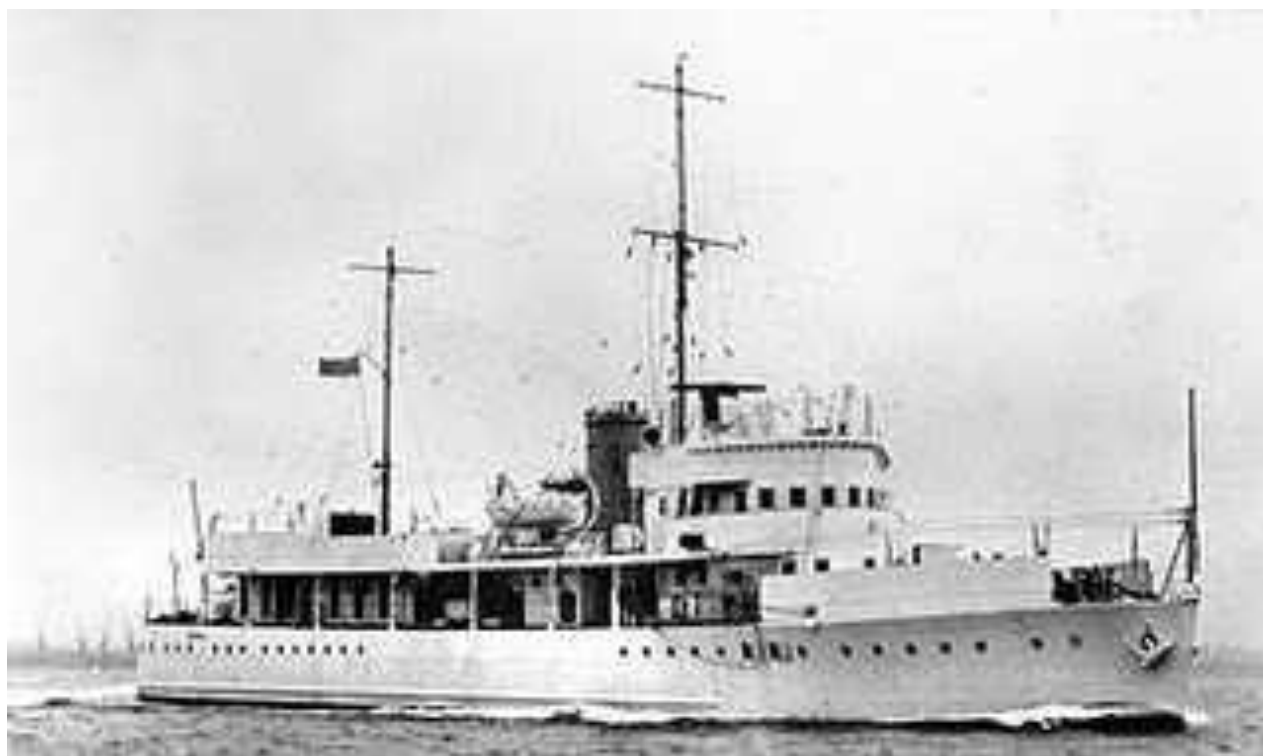


## **“HMS. GRASSHOPPER”**

Bombed and beached at Pulau Sempeng, north-west of Pulau Singkep,

in the Lingga Archipelago on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1942

[ version 1.2.2; January 2021]



‘HMS. Grasshopper’

The invasion of Malaya and Singapore, from the time of the first landings in Northern Malaya on 8th December 1941, was swift and brutal. Within eight weeks the Japanese had taken Malaya and landed on the island of Singapore which had become intensely overcrowded by tens of thousands of fleeing civilians of all races from Malaya plus almost 100,000 servicemen.

By the second week of February 1942 the Japanese army was advancing across Singapore Island and a chaotic evacuation of civilians - mainly Europeans, Eurasians, and a small number of influential Chinese – and selected skilled servicemen, was underway from the port in front of what is today’s CBD.

Literally any ocean-going vessel of any size remaining in Singapore harbour was ultimately enlisted by the authorities to evacuate people, under what had become almost constant bombing and machine gunning by Japanese planes. Singapore itself was ablaze, columns of black smoke rose thousands of feet in the air and the streets were littered with the dead and dying.

