

ML 433

Sunk on 15 February 1942 near Banka island

- Sunk at 0630/0700 hrs.

[Version 1.2.1 ; October 2018]



[A Fairmile B Class launch – 112 feet – the same design as ML433]

On the evening of 13th February 1942 as the Japanese Army tightened its encirclement of the central area of the city of Singapore the Allied troops and civilians endured constant bombing and artillery shelling - the city was in flames; thousands of dead bodies littered the streets and much of the city lay in ruins. In the suburbs hand to hand fighting was taking place in last ditch attempts to stop the Japanese overrunning the city.

The governmental authorities had been very tardy and inefficient in the evacuation of civilians until only a few days before and now, as the last vessels that could be remotely called 'ships' prepared to leave, chaotic scenes were taking place at the Singapore wharves as dozens of European and Eurasian civilian men, together with hundreds of servicemen from the UK, Australia, India and New Zealand scrambled onto any vessel departing that would take them. Most women and children who wanted to escape by ship had already gone – albeit that most of the ships which had left in the previous couple of days were doomed to be sunk.

The military had intensified their efforts to evacuate skilled servicemen to Batavia in Java, to prepare for another stand against the Japanese in the Dutch East Indies, and amongst this group were some 100 highly skilled men of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. and REME (Royal Corps. Of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers).

At Collier Quay at the Singapore wharves (now part of the Fullerton Hotel) a small flotilla of modest sized vessels had been gathered to transport these RAOC specialists, other key army personnel and another group of very senior Navy and Airforce Officers to Java.

Amongst the vessels (Captains) were;

- The 'Pulo Soegi', a small coastal merchant vessel (Lt. A. J. Martin, RNZNVR)
- Fairmile 'B' launch ML 310 (Lt. H. J. Bull, RNZNVR)

- Fairmile 'B' launch ML 311 (Lt. E. J. H. Christmas, RANVR)
- Fairmile 'B' launch ML 432 (Lt. L.H. Herd, RNZNVR with Lt. W.A. Bourke, RNZNVR as First Officer)
- **Fairmile 'B' launch ML 433 (Lt. Cdr. H. Campey, RANVR with Lt Bob Arkley, RNZNVR as First Officer)**

(These 'Fairmile B' type launches ML 310, ML311, etc - which all left at about the same time - were 110 feet in length and 85 tons).

Assembling the 1st Singapore ML Flotilla:

On 13th January 1942 – only a month before the evacuation of Singapore the draft of eight (viewed as 'Colonial') officers and forty-four ratings, who in November 1941 had joined 'HMS Attack' in the UK for training, arrived from England on the troopship 'Aorangi' to man the first four 'B' type ML.s (Fairmiles) of the Singapore Flotilla (source: Arkley).

In England, the previous year, during October 1941 had occurred the first meeting between Lt Cdr Campey, RANVR who was to be the new senior Officer of the Singapore ML Flotilla and some of his 'No.1s' or First Officers – Lt Bill Bourke, RNZNVR, Lt Ted Staples, RNZNVR, Lt 'Aussie' Henderson, RANVR, and Lt Bob Arkley, RNZNVR at the 'Royal Hotel' near the naval base at Portland on the south coast of England. In November they boarded the 'Capetown Castle' at Liverpool bound for South Africa, where they were joined by three other 'SOs' (Arkley's description) – Ward, Christmas (Aust) and Herd (NZ).

On 23 December 1941 they all transferred to the 'Aorangi' in Durban where, on Xmas Eve, Lt Bob Arkley records in his diary "... I have been appointed Lt. Cdr. Campey's No.1, Bill Lt. Herd's, Ted Lt Christmas' and 'Aussie' Lt Ward's...".

Therefore, in overall charge of this contingent of officers who would form the 'newly manned' ML Flotilla in Singapore was the Senior Officer, Lt. Cdr. H. Campey, RANVR.

"...The convoy arrived at Singapore, then steamed into the harbour while enemy planes bombed the airport to the East. It was the first of many raids we were to be subjected to – described by one of the wits as 'being like home again'. As the 'Aorangi berthed alongside an almost deserted wharf I sensed an atmosphere of fear...." (Campey).

They reported to 'HMS Sultan' (the shore base of the Royal Navy in Singapore) on the other side of the island at the Naval Base, which had already shrunk in size from the original massive Far Eastern command base - because the 'Far Eastern Naval Command' had already moved to Java to join the Dutch and American commands. The remaining establishment had been boosted by the small MRNVR of British residents and Malay citizens, several Yangtse river Gunboats, a number of Singapore Harbour Authority vessels and the first two newly commissioned MLs, numbers 310 and 311. Many survivors of the sunken 'HMS Prince of Wales' and 'HMS Repulse' had been temporarily added to 'HMS Sultan' – on which Lt Cdr Campey makes the comment "... which was of doubtful benefit in some cases in whom the shock of defeat and regrouping caused demoralisation as I later found out ..." (Campey).

MLs 310 and 311 were already in commission (albeit not very well equipped) and manned by a mixed crew of ethnic Malay ratings and British RN ratings, with MRNVR officers in command. These were to be somewhat controversially replaced by the officers and ratings from the new arrivals. MLs 432 and 433 had been launched and were awaiting completion at the Singapore Harbour Board, but

over the next few weeks the completion of these two was held back because of “... repeated daily bombings which caused the rapid dwindling of labour ...” (Campey).

The officers were settled into the ‘Adelphi’ Hotel and the ML crews at the ‘Flying Angel’ hostel closer to the dockyard where the four MLs had been built and were berthed.

The arrivals soon found out that the four MLs had been well built at the Singapore Dockyard, but to plans supplied by Admiralty where the draftsman had made an error by shortening the length by two feet to 110 feet and the skilled local SHB manager had shrunk the plans proportionately to fit. This caused some stability problems later.

Then was delivered the news to the existing officers and ratings (mainly Malay ratings and Royal Navy survivors of the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ and ‘HMS Repulse’) currently on the Singapore MLs that arrangements were about to change “... An RN lieutenant and a Lieut. Bull, RNZNVR, were in command [of the two MLs #310 and #311 already commissioned] and were not pleased when they had to remove themselves and the crews to be replaced by the newly arrived personnel under my command ...”.(Campey).

