

'POELAU SOEGI' / 'PULO SOEGI'

Sunk on 15th February 1942 near Banka Island.

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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 chaotic scenes were taking place at the Singapore wharves as European and Eurasian men, and a few well-connected Chinese families, scrambled onto any vessel departing that would take them.

The military had also raised 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)
- Fairmile 'B' launch ML 433(Lt. Cdr. H. Campey, RANVR)

The 'Pulo Soegi' [probably more accurately spelled 'Poelau Soegi' as described by Captain David Nelson, SSVF, in 'The Story of Changi', but we will use the name more commonly used by journalists, survivors and report writers] was presumably named after the island named Pulau Soegi (an island is a 'Pulau') south west of Singapore - between Pulau Batam and Pulau Durian - in the Riau archipelago.

It was described by the officer in charge of the RAOC troops, T/Maj. J.W.P Marsh who boarded the vessel on its last voyage as "... a *Batavian built small boat* ...". He names it as the 'Paula Suegi'.

The vessel is not referred to in any contemporary newspaper shipping reports so was presumably too small to be of commercial consequence.

It does seem however to have been requisitioned by the British authorities and this is referred to in an article in the magazine of the old school of the Captain, Lt. A.J. Martin, RNZNVR, when they state that he was placed in command of a small reconditioned naval ship in January 1942. In the book

'Singapore's Dunkirk' author Geoffrey Brooke, appearing to draw on some communication by Marsh, states that the ship was "... a 130-ton river patrol launch ...".

This indicates a small ship around 100 feet in length and perhaps a little bulkier than 'Fairmile B' type launches ML 310, ML311, etc which left at about the same time from Singapore harbour (Fairmile B class launches were 112 feet in length and 85 tons).

Evacuation from Singapore;

The story of the 'Pulo Soegi' being used in the evacuation of troops from Singapore comes from three primary sources;

- the 'letter report' dated 15.12.45 by T/Maj. J. W. P. Marsh, RAOC, held in file WO 361/316 at the UK Archives and,
- the story described to Geoffrey Brooke in 'Singapore's Dunkirk' (pp. 172 - 177) by Temp. Major Marsh and a Private Arthur of the RAOC.
- And a short summary in 'When Singapore Fell' (pp.42-43) by Joseph Kennedy of "... an account left by Major J.W.P. Marsh, officer – in – charge of Base Ordnance Workshop (MT) in Singapore..." which may be an extract from his private papers deposited with the IWM (Documents 3663.)
- The POW camp diary of Pte. Eric Diss, RAOC, who survived the sinking but died in August 1945 before food and medicine could reach him after the surrender of the Japanese in Palembang.

Temp. Major Marsh, who Brooke describes in his book as "... a prominent Shanghai business man of fifty plus who had stoutly joined up at Singapore as a Second –Lieutenant when war in the Far East was threatened – was OC the MT Base Ordnance Workshop at Anson Road...", wrote in his letter report of 15.12.45 "... On or about 1800 hrs. Feb. 13th 1942 I was at the Mission to Seamen Institute, Anson Road, Singapore when S.O.M.E.B.O.D. Malaya command, Lt. Col. E.K. Scott, came to see me and ordered me to take all details attached to me at that time to Collier Pier, for embarkation en route to Java. The strength of the O.R. s attached to me at that time was about 108 and in checking into the Dockyards Gate that was the number counted including myself. Major Whateley, RAOC, A.D.O.S. (E) assisted me in checking men in as my own workshop staff was normally very small about 20 to 30 only. All other men had been sent to me from other detached jobs and a considerable number were unknown to me personally. On arrival at quayside, two different lots of 20 each were taken from me by Navy Officers, leaving me with approx. 68, which included 2nd Lt. Radford and myself. This 68 embarked on the 'Paula Suegi' a Batavian built small boat, though the Captain said he should have taken 40, only....". Brooke describes what he calls a 'launch' as "...grossly overcrowded, the launch sailed shortly after dark...".

Capt. David Nelson in his book recorded that the 'Poelau Soegi' "...Left Singapore 13.2.42 at 2100 hours...".

Pte Eric Diss gives the perspective of one of the RAOC 'Ordinary Ranks' soldiers during this chaotic time;

"... 13th Feb. Worked with Frank on Ack-Ack cables - battery practically wiped out at 4 pm., friend 'Nobby' Adamson killed instantly 8 pm. Ordered to fall-in battle order. All thought we were destined for last stand in trenches – but no, after marching a mile, turned sharply into blazing docks to board small naval auxiliary vessels. Sailed slowly through minefield.

14th Feb. Anchored near small Islands at dawn and pulled over camouflage nets. Scores of bombers and seaplanes scoured the waters all day – but no bombs dropped on us. Weighed anchor at sundown – sailed through night without incident..."

Joseph Kennedy in his book states *"... Major Marsh lay on the deck most of the time, 'almost played out', suffering from stomach trouble and general exhaustion: he may have lost count on time..."*.

Author Geoffrey Brooke states that, *"...The following day enemy aircraft scored hits on ships nearby, but the 'Suegi' only came in for one bomb which failed to explode..."*.

The sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi':

Brooke follows this comment, by Geoffrey Brooke, up with *"... On the 15th there were various alarms – a huge fleet flew over on its way to Sumatra and a Japanese cruiser squadron forced the 'Suegi' to run for cover - but as night fell they were entering the Banka Strait..."*.

Eric Diss, RAOC continues:

"... 15th Feb. Continued during daylight - more bombers passed over (thank God) met up with three RAF launches – exchanged messages. Large Jap convoy sighted during afternoon going in same direction – changed course to avoid being spotted. Proceeded through Banka Strait at dusk – spotted by Jap cruiser and sunk by gunfire at midnight (Pula Sugi 80 RAOC – crew 8; survivors totalled RAOC 15 crew 1) ..."

Marsh recalled *"... I lay down on the top deck near the smoke stack and as I was absolutely played out, having had no sleep worth while for nearly a week, I was able to sleep. The very next thing I knew was being awakened by an explosion and the ship was a blaze of light; the explosion was the first shell which hit the ship exactly the opposite side of the smoke stack less that a couple of yards away; to say the least I was a bit shook..."*.

In his letter /report Marsh tells us that *"... sometime in the evening of the 15th., we were shelled by Jap craft and all on board abandoned ship and, in accordance with the Captain's orders, we jumped overboard ..."*. Private Arthurs in 'Singapore's Dunkirk' must have been on the side of the ship which was hit by the first shell for he says *"... that a terrific explosion took place underneath him and he was partly lifted and thrown by the blast on to the hatchway beneath and fell on the lads who had been sleeping there....Another salvo hit the ship forward ... At this stage Major Marsh shouted an order: 'Over the side and every man for himself'..."*.

In the book 'When Singapore Fell' Marsh is reported to say that *"... Almost at once, a blaze of light from two large searchlights swept the motorboat and men were jumping into the water away from the light. Marsh jumped too, as shelling continued, and screams rose from the water..."*.

Private Arthurs decide to stay under cover on the ship - he *"...felt a bit shaky but felt safer in his position on the ship than being in the sea, although he was surrounded by men moaning and groaning, and to hear the screams of some of the wounded was a ghastly experience ..."*.

This must have been about the time when Arthurs sensed a short pause in the shooting, so he decided to go over the side, but another salvo hit the ship and he was wounded in the ankle by

shrapnel. After hearing “... someone call out to see if there was anybody all right on the ship and Arthurs stood up and called back. By this time the ship was blazing furiously and small arms and Bofors ammunition started to explode through the heat. The man who had shouted came up and asked Arthurs if he could help with some of the wounded. They went up on deck, but one lifeboat was away and the other had a shell hole in it. Then they went down below and found a stock of lifebelts, which they put on the wounded and threw the latter over the side. This was a very unpleasant job as most of Arthurs’ friends were badly injured by shrapnel and blast ...”.

Marsh’s letter/report then tells us that “...I heard afterwards that some good swimmers swam back to the ship after shelling had finished and launched a boat and raft (we were all provided with lifebelts) ...”.

[Researcher Note: It is now clear from research that the lifeboat that Arthurs and Marsh say had been earlier successfully launched - in which were several of the ships officers and about 15 RAOC plus a few crew - was the only lifeboat to launch and was the ill-fated craft which arrived at ‘Radji Beach’ on Banka Island early the next morning, only to be caught up in the massacre of 16th February 1942 in which the Australian Army nurses were also murdered by Japanese troops.]

With the ‘Pulo Soegi’ now listing badly, Private Arthurs joined his new companion to leave before it was too late (Singapore’s Dunkirk’ page 174)) but not before he came across another ROAC man from the Anson Road Workshop, Private Jack Fleming who was shell shocked and talking about going to sit on a park bench which he pointed out over the water. Arthurs took him over the side and the three men swam to a raft, a Carley float designed for eight men, about a hundred yards away which already had some thirty men hanging on to it. T/Major Marsh was already hanging onto the raft and on hearing two men shouting for help in the distance, asked for volunteers to which Arthurs and another man responded and successfully returned with Privates Jock Kinney and Reggie Ballard.