People desperately clamoured for departure passes from the Colonial government authorities (men under 40 years of age had been banned from leaving the Island for months and women had not been publicly encouraged to leave because it would ‘... adversely affect morale ...’!) to board any

ship leaving the Island. By 11 January 1942 even the rather hidebound men in authority saw the absurdity of their bureaucratic incompetence and more passes were issued for civilian men and women to leave, so finally some real urgency entered the situation.

About 50 ships of all sizes - from the quite large, refrigerated cargo ship 'SS. Empire Star' (525 feet and 12,656 tons) through a range of mid-sized merchant vessels down to some small craft like the "SS. Tandjong Pinang" (which at 97 feet only just qualified in the definition for a 'ship') and even smaller patrol vessels – were assembled to leave as a convoy during the 48-hour period of 11 – 13 February 1942. There were also several Naval ships of varying sizes identified as evacuation vessels.

The naval ships, apart from a couple of destroyers, which briefly escorted the bigger merchant ships like the 'SS Empire Star' and 'SS Gorgon' after leaving Singapore, included auxiliary (i.e., merchant ships which had been requisitioned) patrol ships, auxiliary minesweepers, flat bottomed ex-Yangste River gunboats ('HMS Dragonfly', 'HMS Scorpion' and 'HMS Grasshopper') and ex Yangste river passenger ships, RAF fast launches and even a large ex-Yangste river tug like the 'HMS Yin Ping'. Some of these Naval ships had almost exclusively a complement of service personnel on board – but also a few civilians.

Of the 60-100 or so vessels, of all descriptions, leaving in the last window of opportunity (as many thought) only a dozen or so would make it to safety. The other vessels would be sunk, run aground, or captured at sea by the Japanese navy with almost two thousand of their passengers and crew killed, or taken prisoner to face three and a half years of extremely harsh, malnourished and medically deprived treatment in Internment or POW camps in Sumatra and elsewhere. Many of these women, children and men would die during the remainder of the War in these cruel camps.

To put the research purpose of this document into historical context, the fate of only a small number of the ships sunk carrying evacuees from Singapore during these last few days before the Surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942 have been thoroughly researched and documented. This is one of the attempts to prevent the lives of those several thousand men, women, and children who did die because of their escape attempt being simply consigned, without proper tangible memory, into the dustbin of history.

### **'HMS Grasshopper':**

'HMS Grasshopper' was one of five Royal Navy 'Dragonfly' class gunboats built by Thornycroft & Co. Ltd and it was launched in December 1938 ([www.naval-history.com](http://www.naval-history.com)). Like its sister ships 'HMS Dragonfly' and 'HMS Scorpion'; 'HMS Grasshopper' was a 60-metre-long (197 feet), shallow draft (1.5 metre) steam turbine vessel powered by 2 Parsons geared turbines, with three rudders and with a top speed of 12 knots.

It was armed with two 4 – inch guns, one 3.7-inch howitzer and three machine guns (some sources state eight machine guns).

Built specifically as a river gunboat that could also operate at sea, it was sailed from the UK to China to join the Yangste River Flotilla in September 1939 and deployed on the 'China Station' at Shanghai - where it remained on patrol during 1940-41. At the outbreak of war with Japan the ship was relocated to Singapore for support of the military defence of Malaya. On 27 January 1942, in company with 'HMS Dragonfly' it rescued almost 3,000 British and Indian troops who had been cut

off by the advancing Japanese south of Batu Pahat on the southwest coast of Malaya (source: Graem Castell's memoir reference to his uncle Lt. Gerard Rawlings' memoir).

The vessel was under the command of the Captain, **Lt Commander Jack Hoffman, MRNVR**, an ex-Royal Navy officer and rubber planter in Malaya and his First Officer **Lt James Read, MRNVR**, a land Surveyor from Kedah.

Lt Ian Forbes, RN stated in a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty on 23.10.45 that,  
*"...Grasshopper's company was half Malaya Navy and half Royal Navy. I was very agreeably surprised to see how fearlessly the Malays carried on with their duty during the action..."*.

Able Seaman Laurence Hurndell, RNZN confirmed this recalling that there were about 80 crew – 40 European including 4 officers and the other half Malay.