“... ML311 was employed in clearing up small craft, evacuating islands off southern Malaya and Singapore, patrol work and investigation of enemy coastal movements ...” (Campey).

“... About the 5th February Lieut. Herd and S/Lieut. Bourke both RNZNVR settled their crew in ML432 to be ready for commissioning trials to take place on the 8th February 1942 in a seaward area of the south western approach to Singapore harbour...” (Campey). In fact, this turned into something a lot more and on that first day at sea ML432 and found herself in the position of rescuing some 330 survivors –all on one voyage back into the harbour - from the bombed and burning ‘Empress of Asia’ which had been run aground at the approaches to Singapore harbour!

At this stage, 8th February – it was that night that the Japanese Army landed at Kranji on the northwest coast of Singapore Island - ML433 was still incomplete and laying alongside in the dockyard basin but it seems that it was then rapidly, though incompletely, ‘finished’ with a ‘three pounder’ mounted on the foredeck and a twin Lewis gun also positioned.

Frantic preparations continued and on the 9th February both ML432 and ML433 were stocked by Sub Lts Bourke and Arkley from the main store depot at the Naval Base on the ‘other’ side of the island and then “ ... The next day 10th February both MLs 432, 433 went to a fuel storage island south of Singapore still manned by an official and a few helpers who quickly filled the main tanks and as many drums as could be stowed ...” (Campey).

Lieut. Cdr. Campey remarks in his memoirs “... We were afloat at last and although officially not commissioned ML433 was ready to be used although the R/T sets of Hong Kong origin were of little use being ineffectively screened against electrical interference. They were impossible to use whilst the engines were running ...”.

By the 11th February ML433 was anchored with the other MLs and “ ... a miscellany of boats and craft ... gathered together in the middle harbour, a convenient point of departure close to the city ... and abreast of the ‘Laburnum’ jetty from where water supplies could be obtained. They lay there for 3 days and nights from 11th to 13th February ...” (Campey).” The vessels just had to sit out the regular bombing attacks which were being kept, initially, at a reasonable distance from the ships by AA gunners.

On the 12th February Lieut. Cdr. Campey recalls in his memoirs that he was on ML433 and “... anxiously watching the sky to the north in which a formation of bombers had appeared...” when “..the bombers headed straight for the harbour and as I watched and moved towards the fragile cover of the wheelhouse I heard the machine gun [of the lead bomber which was signalling to the others to release their bombs] and saw the bombs starting to drop in a line intended to cover the evacuees and the waiting craft. The first bombs fell on shore as the evacuees flattened themselves to the ground, and the explosions moved steadily towards the ML, so I dived facedown into the wheel house, where I had ordered others to go; and was met by the deck as it heaved up from the impact of a near miss. A quick survey showed the most damage had been caused to the MLs port side along the engine room where a bomb fragment had ripped a sizeable hole through the two layers of wood and cut the motor mechanics hand [this must have been M.M. James Kelly] as it whizzed passed him. It was not long before both hole and hand were patched...”

Who was on board ML433?

During the last day of Friday, 13th February Campey records that two RN officers joined the MLs – one an “Engineer Cmdr.” [this was Commander (E) George Craven – Phillips, RN]. Campey continues “... he had been with us on ‘Aorangi’ and among his qualifications was an expert’s knowledge of marine petrol engines. It was fortuitous for ML433, for her engines had not been thoroughly tested, so he willingly assumed control of the engine room much to my relief as the mechanic could do little more than start and stop the engines...”.

So, to recap, the Captain of ML433 was Lt. Cdr. H. Campey, RANVR, and his First Lieutenant was Lt. R.T Arkley, RNZNVR. Other naval officers on board were Cdr. (E) G. H. Craven – Phillips, RN., an Engineering expert from the Singapore Naval shore base at Sembawang and Lieut. R.N. Ward, RANVR who was also on the vessel after having earlier in February requested Campey to authorise him being relinquished his command of ML311.

Captain David Nelson in the Appendix to his book “The Story of Changi” recorded “... ML433. Left Singapore 13.2.42 Sunk by gunfire north end of Bangka Straits 06.30 hours 15.2.42. Passengers: Army and RAF 60. Estimated survivors 6 ...”.



LT.CDR. H. CAMPEY

R.A.N.V.R.



LT. R.A. ARKLEY

R.N.Z.N.V.R.

Lt. Arkley, however, who was a man with a talent for precision, tells us (see below) that there were approximately 85 personnel aboard.

So despite research, it is not precisely how many persons, or by any means all their identities, were on this vessel when it sank – it seems that it had 60 or more Army and RAF personnel standing on the deck as did other ML class launches in the escape from Singapore.

This researcher has the view that the most accurate record of the total is that of Lt Arkley – so with 15 Naval Officers and ratings (as detailed by Lieut. Cdr. Campey in his report of 9 September 1945), we can estimate that there were 70 other personnel from the Army and RAF.

Evacuation from Singapore:

About noon on 13 February all the vessels gathered in Singapore Harbour received verbal orders “ ... to take on board as a many evacuees as they could; most had done this already and the MLs were to lay alongside the jetty for the arrival of non-combatant personnel after 2000 hours, and all vessels were to make their way through Surien [sic – Durian] and Banka Straits to Batavia, Java where further instructions would be given them ...” (Campey).

Lt. Cdr. Campey wrote in a personal memoir that “...I had estimated that the remainder of the MLs [he is referring to 311,432 and 433 – since 310 had been selected to take RAMY, the air Vice-Marshal and their remaining staffs] could each carry 60 evacuees and crew together with the two or more forbidden guests they may have or had taken on board, although I had reason to believe there were more ...” (Campey).

ML433 - which vessel had proven to have a compass that had developed a considerable error - was to follow ML311, with Lieut Cmdr. V.C.F. Clark, RN, aboard (and with whom Campey had planned the voyage of the MLs to Java). The plan was to 'lie up' by day and sail at night.