Capt. David Nelson, often a very accurate recorder of these events tells us (P.232) that the ‘Poelau Soegi’ was “... Sunk by gunfire 6 to 8 miles S.W. of Muntok...”.

Survival at Sea:

Those men still able to abandon ship seem to have divided into three main groups of survivors;

- The men who swam back to the sinking ship and launched what appears to be the only surviving lifeboat – a small ship of this size might only have had one or two boats since it does not appear to be a passenger boat and under normal circumstances would have had no more than twenty people aboard. This group then rowed through the night to Banka island landing early the following morning at a beach we can only call ‘Radji Beach’ (although there is no beach by that name) where they came across the survivors from two lifeboats from the sunken ‘SS Vyner Brooke’. The ‘SS Vyner Brooke’ had been carrying about 200 people - mainly civilian women, men and children when it was sunk off the west coast of Banka island by Japanese bombers on 14 February. These RAOC men became victims in a horrendous massacre by Japanese troops on the beach later that morning

- A second group which gathered around a raft - this group initially included Temp Major Marsh – and is said to have had more than nineteen men attached to it (plus Major Marsh, private Arthurs and others who tried to swim to shore leaving nineteen to be picked up the following day by a captured RAF launch - as stated in the book ‘Singapore’s Dunkirk’ (pp. 176-177).
- A third initially large group, including Pte Eric Diss and Pte George Snowdon, of whom sadly some died or fell off the raft during the night leaving only four men to be captured by Japanese in a launch the following day

The remainder of the survivors appear to have been lone individuals such as Temp. Major Marsh and Private Arthurs who individually made it to Banka Island by swimming.

In amplification, Private Eric Diss recorded his personal survival story;

“... 16th Feb. After narrowly escaping being pulled under ships’ propeller – swam for 10 minutes and found a small raft with some of our men hanging on. Tried in vain to make land – were beaten by strong cross -currents. At midday only four of us left on raft, 4pm approx. picked up in heavy sea by captured RAF launch taken to Muntok harbour. Taken up to Airfield – worked until 2.30 pm slept in field ...”.

Major Marsh is reported to have recalled that *“... Soon after the attack there were numerous screams from men in the water – I am afraid they were caused by sharks...”*.

Later Marsh decided that, with land (Banka Island) appearing to be only about five miles away, any good swimmers should leave the raft wearing lifejackets and make for the shore. Apparently as *“... as he drifted through the water, he could see his late rescue vessel blazing through the night. Two lighthouses could be seen ahead [this would have been the lighthouses at Tanjong Oelar and the ‘Muntok Light’, Tanjong Kelian), but at daylight he was still some two or three miles from a shore and feeling ‘all in’. Then a large ship loomed up, the ‘Kwai Maru’ full of Japanese troops...”*. This was the Japanese invasion force landing on Banka Island and soon to commit murder up and down the coast of the Island, but fortunately Marsh came into the hands of the ship’s doctor who treated him kindly and gave him a whisky! Marsh was later taken by an RAF launch, under the command of Commander Philip Reid (but with a Japanese escort) and took him to the newly captured ‘Mata Hari’ before all passengers on that ship were landed on the pier at Muntok.

Contrary to Temp. Major Marsh’s own understanding, as stated in his letter report, that *“ ... Those left on the raft were not seen again or many other of the ship’s total complement ...”*., author Geoffrey Brooke in ‘Singapore’s Dunkirk’ states on pp.176-177 that *“ a satisfactory postscript is that nineteen men who had stayed on the ‘Paula Suegi’s” (sic) raft were picked up by an RAF launch (probably Commander Philip Reid again) and brought into Muntok...”*. One of these was Pte George Snowdon (<http://aotn.dvrDNS.org/MyWeb/public/websites/ww2/malaya.html>) and another was Pte. Eric Diss (<http://www.dissfamily.org.uk/Halstead%20Disses/Eric-Mary-Full-20010430/eric-diary.html>).

Private Arthurs’ story was that he was found drifting at sea the following morning by a *“... Japanese cruiser [which] circled me twice and I could distinctly see the crew laughing but they never picked me up ... once or twice I got hold of the identity disc around my neck to try and strangle myself, but I thought when there’s life there’s still hope so I carried on...”*. He was greatly troubled by water lice biting his legs and the tropical sun which gave him a terrific headache, but he kept on swimming. He persevered through another night and just as day was breaking [this must have been the 17th Feb.] he

pulled himself ashore on Banka island. He was found by two Japanese who took his watch and wedding ring and kicking and beating with their rifle butts before shoving him into a small motorboat before taking him south around the coast to a " ... long jetty ..." - which would have been the Muntok pier. He was carried out by an RAF officer (Air Commodore Modin) and then cared for by Red Cross nurse. In the makeshift hospital in Muntok he again met up with Temp. Major Marsh. [Note: if interested in learning more of the harrowing series of events that occurred in the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi' it is recommended that the reader look at under the personal entry for Private ARTHURS shown below].

Casualty List:

The matter of how many passengers and crew were on board 'Pulo Soegi' is a little hard to determine precisely. In his excellent book 'Spotlight on Singapore' Denis Russell – Roberts quoted figures of '25 Survivors' and '55 Missing'. Another source says there were 30 crew. We know from Temp. Major Marsh that there were 68 ROAC Officers and men on board and there is no record of other passengers.

Capt. David Nelson in 'The Changi Story' recorded "... passengers: Lt. Day, RNVR, Army 2 officers, 66 Other ranks. Survivors approximately 25 including Major J.A.W.P. Marsh, RAOC...".

A slightly differing record is in the POW diary of Private Eric Diss, RAOC who survived the sinking and almost all the wartime period of terrible privation but tragically died in Palembang camp just four days before the Japanese surrendered. His view was that on the 'Pula Sugi' there had been 80 RAOC and 8 crew – with only 15 RAOC and one crew member surviving.

In this instance it is the opinion of the researcher that it would be appropriate to rely on the figure from the officer who counted off his detachment.

From what we are able to gather there were four naval officers on board from the NZRNVR, the MRNVR and a RNVR (or possibly another RNZNVR) officer, plus there were 68 ROAC personnel and we then have to estimate the crew of ratings. Given the small size of the vessel the number of 30 crew stated in a wartime New Zealand newspaper ('The New Zealand Herald, 20.4.42) seems very large – we know some of the Malay ratings from the MRNVR or SSRNVR were complemented by Naval Auxiliary Personnel (as recorded by the CWGC insofar as Greaser Tan Meng K. who lost his life in this sinking) – and it may be that a figure of 10 – 20 crew is more realistic.

So, between the ship's Officers, crew and ROAC passengers a total complement of about 75 - 85 men seem reasonable.

However, there is no record of any crew members being in Palembang POW camp (they may simply have not bothered to note this fact on their MI9 Liberation questionnaires and preferred to record the RN ship they had previously been aboard) and Pte. Eric Diss noted that only one crew member survived. It would be usual to expect at least a third of the crew to survive this sort of sinking and so we are left with the sad presumption that perhaps '4 or 5 officers and crew' managed to swim back to the sinking 'Pulo Soegi' and with a few RAOC survivors and then launch the only ship's boat that had survived the attack. This ship's boat must have been the 'steel lifeboat' which beached the next morning at 'Radji beach' on Banka island and whose occupants died in the massacre there later that morning. Maybe one crew member was in Palembang camp, as Private Diss alludes to in his record.

The next section addresses the fate of what is estimated as some 20 men who got away from the 'Pulo Soegi' in the only lifeboat and landed at a beach named 'Radji Beach' on Banka island on the next morning, 16 February 1942.

What happened to RAOC survivors from 'Pulo Soegi' on Radji Beach, Banka Island?

On the morning of 16 February 1942 quite a sizeable group of some 80 -100 people had gathered on a beach (that was later to be called 'Radji Beach' by journalists and authors) on the west coast of Banka Island from two lifeboats from the sunken 'SS Vyner Brooke' , plus the steel hulled ships' boat/ lifeboat from the 'Pulo Soegi' carrying 20 -25 RAOC soldiers (Sister Vivian Bullwinkel, AANS, testimony to War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo) which landed early that Monday morning, 16 February 1942. Other sources say the latter lifeboat was also carrying a badly burned Malay sailor (who shortly died and was immediately buried on the beach) and a soldier who also died quite quickly and was also buried on the beach from the ship (now known from research to have been the 'Pulo Soegi').

The identities of these 20 British servicemen and/ or ships officers and crew, including the Malay sailor(s), arriving in the lifeboat on the morning of what became an appalling Japanese war crime and atrocity have been somewhat of a mystery since the War – apart, of course, from the identity of CFN /Private Cecil Gordon Kinsley, RAOC, who is well recorded as having survived the massacre and was cared for by Vivian Bullwinkel for several weeks in the jungle bordering the beach, before entering a POW camp where he died on 24 March 1942.