### **Departure from Singapore:**

We have the benefit of several excellent first-hand accounts by civilians - from memoirs and wartime reports and post war police affidavits - for the realities of the departure from Singapore and last voyage of 'HMS Grasshopper'. We will draw on accounts from,

- **John Bagnall (later Sir John)**, Chairman & Managing Director Straits Trading Co. Ltd., - his memoirs
- **John Duke**, an Optician in Singapore - his letter to Captain David Nelson
- **John Robins**, an Engineer with Cable & Wireless Ltd - his wartime diary 'Guest of the Mikado'
- **Frank Brewer**, an Architect.
- **William Francis**, Actg. Commercial Manager, Eastern Smelting, Penang.

We will start with **John Bagnall** *"... As the enemy approached nearer to Singapore the residents of the outlying area moved inwards. On Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> February, I decided that the time had come to leave 'Woodside' and take up residence in the office. Two suitcases accompanied me and during the day my Chinese boys brought me a mattress, pillows, towels and a collection of cutlery, crockery and glassware. I made myself a comfortable bed in the boardroom.....[others of the management] joined me in the office. To my own store of tinned foods, they added their supplies and we looked like being well cared for in that directions. All glass windows and doors having been removed from the office some days earlier, we had a nice cool place.... all except myself slept out on the verandah as the weather was fine. All night long the heavy guns on the neighbouring islands fired at short intervals, but we slept sufficiently, nevertheless. A bright glow filled the sky from the burning oil tanks at Pulau Samboe. On Thursday night we saw Pulau Bukom break into flames and add its quota to the general eeriness.... On Friday morning ... all technical and key men and a limited number of heads of banks and merchant firms to call at the Union Building at two o'clock for passes. Luggage was to be limited to that which could be carried in one hand, and we were to meet at the Harbour Board gate in front of Ocean Building. Secrecy was enjoined. Three hours was far too short for dealing with the more important papers in my office and private safe. Some of the most important ones I took with me in my suitcase. At three o'clock the foregoing men, numbering about fifty were at the appointed place where we were joined by many others who had previously obtained passes to depart. For the next hour, women and children, mainly from the hospital arrived in ambulances, cars and on foot, and until they had all passed through the gate the men had to stand in the hot sun. At 4.15 we entered the Teluk Ayer area and commenced to walk around the dock to the godown on the Southern arm.*

*My suitcase was very heavy, and I appreciated and accepted the offer of a police officer to drive some of us around as far as the wharf...While waiting to embark an air raid took place and a number of those waiting around the dock were injured, and several motor cars set on fire. Various small craft e.g., water boats, were employed in taking passengers off to the principal ship, and after the women and children had been cleared another craft came alongside... our small contingent went out to a small gunboat in the Outer Roads and just as we arrived alongside another raid took place, but fortunately no bombs came near our vessel. Several people were killed on the other steamer [researcher note this was 'SS Kuala'] as they were embarking...".*

**John Duke**, the Optician had a not dissimilar experience "... I was given information by the Government that we could get into an official evacuation party on the Friday afternoon. I went down with Bill [ Bill Steel, Manager, Eastern Bank Ltd], with one suitcase each, and waited for six hours, dodging in and out of a shelter that was there, as the shelling around was infernal. A lot of it came withing 100 yards of the shelter. At the gate there was a strange collection of people. Civilians and over 41 only were allowed to get out, and then only men with special technical qualifications, such as Under-Managers, Customs Officials, Manufacturers, heads of Firms, Thomson of Guthrie's was there. I heard later that he had been killed... Of the four Bank Managers only one got out alive – Stewart of the Hong Kong... Fred and Bill Steel did not escape from Padang.... I at last got through the gate (the Harbour Board Gate opposite Bolland's about 200 yds from Clifford Pier). Our Government exit passes were carefully examined and then we had to wait another half an hour, pending the arrival of the Master Attendant's boat to take us off to the waiting ship in the harbour. At this point there was a sudden alert. Bill flopped down. I got under a motor truck. A stick of bombs fell within 300 ft of us. Bill was unhurt but I was wounded in several places. Subsequently Bill and Gordon got me aboard a small warship (about 600 tons). I was put in the sick bay and attended to by a hospital sister who happened to be on board. Among other bits of shrapnel which she removed from my body was a piece from my nose about the size of a threepenny piece...".

