment, comprised the nucleus of local forces defending Malaya during 1941 - '42.

Appreciation has also been recorded in the memorial plaque for the families within Western Australia who took in and cared for the men, women and children evacuated from a war torn Singapore and Malaya 1941 - '42. The majority of evacuee's now calling Australia home.

Cumulative names and numbers of those either killed-in-action, incarcerated as Prisoners of War, who escaped, with those evacuee's who found residence within Western Australia will be listed for future commemorations. There were numerous identity's who were themselves present during the 1941 - '42 battle for Malaya and Singapore, with 'nine honour wreaths' being placed at the memorial. These wreaths honoured 1 killed-in-action, 13 prisoners of war, 2 escapee's and 21 evacuee's, while added attendee's with family members involved in the retreat and evacuation numbers were present.

The ceremonial dedication and unveiling of the plaques was very moving and informative, as were the speeches given by Rosemary Fell (Secretary of the MVG UK), Elizabeth Bunney (Secretary of the MVG Australia); Mr George Hesse (FMSVF veteran & Force 136) and Mr Bill Adamson (President of the Malaya/Borneo Veterans' Assoc.) Their personal messages came across in a most meaningful commemorative and historical manner.

The Mayor of the City of Stirling; the Hon. Judy Moylen, MP ; Puan Hamidah Ashari AMN, Malaysian Consul General of Western Australia; Rev Barry May OAM JP; Mr Phillip Orchard, CEO R&SL; Col (Rtd) Geoff Simpson, State Deputy Warden; Mrs Rosemary Fell, Secretary Malayan Volunteers Group UK; Mrs Elizabeth Bunney, Secretary Malayan Volunteers Group WA; Mr Bill Adamson, President Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc; Presidents of ex-servicemen and women Organizations within Western Australia; servicemen and service women; the children and grandchildren of the original Volunteers now living in Australia, and, associated public were in attendance.

W. Adamson  
E. Bunney

Good morning everyone, and welcome.

It is a great honour for me to be here speaking today.

My connection with the Malayan Volunteers Group is that I am the daughter of 2nd Lieut. Richard Peall - who, when a toddler - I knew as "Daddy Dick". My father was for a long time Company Sergeant Major of B Company, 2nd Battalion (Selangor) of the FMSVF. He was responsible for the training of a Malay company. Shortly before the general mobilisation, he was commissioned but remained with his Malay troops through all the actions they were involved in during the retreat down the Malaya Peninsula to Singapore.

I last saw him at the age of two and a half. My mother's parents had retired to Perth from Singapore in 1940. Somewhat luckily, they invited my mother and myself to visit them here in Perth for 'a spell of cool weather', so we left Kuala Lumpur in July 1941, and consequently missed the evacuation. However, I have the wonderful inheritance of six months of my father's letters forwarded to my mother.

Mention of his letters reminds me that he also wrote a whole letter to me for my third birthday. In the letter he merely explained the difficulty of sending me a present, but he suggested - "that your mother buy you - and pay for - a nice present from me - something like a real live kangaroo or a tank ..." he was always joking about something. So the war deprived me of a terrific Dad - me and thousands of other young children.

My "Daddy Dick" was killed in action in Singapore on 15th February 1942, so the 15th was especially poignant for me last week when in Singapore myself to commemorate both his service and his life.

I was astounded to learn there is an FMSVF veteran here in Perth, George Hesse. Obviously he was very young at the outset of the war, was involved in many actions, and amazingly, survived it all. His fatherly guidance has kept me facing the right way for twelve months or more in my capacity as Secretary of the Malayan Volunteers Group WA Branch. Luckily, he lives only 15 minutes down the road. You will be hearing from him shortly.

Before I go, I must make mention of the fact that we would not be here today at the dedication and unveiling of the plaque were it not for the efforts of two people. Rosemary Fell tried mightily from England to find a spot in Australia for our memorial plaque, but alas, to no avail. The other person is Bill Adamson who took it on, and after a prodigious amount of hard work and dogged persistence, often into the wee small hours, but with the support of good people he knows (many here today) he managed it. The Stirling City Council has also been a great asset in this endeavour, to whom we are extremely grateful.

Thank you all for coming, and I hope to see you again next year

Elizabeth Bunney.



**Dedication of MVG UK & MBV WA Inc Commemoration Plaque – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012.**

His Worship the Mayor of Stirling, Mr David Boothman; the Hon Judy Moylan MP; Puan Hamidah Ashari AMN, Malaysian Consul General Western Australia; Reverend Barry May OAM JP, Chaplain for the occasion; Col (Retd) Geoff Simpson RFD, Warden and Master of Ceremonies; Mr Jack Le Cras OAM, President Naval Association WA, Guardians of the Stirling Civic Garden Memorial, Mrs Rosemary Fell, Secretary, Malayan Volunteers Group UK, Mr Krishnan, President, Association of Malaysians in Western Australia, the Presidents and Executives R&SL ESO's in attendance, servicemen, evacuees and visitors.

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the fall of Singapore to the Japanese Imperial Army in 1942 took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012.

7 MVG UK and 1 MBV WA Inc members present here today were present at the Singapore Commemoration Services in Singapore on the **15<sup>th</sup> February 2012**. They also visited the historic battle sites spread around the city during the week. The Commemoration of both service and civilian casualties were separate yet significantly special.

It is the wish of **MBV WA Inc & MVG UK** today to commemorate the forgotten Australian members of the various **Malayan or Singapore Volunteer Forces' and Auxiliary Units** who were involved in the defence of Malaya, Borneo, Java and Singapore, of both service and civilian disposition, before the countries fell to the Japanese in February 1942. We primarily reflect upon those killed, were taken prisoner and suffered so greatly at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Forces, also reflect with great respect on those who managed to escape.

**MBV WA Inc & MVG UK** also wish to thank the people of Western Australia who welcomed and cared for the thousands of men, women and children evacuees arriving in Western Australia from war torn Malaya, Borneo, Java and Singapore during 1941 and 1942.

The two Plaque's being dedicated here today are emblazoned with the various Malayan or Singapore Volunteer Force crests of the period. Numerous Auxiliary Units served alongside these frontline regiments and it is hoped that their particular crests will be honoured and displayed in the future.

The **MBV WA Inc & MVG UK** have members whose immediate and direct line relatives are former members of Malayan and Singapore Volunteer Force regiments and Auxiliary Units, (Malayan Nursing Service, St Johns Ambulance Association and other State services), all resident European executives having been called up to fight before the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941. Because of the lapse of time since the Fall of Singapore in 1942, the families now measure a three and four generation growth for all those refugee families who settled in Western Australia as a 'fate of the Pacific War'. It is estimated the resident numbers will reflect more than 6,000 today.



**DEDICATION OF PLAQUES IN THE CITY OF STIRLING WAR MEMORIAL GARDENS  
PERTH WA - 23RD FEBRUARY 2012**



**TWIN PLAQUES**



**SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIAN  
AND MALAYSIAN FLAGS**



**ELIZABETH BUNNEY, ROSEMARY FELL AND  
BILL ADAMSON**



## **MVG LUNCH IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**Report by Elizabeth Bunney  
MVG Australia Secretary**

On Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2012, MVG members gathered at "The Mighty Quinn" Tavern for a pub lunch to meet Rosemary and Donald Fell, who had come down to Perth after their trip to Singapore to attend functions commemorating the Fall of Singapore to the Japanese on 15<sup>th</sup> February, 1942.

Those in attendance (apart from Rosemary and Donald) were: George and Hyacinth Hess'e, Bob Paterson, George Fearby, Rosemary Schulstad, Patricia Wood, Merle Best, Tony Brand, Kaye Breuchle, Mike and Carolyn Field, Garry and Susila Burgoyne, Sheila Bruhn, Peter Wilshaw, Des Woodford, Bill Adamson and Elizabeth Bunney.

Apologies were received from Patricia Giudice, Mr. & Mrs. Sloan, Bob Foston, Ian Peek, Derrick Leembruggen, Lorna Raeburn, Joan Forman and Paddy Backskai.

A very pleasant occasion was enjoyed by all.

Sheila Bruhn had flown over to Perth from Sydney, and stayed with Elizabeth, to attend the lunch and also to go with Elizabeth to the monthly meeting of the Western Australian Quilters' Association. There Sheila gave her talk of her war-time experiences as a civilian prisoner of war in Changi and Sime Road Camps, and also, of course, her participation in the making of the Changi Quilts. Her talk, with slides, was very well received by more than 150 quilters. There were four quilts in all, the first one being made by the Girl Guides in camp, and then later three others made by the women. There was one for the Japanese (it being politic to do one for them), one for the men's camp with embroidered messages, and the third for the women's camp.