Kinsley was on the 'Pulo Soegi' when it was sunk during the previous evening of 15 February. As already mentioned above the personnel on board did as ordered and most jumped overboard, it seems with life jackets, as soon as the vessel was struck by shells – however according to the RAOC officer in command, T/Maj. Marsh, some good swimmers swam back to the vessel and launched a lifeboat and rafts before it sank. So, Kinsley and a few of the ship's crew plus Officers and men of the 'ZAOW', 14 Section, RAOC must have managed to climb into the lifeboat and make it to shore on Banka island early the following morning.

Recent (June 2018) research of the UK Archives in Kew (WO361/316) has raised the probability that perhaps the people in the War Office in Liverpool in late 1945 - investigating the fate of those 'Missing' from the 68 RAOC men (many in the Section 14, 'Z Advance Ordnance Workshop') who originally evacuated Singapore on the 'Pulo Soegi' on 13 February - may not in fact have appreciated at that early stage of post war analysis any significance in a man quoting 'C. G. Kinsley' as his source for information on some missing 'ZAOW' RAOC men killed Banka Island. It is also highly probable that at that, point in history, the British based investigators were unaware of the of killings of the Australian Army nurses and servicemen that had taken place on 'Radji Beach' - but had only recently been publicised to the shocked Australian public – and they would not have been looking for massacre victims amongst the British servicemen.

Starting with the more directly linked (almost 'first hand'?) evidence of the identities of RAOC men and others in the lifeboat arriving on the morning of 16 February, it is possible to reasonably suggest that at least two and up to eight of these men who were murdered on Radji Beach from the 'Pulo Soegi' can be identified with varying degrees of confidence.

In simple numerical terms the total of RAOC men murdered on 'Radji Beach' appears to have been some 15 men – the remainder of those in the lifeboat were almost certainly officers and crew from the 'Pulo Soegi'.

Firstly, an archived document completed by one 'C. H. Cotterrell', REME, for the War Office and received on 7 December 1945 records he had been told by 'C. G. Kinsley' the names of two men bayoneted to death on Banka Island on '18 February 1942' and he tells us that the two men were;

- CFN. A. Atkins, # 7646745, Z.A.O.W.
- Sgt. R. G. Hurrell, # 5768950, Z.A.O.W.

CFN/Pte. A. Atkins fate is also recorded as having "... *Died on Banka Island ...*" by another soldier with the name of 'R.W. Thomas, REME' on another official form provided to the War Office after his release as a POW – his source is stated as "... *Members of ZAOW ...*".

The use of the date '18 February 1942' may at first glance seem at variance with the now understood precise timing of events of Radji Beach which took place on 16 February 1942, but (at least in the opinion of this researcher) in thinking through the practicality of the sequence of events it is unlikely that Cpl Kinsley saw anyone killed on the 18 February 1942 - since he was severely wounded from both the attack on the 'Pulo Soegi' and then the Japanese bayonets at 'Radji Beach' on 16 February - and on that particular date was lying hidden in the jungle adjacent to the beach where the massacre took place. Kinsley could only have relayed this information to Cotterrell in Muntok POW camp at least two weeks after the massacre, he might also have been delirious from his terrible bayonet wounds (he died from his wounds only three weeks later) and it seems impractical to expect that he would lucidly recall the precise dates of events. The fact that C. H. Cotterrell actually managed to retain this information through a variety of POW camps until his release from "... *Sendai No 2 Japan...*" camp three and a half years later is truly admirable! It is also worth understanding - in the context of Kinsley naming only two comrades to Cotterrell - that CFN. Kinsley would also have known only some of the RAOC officers and men in the lifeboat, since it is recorded by the officer in charge (T/Maj. Marsh) that the 68 men on the 'Pulo Soegi' had been suddenly assembled from disparate units of the RAOC from all over Singapore on the night of departure on 13 February. He probably knew only a few men in the ill-fated lifeboat.

Reality is, if Kinsley saw anyone bayoneted in February 1942 it could only have been his comrades on Radji Beach.

Secondly, in addition to the 'Cotterrell/Kinsley' record the UK Archives also contain another record by one 'W. A. Stroud, RAOC 14 Sec' who reported on another form to the War Office on 30 November 1945 which lists two other men as being "... *Bayoneted in Sumatra between 13th and 15th February 1942 ...*";

- S/Sgt. T. Hodgson, # 7610705, RAOC, 14 Sec
- Cpl. W.G.J. Sherrington, # 7624357, RAOC 14 Sec.

The source is stated to be "... *a party of survivors ...*" who were "... *brought back to Singapore in July or August 1942 ...*" which included 'Capt/ Major [actually T/Maj.] Marsh' who led the contingent of 14 Section, ZAOW, RAOC onto the 'Pulo Soegi' on the night of 13 February and would have also been a POW in Muntok camp after the sinking. This is not quite as directly applicable as the 'Cotterrell /Kinsley' information but it offers a reasonable base to suppose that S/Sgt Hodgson and Cpl. Sherrington may have been on 'Radji Beach' – if not on that location then almost certainly bayoneted to death somewhere adjacent on the North West coasts of Banka Island. We should ignore

the dates used here because in reality during 13 – 15 February these men were still at sea on the 'Pulau Soegi'.

Sherrington's death at the hands of the Japanese is also corroborated to the War Office by one 'James T. Thompson, RAOC' of Dunfermline on another official form dated 27 November 1945 where he records Sherrington was "... *Believed reported killed by Japs ...*" on "...*either Banka Is. Or Southern Sumatra ...*" and states the source as "...*Survivors of Regt. who were later returned to Changi S'pore. Is. Believed reported in RAOC records there. Men belonged mainly to 'Z' AOW, Malaya ...*". Thompson also then records another man killed by the Japanese and in the same place as Sherrington;

- A/P/Sjt. A Skimming, #7634180, 14th Sect. RAOC.

At the final, 'third hand' level of identification certainty there is firstly the 'possible' addition of;

- Private Cyril Hill, RAOC – who is recorded as having died on 16.2.42

But at this level of possible victims on 'Radji beach' it is much more worthy to note that T/Maj. Marsh also says in his December 1945 report, that he was told in Palembang POW camp that Kinsley had arrived at Muntok camp after he, Marsh, had been moved to Palembang and that Kinsley is reported to have said that he "... *reached shore in the ship's boat containing twenty men **including officers** ...*" [Underline by researcher]. Marsh continues in his report that the officers referred to [i.e.as those having been in the lifeboat] "... *were possibly 2nd Lt. Radford, RAOC, three ship's officers, Lt. Martin, NZRNVR, another NZRNVR officer name unknown, a R.N.V.R. Eng. Officer and a Lt Day RN or V. unknown (in talking to him on board he said he was attached to Malaya Command) ...*".

Lt. Martin, RNZNVR, was, of course, the Captain of the 'Pulo Soegi'.

In this context it is worth noting, but not conclusive since CWGC dates of death often refer to the date on which the deceased was last seen, that the dates of death recorded by the CWGC for Lt. Martin and Lt. Day are 16 February 1942 – which is not the date of the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi' – but on the other hand also worth noting that Marsh's speculation on the fate of Lt Radford, RAOC, is contradicted by one 'Craftsman Hope T. Cairns, 14th Section, RAOC' recording on a signed form that he was an eyewitness to the fact that Lt Radford had '*Drowned*' and this appears to be also the view of the CWGC who have Lt Radford's date of death as 15 February.

The newspaper 'New Zealand Herald' of 20 April 1942, when listing Lt., RNZNVR, as 'Missing on Active Service' noted that "... *He was in command of a small naval vessel which left Singapore on February 13, with **two other New Zealand officers** and a crew of 30 ...*" [Underline by researcher].

After taking this information into consideration we are left with the reasonable possibility of the following additional men being victims of the massacre on 'Radji Beach';

- Lt. Arthur John Martin, RNZNVR
- Lt. Leonard Stephen Day, SSRNVR/MRNVR
- Plus, at least one other 'unidentified' New Zealand Officer of the RNZNVR who - following investigation into NZ records - could very possibly have been Lt. Henry Alan Moray-Smith, RNZNVR, (whom the CWGC and NZ Navy records have as based with 'HMS Sultan' in Singapore and dying on 16 February 1942, but with no known place or cause of death, except a reference to 'HMS Sylvia' which ship did not exist. He may have been attached to the launch 'Sylvia' prior to the fall of Singapore, but that launch had been damaged and then repaired by Army soldiers and local

Volunteers and made its way from Singapore on 15 February to reach Sumatra unscathed). *If it was not Moray-Smith on the 'Pulo Soegi' then it brings into conjecture the names of RNZNVR Lieutenants such as Edgar Derbridge ('HMS Li Wo'), Geoffrey Inns ('SS Wo Kwang'), Colin MacMillan('ML1062') or John Upton ('SS Fanling') into consideration.*

All those twenty or so men who landed in the lifeboat were therefore dead on 'Radji Beach' by the end of that morning.

They were amongst a group of around 70 – 80 bodies lying on 'Radji Beach'.

