

Harbour Defence Motor Launch 1062

Sunk by gunfire Banka Straits 16 February 1942

[Version 1.1.0; December 2018]



A Harbour Defence Motor Launch of the same design as HDML 1062

HDML 1062 was one of two (the other was HDML 1063) Fairmile Harbour Defence Motor launches built in Singapore and completed in January 1942 for the Straits Settlement RNVR. Others, with batch numbers up to 1220, had been planned or construction started, but wartime events and the invasion of Singapore meant they were not completed - and some never started. In fact, post War in 1946 the 'Straits Times' had an advertisement for the sale of HDML1086 "... *in bad condition...*" at Thornycroft, Tanjong Rhu.1086 must have languished, incomplete, in Singapore during Japanese occupation.

There were also a small group of similar size and design launches used by the SSRNVR," ... *Four had been earlier built for the SSRNVR. by Thornycroft but were outside the normal Royal Navy numbering system for HDML and received names instead: 'Pahalwan', 'Panglima', Pennigat', and 'Panji'. Large numbers were apparently ordered but only these two actually completed – and many never begun. These were small patrol boats that belied their designation. With excellent sea keeping capabilities and a 2000 mile range, they served with coastal forces worldwide...*". ("A Bit of History – RNVR HDML in the Far East 1941).

The HDML are sometimes confused in historical narratives with the HMML serving in Singapore, but the HDML were 40 feet shorter than the HMML with much less speed.

Harbour Defence Motor Launch specifications were;

- 72 foot overall
- 46 tons
- Twin diesel engines
- Maximum speed 12.5 knots/ Cruising speed 10 knots
- Fuel: 1500 gallons diesel
- Range 1000 nautical miles at 12 knots and 2000 nautical miles at 10 knots.
- Standard Armament was a 3 pponder Mk1 gun on the foredeck and two .303 Lewis Guns. Plus, eight depth charges.

The earliest actions of 1062 with Lt Colin MacMillan, RNZNVR, in command were in December 1941 after the Japanese had invaded northern Malaya – it was assigned to special operations on the west coast of Malaya with its twin vessel HDML 1063. On Xmas Eve 1062 set off from Singapore towing two motor boats headed for Port Swettenham and arrived there on Xmas Day 1941. On Boxing Day, it left Port Swettenham with a civilian rubber planter (William Harvey) as a guide to join 1063 at Sungei Burnam. They landed troops between Taiping and the Perak River and on the return journey to Port Swettenham picked up another rubber planter with his wife and 12-year-old daughter from a native boat. On 28 December they left Port Swettenham again and recovered a raiding party who had ambushed a Japanese motor transport convoy.

On 6-7 January 1942 HDML 1062 escorted the tug 'Elizabeth' from Port Swettenham to Malacca which had been evacuated and motored to Muar in company with two steam ships – one, the 'SS Kinto' is attacked and hit several times by Japanese aircraft and set on fire. HDML 1062 and 'Elizabeth' were machine gunned but did not suffer casualties. After reaching Muar and having a confrontation with the local District Commissioner who complained that the presence of the Launch was provoking a Japanese attack Lt. MacMillan appears to have ordered the District Commissioner to leave at gunpoint and motored off to the Singapore Naval Base with 'Elizabeth'.



Lt Colin MacMillan, RNZNVR, M.I.D.

[Photo TCL /Ellen McCormack]

On 1 February, HDML 1062 and 1063, towing naval whalers, evacuated troops from the Malayan mainland to Singapore - under cover provided by the gunboats 'HMS Dragonfly', 'HMS Scorpion' and 'HMS Grasshopper'. It was around this time that Lt. Colin MacMillan assisted in the evacuation of Sungei Punngor and for his deeds received his 'Mention In Despatches'.

On the night of 8 February 1942 the Japanese forces landed on the north west coast of Singapore island and over the next few days the front line moved south through the outer suburbs of Singapore.

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 it appears that a small contingent of men from the Gordon Highlanders were assigned to depart on HDML 1062.

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 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 with Lt. E. Staples, RNZNVR as First Officer)
- 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)
- **HDML 1062 (Lt. C. E. MacMillan, RNZNVR with Lt G. K. Stein, MRNVR, as First Officer)**
- 'HMS Grasshopper' – a 200-foot ex Yangste River gunboat and its sister ships,
- 'HMS Dragonfly'
- 'HMS Scorpion'.