**N.B. Donald and Rosemary Fell wish to thank MVG members in Australia, very much, for the warm welcome and hospitality they received during their visit at the Lunch and dedication of the Plaques in the City of Stirling War Memorial Gardens.**



## Riau Islands Trip - Malayan Volunteers Group

Thurs 16 Feb 2012

Liz Moggie, Frans Duiniveld, Edda and Rufus de Silva, Asalina Yunus and Imogen Holmes met at Tanah Merah Ferry terminal. We took the 1820 ferry and arrived at Tanjung Pinang, Bintan Island, Indonesia about 1 ½ hours later. Clocks were put forward 1 hour. Two Customs officers with Labrador dogs sniffed around us. Darwin, Liz's Indonesian son in law met us and our cases were stowed into the back of a car and we walked along dark and dingy streets and alleys, poorly lit, along a walkway between wooden houses over the sea to a seafood restaurant. We enjoyed steamed tilapia, kang kong, mixed vegetables, prawn fritters and Bintang beer. More alleys busy with many motorcycles. It had been raining heavily and there were a few puddles to negotiate. Down some steep steps to board a sampan.

Dark and tricky disembarking and embarking a large dive vessel called Bintan Explorer. We have a crew of 6 with 4 owners and friends. The Captain is dark, rugged and comes from Lembatan Island east of Flores. There are 7 of us, a total on board of 17, 12 men and 5 women. We boarded at the stern an area with bench seats around. Through to the galley and kitchen section which had a bench seat along one side with narrow table. Opposite was a large counter for laying out food. At one end beneath the counter was a sliding cupboard door which led to the engine room full of rather rusty looking engines. Door from the galley down 6 steep steps to an air conditioned dormitory cabin with 6 berths and 3 alcoves with 4 berth cabins. Each berth had 'sun and moon' patterned curtains. Imogen and I had one four berth cabin. Bottom sheet and rock hard pillow, small thermal blanket and soft towel provided. 2 loos with wash hand basins in a small room between the stern and dining area. No seats on loos, salt water constantly flowing into a big plastic tong in the corner with dipper for flushing. Hose for showering. From the stern there were steps of differing heights up to the top deck which had tables, chairs and benches and a higher platform with a small door for access to the prow.



Donned sarong and had a cursory wash upstairs and attempted to climb into my top berth. It was a long way up. With much giggling and pushing from Imogen arrived in my space. Small windows at the head of our berths and along our bulkhead so with head on pillow much to view.



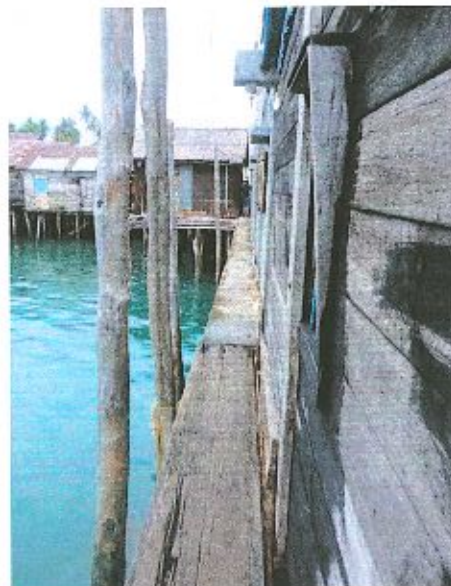


Fri 17 Feb 2012

0340 engines roared into life and we were off on the high tide. 0505 rain lashing on my window woke me. Could not get down the 2 rungged ladder at the end of the berth. It was very high. Tried every which way. Eventually 0530 swung down by holding the ledge between Imogen's bunk and mine and stretching my leg fully down to get my toes on the wooden edge of the lower bunk to descend. Challenging. Dark and cloudy outside but newish moon. One of the crew with a torch was peering out at the stern presumably checking depths. The boat cut under the bridge between Rempang and Galang, across Selat Gombol to Moro on Sungei Bawah.

Breakfast 3 small pesang mas and 2 cups of inky black, very strong coffee.

Tied up at Moro, Sungei Bawah jetty, climbed up steep ladder and walked along a narrow 18 inch plank walkway with wooden hut on one side and water on the other, quite high up from sea level.



Amazing feature were large concrete block houses which had rows of holes for swifts for the collection of their nests. A thriving and lucrative business. There was a constant twittering which was electronic to entice the birds to come and build their nests.

Lots of bicycles some with rattan panniers hanging across them with bigger areas each side for carrying goods and many brightly coloured Japanese Honda and Kawasaki motorcycles. Poor main street quite dirty. Picked up a car and were driven up a rutted coast road through kampongs. Stopped at a large Bhuddist temple on high hill. Moro seemed fairly primitive with rubbish everywhere under the seaside houses hoping for high tide to sweep out the rubbish. Many prison blockhouse/towers for the swifts.

Left 1145 along Selat Durian. 1205 past Durian promontory where on the escape route 2 men were left to assist escaping refugees in Feb 1942.

Lunch: soup with veg and small bird's eggs, steamed ikan, sweet & sour chicken and pesang mas.



Motored awhile and had a siesta. Went ashore at Tanjong Batu and walked the town. Some old Dutch colonial bungalows.



Stopped and talked to schoolchildren in the square practising for a concert. They were chatty and friendly. Boys put their foreheads on my hand after shaking hands. A beautiful gesture. We stopped at a stall for a kopi susu and chat with the locals.

Dinner: fried chicken, sardine curry, veg soup. Fresh sweet pineapple and watermelon.

Happy hour and we sat around on our top deck and recounted our life stories and association with the Malayan Volunteers Group. Liz and I had only met last August and discussed the possibility of this Riau trip and we said 'come on let us do it'.



Sat 18 Feb 2012

Left Tg. Batu around 0130. Fairly rough around 0200 crossing open sea. Alarm at 0600 for us all. Strong black kopi with condensed milk sitting on the stern. Lovely clear sky with a pinky dawn.

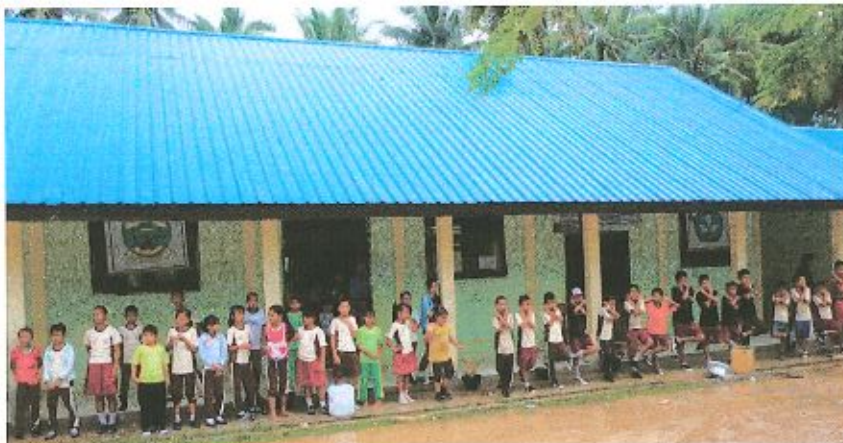
0700 storm approaching.

Approached and went right around Pompong Island which is steep and wooded. Coconut grove at one spot. Some fishing traps. Bengku Island in the distance. 0730 storm approaching with a very black sky.



Breakfast: coffee, toast and selai nanas – pineapple jam - and pesang mas.

0800 lots of islands with mist on mountains. Still raining. There are terrific rips and currents between the islands. Ashore at Tanjong Biru, Temiang Island, Lingga. Walked on a winding cement path through kampong. Children were being punished outside a school. A line of boys arms crossed, holding their ears and standing on one leg. 1000 sailed on.



1135 we must be going over the equator about now

1145 lunch: soup with very green leafy veg, carrot, cauliflower, whole fish with belimbings and veg on top – very sour. Egg and veg omelette, fried rice and chicken. Fungus in soup and vermicelli.



Stopped at Senayang Island during the morning where we had to wait while our Captain registered with the Harbourmaster.



We walked through the village and there were lots of chickens, ducks and cats. At one house with colourful tiled steps the owner was proud to show us a cat with a third ear.



This is where Imogen's father Captain Kirkwood of the Royal Indian Medical Service tended Janet Lim.

Going through islands of Bakung and Lingga around eastern side to Buton on coast from Diak town. Entered at 1430 and at 1500 through strait with Pulau Dasi on left and fishing village of Kelit on right. Followed the western coast of Lingga.



1715 making for a large coral bank and in distance on horizon was an enormous bauxite barge. Scraped and bumped over the coral and had to go astern for a bit. 1800 very tricky and slow approach to Buton arriving just before dark. A very fast ferry came in and we had to adjust our mooring to accommodate it. The ferry tied up alongside and left sometime during the night.

Very long covered concrete jetty. Fishing nets cast out at various points along the jetty and fisher folk also using lines to catch tiny fish without bait (to feed their chickens). Steps down at various points for small sampans to unload and load foot passengers. Motorcycles used the jetty too and there were many.

Set off in 2 cars at 0830 after a huge leap up onto the jetty. Lots of planted nipah palms (for attap) on the way. Stopped at Linggam Cahaya a fantastic museum full of old Malay artefacts. Antiques were collected from people on the island. Dutch, Chinese and willow pattern china. Beautiful porcelain. Malay keris and costumes. A fine entrance path lined with old jars and ground orchids. There is a strong association with the Sultanate of Johore.