Remarkably there were survivors from the massacre (full details of the circumstances and events of the atrocity are contained in the researcher's memorial document on the 'SS Vyner Brooke' and can be supplied by email on request) and it is they who many years later at the end of the war were able to tell the world of this truly horrible war crime. In summary, one RAOC man Cfn/Private Kinsley survived being bayoneted several times on the edge of the water and survived for weeks in the jungle before giving himself up but dying from his wounds on 24 March 1942; a USA civilian from the 'SS Vyner Brooke' by the name of Eric German unbelievably endured bayonet thrusts from the Japanese soldiers but pretended death and made no sound as further bayonets were thrust into him; a nurse in the Australian Army Nursing Service by the name of Vivian Bullwinkel also played dead after being shot (20 of her nursing companions were murdered on the beach) and one crew member from the 'SS Vyner Brooke' , Stoker Ernest Lloyd, RN, sprinted into the sea and swam away despite being hit by several bullets.

What happened to the bodies of this large group of victims is a matter of debate. The mainstream media had tended to repeat the story that they were all washed away by the tides but careful analysis of all the information available from survivors, shipwrecked survivors from other ships landing on 'Radji Beach' later that day, and POW reports by the researcher indicates that – whilst a number of bodies would have been below the high tide mark - many if not the majority of the remains were buried or burnt by local people , POWs under forced labour or the Japanese themselves . At the minimum we know for sure that a Malay sailor from the MRNVR serving on 'Pulo Soegi' and one ROAC soldier were buried on the beach before the massacre.

Memorial Services:

Amongst the thousands of war crimes and massacres carried out by the Japanese during the war only a minority are formally commemorated on location each year.

The massacre at 'Radji beach' on Banka Island is one of the few to be remembered by a well organised commemoration service on location.

Annually on 16 February a group organised by relatives of the AANS nurses and other victims gathers on the beach location to commemorate those who lost their lives in the massacre. This group has

grown over the years and now includes representatives from the AANS, the Australian Defence Forces and officials from the local Indonesian government.

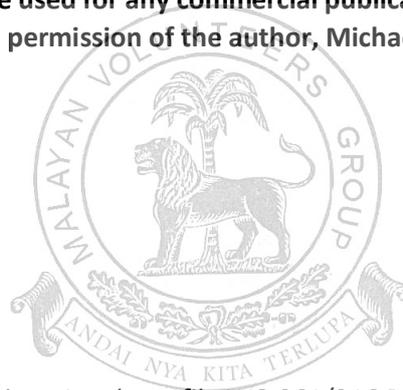
Another commemoration is carried out around the same date for men and women who died in POW and internment camps at Muntok on Banka Island.

See Facebook page 'Muntok Nurses and internees' and the website for the Muntok Peace Museum (muntokpeacemuseum.org).

Anyone with corrections or additional information or comments on the contents of this memorial document to those people on the 'Pulo Soegi' are welcome to contact the researcher Michael Pether, 2/23 Sanders Avenue, Takapuna, New Zealand. 0622. Telephone 09 – 4865754 or 0274543695. Email mncpether@xtra.co.nz.

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Sources:



- UK National Archives, London – file WO 361/316 RAOC Malaya.
- Book - 'Singapore's Dunkirk' by Geoffrey Brooke.
- Book - 'Spotlight on Singapore' by Denis Russell -Roberts.
- Book 'When Singapore Fell' by Joseph Kennedy.
- COFEPOW and Malayan Volunteer Group website for memorial documents on evacuation ships sunk after leaving Singapore – including 'SS Vyner Brooke' and vessels carrying RAOC men ('ML311'and 'ML432')
- CWGC – website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission
- Website in memory of Private Eric Diss, RAOC - <http://www.dissfamily.org.uk/Halstead%20Disses/Eric-Mary-Full-20010430/eric-diary.html>
- Website in memory of Private George Snowdon - <http://aotn.dvrDNS.org/MyWeb/public/websites/ww2/malaya.html>

Crew:

- **DAY – Lt. Leonard Stephen Day, SSRNVR.** Died on 16.2.42, husband of L. Day [this is actually Elizabeth Pauline Day] of Urmston, Lancashire (CWGC). He was born in 1909 in Barton – upon - Irwell to James (d. 1934) and Elizabeth Ann Day (d.1929 – family gravestone in St Saviour’s Churchyard, Wildboarclough, Cheshire) and spent the early years of his life at 66 Brook road, Flixton (1911 census). The website ‘Trafford War Dead’ continues with the information that “... on the 27th April 1929, Leonard embarked on the ‘SS Sarpedon’, a steamship of the Blue Funnel line and travelled 1st Class to Port Said and onwards to the Malayan Straits. Aged 29, he resided at 69 Brook Road, Flixton and was employed as a Clerk. He must have returned to the UK as he married - Elizabeth Pauline Farrand during the June quarter 1939 in the Manchester R.D. – ref. 8d/395. The UK Colonial Office recorded his death as being on or about the 16th February 1942 off Muntok in the Bangka Strait.... He was presumed to have lost his life in the sinking of the ‘HMS Pulo Soegi’, sunk by gunfire from a Japanese Cruiser. There were 25 survivors with 55 missing, one of whom was Lt Day... Administration of his estate was granted to his widow – Elizabeth Pauline Day, on the 8th April 1948 at Manchester. His Estate was valued at STG 871. His widow’s address was given as ‘Shutlingslow’, Dane Road, Sale”. Other sources tell us that Leonard was an Assistant, Sandilands Buttery & Co., 29 Beach Road, Penang (JMM) and became a Sub-Lt in the SSRNVR in 1936 (‘Malaya Tribune’ 15.8.36). During that year he began to feature regularly playing golf for Keppel Golf Club at Sepoy Lines and was best man at the wedding of W.H. Swan (Gas Dept, Singapore Municipality) and Hylde Roberts. Again in 1939 he was best man at the wedding of John Brown (Harrisons Barker & co) to Edith Speers in Penang (‘Malaya Tribune’ 21.7.39.) Lt. Day was listed as one of the ship’s officers believed by T/Major Marsh, officer in charge of the RAOC contingent on the ‘Pulo Soegi’, in the lifeboat that landed on ‘Radji Beach’ on the morning of the massacre. Poignantly in 1946 the ‘Sunday Tribune’ (15.9.36) published an article listing the owners of privately owned books which had been looted by the Japanese in Singapore and which had turned up at Raffles Library and the name of L. S. Day is amongst this long list – which included others who had lost their lives at the hands of the Japanese and from internment in Japanese camps.
- **MARTIN – Lt. Arthur John Martin, RNZNVR.** Captain of the ‘Pulo Soegi’. His early years are described in his old school magazine ‘The Taranakian’ December 1950, the magazine of New Plymouth Boys High School “... ARTHUR JOHN WALLER MARTIN. Lieutenant Arthur John Waller (Peter) Martin came to school from Moturoa in 1928 and remained until 1930. At school he showed interest in many things and was particularly good at games, taking a great interest in athletics. In April 1940 he was granted a commission in the NZRNVR (New Zealand Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve) with the rank of Temporary Lieutenant and left for Singapore in the same month to take up duties there. After extensive training around Malaya, he was promoted to Lieutenant in 1941. In January 1942 he was given command of a small reconditioned naval ship “Paula Soezi’ (sic) with a crew of three officers and thirty Malaysians. His ship left Singapore on the night of February 13th and as far as details can be ascertained, the ship was blown up by a Japanese warship on 16th February 1942.” (Wikipedia). A newspaper article in 1942 titled “Reported Missing: Well known

Yachtsmen” then filled out the story a little further “... Lieutenant A.J. Martin, who is listed as missing, is believed by his mother, Mrs B.I. Martin, of 18 Allenby Avenue, Devonport, to be safe. He was in command of a small naval vessel which left Singapore on February 13, **with two other New Zealand officers** and a crew of 30, and it is thought by other Dominion officers who have returned safely that the ship may have reached one of the outlying islands without interference. Lieutenant Martin, who was educated at the New Plymouth Boys’ High School, was a member of the senior Takapuna Rugby team and had acted as a forward hand of the Auckland yachts ‘Alpere’ and ‘Little Jim’ ... (“The New Zealand Herald’, 20 .4.42). Lt Martin was listed by T/Maj. Marsh, RAOC, who had been in command of the RAOC contingent on ‘Pulo Soegi’, in a post war report as in his view being one of the officers who landed in the ship’s boat on ‘Radji Beach’ on the morning of the massacre.