Campey's memoirs tell us on that night of 13 February ML311 led ML433, with its erratic faulty compass, out of Singapore harbour, during which passage Campey describes the scene as ML433 being;

"... close to her sternlight which rose, wavered, swung and fell like a hovering firefly against the darkness. Moving at ten knots it was not long before we overtook, then passed through the swarm of small auxiliaries as they appeared suddenly and uncomfortably close. Passing through the Durien Straits we left the main pilotage hazards behind, then altered course for the first lying up position in the large Amphritite Bay [this was Amphitrite Bay – now named Teluk Kualacenaku. It is about 20 miles wide and currently described as "the coast ... being completely overgrown by trees, which are all of one kind ..."] cut in the Eastern shores of Sumatra. Dawn began to emerge as the MLs entered the depressingly flat seascape of the bay whose foreshores were hidden over the horizon. A small densely covered island knoll was selected, and we turned our bows into the steep vegetation covered banks to moor them to trees. A small densely covered island knob was selected, and we turned our bows into the steep vegetation covered banks to moor them to trees. The tide was full with a noticeable ebb so a kedge stern anchor was dropped from the dinghy several yards upstream. ML311 was lying down stream some fifty feet away. Each ML put a party of evacuee volunteers ashore to cut and collect vegetation with which they successfully camouflaged the MLs just in time to prevent two low flying Japanese planes' crews spotting us as they passed overhead across our islet mooring. The weather continued to be humid and hot and intolerably still, not a wisp of air moving until the cooler evening settled down whilst the MLs prepared to depart. ... We followed ML311 through the fading light as she moved out of the bay as darkness came down..." (Campey)

[Researcher Note from Lt Cdr. Campey's memoirs: ML433 at that point found its compass had begun to work accurately, so it proceeded independently but then developed an engine water pump problem and had to stop both engines whilst the flooding in the engine room was bailed out and one engine fixed. This took two or three hours and caused ML311 to turn back to search, unsuccessfully, for ML433 before resuming her course towards the Banka Strait. This was a fatal delay for ML311 which at 17 knots may have otherwise just made it through the Banka Strait successfully, ahead of the arrival of the Japanese warship fleet.]

Lt Cdr. Campey then recounts the final minutes of the ML433 and many of those on board – and to his credit (in the view of this researcher) left us with a record which tells us in a very open and honest manner;

"... The Comdr (E) worked untiringly until he had traced and corrected the fault and came to the bridge to let me know to my great relief as we got underway again on the southerly course through the darkness now enshrouded in mist which added to the eeriness. I became aware of closing towards something moving across our course which I thought could have been a large ship and at any moment a searchlight would be beamed onto us. I ordered the course to be altered away to the north and east until the something moved out of my ken, then again headed for the Northern approach to Banka Straits – west of Muntok Lighthouse the darkness began to give way to the light of dawn through the heavy mists. The mist began to thin out to expose what looked like two minesweepers Comdr (E) [this was Lt Cmdre George Craven – Philips] saw them and came to the bridge saying he thought they were Japanese. Focussing my binoculars on them I could see a Dutch flag flying from the foremast of the nearest ship commenting that they were Dutch sweepers clearing the channel. Then I decided to pass close enough to identify ourselves with the Dutch/American/ British recognition signals. Coming up on the sweeper's port quarter they started flashing unreadable

signals while our signal repeated the recognition signal. When ML433 was about 50 to 75 yards off the sweepers port beam I had the Union Jack hoisted. A large one, then down came the Dutch flag and up went that of the rising sun of Japan. Boom went their forward gun, followed by an explosion in the MLs forward mess deck. Shocked and stunned by the sudden attack and unprepared for it I dashed down to the mess deck to find it flooded and full of smoke with no sounds emerging from the area. I turned and climbed back to the bridge to hear another boom and to watch the 3pdr receive a direct hit and disappear over the side. The Union Jack was stuck firmly at the mast head as I tried to pull it down to stop the gunnery practice and save remaining lives.

The gunfire continued so in the confusion I ordered 'abandon ship' an obvious order to issue. Then, as I removed my shoes and binoculars and placed them tidily on the deck the gun boomed again; the shell passed through the engine room and out the port side just under my feet which lifted off the deck as I plunged into the sea. I swam towards the victorious enemy ship to get some help, but they ignored the sign language, so I swam back to the ML still afloat but well down by the bows with four officer passengers who had been asleep in the wardroom on the aft deck looking bewildered. I called to them to throw me a rope to haul myself back on deck and when one of them moved to do so a burst of machine gun fire sent them to the deck.

No Carley float had been launched to help the few remaining survivors in the water who were being led by the Comdr (E) in song to cheer them up..."

No doubt psychologically shattered by the awful human carnage and horrific loss of life he had just witnessed, Lieutenant Commander Harry Campey, RANVR, then began his long, lonely swim in the shark infested waters Banka Straits - which despite him attempting to reach Banka Island and the Muntok lighthouse he could see in the distance, would end up in him being swept away by strong sea currents. He would later be picked up by a launch of Japanese seamen, before being taken to the entrance of the Moesi river on the mainland of Sumatra and then to Palembang and more than three years as a prisoner of the Japanese in the cruel and deprived camps of south Sumatra.

Lieut. Cdr. Campey's account is corroborated in the record (dated 12 July 1948) left by his First Officer, Lt. Bob Arkley. The relevant part of his account is;

"... As dawn broke on 15th February, ML433 was entering Banka Strait, between the mainland of Sumatra and Banka Island. Daylight revealed five Japanese surface craft (sloop type) at close range. Two of these immediately opened fire with what are believed to have been 4" guns and machine guns. The Japanese gunnery was accurate at the short range. ML433's 3-pounder was knocked over immediately and within a few minutes she was on fire and sinking by the head. Casualties were heavy. Lieut. Commander Campey gave the order to abandon ship. He remained on the bridge with Lt. Arkley until everyone else had gone overboard, ordered Lt. Arkley to leave and then dived overboard himself. The Japanese ships circled the survivors in the water but did not pick any up and presently steamed away. The only course left to the men in the water was to try to make shore at Banka island (several miles away), but a strong tide made this difficult and of approximately 85 personnel aboard ML 433 only about 15, including Lieut. Commander Campey and Lieut. Arkley, survived to become Prisoners of War. The writer swam for nine and a half hours and was then picked up by a small Japanese tender and taken to Palembang, Sumatra where he spent the next three and a half years as Adjutant in POW camps there..." (Arkley).