Crops on the island used to be gambier (for tanning leather) and pepper. Visited site of the old Istana Damnah ruins with a fine squat loo on a pedestal at the back and a plunge pool. Across the road was a modern replica of the old palace with pictures, silk hangings and a throne dais. A reception house at the back with an unusual forked path. This is where the ministers used to interview supplicants. Went on in the car up a rough laterite road and then climbed up a fairly steep and stony hill to the old Bukit Cening Fort with old Dutch cast iron cannons from VOC - Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie – Dutch East India company.





Unusual tall bush with white berries on it and a lovely pitcher plant with several flowers. Onboard at 1130, chugged slowly through channel – made a bish on the coral and bumped around and had to go astern.

Lunch: bechoon, omelette cake with curried veg inside, fish, veg soup and melon.

Arrived Singkep 1345, walked through Dabo town. A few bird towers. A fine new white mansion. Lots of cats and dogs. Durians, dukus and mata kuching for sale. Extremely steep hill so Frans hailed a motorcycle and I went up on the back of it followed by the others. Reached the large Dabo hospital on the top of the hill. We spent quite a long time looking around finding the older part of the hospital at the back. Looking up at one of the tiled corridors at the rear we saw that the tiles were the original ones made in Marseilles. Imogen took an enormous tumble, luckily on to the grass. Thought she was going to end up in the hospital where her father had done such sterling work during the war caring for internees. There was a pleasant garden at the back with a fountain, a lovely place for convalescence. Across the road were bungalows which must have been used by hospital staff and the bigger one used by the Dutch administrator. Azlina found an old Indonesian lady with a beautiful face who had a kopi stall where we enjoyed good coffee. Could not obtain the miracle face cream. Wandering down the steep hill there were old colonial Dutch bungalows with big gardens on each side of the road and now looking a bit neglected.



At the bottom of the hill we came upon a stall selling Apam Baleh, a pancake, cooked in a mould and filled with crushed peanuts and sugar, served piping hot. Strolled on into the town and Frans stopped at the durian stall negotiated for a nice buah and we all had some. Very strong with a lingering taste. We burped our way back to our kapal observed by a very large crowd on the jetty who enjoyed whizzing up and down the jetty on their motorcycles. One cycle had 2 adults and 3 children on board. The town was not going to miss viewing us eating our dinner. Even small babies were brought along for the ride.

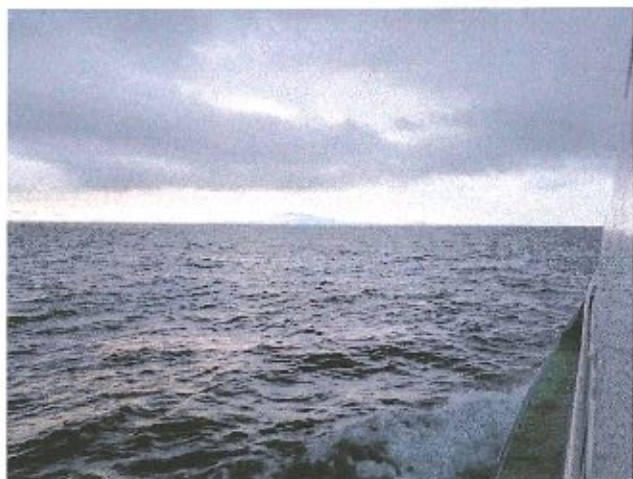




Dinner: veg soup – every soup was different – prawns, fried chicken and potato balls. Of course a big thermos of rice with each meal. Discovered a sweet cordial made from passion fruit – Markisa. Late to bed at 2100 and we left the jetty at 2230. Nice to sleep with the diesels thundering away.

## Mon 20 Feb 2012

Rained a lot during the night. 0500 woken with flashing lightning and the boat wallowing around in a roughish sea. Big tanker on horizon and land in the distance. At 0710 engines were slowed right down and we gathered at the stern while I strewed heather for all those lost on the Tandjong Pinang especially Alexander Brown father of Valerie and Delphine, grandfather of Ann and Tessa; Penelope Landon, mother of June and grandmother of Jeanie and David. I said a prayer for all those souls lost having read through the passenger list earlier. We took photos. One of the passengers was a Mrs. Howe an Australian cake shop owner of GH cafe, Battery Road who gave cake making lessons at YWCA.



0835 passed Tg. Ular lighthouse.

5 small ships and a car ferry. Sheeting down with rain. Arrived Muntok on Banka Island and tied up alongside 2 Timah tugs at jetty. Immigration at 1025 and the very young and smartly uniformed Health Officer examined all of us, stethoscope on our chests and torch into our eyes.

1045 had an Emping – looks like a prawn cracker but made of a fruit called Melinjau.

1245 lunch: fish curry, varied veg soup, chicken, papaya and melon.



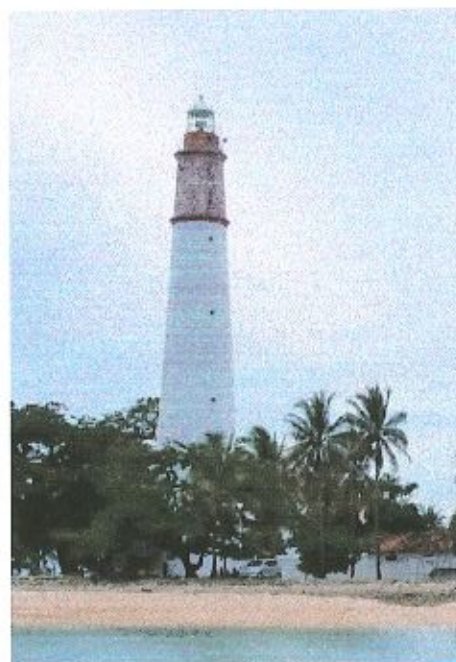
Very difficult getting across the two vessels and up on to the wharf. Walked up a hill but it was not the right one as it lead to the compost area and some official drove up and corrected us. Back down and up another hill and we walked and walked. It felt like 3 miles. Overcast, oppressive and hot. Police cruised by and then some authority who needed our names and nationalities. A gentleman came by and said that Muhd. Rizki was still at a meeting. Whilst waiting on the road we discovered we were in front of the town's murtabak stall. A young Indian fisherman who spoke very good English had a long chat with us. Opposite there were rambutan trees and an avocado tree. A second car came and took us through the large and sprawling town. We passed a sign which said 'Jagan Bwang Sampah Disini' which amused some by being deliberately misunderstood.





On to the waterfront where a lot of the women and children from the shipwrecked Vyner Brooke came ashore. We were shown the buildings they were kept in. One where the English previously kept their horses.

Further inland there was a cinema where prisoners were also kept. We were then driven to the Kalian lighthouse where the memorial in a gated enclosure is dedicated to all the Australian nurses.



I saw Mavis Allgrove's name as E.M. Hannah as she then was. Issued with life jackets we boarded two motorised sampans and banded our way for about 20 minutes to a beautiful beach. Approaching I saw Tg. Ular lighthouse. The beach is Pantai Radji or Telok Ingeris (English Beach) as the locals call it.



We were shown the area where the men were bayoneted. There was a large fresh water stream flowing down to the sea. Further on we came to the place where the nurses were told to walk into the sea to be shot. This is where Vivian Bullwinkle survived her gunshot wound and eventually met up with soldier Kingsley in the jungle. Some big boulders on the beach reminiscent of Penang and Batu Ferringhi. The remains of those bayoneted or shot have never been found which raises the question why?



Liz led us all in the WW1 prayer for the fallen by Laurence Binyon:  
They shall not grow old as we that are left  
Age shall not wear them nor the years condemn  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them.  
We will remember them.

1720 returned in our sampans, getting wet with spray but the return journey was not so bumpy. Driven to the Catholic cemetery where 25 bodies of internees have been buried in one grave. They had been exhumed from the area where Pertamina petrol station now exists. There are still old Dutch graves at the back. Sadly the local government did not register the names when bodies were reinterred.



Imogen said something ran over her feet on the second night at sea and was able to confirm it when she went downstairs during happy hour and saw ratty scampering across the floor.

Dinner: fried chicken, sweet and sour tofu, veg soup, watermelon.

Apparently we have been extremely lucky with the weather as this area around Banka Island can be very rough. The Captain would not go around the Pangkal Pinang side because of the weather, fortunately we wanted to go only to Muntok.

#### **Tues 21st Feb 2012**

Alongside Timah wharf with 3 Timah tugs/barges. No rat during the night. 0600 up a fine clear day.

Breakfast: Ubi (sweet potato), boiled eggs, watermelon, toast.

We all made an effort with clothes for today's presentation and lunch with the Administrator. 0900 Met Muhammad Rizki, Senior Manager Metallurgy of Timah. Driven to Timah's spacious rest house and served Kuih Kuci triangular glutinous rice with slightly sweet chopped chicken in centre, otak otak, Apam Boleh, Kuih Pelita/kapal, a rectangular boat of banana leaf with white coconut jelly inside.