- **TAN – Tan Meng K**, Greaser, NAP, ‘Pulo Soegi’ died 16.2.42. MPK (CWGC)
- **MORAY – SMITH** – (NB: this person is a **speculative inclusion** in this list and primarily included because he was in Singapore attached to shore base ‘HMS Sultan’ and possibly a launch ‘Sylvia’, because another RNZNVR Officer is said to have been in the lifeboat landing on Radji beach. Also included because of a matching date of death and the fact that his cause and date of death are not officially known) Lt. Henry Alan Moray – Smith, RNZNVR, died 16.2.42 (CWGC has on ‘HMS Sylvia’ a non-existent ship at that time – although there did exist a launch by that name which escaped from Singapore – but with no mention of him being on board), son of John and Amelia Moray-Smith of Christchurch. Henry Moray – Smith. He appears to have come from Christchurch in the South Island of New Zealand and there is a record in ‘The Press’, a Christchurch newspaper, of 25.6.34 of him being appointed manager of the Rakaia branch of the NZ. Loan & Mercantile Agency. In 1935 he is reported playing golf and on the Committee of the Rakaia Athletics Association.
- **Unidentified Malay crew members from the MRNVR**
- **Unidentified RNZNVR officer**

ROAC passengers;

Notes;

- I. Names in Green font are those who survived the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi'.
- II. *names with asterisk before surname are those identified as dead by 'eyewitness' Private CAIRNS, RAOC in a signed schedule to the War Office (WO 361/316 Schedule dated 21.1.46).
- III. The CWGC has dates of death of 13 February 1942 for four of the men listed by CAIRNS as having been on board the 'Pulo Soegi' which left Singapore on 13.2.42. It is the researchers experience that the CWGC have used a record that these men were last seen by a witness in Singapore on 13.2.42 and that the CWGC may not have even seen the CIRNS schedule held at the UK Archives.
 - * **ALEXANDER – Corporal William Alexander**, # 7610304, ZAOW, RAOC, died 13.2.42 (CWGC) aged 24 years, son of William M. and Margaret B. Alexander of Falkirk, Stirlingshire. In the Archives file schedule by CAIRNS someone has made a handwritten notation 'Extd' but the meaning of this abbreviation is unknown.
 - * **ARMSTRONG -Private Thomas Kennedy Armstrong**, # 1578879, 14th Section, RAOC, died on 15.2.42 aged 23 years. Son of James M. and Mary K. Harkness Armstrong of Portobello, Midlothian. (CWGC)
 - **ARTHURS – Private Joseph Albert Arthurs**, # 7599473, RAOC born 1920 and captured 15.2.42 was a POW in Palembang and then in the 'Japan Party, 17 July 1942'. His home address was given as '1 Fitzwilliam Square, Greenborough, Rotherham, Yorks' (Palembang POW list). He is quoted ('Singapore's Dunkirk', Geoffrey Brooke, pp 172-173) as having told a Sergeant – Major Hosking, that he was on the 'Paula Soegi' and after a bombing attack on 14 February when the vessel "... came in for one bomb which failed to explode ...", the vessel was in the Banka Strait on the evening of 15 February when "... a terrific explosion took place underneath him and he was partly lifted and thrown by the blast onto the hatchway beneath and fell on the lads who had been sleeping there, but had now jumped up, wondering what was happening. Another salvo hit the ship forward and Arthurs rolled off the hatchway and managed to get between the hatchway top and the engine room plating and in this position was sheltered on two sides.... [the order to abandon ship was given] ... Arthurs saw another set of flashes, so stayed under cover, and this salvo whistled over the ship and fell 'plus'. He managed to find a steel helmet nearby and put this on and waited for some time, it seemed like hours to him, and lay watching the gun flashes every few seconds , and the shells would either hit the ship or go overhead and explode in the water, Arthurs felt a bit 'shaky' but felt safer in his position on the ship than being in the sea, although he was surrounded by men moaning and groaning, and to hear the screams of some of the wounded was a ghastly experience. There was a short pause in the shooting, so thinking the shelling had finished, Arthurs decided to go over the side. Just as he stood up another salvo hit the ship , and he seemed to be in the midst of hot wires and sparks flying all around him, and suddenly his left ankle felt as if someone had stuck a lot of red hot needles into it, then his right leg similarly, then something hit the side of the engine room plating, then his steel helmet. Arthurs dropped to the deck quickly and as he

went to put his helmet back into position on his head he burnt four fingers. Examining his steel helmet later he found a shell splinter about four inches long had stuck into the helmet and had penetrated about half an inch. After this experience Arthurs waited again to ensure the firing had ceased – the pain in his legs making him feel sick. He heard someone call out to see there was anybody all right on the ship and Arthurs stood up and called back. By this time the ship was blazing furiously and small arms and Bofors ammunition started to explode through the heat. The man who had shouted came up and asked Arthurs if he could help with some of the wounded. They went up on deck, but one lifeboat was away and the other had a shell hole in it. They then went down below and found a stock of lifebelts, which they put on the wounded and through the latter over the side. This was a very unpleasant job as most of Arthurs' friends were badly wounded by shrapnel and blast. And he found his own injuries were very slight compared to theirs. The ship was Listing badly by this time: they decided to leave before it was too late and going up on deck, staggering around the Bofors gun; in the light of the fire, Arthurs recognised him as Private Jack Fleming from Anson Road workshop, who explained that he was going to sit on a bench in the dark, pointing out over the water. Arthurs realised he was mentally affected by the blast etc and the three of them went over the side together, making their way to a raft about a hundred yards away. This was a Carley float designed for eight men and there were thirty hanging on to it, those outside holding the shoulders of those holding on to the raft. The sea was very rough and beating onto their faces with some force. Two men could be heard shouting for help in the distance and Major Marsh asked for any strong swimmers to volunteer to go to their assistance. Arthurs and another man eventually set off, guided by the shouts and found Privates Jock Kinney and Reggie Ballard, the latter being dangerously close to the blazing ship which was about to founder; Arthurs was conscious of the danger of the suction taking him down with the ship. They returned to the raft successfully. Land appeared to be only about five miles away and Major Marsh suggested that good swimmers should leave the raft to the weaker and non-swimmers; at which several men including Marsh set off independently, all wearing life jackets. [Major Marsh in his account of the sinking makes the terrible observation that around this time there were terrible screams from men in the water and recorded "...I am afraid they were caused by sharks ..."] "...". Private Arthurs account continues to tell us that during the next morning as he swam alone a Japanese cruiser circled him twice with the crew laughing but they did not pick him up. He considered trying to end his life by strangling himself with the cord on the identity discs around his neck but decided to persevere through the pain of 'water bugs' [probably sea lice] and a terrific headache from the sun during the afternoon following the sinking. After another night in the sea he pulled himself ashore on Banka island [this must have been the 17 February]and collapsed asleep – he was captured by two Japanese soldiers who stole his watch and the ring on his finger before bundling him into a small motor boat and delivering him to Muntok where he became a POW. The 'postscript' is that the nineteen men on the 'Pulo Soegi's' 'raft were picked up by a captured RAF launch and brought into Muntok.

- **ATKINS – CFN. Arnold Wilson Atkins, #7646745, ZAOW, 14 section, RAOC.** Died aged 32 years on 15.2.42 (CWGC), son of Samuel and Elizabeth Atkins; husband of Gladys Evelyn Atkins of Ravensthorpe, Dewsbury, Yorkshire. The IWM website shows a memorial at Kirklees, Longwood, Yorkshire recording Arnold Atkins and stating "... Died of Wounds, Muntok, Banka island, February 16, 1942 ...". In the UK Archives at Kew an archived document in file wo 361/316 being a schedule completed by one

'C. H. Cotterrell', REME, for the War Office and received on 7 December 1945 records he had been told by 'C. G. Kinsley' the names of two men bayoneted to death on Banka Island on '18 February 1942' and he tells us that the two men were;

- CFN. A. Atkins, # 7646745, Z.A.O.W.
- Sgt. R. G. Hurrell, # 5768950, Z.A.O.W.

CFN/Pte. A. Atkins fate is also recorded as having "... *Died on Banka Island ...*" by another soldier with the name of 'R.W. Thomas, REME' on another official form provided to the War Office after his release as a POW – his source is stated as "... *Members of ZAOW ...*".

The use of the date '18 February 1942' may at first glance seem at variance with the now understood precise timing of events of Radji Beach which took place on 16 February 1942, but (at least for this researcher) in thinking through the practicality of the sequence of events it is unlikely that Cpl Kinsley saw anyone killed on the 18 February 1942 - since he was severely wounded from both the attack on the 'Pulo Soegi' and then the Japanese bayonets at 'Radji Beach' - and on that particular date was lying hidden in the jungle adjacent to the beach where the massacre took place. Kinsley could only have relayed this information to Cotterrell in Muntok POW camp at least two weeks after the massacre, he might also have been delirious from his terrible bayonet wounds (he died from his wounds only three weeks later) and it seems impractical to expect that he would lucidly recall the precise dates of events. The fact that C. H. Cotterrell actually managed to retain this information through a variety of POW camps until his release from "... Sendai No 2 Japan..." camp three and a half years later is truly admirable! It is also worth understanding - in the context of Kinsley naming only two comrades to Cotterrell - that CFN. Kinsley would also have known only some of the RAOC officers and men in the lifeboat, since it is recorded by the officer in charge (T/Maj. Marsh) that the 68 men on the 'Pulo Soegi' had been suddenly assembled from disparate units of the RAOC from all over Singapore on the night of departure on 13 February. He probably knew only a few men in the ill-fated lifeboat.

Reality is, if Kinsley saw anyone bayoneted in February 1942 it could only have been his comrades on Radji Beach.