In his wartime letter John Duke also gives an insight into the lifetime pain being inflicted on individuals and couples by the chaos and rules of the moment" ... *Harking back to our exit from Singapore, I have just remembered a rather sickening episode, which I ought to mention. Husbands and wives were not allowed to travel on the same ship for some reason, probably women and children first. No matter who you were you had to wait – justly and rightly so. You will remember Mrs Bennett, with the funny and little face [ this was Mrs Violette Bennett aged 61 years]; after she had been through the barrier, she came back and pleaded with the Military Police to be allowed to remain and travel with her husband [ who was Ernest Bennett, Director of G.H. Slot & Co and a Municipal Councillor] but they had their orders and could not do anything; they could make no exception. She was led away weeping passionately. Poor old thing, she cannot now be traced in Batavia, Australia, India or anywhere....".* [Researcher Note: Violette Bennett was led away to board the 'SS Kuala' with 700 other women and children and was killed when that ship was bombed, set on fire, and sunk at Pom Pong island – Ernest in fact boarded the 'HMS Grasshopper' and later made it to Padang and Colombo on 'SS Palopo'].

In a letter dated 23 April 1943 written from Lavender's Hotel, Bangalore, South India, another survivor of the sinking of 'HMS Grasshopper', an Architect by the name of **Frank W. Brewer**, [ who designed the iconic Capitol Building – movie theatre and flats - in central Singapore in 1938] who accompanied the Cable & Wireless Ltd., personnel to the wharf gate wrote about the fate of his wife Nell and his own escape "... *Dear Nell, on the day we were ordered out, went through the gate (in front of the Ocean Building) first, with all the Sisters from the General Hospital and the Q.A. Sisters, and they all left on the Straits Steamship boat the 'Kuala'. When I got through an hour and a half later I found myself on*

*the gunboat 'Grasshopper'.... Most of the men however - there were also a number of men on the 'Kuala' – found themselves on the 'Grasshopper' and 'Dragonfly'...".*

**John Robins** gives an insight into the evacuations of the Cable & Wireless personnel. A large group of Cable & Wireless senior personnel had, after drawing lots from a hat as to who would stay and who would go, left earlier (11<sup>th</sup> February) to board the ill-fated 'SS Redang', the shelling and sinking of which on Friday 13 February took the lives of 20 Cable & Wireless employees. Then on 13<sup>th</sup> February it was the turn of the remainder of the senior men from Cable & Wireless, plus one of the wives, Mrs Lampen – Smith, to leave. Mrs Mavis Lampen – Smith had been donating blood at the hospital and it had affected her health (she had developed anaemia of the brain due to giving too much blood at the blood bank) so that she was no longer able to walk or see properly. Robins recorded *"... Late in the afternoon came the message from a Government authority that we should in half an hour, with one suitcase per man, be at a certain quayside prepared to evacuate... as if to put a fitting end to the proceedings the building was shaken by an explosion, accompanied by the noise of falling masonry and shattered glass. We had received a direct hit. A bomb had burst on the roof hurtling chunks of masonry down the well of the building, breaking most of the windows in the well... Other bombs had fallen on Robinson road outside the Office, where I had parked my car. I found one of the rear tyres punctured, but there was no time to worry about details like that. Blackwell and I flung our bags in the back and we set off, flat tyre flapping ... three or four bombs burst in succession in the road behind us ... there was a small crowd at the dock gates, awaiting examination of their passes to enter. I abandoned the car, which was promptly seized by some tommies, who, however, did not seem so keen when they discovered the punctured tyre. Once through the dock gates we found we had a long walk to the quay, our suitcases felt unpleasantly heavy at the end of it. Along the route were numerous burning lorries and cars, a result of the last air raid...Joyce and Docker had waited with the Lampen – Smiths at the gate, hoping for an opportunity to get a lift for Mrs Lampen – Smith. Blackwell and I, having dumped our bags, walked back to see if we could lend a hand. We met them halfway and gave Mrs Lampen – Smith a ride on a luggage barrow for the rest of the way, an incident which raised a good laugh and eased the tension of a somewhat grim situation... we had to board a tug immediately which took us out to HMS Grasshopper, a river boat of about 1000 tons... aboard Grasshopper we were welcomed with cups of tea and slabs of chocolate. There were about fifty or so civilians in addition to the crew of this little ship..."*.