In April 1945 all prisoners moved from Muntok to Berlailau in Sumatra. The internees were released by the Dutch. The Japanese first came to Muntok Feb 14 1942 and bombed the ships Gian Bee, Mata Hari and Vyner Brooke.

1200 went in buses to beautiful palace of Bupati, Regent of Muntok (elected).

Anthony Pratt and Judy Balcombe were garlanded and we were escorted by ceremonial costumed people, the men holding tall umbrellas and the ladies with garlands on cushions. We were led to the steps. Dance of welcome by lovely girls. Very beautiful and graceful.







We were seated at round tables with pretty decorations. Speech of welcome by the Bupati and response by Anthony Pratt. Then Muhd. Rizki spoke in both Indonesian and English and said that all those whose relatives died here are now family.

Buffet lunch: beef curry rib soup – guli kedondong is an acid fruit. Sweet sour prawns, baked fish in a spicy chillie sauce, fish balls, beef satay, gadoh gadoh, fried sotong. Grapes, Lengeng – mata kuching, kway lapis, kway koci with coconut and palm sugar.

After lunch we were driven nearby to the prison which was the site of the men's camp. Anthony Pratt's father died here in 1945. The plaque was presented and placed on the new plinth. We were met by officials and shown a short way into the prison compound. I could see a durian tree in the distance.

On to the shore where some of the escaping boats landed at Kalian lighthouse. Anthony and Judy left their garlands on the memorial to the Australian Nurses.

Then to site of the women's camp with the existing well still in use. A huge crowd of villagers with their children gathered around for the plaque ceremony. A large notice board showed drawings of the women's huts. Margaret Caldicott's grandmother died at Muntok. The Bupati made a speech. He also told the village that the road would be made good. Enthusiastic children sang the Indonesian national anthem. The women's camp covered an area of 5 acres. Only objects still remaining are 2 wells and the kitchen concrete platform. Margaret Caldicott spoke.



Returned to Timah resthouse for tea and watched a documentary film of Vivian Bullwinkle. Margaret Caldicott showed us pictures of her family in the early days in Singapore and her mother's sad letter to her father from the camp at Berlalu telling him of his wife's death at Muntok.

We were each presented with a Timah t-shirt, a Banka tin keychain and a colourful t-shirt depicting local scenes. The Bupati's wife who promotes the island's heritage and batik which is called CUAL, presented the ladies with a beautiful batik silk blouse with a typical Banka pattern.

We had dinner outside around 1900. Gadoh gadoh, prawns, fish and a sweet cakey like pudding made with cheese. Watermelon.

Muhd. Rizki took me to the dedongdong tree outside and presented me with a branch with some fruit on it. We had been given a wonderful welcome with delicious food and taken on a most interesting tour of the wartime sites. Everyone wanted to chat. A memorable day indeed.



There were planks ready for us to walk from jetty to the first barge but an enormous jump down and Franz helped us. We left the Timah wharf at 1540.

**Wed 22 Feb 2012**

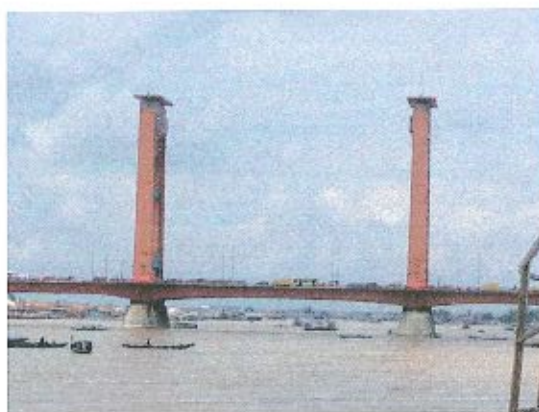
0600 we were in the mouth of the Moesi river with muddy water.

Breakfast – fatter bananas, selai nanas (pineapple jam) with toast. One of the crew poured himself a coffee from the thermos and added 4 huge tablespoons of sugar. More sugar than coffee.

0720 – lots of water hyacinth in the water. Trees growing in the water but not mangroves. An occasional padi field. 0810 still chugging up river. Large ship coming up behind us. Several Banka ferries going down river passed us. Increasing small boat traffic. 0930 passed Global Triton registered in Panama. On left bank an oil terminal ? Pladjoc.



1020 approaching more oil storage tanks. Lots of shipping, small boats, houses, both sides. 1050 we chugged under Ampera bridge with stacks of traffic going over it and approached wharf.



Moved off and back under bridge and then 11.15 tied up alongside 2 tongkangs to register with harbour office. 12 cookie came and gave us a scratch lunch of veg and fish.

12.45 very hot and still waiting.

12.45 we left our kapal with fond farewells to our stalwart crew and climbed over a boat and got into 2 taxis. Went over Ampera Bridge and saw our boat tied up alongside.

There are 1 ½ million people in Palembang which is the second largest city after Medan in Sumatra.

1340 still in the traffic looking for the hotel. 1445 arrived at the Hotel Arista (which changed its name from Horison a few weeks ago causing the confusion).



Lots of durians around. We went to the market by the river. Filthy with rubbish everywhere and crowded. Exceedingly hot. We walked around trying to find batiks but all were of poor quality.



**Thurs 23 Feb 2012**

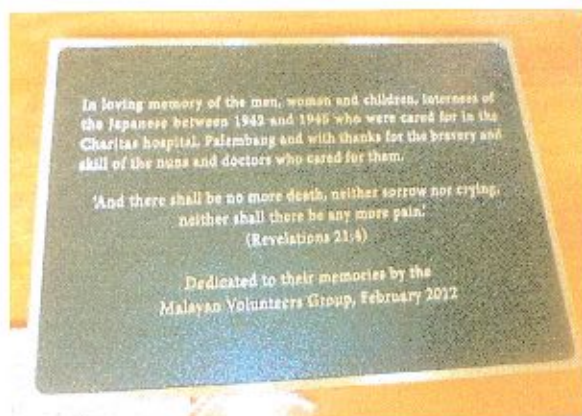
Sumptuous breakfast provided by Arista Hotel. Every type of European food, Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese and Thai. Eggs, omelettes, pancakes, waffles, breads, croissants, muffins. Fresh fruit – papaya, pineapple, rambutans, watermelon. Fresh orange and guava juice. A special blender to make thick papaya juice. Very good Indonesian coffee.



We hired a car and our driver Arun Khan (HP 0815 32984394) was most obliging and pleasant. He was smartly dressed in a batik shirt and wore white elongated shoes with squared off toes. I noticed many Indonesian men favoured these long toed shoes.

To Tg. Tumpang textile museum Fikri Kolcksi, Jl. Kiranggo Wiro Sentiko No. 500 Rt. 12-30 Ilir Tel: (0711) 315571. We watched several girls making songket. Had fun looking at the batik and songket and purchased several sarongs and small items.

Next stop Charitas Hospital where hanging in the entrance is a plaque from the Army, Navy and Air Force of the United Kingdom in gratitude to the Mother Superior and Sisters of Charitas Convent who gave so much help during the period 1942-1945 to prisoners of war. We met Dr. Yanto and were taken around the hospital, shown old pictures of the hospital and the heavy bronze plaque which Judy Balcombe on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group had presented the day before. Mother Pawli, head of Charitas Foundation came to greet us. Sister Melanie is the head of the congregation of Franciscan Sisters. Dr. Yanto and his assistant then took us across the road – where we took our lives into our hands negotiating the traffic – to St. Joseph's Convent. The large and beautiful church was rebuilt in 2011 as the old one had succumbed to termites. A statue of the Virgin had a serene Indonesian face.



Lunch at a local restaurant – kway teow, soto ayam, bihun goreng.

Stopped and visited a zoo Punto Kayu Park in parkland setting. Small elephant being ridden by his keeper. Several monkeys and the wah wahs were whooping. A crocodile, hamsters and geese. Said farewell to Rufus, Edda and Azlina at the airport and then visited Carrefour Hypermarket for Imogen to buy a case. Noticed they sold Lays crisps, Indonesian style. All enjoyed a Magnum ice cream.



We passed an interesting T-SHIRT shop. Hordes of motorcycles driven by men and women weaving in and around the cars. Dextrous drivers as we never saw an accident.

After dinner we met Frans' friends in the lobby who showed us 2 antique sonket sarongs. We were then driven to the home of the dealer, quite a long journey. The sitting room, ante room and dining room were filled with old chests, Dutch and Chinese furniture, Dutch lamps and cupboards full to the brim with porcelain, metal ware, neilo and baskets. Most of the porcelain and particularly the trade beads, were dug up from the river. We were engrossed and surprised to find it was after midnight when Imogen phoned from the hotel to enquire our whereabouts.

#### Friday 24 Feb 2012

Same car and driver and 11.45 dropped Imogen at the airport. Stopped at a rattan shop where a great deal is imported from Cheribon on north coast of Java. Good strong furniture. Interesting large woven food covers in pleasing patterns, round and oblong. Some big oval clocks on the wall in a bronze colour and intricately patterned. Mosques crowded for Friday prayers and the Imams were preaching their sermons broadcasted by loudspeakers.