- * **BACON/ 'BAKON'** – Craftsman H.T. Cairns, REME, reported to the War Office, Liverpool on an official schedule that he was an eyewitness to the death by drowning of 'Sgt. Bacon, 14th Section, RAOC' on 15.2.42 in Banka Straits (Cairns reported some 20 other deaths by drowning amongst the same RAOC unit on the same schedule on the same date). This credible report is at variance with the record at the CWGC (which has a stated policy of using the 'date last seen' as the date of death on many men in the war against the Japanese) and there must have been other reports that Sgt Bacon was seen in Singapore on 13.2.42 before he boarded the 'Pulo Soegi'. The CWGC record is **Serjeant Ernest Ivor Bacon, #1069547**, died 13.2.42, aged 30 years, RAOC. Son of Ernest Ivor and Florence Bacon: husband of Ellen Bacon of Portsmouth (CWGC).
- **BALLARD – Private Reginald 'Reggie' W. Ballard, # 1578836, RAOC.** He was born in 1920. Saved at sea by Private Arthurs, RAOC, as recorded in 'Singapore's Dunkirk' by Geoffrey Brooke where he recounts that after the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi' Arthurs

was struggling in the rough sea with many other survivors “...This was a Carley float designed for eight men and there were thirty hanging on to it, those outside holding the shoulders of those holding on to the raft. The sea was very rough and beating onto their faces with some force. Two men could be heard shouting for help in the distance and Major Marsh asked for any strong swimmers to volunteer to go to their assistance. Arthurs and another man eventually set off, guided by the shouts and found Privates Jock Kinney and Reggie Ballard, the latter being dangerously close to the blazing ship which was about to founder; Arthurs was conscious of the danger of the suction taking him down with the ship. They returned to the raft successfully...”. Reggie’s records show that he was captured on 16.2.42 and after time in Palembang camp was sent to Japan in a ‘Japan Party’. The Japan Party left on 17 July 1942. His home address in camp records was ‘Mother: Mrs. Ballard, 82 East Hill, Dartford, Kent’.

- * **BIBBY – Private Arthur James Bibby**, # 1572468, 14th Section, RAOC., died 15.2.42 aged 22 years. Son of Arthur Albert and Alice Bibby of Clacton – on – Sea, Essex. (CWGC).
- * **BLEMINGS / ‘BLEMMINGS’ – Private Thomas Blemings**, # 7623410, RAOC, Attd. 285 Field Park Coy., RE. Died on 15.2.42 aged 22 years, son of Thomas John and Isobel Blemings of Rutherglen, Lanarkshire. There is a handwritten notation on the CAIRNS schedule stating ‘KIA’.
- **BOULTON – Private George William Boulton**, # 7641606, RAOC. A source says they saw Armstrong, Bibby and Boulton on a small coastal craft near a group of islands on 14.2.42. Boulton was on the ‘Pulo Soegi’ and the earliest he could have died was on 15.2.42. However, the CWGC (which often uses the ‘last day seen’ as the date of death for those who lost their lives) states that “... aged 21 years he died 14.2.42” and is also memorialised on the Singapore memorial, Col.108. In the UK archives there is a physical description of him as “... five foot ten inches, medium build, dark hair and last seen on a small coastal craft near some islands on the way to Java on 14.2.42 “.
- * **BUTLER – Private William Butler**, # 1578691, RAOC, died 15.2.42 aged 24 years, son of Mr. & Mrs. J. Butler of Sherwood, Nottingham and husband of K.L. Butler of Thorneywood, Nottingham (CWGC).
- **CAIRNS – Craftsman Hope T. Cairns**, # 7636619, 14th Section, RAOC. States on a schedule dated 22.1.46 that he was on ‘Pulo Soegi’ and an eyewitness to the drowning of Lt. Radford (who Temp Major Marsh has confirmed as being on ‘Pulo Soegi’). Cairns recorded that he was captured at ‘MONTOCK’ Banka on 15.2.42 (16.2.42 according to Palembang POW schedules) and released at the end of the War from Palembang camp records are that his home address was ‘Mrs Cairns, 27 Preston Street, High Val. Field, Fife, Scotland’. A very sad note to his life is added in a Fife, Scotland newspaper article in August 2007 recording that Hope Cairns aged 87 years had been attacked by three boys aged 11 -13 years of age and knocked off his mobility scooter in Dunfermline. After a lifetime of living in Fife and with a harsh experience during the War this was a sad reflection on Fife society.
- **DISS – Private Eric Diss**, # 7634791, RAOC, born 14.3.14, he was a jeweller and Director of the family firm F. Diss & sons, Dewsbury, he married Mary Blacka in 1940. He initially joined the RAOC but transferred to REME as an Instrument maintenance mechanic. He arrived in Singapore in May 1941 - there are a lot of his letters home on the Diss family genealogy website. In 1942 he wrote in his diary that, after the ship began to sink “... 16th Feb. After narrowly escaping being pulled under ships’ propeller – swam for 10 minutes and found a small raft with some of our men hanging on. Tried in vain to make land – were beaten by strong cross -currents.

At midday only four of us left on raft, 4pm approx. picked up in heavy sea by captured RAF launch taken to Muntok harbour. Taken up to Airfield – worked until 2.30 pm slept in field ...”. He also wrote in a POW camp letter dated 6.3.42 “ ... we lost three quarters of our men on board, but I was one of the lucky ones, who was able to jump for it and cling to a raft for 14 hours until I was picked up and brought ashore ... ‘ ; his comrade AQM JOYES wrote in a letter to Mary Diss after the War “ ... he had managed to grasp a raft and cling to it for 15 hours when he was picked up in the morning by the Japs..” there are also other references “ ... he swam to Banka Is. Took him 14 hours ...” (Diss website letter 17.11.45) and that he was “... taken to ‘Airdrome’ Muntok...”. Palembang camp records show his home address as ‘Mrs Diss, Ashfield, Oxford Road, Dewsbury, Yorks’. Tragically only five days after the Japanese surrender and three days before the Australian Air Force flew in supplies Eric Diss died in Palembang camp on 20.8.45. He was initially buried in No.2 Campo cemetery, Grave 163.

- ***DOBBS / ‘DOBBE’ – Private Herbert William Dobbs, # 7643018, ‘Z’ Adv. Workshop, RAOC, died 13.2.42 aged 31 years. Husband of Naomi Rachel Dobbs, of East park, Hull. (CWGC). The schedule completed and signed by CAIRNS states that Dobbs drowned on 15.2.42 and someone has noted in hand on the schedule ‘KIA’.**
- **FLEMING - Private William Fleming, # 7598444, ‘Z’ AOW, REME from whose MI9 Liberation questionnaire we learn that he was born on 17.11.19 and was from 1 Alexander Street, Coatbridge, Scotland. His father was Mr. D. Fleming at the same address (Palembang camp records). He was captured on 16.2.42 in the Banka Straits and was moved as a POW to Japan as part of the 17 July 1942 ‘Japan Party’. This is probably the same man as probably Private ‘Jack’ Fleming (REME) who was saved (‘Singapore’s Dunkirk’ p.174) by Private Arthurs “ ... The ship was Listing badly by this time: they decided to leave before it was too late and going up on deck, staggering around the Bofors gun; in the light of the fire, Arthurs recognised him as Private Jack Fleming from Anson Road workshop, who explained that he was going to sit on a bench in the dark, pointing out over the water. Arthurs realised he was mentally affected by the blast etc and the three of them went over the side together, making their way to a raft about a hundred yards away. This was a Carley float designed for eight men and there were thirty hanging on to it, those outside holding the shoulders of those holding on to the raft. The sea was very rough and beating onto their faces with some force...”. Pte. Fleming recorded that his imprisonment was firstly in ‘Montok’ Hospital, then Palembang Hospital [so he must have been significantly affected during the sinking], before being moved to Singapore, then Formosa and finally Japan. His latter two POW Commanders were Col. Lindsay and then Major Teesdale.**
- *** GILLIARD – Staff Serjeant Harold Hall Gillard, # 7586888, ‘Z’ Adv. Ordnance workshop, RAOC, died 15.2.42, son of Henry Hall Gillard and Kate Gillard of Newport, Isle of Wight (CWGC). On the CAIRNS schedule someone has made handwritten notations ‘M’ and ‘Extd’**
- *** GRAY – Private John Waugh Gray, # 7599226, RAOC, died [according to the CWGC] on 13.2.42 [but this was probably a date that someone in Singapore ‘saw’ Gray and the CWGC often use such a date as the day of death in the absence of other information], aged 21 years, son of John W. and Jane S. Gray of Brightons, Stirlingshire. He is also memorialised on the Singapore memorial, Col. 109. (CWGC). Brightons is a village in Scotland south east of Falkirk. On the CAIRNS schedule (held**

in the UK Archives file on the RAOC) which states that Craftsman Cairns, RAOC, saw John Gray drown on 16.2.42 after the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi', someone has made the handwritten notation 'KIA'.