One of the military evacuees aboard 'HMS Grasshopper' was newly commissioned Lieutenant and Japanese translator in the Intelligence Corps, **Lt Gerard Rawlings**, who wrote in his unpublished 1990s memoir 'In Honour Bound' *"... From the harbour, Singapore was a fantastic sight. There were seven major oil fires. It looked like an artist's impression of a town on fire... Within a few minutes, the whole length of the quay was a raging inferno. We could feel the heat of the flames. Three ships were now crammed with evacuees – VIPs, soldiers, nurses, civilians and children – and in addition, 'Grasshopper' carried a cargo of ammunition and nine Japanese prisoners of war..."*.

**John Duke** recorded in his letter *"... We got away about 5 o'clock and sailed down the Rhio Straits. About 8 o'clock that night when we were congratulating ourselves on our safe departure the Skipper got a wireless message to return to Singapore to pick up some people, important army people... We got back to Singapore in the dark and had the ghostly experience of seeing the whole city in flames – at least that is what it looked like. A dark night always exaggerates one's impression of a fire and later on I found out it was probably not as bad as it looked, but literally the whole town appeared to be ablaze; from Pulo Brani to Tanjong Rhio there was no gap in the fire, a hideous sight, something I will never forget. The Japanese must have known, from their agents, of our return, because they started shelling the ship. It got nearer and nearer – a vicious crack, a different sound from the*

*bombing crump – the last lot fell within 40 ft of the ship so the Skipper decided not to wait any longer and we left, when I cannot say exactly as, of course at this time, I was a cot case...”.*

**John Robins** sounds more accurate in his account “... At dusk we weighed anchor and steamed out to sea in company with two patrol vessels and two locally built motor launches. Darkness was soon upon us and we felt very conspicuous when a searchlight from Blakan Mat illuminated us for some time. Singapore itself presented a dramatic sight, numerous large fires giving an ominous glow against a vast pall of smoke. Hades, I felt must look something like this. There were large stocks of oil in Singapore which had been fired either by ourselves or enemy bombs. Tanks at the naval Base had been burning for days, and to that had now been added the large installations of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APC) (750,000 tons) at Pulau Bukum, a large number of tanks along the Ayer Raja Road (500,000 tons) and more on Pulau Sambo which island we were now passing. When we were just off this island and almost enveloped by smoke from it, we turned round and headed back to Singapore. No reason was given, and we could not understand it. We were reluctant to believe that we were actually returning until we found ourselves back from where we had started. We attempted to tie up against a similar vessel to our own, afterwards discovered to be the ‘Dragonfly’. The first attempt was a failure, and we rammed her stern with our stern rather heavily and the ‘Dragonfly’ broke adrift... Then began a long and weary wait, for the latter part we were under fire from a gun firing from the direction of the Swimming Club to the east of the town [ Researcher note – that is towards today’s Changi Airport]. We could see the flash, then hear the report, followed by the bursting of the shell in the sea nearby. We were never hit although we must have been clearly silhouetted against the fires of the burning godowns .... There were audible sighs of relief when about 1 am we made preparations for departure once more. The reason for our return was now apparent. A Brigadier General came aboard. If I felt antagonistic to him it was nothing to the poor opinion I formed of him later on... There was of course no accommodation for us, and we had to find a suitable space on deck, to lie on. All available spots were hard, all had projections or knobs of some sort to be circumvented; all were draughty, and the night was cold. ...”.

**Frank Brewer** has similar recollections in his 1943 letter “... All [three vessels] left about 1900 hours and I did not see the ‘Kuala’ again. The ‘Grasshopper’ stopped off Pulau Sambo and at 23.30 hours went right alongside the old RNVR Training Hulk ‘Laburnum’ to pick up a Brigadier and his Staff. I eventually wished this Brigadier in Hell; as after he had come aboard at midnight we were still waiting tied up in the dark – except for the blazing go downs on the shore and the Japs had started heavy shelling and were trying to hit the big Ack-Ack Battery which was just behind the C & W. Building. They were overshooting and the shells were raining down and just missing the bridge of our little gunboat. At a quarter past midnight, I heard the Second In Command say to the Commander, ‘If you do not cast off now, they will get us’ and two minutes later we were steaming at full speed past the breakwater...”.