At about midnight on 13 February 1942 (some sources say 2200hrs and others say it was at 0100hrs on 14 February) there are references to a 'naval launch' which we presume to be HDML 1062 (since 1062 is identified specifically as being with the Yangste River gun boats the following day) leaving Singapore harbour in company with 'HMS Grasshopper' and 'HMS Dragonfly' (statement by L/Cpl Hollard, Reconnaissance Group and a passenger on 'HMS Dragonfly).

Then there is (in page 106 of the book "Course for Disaster: From Scapa Flow to the River Kwai" by Lt Richard Pool) a record that on 14 February HDML 1062 was sheltering in the Bulang Archipelago, in the next bay to HMML 310. In the book Pool recounts how after HMML310 left Singapore Harbour

late on 13 February they motored through the night south through the islands south of Singapore past the large Pulau Batam, but early next morning they began to see aircraft culminating in the sighting of a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft which forced HMML310 to "... turn into the Bulang Archipelago only about 35 miles south [of Singapore] which we did at 10. . A small bay with a Chinese village lay behind a fringe of palm trees ... We noticed ML1062 make its way into the bay just beyond ours ...". Bulang Archipelago, a group of islands dominated by what is now named Pulau Bulan (spelt Bulang in Chinese), lies to the southwest of Pulau Batam.

Also, on 14 February Lieutenant I. D.S. Forbes, on 'HMS Grasshopper' says he saw '1062' when it joined 'HMS Grasshopper' and observed at about 0900 (approx.) "... At this time we were joined by a 'Fairmile' launch ML1062 with troops of the Gordon highlanders on board ...", he then talks of 'Dragonfly', 'Grasshopper and the HDML 1062 deciding to proceed towards a small group of islands to the north of the Island of Singkep.

[Researcher Note: The presence of 'troops' of Gordon Highlanders indicates a group of something like perhaps more than ten men – and possibly up to thirty - from the 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders who had been stationed in Singapore. Only four men from this Battalion were later listed as POWs in the Palembang POW camp which again indicates that there must have been a very high death toll of those men who had been passengers on HDML1062. It has not yet been proven that, if they were on board, the Palembang POWs were in fact passengers from HDML1062, but the fact that there are no records of Gordon highlanders on any other evacuation vessels and that they have dates and places of capture occurring after the sinking of HDML 1062 and in locations on Banka island suggest that they were from that vessel. The death toll on these small Royal Navy patrol boats (including the larger HMML vessels of 112 feet in length) sunk around Banka Island as they came into contact with destroyers of the Japanese navy was extremely high - because the servicemen passengers tended to have been literally standing on the decks of these craft which were constructed of wood and would have shattered at the impact of high explosive shells.]

Lt Forbes also records that at about 1130 hours on 14 February 1942, two formations of Japanese bombers with attendant fighters flying in the direction of Singapore, broke formation and attacked in flights of nine planes at a time. "... the flights came from all directions at 5 minute intervals, 'Dragonfly' was sunk by the first wave. The Fairmile 1062 was machine gunned and beached herself...".

Here we have a number of survivors from the 'HMS Grasshopper' also giving accounts of where the bombing attack might have occurred – one John Duke says 50 miles south of Pulau Batam; Sir John Bagnall talks of being bombed near 'Pulau Mas' and one John Robins talks of the 'Lingga Archipelago' provides a rough hand drawn map of 'Pulau Belakan Ulu Hitam' and 'Pulau Mas'; he also records seeing a "Fairisle" (sic 'Fairmile') trying to rescue people from the sinking 'HMS Dragonfly' but being driven away by machine gun fire from the Japanese planes.

Despite the claimed sighting by Lt Forbes, RN, of ML1062 being machine gunned and beached at what must have been an island near Pulau Bulan there seems to be much more to the story because we have the civilian men stating locations further south. Also, being sunk on that date and in that location does not correlate with the survivors such as Lt G.K. Stein, MRNVR, and Stoker Lewis Day (and even possibly the Gordon Highlanders who were later POWs in Muntok and Palembang) reaching Banka Island, some 250 kilometres away, within between three and six days on a raft or lifeboat. Also, the dates of these men being captured indicates some other explanation for the location of the sinking of the HDML 1062.