- *** HADDON – Pte Haddon, 14th Section, RAOC.** – *this is a name recorded by Craftsman Cairns on a schedule to the War Office after the War, of men whom he saw drown after the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi' – but the spelling must be incorrect because there is no record at the CWGC of the death of such a person at this time.*
- **HODGSON -Staff Sgt. Thomas Hodgson, # 7610705, ZAOW, 14 Section, RAOC.** Died 16.2.42 (CWGC) aged 37 years. The UK Archives file on the RAOC also contains another record by one 'W. A. Stroud, RAOC 14 Sec' who reported on another form to the War Office on 30 November 1945 which lists two other men as being *"...Bayoneted in Sumatra between 13th and 15th February 1942 ..."* [*Researcher Note: It seems extremely unlikely that Hodgson could have reached Sumatra by 15 February 1942 to have been bayoneted and the more likely scenario is that Staff Sgt Hodgson was in the ships lifeboat with Cpl Kinsley and was murdered by Japanese troops on 'Radji beach' - which massacre took place on 16.2.42.*]
 - S/Sgt. T. Hodgson, # 7610705, RAOC, 14 Sec
 - Cpl. W.G.J. Sherrington, # 7624357, RAOC 14 Sec.

The source is stated to be *"... a party of survivors ..."* who were *"... brought back to Singapore in July or August 1942 ..."* which included 'Capt/ Major [actually T/Maj.] Marsh' who led the contingent of 14 Section, ZAOW, RAOC onto the 'Pulo Soegi' on the night of 13 February and would have spoken to POWs who had been in Muntok camp after the sinking and when Kinsley was brought into Muntok POW camp. This is not quite as directly applicable as the 'Cotterell /Kinsley' information but it offers a reasonable base to suppose that S/Sgt Hodgson and Cpl. Sherrington may have been on 'Radji Beach' –if not on that location then almost certainly bayoneted to death somewhere adjacent on the North West coasts of Banka Island. Sherrington's death at the hands of the Japanese is also corroborated to the War Office by one 'James T. Thompson, RAOC' of Dunfermline on another official form dated 27 November 1945 where he records Sherrington was *"... Believed reported killed by Japs ..."* on *"...either Banka Is. Or Southern Sumatra ..."* and states the source as *"...Survivors of Regt. who were later returned to Changi S'pore. Is. Believed reported in RAOC records there. Men belonged mainly to 'Z' AOW, Malaya ..."*.

Other documents in the 'RAOC' section of the WO 361/316 file give us descriptions of Staff Sgt. Hodgson;

- *"... This NCO was employed in the Base Ord. depot, Singapore, so far as I can recall, he was in 14 Sect RAOC and was employed in the Depot Pay Office ..."* (J. Collier, S/Cdr, RAOC)
- *"... Hodgson was employed in the Company office and describes him as 5 '10' or 5' 11', spare build, little hair, fair or greying, age 40 – 45 years. Civil occupation – either the owner or manager of a small factory or mill somewhere in the north of England. (S.R. Clark, S/Cdr.)*
- *"... height about 5' 9" or 5' 10", fair complexion, hair light brown, slight build ..."* (W.A. Stroud)

- **HURRELL – Sgt. Robert George Hurrell, # 5768950, ZAOW, RAOC.** Died 16.2.42 aged 36 years (CWGC). Husband of Violet Agnes Hurrell of Hinckley, Leicestershire. Marsh wrote to his wife after the war at Cropston Magna, Nr. Hinckley, Leicester. an archived document completed by one 'C. H. Cotterell', REME, for the War Office and received on 7 December 1945 records he had been told by 'C. G. Kinsley' the names of two men bayoneted to death on Banka Island on '18 February 1942' and he tells us that the two men were;
- CFN. A. Atkins, # 7646745, Z.A.O.W.
 - Sgt. R. G. Hurrell, # 5768950, Z.A.O.W.

CFN/Pte. A. Atkins fate is also recorded as having "... *Died on Banka Island ...*" by another soldier with the name of 'R.W. Thomas, REME' on another official form provided to the War Office after his release as a POW – his source is stated as "... *Members of ZAOW ...*".

The use of the date '18 February 1942' may at first glance seem at variance with the now understood precise timing of events of Radji Beach which took place on 16 February 1942, but (at least for this researcher) in thinking through the practicality of the sequence of events it is unlikely that Cpl Kinsley saw anyone killed on the 18 February 1942 - since he was severely wounded from both the attack on the 'Pulo Soegi' and then the Japanese bayonets at 'Radji Beach' - and on that particular date was lying hidden in the jungle adjacent to the beach where the massacre took place. Kinsley could only have relayed this information to Cotterell in Muntok POW camp at least two weeks after the massacre, he might also have been delirious from his terrible bayonet wounds (he died from his wounds only three weeks later) and it seems impractical to expect that he would lucidly recall the precise dates of events. The fact that C. H. Cotterell actually managed to retain this information through a variety of POW camps until his release from "... Sendai No 2 Japan..." camp three and a half years later is truly admirable! It is also worth understanding - in the context of Kinsley naming only two comrades to Cotterell - that CFN. Kinsley would also have known only some of the RAOC officers and men in the lifeboat, since it is recorded by the officer in charge (T/Maj. Marsh) that the 68 men on the 'Pulo Soegi' had been suddenly assembled from disparate units of the RAOC from all over Singapore on the night of departure on 13 February. He probably knew only a few men in the ill-fated lifeboat.

Reality is, if Kinsley saw anyone bayoneted in February 1942 it could only have been his comrades on Radji Beach.

- **JENKINS – Private Elwyn William Jenkins, # 7612436, RAOC, Attd. 65 (The Norfolk yeomanry) Anti – tank regt., RA., son of Mrs A. J. Jenkins of Miskin, Glamorgan (CWGC).** The CAIRNS schedule records him as 14th Section, RAOC and someone has noted against his name 'Extd' an 'M'.
- **JOYES -A.Q.M. Sgt. Joyes (Eric Diss story – letter to Eric's mother]. This is according to Palembang camp records, W.O. 2, F. Joyes, # 7587442, RAOC, whose home address was recorded as Mrs. F. Joyes, 54 Bicester Road, Richmond, Surrey.**

- **KINNEY – Private H.M. ‘Jock’ Kinney, # 7642583, RAOC.** Saved at sea by Private Arthurs who related that after the sinking of the ‘Pulo Soegi’ he swam to a raft and “... This was a Carley float designed for eight men and there were thirty hanging on to it, those outside holding the shoulders of those holding on to the raft. The sea was very rough and beating onto their faces with some force. Two men could be heard shouting for help in the distance and Major Marsh asked for any strong swimmers to volunteer to go to their assistance. Arthurs and another man eventually set off, guided by the shouts and found Privates Jock Kinney and Reggie Ballard, the latter being dangerously close to the blazing ship which was about to founder; Arthurs was conscious of the danger of the suction taking him down with the ship. They returned to the raft successfully. (*‘Singapore’s Dunkirk’* pp. 176-177, by Geoffrey Brooke). In the Palembang POW camp database, it is recorded that Jock Kinney was captured the following day, 16.2.42. His home address is recorded as ‘Mrs. E. Kinney, 34 Vine Street, Glasgow, Scotland’.
- **KINSLEY (sometimes misspelt as KINGSLEY) - Private Cecil Gordon Kinsley, # 7654688, Royal Army Ordinance Corps, ‘Z’ Advanced Worksoop, aged 33 years died on 23.3.42, and was the husband of Elsie Kinsley, Beverley, Yorkshire, he is remembered on Col. 109 of the Singapore memorial at Kranji (CWGC).** Private Kinsley was a survivor from the sinking of another ship near Banka island – the ‘Pulo Soegi’ and landed in a lifeboat with other ‘ZAOW’, RAOC soldiers and some members of the ship’s crew 9 including ship’s officers) at ‘Radji Beach’ on the morning of Monday 16 February 1942. Kinsley (incorrectly named ‘Kingsley’ by Eric German in his account as recorded in BYE) had been one of the wounded lying on stretchers at the top of Radji Beach – whom the Japanese proceeded to bayonet after they had murdered the three main groups of men and then nurses on the Beach (BYE, p. 153). Eric German states that when he returned to the site of the killings after hiding in the jungle he found “...Two stretchers were empty. One had been the old magistrates’ and the other the wounded soldier Kingsley’s. What had become of Kingsley? Thinking perhaps Kingsley had survived the bayoneting and crawled into the jungle they searched the immediate area and called his name. No answer...”. Kinsley had in fact crawled into the jungle and some hours after the massacre he heard Vivian Bullwinkel nearby and called out “... Where have you been, nurse?” (Vivian became exasperated with him later and told him off for calling him a ‘nurse’ – she was a ‘Sister’! He told Vivian during the 12 days they hid in the jungle that he was from Yorkshire and his wife’s name was ‘Elsie’ (“Singapore Burning” by Colin Smith, p.534) – he was born in 1909, was from Hull and had married Elsie Pearson in 1933 in Yorkshire. Cecil Kinsley had survived two bayonet thrusts to the lower and upper abdomen (one of which had punctured his lung) during the killings on Radji Beach, which came on top of the shrapnel wound he had presumably suffered in the sinking of the ‘Pulo Soegi’ which had sliced his left upper arm to the bone (p.535). Vivian Bullwinkel recalled that all his wounds became infected whilst they were in the jungle. After some 12 days they began to trek together to Muntok – incredibly a Japanese naval officer in an open topped tourer picked them up, gave them each a banana, and drove them to Muntok. Without access to the drugs which would have saved him, Private Cecil Kinsley died in hospital in the POW camp there on 24 March 1942 and was buried in the cemetery there. (“Singapore Burning”, p. 5353). There is also a War office schedule in WO 361/316 by C.H. Cotterell, Z. Advanced Workshops, REME, stating “... Cfn. C.G. Kinsley, 7654688, Dead, three

bayonet wounds in chest, died Muntok, bank is 28.2.42 [NOTE different date of death] Informant G. COPELY, ZAOW ..." [There was a private A. Copley in Palembang POW camp].