#### **Who was on board ‘HMS Grasshopper’?:**

There was of course no passenger list.

The Captain was an ex- Royal Navy officer from the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and for the twenty years prior to the Second World War a resident rubber planter in Malaya, his name was **Commander Jack Sanger/Sauzer Hoffman**, MRNVR (Sauzer is the middle name used in his gazetted award of MID). Jack Hoffman who had come of naval retirement in 1939 to assume control of an anti-submarine Trawler in the UK, then returned to Malaya and a life of rubber planting only to be assigned to ‘HMS Grasshopper’ when it was relocated to Malaya in the face of the Japanese takeover in China.

As with several other evacuation vessels leaving during 11-13 February 1942, 'HMS Grasshopper' had on board a group of the most senior businesspeople in Malaya and Singapore. These were men who had lived and worked in the colony for 10 -20 years (or more) and who had remained in the beleaguered city until the very last days before the Surrender to the Japanese on 15 February. The included **Lt. Col. Noel Bridges**, FMSVF and Surveyor -General for Malaya and Singapore ( who would reach Padang but lose his life on 28 February in the sinking of the 'SS Ban Ho Guan'); **Lt Col. Harold Morton James**, FMSVF ( a senior rubber planter who would lose his life as a result of the attack on the ship); **Sir John Bagnall**, Chairman of Straits Trading Ltd ( who safely reached India); **Leslie Masson Smart**, General Manager of FMS Railways and his wife ( who would become internees in the terrible camps at Padang and Bankinang for the duration of the war; **John Sanders**, also of FMS Railways ( who also reached India and returned to Malaya post war – he became Sir John Owen Sanders).

Insofar as the complement of people on board the vessel as it prepared to leave Singapore we refer to,

- The reliable source, **Captain David Nelson**, SSVF and the Bureau of Record and Enquiry in Changi POW camp who recorded *"...passengers approximately 73 including 4 women..."*.
- **William T. Francis**, Acting Commercial Manager, Eastern Smelting, Penang who reported to the Malayan Research Bureau *"... She carried 140 of whom 30 were civilians, 5 women, 4 children..."*.
- Andrew Miller of Northern Ireland who says his grandfather **Norman Miller** was on the ship and said *"... there were 150 on board – nurses, Royal Marines, women and children (in that order of priority apparently) swelling their complement of 55 to some 200..."*
- We also know there was a group of Cable & Wireless employees, plus Mrs Lampen – Smith, and in the book **"When Singapore Fell"** p.61 it states that there were also some members of the Federated Malay States Railway staff.
- **Lt Ian D S Forbes, RN**, another survivor recorded *" we had on board fifty passengers, composed of Japanese Prisoners of War, Royal Marines, Army Officers and civilian men and women..."* ( in an auctioneer's footnote to the sale of Ian Forbes' medals in 1994 the description adds that the 'Grasshopper' departed with a crew of seventy four, in addition to nine Japanese POWs, some Royal Marines and civilians, including two Dutch women in the final stages of pregnancy and another who was blind - this may have been a reference to Mrs Lampen – Smith).
- **'The Aberdeen Press & Journal'** of 1 February 1944 had an article on the formation of the composite 'Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders' in Singapore in early 1942, which included men from the Royal Marines from 'HMS Prince of Wales' and 'HMS Repulse' and it mentioned *"...When the general evacuation [from Singapore] was ordered, one party [ of 'Plymouth Argylls'] rowed from the Island in a small boat to be picked up by 'HMS Grasshopper', a gunboat..."*.
- **Royal Marine, William Alexander**, ex 'HMS Prince of Wales' and a 'Plymouth Argyll', had come aboard guarding the Japanese POWs – in his oral history at the IWM - mentions that there were ten Japanese POWs, naval personnel and [he may be wrong here] two dozen AIF deserters aboard the 'HMS Grasshopper' - which he said was *"...fairly well packed..."* and that there were a few other Marines aboard namely 'Wootton' and 'Esther'.