Museum shut for lunch so we walked along to the old Dutch Fort with angled slit apertures for slim muskets. Unusually the high and steeply sloped walls above the angled openings ended in an ordinary high wall on both sides of the fort's gates. Guard in the 'piket' denied us entry as it is a military establishment. One could see the main house inside with 2 large cannons on the front lawn.

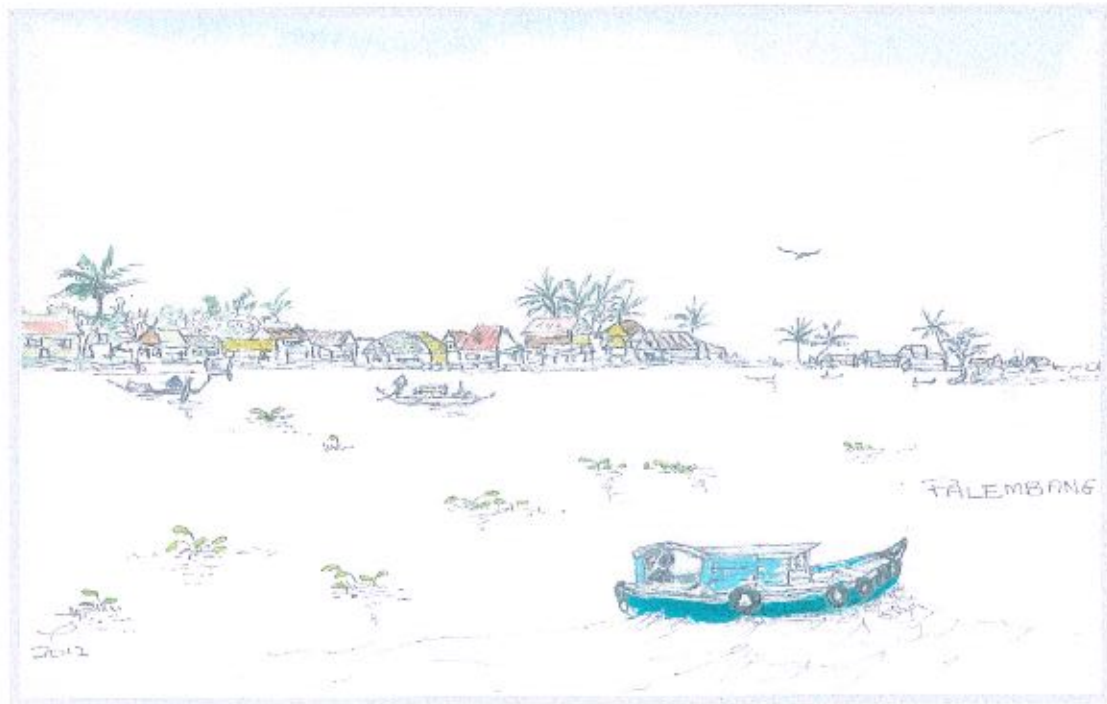


The Museum was interesting and full of artefacts, costumes, porcelain and keris but unbearably hot. A wonderful unusually shaped Chinese pottery tong at the back. On to stalls selling antique books. Liz then departed for KL and Frans and I enjoyed a pleasant evening and dinner together.

#### Sat 25 Feb 2012

Frans and I breakfasted at 0630 and left for the airport where we parted, he for Djakarta and Bandung and me for Singapore.







## RETURN TO MUNTOK (FEBRUARY 2012)

By Judy Balcombe

In April 2011, I visited Palembang in Sumatra and Muntok on Bangka Island with Mr. Anthony Pratt. We each wished to find out what had happened to our family members, Anthony's Father and my Grandfather, who had been civilian internees of the Japanese and who had both died in Muntok.

The story of our first journey was printed in Apa Khabar last year. On that trip, we visited the Charitas Hospital in Palembang, where some internees were able to be treated and also found the location of the civilian internee camps there. We then travelled to Muntok and saw the jail where the civilian men had been interned and the village which had been the site of the civilian women's camp.

A difficult question was always 'What had become of the civilian graves in Muntok?' We each had a photo of our relative's grave, believed to have been taken in the Dutch cemetery in Muntok by Dutch military officers after the war.

The East Indies Camp Archives website has a map of old Muntok, showing the Dutch cemetery.

William McDougall, the American journalist who had been interned in the camps and who became a Catholic Priest after the War, described the funeral processions and the location of burials at Muntok very clearly. Further information was gained from our friend and MVG member Neal Hobbs who was interned from the age of 17 to 21 and now lives in Queensland. He had been a member of the burial groups.

We thus knew where the civilian men had been buried and believed that the women, first buried in a Chinese cemetery near the women's camp at Muntok or in a nearby rubber plantation, had been moved to the Dutch cemetery after the war.

The Dutch military had prepared a very neat cemetery after the War, with the graves having concrete surrounds and a clearly-named wooden cross.

Advertisements had been placed in Singapore newspapers, offering copies of the photos to bereaved family members.

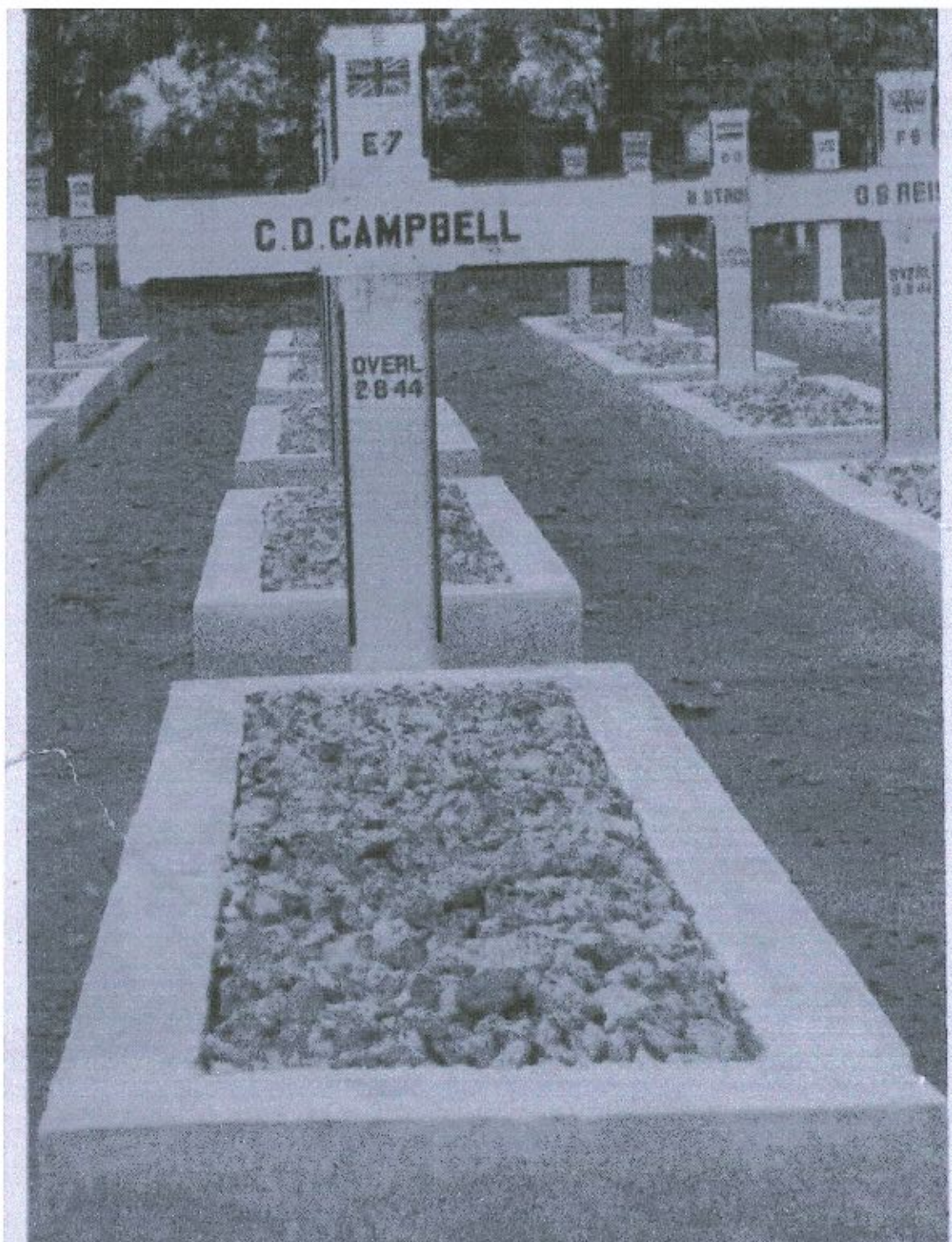
### The Straits Times, 9 November 1948, Page

#### DUTCH PICTURES 5 OF WAR GRAVES

The Dutch War Graves Authorities have sent to Singapore photographs of the graves of civilian internees who were buried in Muntok Cemetery, Banka Island, Netherlands East Indies.