- * **LUCAS – Private Francis Godfrey Lucas, # 7592071, 'Z' AOW, RAOC**, died 13.2.42 (this is an error by the CWGC and presumably arises from their policy of dating death from the last time there was a sighting of a person – but they appear to have been ignorant of the files of the War Office that evidence him being on the 'Pulo Soegi' when it sank) aged 31 years, husband of E. Lucas of Dorchester, Dorsetshire (CWGC), also on Singapore memorial ,Co;. 109. The UK Archives files also show that Temp. Major Marsh, OIC troops on the 'Pulo Soegi', recorded that he visited the wife of Private Lucas after the War "Wife, 9 Damer Road, Dorchester".
- * **MARTIN – A Private Martin** is reported drowned by Craftsman Cairns on 16.2.42 and also 'KIA' is recorded on the RAOC file at the UK Archives. There were two men from the RAOC who died around the relevant date **Private Ernest William Martin, # 7646710, 'Z' AOW, RAOC**, aged 31 years, died 13.2.42, son of Arthur and Alice Martin; husband of Winifred G. martin of Braunstone, Leicestershire (CWGC). Also,
- ***MARTIN – Private James Martin, #7635427, 'Z' AOW, RAOC**, died 13.2.42 aged 32 years, son of James and Elizabeth Martin of Dumbarton. (CWGC). – it may have been that one or both men were on the 'Pulo Soegi' and seen by cairns on the ship. Another RAOC man on the 'Pulo Soegi' writes that he did not recall 'Martin' being at the last parade at Anson Road Workshop in Singapore on 13.2.42, but states that he should have been there because he was part of the Workshop staff.
- **MOYS/ * MOYCE – Warrant Officer Class 1 Sidney Charles Moys, # 7585755, RAOC**, died 15.2.42 aged 38 years. Son of Charles and Ann Moys, husband of Vera Moys of Southbourne, Hampshire (CWGC). Temp Major Marsh records him as 'S.M. Moys, REME" and states officially that upon his return to the UK he had been to visit "Wife, 46 Hilary Ave. Cosham, Hants."
- ***PARROTT / * PIRATE – Corporal Pirate, 'Z' AOW, RAOC** (*sic -a spelling mistake by an RAOC comrade who was with him when the 'Pulo Soegi' sank*). This was **Corporal Frank Henry Parrott, # 5723590, 'Z' AOW, RAOC**, died 13.2.42 (error by CWGC as to date, this would be simply when a record would have shown he was seen in Singapore) aged 32 years, husband of Helen Parrott of Dorchester, Dorsetshire and recorded on the Singapore memorial, Col. 108. (CWGC). According to Craftsman C.H. Cotterrell, Corporal Parrott died after the sinking of the 'Pulo Soegi' on 16 2.42 in the Banka Straits (UK Archives). The files in the UK Archives also show that Temp. Major Marsh visited the wife of Corporal Parrott, REME. "Wife, 54 Marie Road, Dorchester" after the War.
- * **PRICE – Private Rex Percy Woodville Price, # 7630908, RAOC**, attd. 122 Army Field regt., RA., died 15.2.42 aged 24 years. (CWGC).
- * **RADFORD – 2nd Lieutenant Albert Stanley Radford, # P/1897/62, 14th Section, RAOC**, died on 15.2.42 aged 32 years, son of Albert J. and Elizabeth Radford, husband of Constance E.M. Radford of New port, Monmouthshire (CWGC) also on

the Newport memorial. 'The London Gazette' of 10.6.41 noted the appointment of Albert Stanley Radford to the rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

- **SHERRINGTON – Corporal William George James Sherrington**, # 7624357, ZAOW, 14 section, RAOC, died 13.2.42 (CWGC) aged 26 years, son of William and Nellie Sherrington; husband of M. Sherrington of Southend – on -Sea, Essex. The UK Archives also contain another record by one 'W. A. Stroud, RAOC 14 Sec' who reported on another form to the War Office on 30 November 1945 which lists two other men as being "...Bayoneted in Sumatra between 13th and 15th February to the War Office on 30 November 1945 which lists two other men as being "...Bayoneted in Sumatra between 13th and 15th February 1942 ...";

- S/Sgt. T. Hodgson, # 7610705, RAOC, 14 Sec
- Cpl. W.G.J. Sherrington, # 7624357, RAOC 14 Sec.

The source is stated to be " ... a party of survivors ..." who were "... brought back to Singapore in July or August 1942 ..." which included 'Capt/ Major [actually T/Maj.] Marsh' who led the contingent of 14 Section, ZAOW, RAOC onto the 'Pulo Soegi' on the night of 13 February and would have also been a POW in Muntok camp after the sinking. This is not quite as directly applicable as the 'Cotterell /Kinsley' information but it offers a reasonable base to suppose that S/Sgt Hodgson and Cpl. Sherrington may have been on 'Radji Beach' – if not on that location then almost certainly bayoneted to death somewhere adjacent on the North West coasts of Banka Island. Sherrington's death at the hands of the Japanese is also corroborated to the War Office by one 'James T. Thompson, RAOC' of Dunfermline on another official form dated 27 November 1945 where he records Sherrington was "... Believed reported killed by Japs ..." on "...either Banka Is. Or Southern Sumatra ..." and states the source as "...Survivors of Regt. who were later returned to Changi S'pore. Is. Believed reported in RAOC records there. Men belonged mainly to 'Z' AOW, Malaya ...".

- **SKIMMING - Sgt. Archibald Skimming**, # 7634180, ZAOW, 14 section, RAOC. Died on 15.2.42 (CWGC) aged 29 years, the son of Margaret Skimming, of Motherwell, Lanarkshire. The file wo 361/316 contains a schedule signed by James K. Thompson, RAOC, in which he recorded "... A/A/Sgt. A. Skimming, 7634180, 14thSection, RAOC, died 'bayoneted by Japs' either Banka is. Or southern Sumatra. The source was survivors of Regt. returning to Changi [POW camp Singapore]. His description is given as "...tall well built belonged Motherwell, Lanarkshire ...". Temp. Major Marsh wrote to Skimming's father after the war at 18 Albert Street, Motherwell. In another document Thompson also then records another man killed by the Japanese and in the **same place** as Cpl. Sherrington (noted in previous entry) this being ' P/Sjt. A Skimming, #7634180, 14th Sect. RAOC'.
- * **SNOWDON – Serjeant Phillip Simpson Snowdon**, # 7594276, RAOC, died 17.2.42 [Note that date of death between CWGC and signed schedule is different] aged 28 years, son of Edward and jane Snowdon, husband of Vera Snowden of Seaton Delaval, Northumberland (CWGC).
- **St. CLAIR – Private Claude Evelyn Edgar St. Clair**, # 7639972, RAOC, died 13.2.42 aged 28 years, son of Maud Grace St. Clair of Canvey island, Essex (CWGC) [Note the disparity in date of death between CWGC and CAIRNS schedule.]. On the CAIRNS

schedule someone has made a handwritten notation against the name of St Clair of 'Died'.

- **SNOWDON – Pte George Albert Snowdon, # 7608946, RAOC** [his story is on the website <http://aotn.dvrDNS.org/MyWeb/public/websites/ww2/malaya.html>], he was captured on 16.2.42 and his home address was recorded in Palembang camp records as 'Mrs. G. Snowdon, 53 Brunton Street, Percy Main, Newcastle-On-Tyne'.

- * **TENNENT/TENANT** – a "... Pte. Tenant ... "is on the schedule (which has a few other spelling errors) held in file WO 361/in the UK Archives and signed by Craftsman CAIRNS as men he knew were on the ship and drowned - against which name is also noted in handwriting, someone other than CAIRNS, the initials 'KIA'. The CWGC has a person with a surname spelt differently but which is very probably be the person CAIRNS warranted was on the 'Pulo Soegi – this is **Lance Corporal John Tennent, # 7624382, RAOC**, died aged 27 years on 13.2.42 [no other details given by CWGC].

- * **WOODHEAD – Private John Watkin Woodhead, 3 10538482, RAOC, died 15.2.42 aged 22 years, son of Ernest and Mabel Woodhead of Bolton, Lanarkshire. F.I.A. (CWGC). Temp. major Marsh** wrote to his mother after the war at Ellet Bank, Bay Horse, Lancaster. On the CAIRNS schedule someone has made a handwritten notation against his name with 'Extd' and 'M'.

- **'Unidentified soldier'** - almost certainly a man from the RAOC who was in the lifeboat which landed on 'Radji Beach' early on the morning of 16 February 1942. This soldier died soon after the lifeboat landed and was immediately buried on 'Radji Beach' – he is almost certainly one of the men listed above.