- There was a sizeable group of 'Malaya Command Interpreters' - seven Japanese speakers and three Chinese and Thai speakers - on board the ship under orders. Two listed were in charge of the Japanese POWs and later captured in Padang (sources for this list include memo. By **Lieut. W.M.E. Clarke**, Bombay, 27.4.42).
  - Captain Kalberer, G.III (I), HQ., Malayan Command (who reached Padang and was lost in the sinking of the 'SS Rooseboom' in the Indian Ocean)
  - Lieut. C.W. Tait, Int. Corps
  - Lieut. G.S. Walker, Int. Corps
  - Lieut. R.P. Brown
  - Lieut. P.W. Wait/Waite (who became a POW in Padang)
  - Lieut. G.C. Rawlings (POW in Padang)
  - Lieut W.E.M. Clarke, Intell. Corps
  - Lieut. W.B.C.H. Dobson (Chinese and Thai speaking interpreter)
  - Lieut. E.H. Morris (Chinese and Thai speaking interpreter)
  - Plus, according to Lieut. W.E.M. Clarke, there were 9 Japanese POWs.

**Lt Gerard Rawlings**, a Japanese translator in the Intelligence Corps and one of the officers in charge of the prisoners, later wrote in his unpublished memoirs *"... When it became clear that Singapore would fall, our prisoners, of whom we had thirteen, were given the choice of being handed back to their own people or being evacuated with us. Four of the thirteen were hospital cases, too badly injured to be moved. The rest chose to come with us. Japanese soldiers were under orders [from their higher command] that they must on no account be taken prisoner, even if this meant committing suicide. This instruction failed to take into account that an unconscious soldier might not be in position to take his own life, and in all thirteen cases the prisoners in my care had been unconscious when captured. They begged that their next-of-kins should not be informed, as this would bring disgrace on themselves and above all on their families. They at first asked that we should 'give them death'."*

The book **'When Singapore Fell'** (p.61) states *"... Among those who passed through the island of Singkep in escaping from Singapore were some of the members of the staff of the Federated Malay States Railways. On Friday 13 February, a party of named members of railway staff, with permission to leave Singapore passed through the gates of Tulus Ayer basin and was taken by launch to board the 'HMS Grasshopper'. They joined a number of other civilians on board, together with some naval and military personnel and nine Japanese prisoners: estimates of the total number of passengers have varied widely and there is some evidence to suggest that the ship's captain had no clear instructions concerning the evacuees..."*

There were probably at least 73 naval crew on the ship, similar to the number given on the website [www.wrecksite.eu](http://www.wrecksite.eu) for 'Locust' class vessels such as the 'HMS Dragonfly'.

**So, it looks like there was a total of at least 140 people on board** – crew and passengers, including between 4 and 8 women and 4 children.

A tabulation of those aboard may look like;

• Women/Nurses	7
• Children	4
• Civilian men	30
• Japanese POWs	9
• Lt Colonels	3



• Military & intelligence Officers	10
• Royal Marines	2
• Indian Soldiers	3
• Crew (RN/RNR/RNZN/Malay Section SSRNVR)	<u>73 plus</u> (estimate)
• TOTAL	141 plus

### **Final Voyage and the Attack:**

Once the ship left Singapore, all male passengers would have experienced a most uncomfortable night trying to sleep on the deck and steel hatches of the vessel. No doubt the few women and children were able to use officer's accommodation. The regular crew would have been in their normal quarters and no doubt started the day as they had for weeks.

At daybreak passenger **William Wegener**, of FMS Railways, later wrote in his report to the Malayan Research Bureau that 'HMS Grasshopper' was sailing in company with 'HMS Dragonfly' and either" ... *Fairmile launch No '310' or '311'...*" [ it was probably HDML 1062, but HMML 432, 310 and even HDML 1063 have been mentioned], then when the 'Dragonfly' was sunk the "... *Fairmile escaped and ran ashore at Pulau Sempang...*"