The photographs may be claimed by relatives, who should address their inquiries to Army Graves Registration. Nee Soon, Singapore.





( Photo of my grandfather's grave, with many others, including Gordon Reis, in the Dutch cemetery, Muntok circa 1948)

In the early 1960's, the Indonesian government asked the Dutch and British to consolidate the many war cemeteries. The Dutch moved their military and civilian graves to Jakarta but the British moved only their military and a very few civilian graves.



This information was confirmed to Anthony Pratt and to me by the Netherlands War Graves Foundation. Correspondence between former internee Mrs Shelagh Lea, whose Mother died in Muntok, and the British government describes this sad situation in detail.

Mrs Lea wrote to the Foreign Office for many years until 1968 when she was finally told that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission had no responsibility for civilian graves. This correspondence can be seen at the National Archives at Kew, United Kingdom.

Residents in Muntok told us last year that their houses, in the location of the old Dutch cemetery, were built in 1965.

After much investigation, we now believe that the remaining civilian graves in Muntok lie beneath houses built in 1965 and the Pertamina petrol station built in 1981. A separate group of graves, thought to be those of 25 civilian women, was uncovered during the excavation for the petrol station and was moved to a nearby Catholic cemetery.

Although our heartache was eased by the warmth and new friendships we found in Muntok, we still felt we would like to place memorials there to the internees and particularly those who had died and had no marker.

In addition to the internees, many thousands of people fleeing Singapore had been bombed and died in the Bangka Straits. Clear records were not able to be kept but it is estimated that between 4,000 and 5,000 people died in this way.

There is a memorial at Muntok to the nurses who were shot on Radji beach, to the nurses who drowned before reaching shore, died in captivity or managed to survive. Another group of civilians was killed on Radji beach and Vivian Bowden, the Australian Trade Commissioner, was killed on reaching Muntok.

Of the civilian internees, records show that 270 men and 78 women died in Muntok camps. Others died en route to the last camp at Belalau rubber plantation near Loeboek Lingggau in Sumatra and during internment there. We understand that those who died at Belalau were later moved to Jakarta.

It is not known why the British civilian graves were left at Muntok, as the Dutch moved both their military and civilian graves. Despite heartfelt letters to the British government over a 20 year period, Mrs Lea, the former internee whose Mother died in Muntok, was told that Bangka Island was remote and that the initially impeccable cemetery prepared by the Dutch military had become overgrown and too difficult to maintain.

This was the situation as we found it last April, not ideal but not able to be changed. We were very fortunate, however, to find that the people of Muntok are very interested in all aspects of the history of the island. Our friends in Muntok, Mr Mohammad Rizki, manager of the Timah tin mining company and members of the Muntok Heritage Community were planning a museum to be placed in the lovely old Tinwinning building opposite the jail. They



were happy for us to place plaques in Muntok, to remember the civilian internees. At last the civilians would be able to have a memorial.

It was decided that a plaque would be placed at the Charitas Hospital in Palembang – there was already one in place to thank the hospital for its care of the British forces in 1942 and 1943. Until the hospital was closed down by the Japanese in 1943, some internees were able to be treated there. Some were admitted for several weeks and helped to recover from dysentery, which would otherwise have killed them.

Sometimes hospital staff arranged for husbands and wives to be admitted from the camps at the same time – this was often the only way that each knew the other was still alive. Nuns also helped to smuggle letters and medicines back into the camps.

Finally, the hospital was forcibly closed down and the doctors and staff arrested and tortured.

Other plaques were planned for Muntok, to remember the evacuees who died at sea, the interned men, women and children and with a further plaque for the museum, to remember all who had suffered there.

The Malayan Volunteers Group very kindly offered to fund the plaques – many of those who drowned in the Bangka Straits, who died on reaching shore or who were interned in the camps were members of the Malayan Volunteers or were their families.

On this return journey to Palembang and Muntok in February 2012, Anthony Pratt and I were very lucky to be joined by Margie and Stephen Caldicott. Margie is the daughter of Mrs Shelagh Lea, the lady who had written to the British government for 20 years, trying to maintain the Muntok cemetery or to place a memorial. It was wonderful that after so many years, the late Mrs Lea's wishes could finally be recognised.

We met in Singapore and attended the lunch at the Bark Café at Changi Museum and the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary service at the Kranji War Ceremony with the Malayan Volunteers Group and members of the Badan Warisan, concerned with Malaysian Heritage. A group of these friends were travelling by boat to Palembang, following the path of the evacuees and we arranged to meet again in Muntok to present the plaques.

There followed 2 days in Singapore, waiting for the flight to Palembang. The time passed very quickly, exchanging stories, pictures and photographs. Margie had brought a package of papers showing a detailed plan of the Muntok Dutch cemetery, lists of those buried there and photographs of a semi-circular wall behind the graves. There were later photos of the graves in disrepair. From these we would be able to tell roughly where our family and friends had been buried.

We flew to Palembang on Saturday February 18<sup>th</sup> and took the memorial plaque to the Charitas Hospital. We met with the Archbishop of Palembang, the Hospital Director and the



kind and gracious nuns. We thanked the Hospital for its care of the internees in 1942 and 1943 and asked that those who died could be remembered in their prayers.

We toured the hospital and saw its modern and up-to-date facilities as well as a beautiful museum made with small dolls, telling the history of the Nun's order. We also learnt that Charitas runs 6 hospitals for the poor in rural areas.

While in Palembang, we were met by Putu, an employee of the Timah tin company in Muntok, his wife Komang and little daughter. We visited the site of the women's internment camp at Talang Semoet, and could match the streets shown on the old East Indies Camp Archives map with a modern-day street map. Many of the older-style Dutch houses which formed the first Women's camp are still in place.



(example of an older Dutch house with garage, in Bukit Besar, near the area of the women's camp, Palembang)

It seems that a small hotel, 'Wisma Maharani,' now stands on the site of garage No 9, which housed Margie's Mother, Grandmother and a group of missionaries, including Margaret Dryburgh.

While in camp, Margaret Dryburgh transcribed beautiful classical music scores, which the women were able to sing together in a vocal orchestra. Even though the British and Dutch



women did not speak one another's languages, they were able to transcend the hardship and squalor of the camps and feel their spirits soar free beyond the camp walls.

Men working at Wisma Maharani surprised us by reporting that they had seen the ghosts of women in the hotel. They were quite definite about this and had goose bumps on their arms when speaking to us. We later heard a similar story in Muntok.

The site of the men's camp is nearby, now mainly comprising modern houses. The area was known as **Poentjak Sekoening (which means 'Golden Peak')**. We tried to imagine the working parties of men walking from the Palembang jail to build their new home of atap (palm leaf) huts. It is recorded that the women stood on the roofs of their Dutch houses and waved to the men and that on their first Christmas, the men slowed their walk to hear the women singing to them. The men reciprocated by singing 'O Come All Ye Faithful' as they walked past the women the following day.

When the men were moved back into Muntok Prison in September 1943, the women and children were moved out of the Dutch houses into this atap camp.

After this, our friends took us to see the grim exterior of the Palembang jail which housed the civilian men until they moved into the atap camp. Nurses Margot Turner, Mary Cooper and Jennie Macalister, Olga Neubrunner and Dr Holweg's wife were imprisoned in the jail without charges from April 1943 for 6 months. The local criminals, murderers and thieves tried to help the women and sometimes passed them a banana, black coffee or a piece of cake, at great risk to themselves.





(Palembang jail)

We next visited the Museum Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin 2 next to the Benteng Kuto Besak fort, both on the Moesi river. We greeted our friend the museum guide who had helped us to find the camps sites in 2011.

Next we visited our friend's parents' home in Pladjoe. This is a suburb of Palembang where the oil refineries are situated and where large tankers on the Moesi river transport the oil overseas. In 1942, allied planes tried to bomb the refineries and destroy the oil. Groups of internees, including Anthony Pratt's Father, were sent by the Japanese to construct an airfield. The area was very low-lying and unhealthy and several men died there from dysentery.

On this visit, we were very warmly welcomed by our hosts, a Hindu family and offered a wonderful traditional lunch, including a large fish from their pond. We then drove into the countryside to visit other family members and were shown their Hindu temple and traditional wedding furniture.

The following day we rose early and drove to the docks at Boom Baru to catch the Express Bahari ferry to Muntok. As we watched the sun rise over the Moesi river, I am sure we all



thought of the very different journeys our families had made on the river to and from the camps on Bangka Island. This boat was comfortable - we travelled in soft seats with air-conditioning, watching a DVD and given a lunch box. The journey took 3 hours rather than the 12 hours endured by the prisoners. Nevertheless, as we stood in the engine-room, watching the island approach, our families and friends were very much in our minds.

Margie's Mother and Grandmother, Shelagh and Mary Brown had been on board the 'SS Vyner Brooke', thought to have carried 241 passengers, of whom 135 were bombed and drowned. Mrs and Miss Brown were pulled onto a raft and eventually reached the shore. They sheltered in a pig-stye until taken into the Muntok cinema and then to the coolie lines.