Casualties:

Reflecting the absolute paucity of knowledge that publicly recorded history has of this tragic sinking of ML433, some sources (most incorrectly) claim that the outcome was only “...*One person apparently killed...*”.

In fact, in the same manner as revealed by research into the sinking of other small evacuation vessels – such as the ‘SS Tanjong Pinang’, the ‘SS Redang’, the ‘Pulo Soegi’ and ML311 - by heavily armed (in fact ‘leading edge’ for their era) Japanese warships, firing their heavy guns and machine guns at close quarters, the death toll was horrendous and the vast majority of passengers and crew on all these frail vessels were killed within moments.

In this instance we have somewhere between 70 and 85 men on board and somewhere between only 6 (source - Captain David Nelson, of the ‘Bureau of Record & Enquiry’ in Changi POW camp) and 15 crew and passengers (Lt Bob Arkley) surviving to reach land and become POWs.

It appears none of the naval ratings on ML433 survived the attack and this is easily understandable from the reports by Campey and Arkley of where and how the Japanese shells hit the wooden hull and superstructure of ML433.

Given that most of the Army and RAF passengers would have been standing on the open deck of the ML they would have been even more vulnerable to the bursting shell shrapnel and heavy machine gun bullets from the Japanese warship so close at hand.

Disappointingly, research has so far identified only two of the passengers. The passenger complement - in the same manner as ‘Pulo Soegi’ and ML311 and ML 432 (beached and then captured without casualties) would have comprised about 20 RAOC/REME ‘Other Ranks’ and presumably a large group of at least 30 men from the RAF, presumably also ‘Other Ranks’ – unless new documents come to light all these men of the RAOC, the REME and the RAF appear to have irrevocably entered the classification of ‘Missing Presumed Killed’.

Given this situation - and with the objective of not breaking the thread to future possible individual identification of the **RAF contingent** on board ML433 - this researcher has taken somewhat of an ‘historical liberty’ and a little speculatively attached a few pages (sourced from the website “WW2 Talk” discussion on the fate of ML310) which have been copied from the UK Archives file WO 361-1202 titled ‘*Far East Malaya; Royal Airforce 40 to 50 men abandoned on island (15 February 1942) and died of starvation , included Air Vice Marshal Pulford and Rear Admiral Spooner*’ – these are attached at the end of this document because this researcher believes that these pages were probably misfiled and left in that file by mistake in the original investigation into the fate of ML310. **They in fact do not record any of the men who died on ML310** - when it was stranded on an island near Banka Island and many of those unable to leave in a couple of small boats died of disease or depression - but rather are a list of RAF /RAFVR men who died after escaping from Singapore and indicates many in the region of Banka island. As the document shows , some of these RAF/RAFVR men died on Banka Island from wounds within a month of the evacuation of Singapore, and all are classified as either ‘Killed in Action’ or ‘Missing Believed Killed or Drowned (as above) – at sea’, or just ‘Missing’ and these men were specifically described as “... *drowned in action, or drowned in consequence of ship sinking, or in consequence of having been ordered to abandon ship ...*”.

There is a very high possibility that some of these men were the RAF men on the ML433.

Four survivors are recorded as being in in Palembang POW camp;

- CAMPEY - Lt. Cmdr. Harry Campey, RANVR
- ARKLEY - Lt. Robert Thirlway Arkley, RNZNVR.
- BEDFORD - Lt. Col Robert Bedford, HKSRA.
- FOX - Lt Col. Fox, RASC.

If anyone has additions, deletions or corrections to this material it would be gratefully received in the interests of achieving a high degree of accuracy - would you please email Michael Pether at mncpether@xtra.co.nz who will copy all the organizations and individuals using this document in websites etc, with the updates. Alternatively, the telephone number is - New Zealand 09 - 4865754; or postal address of;

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Thank you.

Sources:

- Report by Lt. Cdr. H. Campey, RANVR – dated September 9th, 1945 and his personal memoirs written after his retirement.
- Report dated 12th July 1948 (unsigned but clearly by Lt Arkley) in the personal papers of Lt Bob Arkley, RNZNVR,) titled “Singapore M.L. Flotilla (‘B’ Type Fairmiles).”
- Website - www.naval-history.net (for casualty list)
- Website – www.navy-net.co.uk
- Website – www.scotch.vic.edu.au/ww1/honour/fox
- National Library of Singapore – online newspaper archives
- CWGC – the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
- UK National Archives – file WO 361/316 ‘Malaya RAOC + REME’

Crew:

- **ARKLEY – Lt. Robert ‘Bob’ Thirlway Arkley, RNZNVR** from Wellington, New Zealand. Bob was born August 1916 at Newcastle – On – Tyne, UK, and came to Wellington as a small boy. He was a keen yachtsman sailing small centreboard yachts at Worsley Bay Boating Club near the entrance to Wellington Harbour. His secondary education at Rongotai College developed leadership qualities which were to benefit both him, and the people around him, in future years. Bob qualified as an Accountant and started work with Todd Motors, then with Clarke Menzies & Co., (Public Accountants). With the outbreak of war Bob enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Navy in 1940 as a trainee Officer in the first draft of ‘Scheme B’ [sometimes referred to as the ‘Yachtsmen’s Scheme’]. He trained at ‘HMS King Alfred’ and at sea in ‘HMS Electra’, based at Scapa Flow during the Battle of the Atlantic. Volunteering for a posting to the ML flotilla based in Singapore he arrived there in January 1942, where he was listed as captured on 15 February 1942 – spending the next three and a half years as a Prisoner of War. He served as Adjutant in Palembang POW camp, maintaining many of the surviving records from that camp and the very impressive Letters of Commendation written by Senior Officers (British and Dutch) from that camp are a testimony to a man of great patience, tact, perseverance and ability. Bob married ‘Wren’ Joan Moffitt in September 1946 and son John Robert was born 1948 and daughter Jill Lesley 1951. Bob joined the major New Zealand corporate, Fletcher Holdings Ltd in 1949 as Wellington Branch Accountant. He was appointed Company Secretary of Fletcher Construction Company in 1954 and in that capacity moved to Auckland in 1964 when the head Office was transferred. In 1972 he was appointed Secretary to the Fletcher Holdings Board of Management before retiring in 1977. Bob passed away from cancer in 1990. (Bob’s life story courtesy of John Arkley and Jill Kimpton, October 2018).
- **BARRATT – Ordinary Signalman Arthur Barratt, P/JX 233398, Royal Navy, died 15.2.42, aged 20 years on HMML 433.** Son of Arthur and Alice Maria Emily Barratt. Also remembered on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial Panel 66, Col 2. (CWGC). MPK. Other information on Archives file – “...Probably Portsmouth Div. Single. Hometown believed Gloucester ...”
- **BARTLETT – Leading Stoker (shown as Signalman on www.naval-history.net) John Douglas Raymond George Bartlett, P/KX 86252, Royal Navy, died 15.2.42 on HMML 433(CWGC).** MPK. Other information on Archives file “... Home Weymouth ...”.