A file in the UK Archives states "...HDML 1062 sunk by gunfire in the south end of the Banka Straits 16/2/42 ...".

It is possible that Stein, Day and even the Gordon Highlanders may have been picked up by another vessel such as one of the HMMLs or a civilian craft and then sunk again near Banka Island, but this is now in the realms of conjecture.

The most likely scenario is that HDML 1062 made it to the entrance of the Banka Straits and was sunk by Japanese warships in the same manner as 'Pulo Soegi', HMML 311 and HMML 433 together with many other small ships - and the survivors swam to the west coast of Banka Island. Because they were not sunk until 16 February 1942 it is possible that they made land on Banka Island on 17 February, which was after the Japanese troops were systematically killing many of the survivors, they found on the beaches of Banka Island in the previous couple of days.

The fact that Stoker George Day died of wounds on 20 February on Banka island and Lt George Stein reported this date specifically to the War Office after the War suggests that Day and Stein had made it together to Banka Island and perhaps were hiding in the jungle there when Day passed away. Some survivors from other ships sunk around that island had similar experiences. George Stein was not captured for another three days and the location of his capture is given as Pangkal pinang – which is a long way from the west or south coasts of Banka Island, being situated on the north east coast. Stein must have acquired some food from local Indonesian people to have survived that long ashore and presumably trekked across the large island before being captured.

The fact that Lt George Keir Stein, as First Officer, reported to the War Office recording all members of his crew as "Missing" as opposed to "Died" indicates also that the circumstances of the sinking of the vessel must have been very chaotic or that the event occurred at night – the point is that he did not appear to see them die. If the launch had been attacked by a warship in daylight, experience shows that in comparisons with the sinkings of vessels of a similar size and construction, that survivors usually see at least some of their fellow crew members killed in the shelling or bombing of the vessel.

Whether HDML 1062 was sunk by bombs or shellfire from Japanese warships, or precisely where it was sunk, will never be proven unless we can obtain direct evidence from the family of one of the very few survivors such as Lt. George Stein. In the same context the identities of other personnel on board may remain unknown unless survivor George Stein left any memoirs covering his wartime experiences.

Anyone who has corrections, amendments, clarifications or additional material on the crew or passengers of HDML 1062 is most welcome to contact the researcher and compiler of this document: Michael Pether, 2/23 Sanders Avenue, Takapuna, Auckland, 0622, New Zealand. Email is mncpether@xtra.co.nz. Telephone number is New Zealand 09-4865754 or mobile New Zealand 0274543695.

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Sources:

- Auckland War Memorial Museum – War Graves project.
- JM - Jonathan Moffatt, researcher and author, his database of ‘Malayans’
- Medusa Trust
- Naval – history -.net website – ‘Casualties of the Royal Navy’.
- Papers past – archive of New Zealand newspapers
- Singapore National Library – newspaper archive
- Tauranga City Library – Debbie McCauley, Heritage Specialist, Tauranga city council - http://tauranga.kete.net.nz/remembering_war/topics/show/1016-colin-edward-macmillan-1899-1942
- Photo TCL /Ellen McCormack – this means Tauranga City Library file below: McCormack, Ellen (20158). *Family history documents relating to the lives of Colin Edward Macmillan and Lillian Marie Elise Macmillan* [Tauranga City Libraries, Research Collections: Sladden Collection, 929.3 MACM]
- UK National Archives files.

Crew:

- **BURKE – Able Seaman Burke.** “...Formerly ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ and now ‘Missing’...” (reported by Lt. G.K. Stein). The CWGC states ‘... Ordinary Seaman Edward Burke, D/MD /X 3139, Royal Naval Reserve, died 16.2.42, ‘HMS Sultan’ [this is the RN shore base in Singapore which Edward would have been attached after the sinking of the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ and prior to the evacuation ...”. It is also noted that the website ‘www.forcez-survivors’ does not list Edward Burke as a crew member of ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ or ‘HMS Repulse’].
- **DAY – Stoker 1st Class H. Day –** “... died of wounds on about 20.2.42 on Banka ...” (reported by Lt. G.K. Stein) which is probably the most accurate record of the death of George Lewis Day. The CWGC states “... **Stoker 1st Class George Lewis Day, C/KX 99667, Royal Navy, died 16.2.42 (died ashore) ‘HMS Mauritius’.** Son of Edward Stanley and Clara Day of Manor Park, Essex. Memorialised on the Chatham Naval Memorial Panel 83...” but this looks like it has been dated to align with the sinking of HDML 1062 and the CWGC may not have been aware of Lt Stein’s report. The light cruiser ‘HMS Mauritius’ was a relatively new ship in 1941 when it went to Singapore for a refit for ‘degaussing’ in November 1941 but left on 11 December 1941 when the Japanese invaded northern Malaya – it had taken on survivors of the sinking of the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ and ‘HMS Repulse’. Why Lewis Day was put ashore to soon join the crew of HDML1062 is unknown. After the sinking of his HDML he must have been wounded and somehow reached Banka island (perhaps with Lt Stein?) but died of his wounds on that island.
- **ISMAIL – Able Seaman Ismail Bin Awang, #MN45, Royal Navy (Malaya Section)** according to the CWGC he died on 14.2.42 (date appears to be incorrect) and on ‘HMML’ (should be HDML) 1062.

- MACMILLAN – Lt. Colin Edward Macmillan, RNZNVR.** Mentioned in Despatches, died 16.2.42 (also reported as “Missing” by Lt. G.K. Stein). ‘The Medusa Trust’ website states that Lt MacMillan gained the MID for his courage during the evacuation of Sungei Punngor in 1942. Colin Edward Macmillan served in both World War One and the Second World War. He was born in Thames, New Zealand on 20 January 1899 to Robert and Mabel (nee Hart) Macmillan and had three siblings. As a small boy he attended No. 2 School, Beach Road, Katikati but his father died when he was 13 years old and Colin and his 15-year-old brother attempted to run the family farm with their mother whilst attending school - this proved impossible. The family returned to Thames and Colin attended Thames High School from 1913 to September 1915. Colin enlisted in Wellington, NZ on 21 January 1918 and embarked as a Gunner with the 43rd Reinforcements on the ‘Matatua’ for London on 2 October 1918 but it was soon noted he was underage and suffered from ‘claw foot’, so in April 1919 he was discharged as no longer physically fit for war service. He returned to Wellington, NZ., and worked for the Ministry of Health. He played rugby in that city and had a passion for the sea and boats, apparently owning his own yacht in Wellington at that time – he was also a member of (possibly Secretary) of the Royal Port Nicholson Yacht Club in Wellington at that time. When World War Two was declared, Colin applied to Admiralty House in London and was then assigned to training at the RN shore base in Singapore, ‘HMS Sultan’, as a Probationary temporary Sub- Lieutenant attached to ‘HMS Grasshopper’. On 14 May 1941 Colin was promoted to Temporary Lieutenant serving in ‘HMS Grasshopper’ until 2 September 1941 and appears to have taken command of HDML 1062 as early as October 1941. Letters home during this period talk of his move from his regret at leaving his ‘ship’ (probably HMS Grasshopper’) and his move to command “... a small patrol launch...” plus comments that “... of course life is most interesting, but some of our patrols are a little boring ..., but other times we do some really interesting work ...”. In December 1941 Colin and his launch were assigned to Special Operations on the west coast of Malaya and this is when he earned award of ‘Mentioned in Despatches’ (posthumously awarded). The 22.4.42 issue of the ‘Bay of Plenty Times’ carried the only newspaper record in New Zealand of his fate – it simply said that he had been reported ‘Missing’ and “... is the son of the late Mr R.J. Macmillan and that his next of kin is his sister, Miss Vera MacMillan who is living in Sydney. The last word that his relatives in Tauranga received was that Lieut. Macmillan was in command of a small naval vessel at Singapore ...”. In a letter to Colin’s sister Vera, dated 15 August 1946, Lieutenant – Commander Victor Cecil Froggatt Clark, RN wrote “... he served in ML1062 under my orders from some time during Dec 41 and Jan 42 and I came to know him well and liked him very much. In fact, I can say there was no ML. I liked being around so much. I was a POW from March 42 – last Sept and it was then I learned of his ML being sank and I was very sad to hear it ... once again can I say how very sorry I am that your brother did not come through, but you may be proud of his always cheerful contribution to the cause in the blackest of days ...” (sources - Tauranga City Library, Debbie McCauley, Heritage Specialist, Tauranga City Council - file,