As we neared Muntok, we could see the lighthouse and remembered the nurses from the 'SS Vyner Brooke', 22 of whom landed on Radji beach and whom, with the exception of Vivian Bullwinkel, were shot dead in the sea. They joined the men bayoneted earlier and the nurses and civilians who drowned before they could reach the shore.

Margot Turner was a British nurse who had survived the bombing of the 'SS Kuala' which carried about 700 people, near Pom Pom Island. She was rescued by 'SS Tanjong Pinang', only to be bombed again near Bangka Island. She was the sole survivor of a raft carrying women and children and reached Muntok very near death.

My Grandfather, Colin Douglas Campbell, a rubber planter from Telok Anson, was on board the 'Giang Bee'. On board, volunteers were asked to man shifts, shovelling coal to drive the boat as fast as possible – it was their only chance of escape. But the ship was also hit, leaving only 70 survivors of 293 people on board.

There were not enough lifeboats and the ropes of some were damaged, tipping women and children into the sea. Those in a lifeboat or lifejacket or holding onto debris watched as the 'Giang Bee' sank with more than 100 people still on board.

Anthony Pratt's Father, Donald Frederick Pratt, had been on board the 'SS Mata Hari', with 483 people on board. Brave Captain Carston tried to avoid the Japanese by sailing close to the shore of Sumatra but the ship was captured and taken into Muntok harbour. The passengers were taken into Muntok but allowed to take one suitcase each with them. The captain also opened the food stores and distributed all the tinned food on board. The food and clothes were very useful for the other shipwrecked internees who had lost all their possessions.

We thought of the 'Li Wo', the 'Mary Rose' and all the other vessels which brought evacuees to Muntok to their fate.

Nearing Muntok, on a sunny day, with blue skies and with smiling faces around, we nevertheless thought of the tragedies that had occurred here 70 years ago.





**(Muntok lighthouse)**

We were taken to the Timah Tin Company rest house and met our host Muhammad Rizki, the Muntok Heritage Community members and the Malayan Volunteers Group members and members of Badan Warisan and friends who had sailed from Singapore, travelling in the path of the evacuees.

We were taken in cars to the home of the Regent of Bangka Belitung, Ust.H. Zuhri M. Syazali. We realised we were in a convoy of vehicles, travelling very slowly and with indicators flashing, a true funeral procession. On reaching the Regent's home, we were escorted under decorative umbrellas, to the accompaniment of drums and Indonesian dancers. The Regent greeted us and speeches were made, followed by a lovely lunch.

From here, we drove to the Muntok jail, where the men had been interned and where so very many had died in both the jail and adjoining coolie lines. A brick plinth had been built outside the jail to house the plaque dedicated to the male internees. The first plaque was thus put in place.





(Presenting the plaque for the civilian men and boys at the Muntok jail. Judy Balcombe, Anthony Pratt, the Regent of Bangka Belitung and Jail Superintendent)

From here we proceeded to the village which was the site of the former women's and children's camp. 20 families now live here and they came to greet us at the tiled plinth which was to hold the plaque. The Regent spoke to them, saying that all our families had been in Muntok at the same time and thus we are all one family now. He asked the people to take good care of the plaque for us.



(The plaque to the women and children in the village where the camp was situated.)



The only remaining structure from the old camp is a curved stone well. It is now dry but is being preserved for historical purposes. We felt we would like to help the village and learning that they now walk to collect fresh water, decided we will contribute to the project to build them a new well. It will be good to feel there is a continuing link with Muntok and the people of the village.



(The original well from the women's camp – now dry but will be preserved. Muhammad Rizki, Margie Caldicott, Anthony Pratt (behind) and the Regent Ust. H. Zuhri M. Syazali)

The last plaque will be placed at the new Tinwinning building museum when the museum is completed in November. Scaffolding is in place to begin cleaning the walls and the architectural drawings show a fine and very pleasing complex.

The following day, we visited the site of the former Dutch Cemetery. This was the burial place of very early Dutch pioneers and then the male internees who died in Muntok. After 1945, the Dutch military reburied the women internees who had lain in the Chinese cemetery and the rubber plantation behind the Women's camp, here.

As mentioned above, in 1948, the Dutch had constructed neat graves with a concrete surround for each internee and made very clear wooden crosses bearing each internee's name

Margie's mother Shelagh, a former internee and whose mother had died in Muntok had written to the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, the Foreign Office and the British Ambassador in Jakarta for over 20 years, asking for the Muntok cemetery to be maintained. Initially, the reply was favourable, with plans for a tidy cemetery, with graves planted with verbenas. As time passed and the graves fell into disrepair, the location was said to be too



remote and the project too expensive. Eventually, it was concluded that the Commonwealth War Graves Commission had no responsibility for civilian graves.

In the meantime, in 1961, the Netherlands War Graves Foundation had moved both their military and civilian graves from Muntok and the British military graves had also been moved. This process had been observed by local residents, including children who had played in the cemetery. They described to us the exhumations, with remains being placed into separate bags, each labelled with a metal tag with the person's name. This activity doubtless contributed to the falling down of the remaining British civilian gravestones.

Margie Caldicott had brought with her lists of the people buried in Muntok cemetery, both alphabetical and by row and plot number. She also had a schematic diagram of the cemetery, corresponding to the list. In addition, she had photos showing the overgrown and derelict graves with a large semi-circular wall behind them.

As we explored the housing area behind and to the right of the Pertamina petrol station, we found the remains of the base of a curved wall situated in the ground. It was possible to gauge the expanse of the prior wall. Mr Herman, the householder, greeted us – he told us the wall had been in his front garden and that, as it was damaged, he had removed it 4 years ago. He also told us that the houses had been built there in 1965.

Mrs Herman kindly brought out seats for us and Mr Herman provided a tape measure. It was thus possible, by counting down and across on the cemetery plan, to roughly establish where particular graves had been.

We thought my Grandfather's grave had lain in the driveway of the Herman's relatives and that Anthony Pratt's Father's grave was in the same enclosure, near a wall. It was extraordinary to view the householders going about their activities, children playing and chickens pecking, just where our relatives had been laid to rest.

The local people were not oblivious of the graves, however – a man told us he had been digging near my Grandfather's probable grave and had struck wood, then had fallen into the hole. Someone nearby had found hair and teeth when digging the foundations for their house. The people were not bothered by their proximity to a graveyard although they did tell us they saw a ghost in the area. The ghost was of a tall man, dressed in regal clothes with gold buttons. In addition, he had no head.

Further measurements suggested there may be buried remains in the vacant land behind the petrol station. We also felt it is very likely that the women's graves are the remains moved to the Catholic cemetery in 1981, when the petrol station was built.

The cemetery plans show the civilian women's graves lay at the front of the cemetery, near the road. Measurements showed this was close to the location of the excavation for the petrol tanks. We were told that, on finding these remains, the builder went to the Catholic



church. The remains were placed in 3 communal graves in the Catholic cemetery, with a headstone stating that '25 English allies, killed in WW2, were reburied there in March 1981.'



(one of 3 graves containing the remains of 25 English allies, reburied in the Catholic cemetery in 1981 during construction of the Pertamina petrol station.)

The following day, we visited the Catholic church and met the Priest. He kindly telephoned to the head of administration in Pangkal Pinang but no further information was available. It is at least comforting to feel that care was taken of these remains and that they are very likely the graves of the women internees.

We also visited the house of the neighbour behind and to the left of the petrol station and saw in place some tall, shaped concrete pillars. These were seen in the old photographs as marking the edges of the cemetery and if still in their original location, define the margin of the old grave yard.

The plaques presented, friends greeted and the grave area explored, it was time to return to Palembang, Singapore and home. We boarded the ferry and took our leave, thinking all the while of the brave and true people who had lived and died here, their suffering and how their lives could have been. At least we know that they were interned with friends who tried their very best to care for them and that they did not die alone. They now lie in a warm and friendly town and will not be forgotten.



Internee W.Probyn Allen died from Blackwater fever (haemolytic malaria ) at Belalau, the final camp, on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1945. He wrote a poem to his wife, including these lines:

"My thoughts and prayers and wishes to the stars and round moon spoken,  
Are all the gifts that I can send to you for token  
Of all the joy there is between us, come what may.  
Have faith, my love, although the night is dark,  
the day will break, and peace and good will come  
to men at last."

Although the past should not be forgotten, we would like to think that good has come to Muntok now and that in the words of the Regent, we are all members of one big family.



(If any readers would like to contribute to MVG to the cost of the memorial plaques and/or to the Muntok well project in memory of friends or family, this would be very much appreciated, thank you.)



### RETRACING MY FATHER'S FOOTSTEPS IN SUMATRA

When I first read in the April 2011 edition of *Apa Khabar* that there would be a Service of Remembrance in Singapore to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, in February 2012, and a group of MBG members were planning to go, I thought it would be an ideal opportunity to do something I had had in mind for a little while. I had discovered the previous year, through the MVG, that my father has been a prisoner of war on the Pakanbaroe Railway line, about which I knew very little, but after finding a website called [www.pakanbaroe.webs.com](http://www.pakanbaroe.webs.com), I felt I would like to go there and try to find out some of the remains of the railway.