- **BELL** – Able Seaman George William Bell, C/SSX 26733, is recorded by the CWGC as having died on 16.2.42 (but with a strange notation as ‘Died Ashore’) and then records ‘HMS Sultan’ which is simply the Singapore shore base to which he was attached until the evacuation. His age was 20 years and he was the son of Robert and Maria bell of Port Mulgrave, Yorkshire (CWGC). Able Seaman Bell is listed by Lt. Cdr. Campey as being a crew member of ML433, but with his fate ‘Unknown’ and he is also listed as crew in the UK Archives file which adds “... G. Bell, A.B. (L.R.3). Previously served on ‘HMS HUNTER’. Home near Middlesbrough...”.
- **CAMPEY** – Lt. Cdr. Harry Campey, RANVR. Born on 4 September 1907, Harry (Henry) Campey grew up in Sydney and attended North Sydney Intermediate High School later to become North Sydney Boys High School, Crows Nest. Harry was employed as a textile sales representative for England based *Tootal Broadhust Lee*. He spent time living near Sydney’s southern beach suburbs with the Coogee area as one of his favourites. He also commenced training in the 1920’s as an officer in the RANVR and became an accomplished sailor on Sydney Harbour in 18-foot skiff racing for the RAN Sailing Club. In 1937 Harry married Rosalind Baker and at about the same time retired from the RANVR with the rank of a Lieutenant. Daughters, Janet (1938 – deceased) and Rosemary (1939) were born and the family lived in Cremorne, inner north Sydney. Following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, Harry rejoined the RANVR and underwent Anti-Submarine training on the new ASDIC underwater detection system being introduced to naval forces. In 1940 Harry was posted to England as a Lieut RANVR to be trained for ‘little ships’ in this case the Motor Launches (ML) being introduced into Service. In late 1940, Harry assumed Command of the 7th ML Flotilla forming up at Great Yarmouth then following sea trials and workup to be deployed to Dartmouth. At the end of 1941 he was posted to Singapore to join the ML Flotilla being built there. His ML was sunk in Banka Strait whilst escaping from Singapore. Harry was incarcerated as a POW in Palembang, Sumatra and later at Changi, Singapore. On repatriation to Australia in 1945 to reunite with his family, Harry continued his pre-war employment as a textile sales representative. In subsequent years three more children were born in Sydney, Henry Edward (1947), Marion and James (Twins 1952). The family moved to Brisbane in 1955 when Harry was promoted to State manager. He travelled extensively throughout Queensland during this period. He died in Brisbane on 10 February 1978. His children recall that Harry was a changed and ‘difficult’ person following his wartime experience. He was a disciplinarian, firm and seemed aloof to day-to-day family activity. However, during the Sunday family outings and the annual seaside two-week holidays, he seemed to be more relaxed. There were sometimes when Harry’s alcohol consumption caused family disputes. He spoke little of his wartime experiences, but some hints were drawn out during long

discussions about politics, religion, human behaviour and many other subjects on the back verandah. Reading his wartime narrative written after his retirement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, does shed light on why he was a changed person post war. (This summary of his life was provided by Harry Denovan Campey's son CMDR Henry Campey, RAN, Rtd., in September 2018) There is a record of Harry Campey being appointed a Sub.Lt.in the RANVR dated 1.6.27. He is also listed as being a POW in Palembang camp – his date of capture is not listed. In 1945 'The Daily Telegraph', Sydney, (14.9.45) recorded him as from Cremorne (in Sydney) and a survivor of 'HMML 432' and "now in 'Tokio Bay'".

- CRAVEN – PHILLIPS – Commander (E) George Hutchings/Hutchison Craven – Phillips.** The 'HMS Conway' (merchant marine training base in UK) website states in several sections that George Craven - Phillips, who had been a cadet at 'HMS Conway' during 1919-20, was aged 37 years when he lost his life and (with a few historical errors the website records that he) had "... joined the RN in 1922. From 7th April 1926 to 21st March 1928 he served in 'HMS Enterprise' when she took the Prince of Wales on a world tour. He was posted from 'Enterprise' to 'Erebus' the cadet training ship and turret drill ship at Devonport for duty with Special Entry Cadets. He served with the Fleet Air Arm early in the war at 'HMS Nasar' (RNAS Sembawang) near Singapore ..." and been "... serving as Cdr. (E) RN attached to HMS Nasar shore base at RNAS Sembawang near Singapore. It is assumed he was responsible for the maintenance of shore-based Fleet Air arm aircraft and those from local carriers which were often disembarked to 'Nasar' when in port... By January 1942 the situation on the ground in Malaysia had worsened and Sembawang was evacuated by sea. He was in HMML 433 (a Fairmile B motor launch based at Sambawang (sic) and heading towards Batavia in company with other assorted craft. She was "Lost by gunfire from Japanese surface vessels off Banka Strait" along with her CO and crew, if not all hands. He is not listed in the 1945 Roll of Honour, under Craven or Phillips. He is commemorated on Plymouth Naval Memorial, panel 63, column 1 ... ". The official record is "... Craven – Phillips, George Hutchison, died 15.2.42 son of Lt. Col. George P. A. Phillips and Mrs B.D. Craven Phillips, husband of Kathleen Cecil Babette Craven Phillips of Chapel Thorpe, Yorkshire (CWGC). George Craven – Phillips was born in 1905 and appointed commander 9E) on 31.12.38. He married Kathleen Cecil Babette Williams of Chapelthorpe, Yorkshire in 1940 (unithistories.com). We now know from the memoirs of Lt. Cdr. Campey that George Craven - Phillips was still alive, and seemingly still energetic, in the sea after the sinking of ML433, in fact leading the few remaining survivors in morale boosting song! From this we can only speculate that Commander George Craven – Phillips, aged 37 years, lost his life in the course of duty in the waters of the Banka Straits from, either drowning, exposure and lack of water or a shark attack.