http://tauranga.kete.net.nz/remembering_war/topics/show/1016-colin-edward-macmillan-1899-1942 and Ellen McCormack - Tauranga City Library file, McCormack, Ellen (20158). *Family history documents relating to the lives of Colin Edward Macmillan and Lillian Marie Elise Macmillan* [Tauranga City Libraries, Research Collections: Sladden Collection, 929.3 MACM]).

- **MANNING – Able Seaman Manning.** “... Formerly ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ Missing...” (reported by Lt. G.K. Stein). The CWGC states “... **Able Seaman Peter Manning**, D/JX 213548, age 25 years, Royal Navy, ‘HMS Sultan’ [this is the RN shore base in Singapore to which Peter Manning would have been attached after the sinking of the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ on which he is listed as crew]. Son of William and Annie Manning, of Leeds, Yorkshire. Also recorded on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, panel 66, Col.1 ...”. A contemporary newspaper cutting displayed on the website ‘www.forcez-survivors’ records him as Able Seaman Gunner Peter Manning, son of the late Mr and Mrs William Manning, Vulcan Lane, Dewsbury. [Dewsbury is in West Yorkshire].
- **MUHAMMAD - Able Seaman Tabal Bin Muhammad Yusuf**, MN 508 (Royal Navy Malay Section), died 14.2.42 HDML 1062. Also commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, panel 97, Col.2 (CWGC).
- **UMAR /OMAR** – (a Malay rating by the name of ‘Omar’ was reported “Missing” by Lt. G.K. Stein), MPK. This may very well have been **Ordinary Seaman UMAR Bin H. H.**, SE/X 716, (Malayan RNVR) ,MPK, 14.2.42 ‘ (www.naval-history.net) who is recorded as attached to the Royal Navy’s shore base ‘HMS Sultan’.
- **ROWLAND – Stoker 2nd Class William Rowland, D/KX 116K122**, “ ... Missing, from Manchester...” (reported by Lt. G.K. Stein). The CWGC states “... *Stoker 1st Class William Rowland, D/KX116122, age 21 years, died 16.2.42, HMML [should be HDML] 1062, Royal Navy. Son of Arthur and Elize Ella Rowland of Miles Patting, Manchester. Also recorded on the Plymouth Naval Memorial, panel 70, Column 1 ...*”.
- **STEIN – Lt. George Keir Stein, MRNVR b.1915.** From Bedford and at the time of his wedding in 1946 was recorded as the only son of Mrs N.J. Stein of Bedford. To Malaya 1939. Assistant, Joseph Travers Ltd. George Stein was a very good sportsman, in tennis and other sports, and has the distinction of there being 432 separate references to him in Singapore and Malayan newspapers! Appointed Lt SS RNVR September 1940 to Lt MRNVR, and by the time of the evacuation from Singapore he was First Officer under Lt MacMillan, RNZNVR, on HDML 1062 – sunk in the Banka Straits 16.2.42. George appears to have been the only survivor of the crew of HDML 1062 and was not captured until 23.3.42 at Pangkal Pinang, on the north eastern coast of Banka island so must have swum to the western coast and trekked cross the Island. Later a POW in Palembang, Sumatra. And again, later to Changi, Singapore. Returned to Joseph Travers, Penang 1946. Remained in Singapore a where he had the business of the representative of Phillips Bicycles. He married Mrs Natalie Denton, youngest daughter of the late Mr. Robert Wood & Mrs. Nellie Wood, from Wellington, NZ in September 1946 at St Andrews Cathedral, Singapore. Their daughter Amanda (later Mandy Elder) was born in 1949. George died 19 March 2004 in Berkshire aged 89 years. (JM and SFPMA 16.9.46). George Stein appears to have been to have

been the only member of the crew of HDML 1062 to have survived what would have been a horrendous experience in the sinking of that launch.