My father, Captain Patrick Kirkwood had been a doctor in the Indian Medical Service, which he joined in 1938, following in the footsteps of his own father who had been a surgeon in the IMS, serving in India, where my father was born. His first posting was in Secunderabad in 1939, but after 2 years was posted to the Asiatic Hospital on Blakan Mati (now Sentosa) and was there when Singapore fell in February 1942. He had been sent to Singapore on 13<sup>th</sup> February in a launch to deliver 2 wounded Volunteers to a hospital there. In the meantime, the hospital on Blakan Mati was flattened by Japanese bombs, so he was ordered to leave Singapore with several wounded and a medical team aboard the Red Cross launch, *Florence Nightingale*, on 15<sup>th</sup> February. They were to head for the escape route across Sumatra. It took several days to reach the Island of Senayang, where he did what he could for the wounded survivors of shipwrecks, such as the *Kuala*, taking some of them on to the more modern Dutch hospital at Dabo on the Island of Singkep in the Lingga Archipelago. He stayed there until he felt everyone was ready to leave and took the Indragiri River escape route, but by the time he arrived at Padang on 17<sup>th</sup> March, the last ship to freedom had sailed a week previously.

I had known he had been a prisoner in Sumatra in Medan as he had been mentioned in several books, "The Boat" by Walter Gibson, "Singapore to Freedom" by Oswald W. Gilmour and "Sold for Silver" by Janet Lim (referred to as Dr. Cuttwood), but I didn't know about the railway. He didn't speak about his experiences and I had been conditioned by my mother not to ask. How I wish I had.

After spending 5 days in Singapore attending the various events, ceremonies and services organized by the MVG and the Changi Museum, I joined Liz Moggie, Yvonne Wurtzburg, Frans Duiniveld, Edda de Silva, Rufus de Silva and Azlina Yunus on the wonderful boat trip through the South China Sea, following the escape route taken by the evacuees, as described by Yvonne Wurtzburg. I was following in my father's wake 70 years later.

We ended our trip in Palembang, spending 2 nights in a smart hotel, wonderfully luxurious after the rather primitive conditions aboard our boat.

We separated there, most of the others flying home, whereas I flew up to Padang, then travelled by mini-bus to Bukittinggi – a very exciting ride as the drivers are crazy – at one point we were overtaking a vehicle with a lorry overtaking a lorry coming the other way. I'm not sure how we survived that one, as my eyes were closed! The drive through the Anai valley was spectacular. After a night in Bukittinggi (spent wondering what on earth I was doing all on my own in this strange country) I had a taxi (a very sweet driver, who bought me breakfast on the way) to Padang Panjang station, where I took a train (now a tourist train which only runs on Sundays) down to Sawahlunto – the extent of the existing line. My father would have travelled on this line as a POW, after being Medical Officer on a road building project when a road was built from Blangkedjeren to Takengon in northern Atjeh. After the road was completed, the prisoners had an 85 mile march through the jungle to Kotajani and were soon after moved to Fort de Kock (Bukittinggi), whence they were taken by train to Muaro and from there by truck to Petai, Camp 14 on the Pakanbaroe Railway Line.

My journey was a pretty one, with the train more or less passing through people's back gardens – whole families were out to watch it pass, the children with their hands over their ears to protect them from the constant loud tooting. After a while, we were passing the terraced paddy fields complete with water buffaloes – very picturesque, unfortunately most of the photos I took were rather blurred.

From time to time the train slowed up and I noticed abundant fruit trees – rambutans, ducos and avocados – I longed to reach out through the window and pick them. The train passed Lake Singkarak, which was very beautiful, and arrived at Solok, where it picked up many more passengers. As usual, as a Westerner, I was the centre of attention with everyone wanting to have their photo taken with me.

My plan was to visit the beginnings of the railway built by the POWs at Muaro and to go and see the locomotive memorial at Silokek, about 15 km along the road, which follows the Indragiri River. My original idea of stomping through the jungle along the length of the railway finding old tracks had been rather knocked on the head. I had been told there was hardly anything left as all the tracks had been taken up and sold off for scrap, and the railbeds had been swallowed up by inhospitable jungle. Indonesians do not understand or are hardly interested in Colonial history or WW11 history and mainly remain ignorant as to what happened so close to their homes. Travelling alone would be dangerous in Riau as apparently



there are bandits and, without a guide, the language barrier would present a problem. After the adventures on our boat trip, I was more than happy to limit my 'pilgrimage' to one end of the line.

I had been sent a hand drawn map and information via e-mail by Jamie Farrell, whose daughter, Amanda, runs the Pakanbaroe website. Jamie had arranged my hotel at Sawahlunto, and a driver for the morning, but I was still very nervous about trying to follow the map and direct the driver with only a few words of Indonesian (the important one being '*pelan*' = 'slow') and the driver with no English. However, on the Sunday evening, a knock at my hotel door revealed an Indonesian man, with his wife, who knew my name and, after introducing himself as Sony in reasonable English and explaining he was the brother of someone who works with Jamie Farrell in Balikpapan, East Borneo, issued an invitation to their house for coffee. We walked up the road, very slowly so everyone could see they were with the 'European lady', and spent a pleasant evening with their family, our conversation halted on one occasion by the very loud Call to Prayer from the Mosque just below the house. Sony made several calls on his mobile phone and every now and then would hand the phone to me so I could talk to one of his friends. At some point, I thought I heard Sony say he would accompany me in the morning to the railway line. I made him repeat it to make sure and as so delighted I had heard right and would have company and a translator for the trip.

Sony duly turned up in the morning and our driver turned out to be the hotel desk boy who indeed spoke very little English. The car looked fairly new and was very comfortable. Sony sat in the front and took charge of the map. When we arrived at Muaro township, Sony told the driver to stop and we got out and there were some of the tracks of the original railway, built by the Dutch.

We came to a bridge over the river which had the old Dutch foundations alongside. We stopped there and I walked up the road and saw what looked like the old railway bed. Sony phoned a friend who turned up fairly soon after on a motorbike and led the way along the road which was very narrow and at places looked as though it had suffered in an earthquake, all broken up with large chunks pointing upwards. There were land slips and in places parts of the road had fallen into the Indragiri River, which we were following. Every now and again the road crossed a stream and the bridge consisted of railway sleepers (taken from the railway?), which were disintegrating, with great holes and gaps – each time I was sure we would get a tyre stuck, but we always made it. All very exciting. Everywhere motorbikes, dogs, chickens – for such an out of the way place, a very busy road. This would have been the same road my father and other POWs would have been taken along in trucks. The river was on one side of the road and the steep sides of the gorge on the other, so I couldn't see where the railway line could possibly have been, but the whole point of my being there was to follow in my father's footsteps and get a feel for the place.

After a while, we stopped at a spot on the river where there were many flat-bottomed boats, apparently dredging for gold. While we were there, a Chinese man, who spoke pretty good English, came up to us. He introduced himself and explained he was part owner of one of the boats. He knew all about the railway line built by the POWs and said he had recently met a Romusha still living nearby. I wished I had had more time to talk to him and find out more, but our driver and Sony were anxious to get on. Our poor desk boy was quietly having a nervous breakdown at the state of the road and his car, so motorbike boy took over the driving. Eventually we came to the locomotive and memorial plaque where we stopped and I took photos. The locomotive was housed in an open-sided shed and stood on a concrete pad. It was in good condition considering it was nearly 70 years old. The memorial depicted scenes of horror – prisoners, looking almost skeletal, working on the railway and being beaten and bayoneted by their guards.

People from nearby houses came to see what we were up to – they didn't seem to know much about the history of the area and didn't seem too interested to hear it now. We turned round and headed back. I then realized that this would have been the same road that the evacuees from Singapore would have travelled along after going as far as they could up the Indragiri River. From Rengat, they would have been taken to Sawahlunto by Dutch Army lorries, and from there they would have taken the narrow gauge railway, which would meander through the mountains, thousands of feet high, before arriving at Padang 24 hours later.

When we reached the gold-dredging boats, motorbike boy was reunited with his bike and Sony took over the driving. Back in Sawahlunto I treated everyone to lunch, but it was very hard to make it a grand gesture, as the total bill came to £5! After a fond farewell to Sony in Sawahlunto, the desk boy and another young man from the hotel who, the previous afternoon, had taken me to visit the local museums and sights of Sawahlunto on the back of his motorbike, drove me to Bukittinggi where I could relax in my comfortable hotel and reflect upon the extraordinary two days I had just had, with such kind people.

**Imogen Holmes. February 2012**



## MY SEARCH FOR THE SUMATRAN RAILWAY



**RAILWAY STATION AT PADANG PAJANG**



**PADDY FIELDS TAKEN FROM THE TRAIN**



**"SONY" MY GUIDE WITH SOME OF THE ORIGINAL  
RAIL TRACK**



**GOLD-DREDGING BOATS ON THE INDRAGIRI RIVER**



**"SONY" AND HOTEL DESK BOY DRIVER WITH OLD  
LOCOMOTIVE**