- **HANCOX/HANCOCK (Sic)– Able Seaman Ernest Walter Hancox**, P/JX 228287, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 in the sinking of HMML 433. Son of Harold and Louisa Maud Hancox of Farnborough, Banbury, Oxfordshire. Also commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval memorial, panel 64, Col.1. Officially MPK. Other information on Archives file “... *Probably Chatham Division ...*”.
- **HEWSON – Stoker 2nd Class Leonard Hewson**, D/KX 118096, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 (and CWGC show him as ‘attached’ to ‘HMS Sultan’ which of course was the shore base that all’ unattached’ RN sailors were based at prior to the evacuation of Singapore). Son of Robert and Eliza Kate Hewson of Liverpool; husband of Elizabeth Hewson of Liverpool (CWGC). The website www.naval-history.net shows him as on ML433. Other information on Archives file “... *Rating on ML 433. Devonport Division. Home town Liverpool ...*”.
- **KELLY Able Seaman Geoffrey Clifford Kelly**, D/JX 144604, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 aged 22 years in the sinking of HMML 433. Son of Walter and Alice Kelly of Colwyn Bay, Denbighshire (a sea side town in North Wales). Also commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, panel 65, col.3. (CWGC). MPK. Other information on the UK Archive file is “... *G. KELLY, A.B. (A.A.3.) Devonport Division. Home is Manchester...*”.
- **KELLY – Motor Mechanic James Kelly**, C/MX 77317, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 aged 22 years in the sinking of HMML 433. Son of Patrick and Margaret Kelly of Leyton, Essex. He is also memorialised on the Chatham Naval memorial; 63.2 (CWGC). MPK. Other information on the UK Archives file is “...*J (?) KELLY, L.M.M., Chatham Division. Home in Leyton ...*”.
- **KELLY – according to the list of Lt. Cdr. Campey this is L/Cox Kelly J, whose fate was ‘Unknown’ – presumably this listing means ‘Leading Coxswain Kelly J’**, The UK Archives file shows “... *J. Kelly, L. SEA. Devonport Division. In ‘HMS Escapade when first commissioned. Wife resides in Bath ...*”. No one appears to fit these latter details but two possible identities are firstly **Ordinary Seaman William James Kelly**, P/JX 161309 who the CWGC has as dying 13.2.42 aged 19 years and attached to ‘HMS Sultan; and secondly **Leading Seaman John M Kelly**, D/JX 150044, who again the CWGC has as attached to ‘HMS Sultan’ and who died in Palembang camp on 31.10.42 aged 33 years.
- **O’BOYLE – Able Seaman Arnold O’Boyle**, C/JX 223132, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 in the sinking of HMML 433. Memorialised on the Chatham Naval memorial, 55.2. (CWGC). MPK. Other information on Archives file “... *Chatham Div. Wife lives in Edmonton ...*”.
- **O’SHAUGHNESSY – Acting Leading Telegraphist Thomas Patrick O’Shaughnessy**, D/JX 142034, Royal Navy. Died 15.2.42 in the sinking of HMML 433. Also memorialised on the Plymouth Naval memorial, Panel 68, Col.1. (CWGC). MPK. Other information on Archives file “... *Devonport Division. Home Dublin ...*”.

- WARD – Lt. Richard Norman Ward, RANVR**, was born in Sheffield, England on 14 June 1901. According to his service file held in the National Archives of Australia he had “eight years prior service” as a midshipman with the RAN during 1918-26 and a Second mate Certificate (Steam) before he enlisted with the RANVR on 29.10.40, described as “...5 feet 9 inches in height with fair hair, blue eyes and a fresh complexion ...” and appointed Sub. Lt. (On Probation) under the ‘Yachtsman Scheme’, which operated in both Australia and New Zealand at that point of the War to recruit further men at that seniority for service in the UK and Far East. Richard Ward was soon sent to the UK on the ‘Largs Bay’ for further training and experience and was promoted to Lt. (Prov) on 10.2.41. He saw service on a variety of vessels during 1941 including ‘Hibiscus’, ML309 (where he was in command) and ‘Attack’. He was married to Florence Grace Ward and their address at the time of enlistment looks like Waterview street, Mona Vale, Sydney. It is recorded that Richard “... failed to survive the sinking of his craft [records do not specify what craft he was on] in the Banka strait, NEI ...”. As his widow, Florence was granted a pension of seven pounds per fortnight from January 1946, but this was reduced to five pounds only six months later – her address after the War was 344 St Kilda Road, Melbourne. For the record the AWM have him recorded as incorrectly serving in the RAN, as opposed to the RANVR. The CWGC entry for Richard Ward is sparse to say the least “... Richard Norman Ward, RANVR, died 15.2.42 aged 40 years. ‘HMS Sultan’. Also commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 77, Col 1...”. (CWGC).
- WATT – Able Seaman Peter Alexander Watt, D/JX 139164, Royal Navy**. Died 15.2.42 aged 25 years and the CWGC shows ‘HMS Sultan’ (but the www.naval-history.net website has him in the crew of ML433 as does the file in the UK archives). Son of Alexander and Christina G. Watt of Usan, Angus, Scotland. Also commemorated on the Plymouth Naval memorial panel 67, Col. 1. (CWGC). For the record Peter’s parents died in 1958 (his father Alexander aged 74) who is buried with his wife, Christina Gordon Watt, who died in 1963 aged 68 years– they lived at 24 Usan Village, Craig. Usan is a tiny fishing village and ‘salmon station’ in Angus, Scotland some three miles south of the town of Montrose. Other information on the UK archives file “ ... L.R.3, Devonport Division. Home in Stornaway, Scotland...”.