- **WELLS – Leading Seaman William E. Wells, (L.T.O.),** RFRC?? C/J 98299, “... Missing...” (reported by Lt. G.K. Stein). The CWGC states “... *Leading Seaman William Edward Wells, C/J 98299, Royal Navy (DSM.), age 38 years, died 16.2.42, HMML [HDML] 1062, son of William Edward and Elizabeth Waterman Wells, husband of Ethel Amy Wells of Romford, Essex...*”. (CWGC and www.hmsmedusa.org.uk).

Passengers:

Although there are no records to date directly linking the following men to HDML 1062 it is the view of this researcher that the dates on which they were individually captured i.e. after the sinking of HDML 1062, and the fact that they were captured on locations on Banka island suggest strongly that they were amongst the “... *troops of Gordon Highlanders ...*” seen on the vessel on 14 February;

- **CLARK – Private Alfred B. Clark, # 2878440, 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders.** Alfred Clark was born on 19.3.21 and enlisted on 19.2.38. His NOK contact whilst in Palembang POW camp was shown as 64 School Street, Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire. According to his MI9 questionnaire he was captured at Muntok, Banka island on 16.2.42 and was a POW at Muntok camp until April 1942 when he was transferred to Palembang POW camp in southern Sumatra where he remained for the duration of the War.
- **CLEARY – Private Francis G. Cleary, # 2761836, 2nd Battalion, Gordon Highlanders.** Francis Cleary was captured on 24.2.42 which is a week after the sinking of HDML 1062. He was a POW in Palembang camp until he joined a ‘Japan Party’, with 93 other POWs, which left by ship on 17.7.42 for Japan. His NOK address whilst in Palembang was Mrs Cleary, c/o Mrs Fodey, 5 Dalfield Terr., Dundee, Scotland.
- **GALLACHER – Private Hugh Gallacher, # 2876873, 2nd Battalion Gordon Highlanders.** Hugh Gallacher was born on 10.11.18 and enlisted on 11.11.35. His NOK address whilst a POW was ‘*Father- Mr. W. Gallacher, 5 Stanton Crescent, Neatherton, Wishaw, Lanarkshire*’. Captured on 17.2.42 at Pangkal Pinang, Banka island 9 this sounds like a possible mistake if the ship was sunk on 16.2.42 because Banka island is on the opposite side of Banka island to where the HDML 1062 appears to have been sunk. On his MI9 questionnaire Hugh Gallacher recorded that he was in Sungei Ron Camp in March 1942, then ‘Chung. Wha ‘B’ Camp, then Mulo School camp – all in Palembang, Sumatra.
- **MCGURK – Private Hugh McGurk, # 3054253, 2nd Battalion Gordon highlanders.** He was born on 29.10.17 and enlisted on 5.1.35. His NOK address whilst a POW was recorded as ‘Primrose Cottage, Boat O

Garten, Inverness' – this is a small village near Inverness. He was captured on 28.2.42 at Pangkal Pinang, Banka Island. This is of course some ten days after the sinking of HDML 1062 and perhaps the explanation is contained in his recording of his '1st Escape attempt 'during the war (as per his MI9 questionnaire) which stated " ... *When sunk by a Jap cruiser on 17th February , instead of being picked up as a survivor I swam ashore and lived in the jungle with native fishermen. After about seven days like this I picked up four women and three children survivors of the SS Van Der Brook (sunk by Jap cruiser). These survivors were cared for by Malay women. The Japs were 80 miles away. After another three days the Japs found us through a native informer and took us to Pangkal pinang...*" (MI9 questionnaire – COFEPOW website). The researcher can confirm that these women and children were almost certainly three generations of the Armstrong family and an unnamed "White Russian" woman plus a child by the name of June Bourhill, who had all been passengers on the 'SS Vyner Brooke" which had been sunk off the west coast of Banka Island on 14 February 1942 (see pp. 47-50 in the book "A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke " by Ralph Armstrong. In what appears to be the record of the post war death of Hugh McGurk, there is a headstone in Lithgow cemetery (findagrave.com) that records Hugh Francis McGurk as the son of Hugh and Catherine McGurk , both of whom had died before the war, and two brothers who lost their lives during the war, plus an epitaph "*In loving memory of Hugh Francis McGurk, MN [researcher note - Merchant navy?]. Drowned at sea 27th January 1948 aged 30 years*".