Passengers:

- BEDFORD – Lt. Col. Robert Bedford, HSRA. Captured 15.2.42 and a POW in Palembang camp.** BEDFORD R. [Robert] Major Assistant Stipendiary Steward, Straits Racing Association, Mercantile Bank Building, Singapore Promoted 1941 Lt Colonel HKSH RA/ Malaya Command. Captured at Banka. POW Palembang, Sumatra.
- FOX - Lt. Col. Thomas Laurence ‘Laurie’ Fox, RASC.** The Scotch College, Melbourne, (his old school) World War One Honours and Awards website tells us that ‘Laurie’ was born on 21.9.1893, the son of Thomas Barter and Mary Maude (nee Wilkinson) Fox and lived in Albert Park, Melbourne whilst he attended the College during 1907 until 1901. When he enlisted for the

First World War on 18.8.14 he was a 20-year-old medical student with a scholarship at Melbourne University and cited '5 years senior cadets' as his previous military experience. He was given the prestigiously low number '26' and allotted to the 2nd Field Ambulance – within a month he was a Corporal. In October 1914 he sailed for overseas. In April 1915 he was discharged from the AIF in England and transferred to the British Army with a commission in the RASC. At some point he was promoted to Captain and in 1918 to Temporary Major. He served in France, Salonica and Russia. Twice he was mentioned in Despatches and after the War ended, he remained in the regular army. By 1919 he had received an MBE. He went to Malaya in 1924 and became a leading trainer in Malayan horse racing. In fact there are 2754 references to him in newspapers in Malaya and Singapore during 1924 until he death in 1954. When the Japanese attacked Malaya he reenlisted in the Army RASC and some sources say that he was promoted to Lieutenant - Colonel , although 'The London Gazette' of 4 March 1947 states that Major T.L. Fox had then exceeded the age of limit of liability to recall and therefore ceased to belong to the Reserve of Officers and was granted the hon rank of Lt. – Col. . His MI9 questionnaire records no Service Number, but that he was *"...a regular officer in RASC, Malaya Command, had enlisted in April 1915 and that he had been awarded the OBE (Mil). His next of kin was c/- Mrs. M.M. Fox, Brandy Creek Road, Warragal, Vic, Australia. He was captured at 'Pangkoll Pinang', Banka Island on 23.2.42 and became a POW at Muntok from 24.2.42 until 6.3.42 under Lt. Col. H.L. Hill, I.A. He was moved to Palembang camp from 8.3.42 until 26.5.45, under Cdr. Reid, RN and Lt. Col, Hill, I.A. before finally being a POW in Changi from 31.5.45 until 23.9.45..."*. After the war he returned to his business of horse training and an article in the 'Straits Times' of 28.9.47 quotes him as recounting that *"... when he was ordered to take out an evacuation party, his three launches ran into the Jap navy and were blown out of the water. He spent three days and nights swimming down the Banka straits and finally got ashore on a small island. He was one of four survivors of his party and was interned in Palembang and later Changi. After the liberation he did a great deal to rehabilitate the Malayan turf. He brought a large string of new horses from Australia and assisted the Penang Turf Club in bringing out a batch of griffins. At the moment, he trains one of the biggest strings in the country and with the re-opening of Bukit Timah he hopes soon to shift to his old headquarters ..."*. Laurie Fox died in Singapore in 1954 aged 60 years of age. He had married Dorry Carr in Victoria in 1914.

The next three pages of photographs are from file WO 361-1202 in the UK National Archives and appear to have a high possibility of containing the names of RAF/RAFVR men on ML433 (as well as other evacuation ships) who lost their lives in the attack, the sinking, in the sea or possibly even after reaching Banka island;



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ROYAL AIR FORCE.

KILLED IN ACTION: (Includes drowned in action, or drowned in consequence of ship sinking, or in consequence of having been ordered to abandon ship).

Officers: Wing-Commander R.A. CHIGNELL (Fighter Group) killed and buried at sea 14. 2. 42.
Pilot Officer M.F.W. PAUL (R.A.F.V.R.) buried at sea 16. 2. 42 -(Tarsus Est. Fort Dickson Ansea R.S.)
Pilot Officer G. RUTHERFORD, buried at sea 15. 2. 42 (S.H.Q. Seletar - Marine Craft Section).
Pilot Officer TONGUE J. (R.A.F.V.R.) buried at sea 14. 2. 42 (A.H.Q. F.E.)

Other Ranks:

512515 L.A.C. CHECHETS (243 M.R.V.R.A.F.) 15.2.42.
Sergeant W. BULLOCK, buried at MUNTOK, 25 yards N.E. of N.E. corner of Cinema near the Pier, 16. 2. 42 (A.S. R.S.)
518522 Sergeant E. CHATT, buried at MUNTOK, 25 yards N.E. of N.E. corner of Cinema near the Pier, 16. 2. 42. (A.S. R.S.)
Sergeant McBRIDE (buried at sea 15.2.42) (SHQ Seletar).
1252182 Cpl. K. FAIRBRASS, R.A.F.V.R., buried PULO POMFOM (Rhie Groun) 18.2.42. (SHQ Seletar)
921522 A.C.1 ELTON W.J., buried BANKA ISLAND, 17.2.42 (R.A.F.V.R.) (A.S.R.S.)
930128 A.C.2 MARCH A., buried at sea 16.2.42 - R.A.F.V.R. (A.S.R.S.)
L.A.C. PERRY M.C., R.A.F.V.R., Fighter Group,
A.C. 2 GRANT J., buried BANKA ISLAND 16. 3. 42, R.A.F.V.R., (A.S.R.S.)
L.A.C. TITLEY A. 15. 2. 42. (243 M.R.V. R.A.F.)
L.A.C. DOUSE D. 15. 2. 42. -do-

MISSING BELIEVED KILLED OR DROWNED (as above):

Officers: F/O. B. CALLICK, 36 Squadron.
W.O. Pilot GEO. POK (36 Squadron Fighter Group).

Other Ranks:

CPL. EMERY, R.A.F.V.R., at sea 15. 2. 42.
L.A.C. WATKINSON, R.A.F.V.R., at sea 14. 2. 42.
A.C.1 WARDALE J.
1255228 A.C.1 BOWEN T.B. at sea 14.2.42 (R.A.F.V.R. S.H.Q. Seletar).
A.C.1 HILL, R.A.F.V.R., at sea 15. 2. 42 (Fighter Group).

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Contd..)

- 2 -

MISSING BELIEVED KILLED OR DROWNED(as above) (CONTD.)

Other Ranks: (CONTD.)

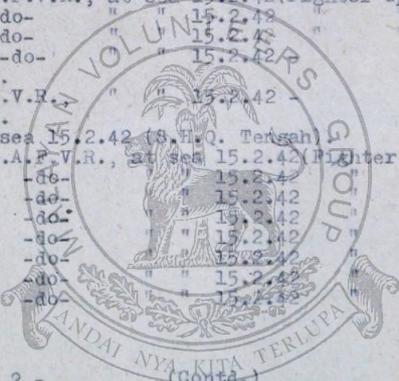
941184 A.C.1 MORRILL W.E. at sea 14.2.42 (R.A.F.V.R. S.H.Q. Seletar).
1177613 A.G.1 DOLMAN J.H., R.A.F.V.R., at sea 14.2.42 (S.H.Q. Seletar).
638121 A.C. (or L.A.C.) SWIFT, Banka Islands, 14.2.42 (S.H.Q. Kallang).

MISSING:

Officers: F/O. R.R. LAMB (100 Squadron) 9. 3. 42.
Pilot Officer STACEY (243 M.R.V. R.A.F.) - 15. 2. 42.

Other Ranks:

Sgt. MERCER J. (R.A.F.V.R.) BANKA ISLAND, 24.2.42 (62 Squadron).
Sgt. TEARNAN A.A. (R.A.F.V.R.) BANKA ISLAND, 24.2.42., (62 Squadron).
545204 Cpl. WILDMAN C. (Fighter Group) at sea 15.2.42. (Fighter Group).
Cpl. CHALMERS W. at sea 15.2.42 (S.H.Q. Seletar).
Cpl. TYRNELL C., R.A.F.V.R., at sea 15.2.42 - (S.H.Q. Seletar).
632213 L.A.C. LAMONT D.C., at sea 15. 2. 42 - (Fighter Group).
L.A.C. MILNE J., R.A.F.V.R., at sea 15.2.42(Fighter Gp).
L.A.C. UNDERWOOD, -do- " 15.2.42 "
L.A.C. DOUGLAS -do- " 15.2.42 "
L.A.C. McGRINDLE J. -do- " 15.2.42 "
(S.H.Q. Kallang).
L.A.C. MALONE, R.A.F.V.R., " 15.2.42 - (S.H.Q. Kallang).
A.C.1 MIDDLETON, at sea 15.2.42 (S.H.Q. Tengah).
A.C.1 ROBINSON A., R.A.F.V.R., at sea 15.2.42(Fighter Gp).
A.C.1 BULLOCK R. -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C.1 LOOBY, -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C. ADAMS, -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C. WILLIAMS, -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C. WILSON R. -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C. SPRINGHALL -do- " 15.2.42 "
A.C. GEORGE, -do- " 15.2.42 "



- 2 - (contd.)

MISSING (CONTD.)

Other Ranks:

569643	L.A.C.	DATSON, T.H.	(A.S.R.S.)	16.2.42.
...295	A.C.2	MOORE F.A.	-do-	16.2.42.
	CPL.	SPARKES	(243 M.R.V.R.A.F.)	15.2.42
	CPL.	HORTON	-do-	15.2.42
	L.A.C.	YARDLEY L.	-do-	15.2.42
	L.A.C.	HUGHES W.	-do-	15.2.42.
	L.A.C.	UNDERWOOD J.	-do-	15.2.42.
	L.A.C.	RICHARDS	-do-	15.2.42
	L.A.C.	VAUX "PADDY"	-do-	15.2.42.
	L.A.C.	DAVIES (OR DAVEY)	-do-	15.2.42.
		"TAFFY"	-do-	15.2.42.
	A.G.	DINON D.	-do-	15.2.42.
	A.C.	GUY	-do-	15.2.42.
	A.C.	LUCAS	-do-	15.2.42.

DIED OF WOUNDS:

Officers: Flight-Lieutenant R.W. ARMSTRONG, R.A.F.V.R.,
(Fighter Group) - Interred at MUMTOK
Cemetery, BANKA ISLAND, 11. 3. 42.

Other Ranks:

1000442 A.C.1 TATE G.M., R.A.F.V.R., (A.S.R.S.) -
Interred MUMTOK Cemetery, BANKA ISLAND, 18.3.42.
643047 Cpl. KELLY W., at CHARITAS HOSPITAL,
PALEMBANG on 17. 2. 42.

DIED:

Officers: P/O. PAUL STEVENS, R.A.F., died approx.
25. 4. 42. of exposure in open boat, approx.
500 miles S. of Java. Buried at sea. Age 21.

Other Ranks:

1250898 A.C.1 GARRARD N.F., R.C.A.F., (A.S.R.S.)
Died of Dysentery at CHARITAS HOSPITAL, PALEMBANG,
on 12. 4. 42.
941974 A.C.1 WILCOX S., died of Dysentery and
Malaria in CHARITAS HOSPITAL, PALEMBANG, on
17. 5. 42. Buried Grave No. 334 in New
European Cemetery, Palembang.
926871 L.A.C. PEROWNE W.H., at CHARITAS HOSPITAL,
PALEMBANG, on 20. 8. 42. Grave No. E. 11/47 in
New European Cemetery, PALEMBANG.
CPL. STIFF L.G. (R.C.A.F.) died of exposure in
open boat approx. 25 miles S. of Sumatra, approx.
on 23. 6. 42. Buried at Sea - Age 21.
L.A.C. MARLOW K. R.A.F., died approx. 3. 7. 42 as
result of exposure in open boat at Blapping
Lighthouse, S.W. Sumatra, Buried in Cemetery
about 1 mile from Lighthouse. Age 24.