Insofar as the passengers, **John Robins** has an eloquent description of the new day "... *Foolishly we welcomed the dawn, for in fact the day was to be far more uncomfortable than the night had been. Breakfast was available in the form of soup and coffee, after which I managed to get a shave, little dreaming that it was to be the last one for three and a half years. I had just put my shaving tackle away when there was a cry of 'aircraft'. Away on our starboard beam we saw the Japanese bombers flying in and out of the clouds. They did not appear to be taking any interest in us and we kidded ourselves that we were not a sufficiently important target and that they were making for some town in the NEI. They passed on and we were just beginning to feel a little relieved when two seaplanes were seen approaching and obviously making for us. Those of us on deck endeavoured to make ourselves as small as possible behind a barricade of suitcases. It gave us a sense of security even if it was not very effective. At least it might give us some protection from burning oil which some of the Japanese bombs contained. Our own machine guns opened up against them and a stick of bombs burst in the water beside us. And that was all there was to that attack...*".

This was **0800 - 0900 hrs** on the morning of Saturday, 14 February 1942.

**John Duke** saw it a little differently "... *the next morning about 10 o'clock a Japanese plane came over the ship and let loose a bomb which glanced off the side of the ship. I was told that a few men had been injured by the explosion. We were all advised to take shelter. At that time, we were 50 miles further on than [Pulau] Batam and some islands came into view...*".

**Lt. I.D.S. Ian Forbes** gave this description of their position "... *All three ships made for a small group of islands to the north of the island of Singkep. At 1130 (approx.) when only two miles from one of the islands we closed the wreckage of the tug, St Breock. At this moment two formations of 81 bombers with attendant fighters flew over at 4000 feet in the direction of Singapore (Army 97 bombers). Having passed over they broke formation and attacked in flights of 9 at heights of 2000 and 4000 feet. The waves came from all directions at 5-minute intervals... we avoided between 15 and 20 attacks. ...Then about half a mile from the islands Grasshopper was hit in the after mess and set on fire. We were unable to flood the after magazine which was in danger from fire.... When I informed the Commanding Officer [Commander Hoffman] of the position aft, he took the ship*

*straight in and beached her. Two more attacks were made after the ship was beached and before she was completely abandoned. The Japanese made one final attack with machine gun only, on the beach and jungle...".*

At **1100-1130 hrs** two squadrons of Japanese bombers, numbering perhaps 120 planes, arrived.

**John Robins** has left us a vivid description" ... *It must have been about 11am when we were passing some islands of the Lingga Archipelago that planes were sighted again. We turned in amongst the islands and each ship [note: the 'HMS Dragonfly, and accompanying Fairmile patrol boat – possibly HDML1062 or even HMML 432 since it is recorded that 432 picked up 24 survivors from the area around the sinking from the sunken 'St Broek' and took them to Singkep or even HMML 310 which is recorded by Capt David Nelson in Changi POW as having '...picked up a few...' – plus 'HMS Grasshopper'] took its own course. The Dragonfly was the first to be attacked. Bombs were seen to explode all around her, and she was lost to view in the columns of water which were thrown up. Presently we saw her emerging and looking quite unscathed, but a little later a whisp of smoke from her stern showed she had been hit. She slowed down and we could see people jumping overboard and the boats being lowered. Soon she began to settle by the stern. The Fairisle [sic: a Fairmile launch] approached and began picking up survivors when seaplanes flew over and began machine gunning them. The Fairisle was forced to relinquish her humane task and we realised what our fate was likely to be. We were not left long in doubt. "Planes approaching ahead, Sir" was called to the bridge from the forward lookout. "Twenty-seven planes astern, Sir" came from the after lookout. More planes were seen on the beam. Full speed was signalled to the engine room, and then came a twisting and turning which made the little ship heel first to starboard then to **port** and back again. The First Lieutenant was watching the bombs as they left the plane and reacted accordingly with amazingly successful results. How many attacks were made I cannot remember, but salvos of bombs fell first this side, then that, sending up great columns of water which fell inboard like heavy rain. Survivors from a Government tug, St Briac [sic: St Breock] which had been sunk earlier, told us, when we met them months later, that it was incredible how we kept emerging from each attack unharmed and still steaming full speed. We thought so too. They must hit us next time surely, they can't go on missing. During a brief lull in the attacks (I remember catching a glimpse of the Dragonfly at the time, only the bows of which were now above water) one of the engine-room staff asked us to remove the hatch covers. He was sweating streams; the atmosphere must have been awful down there with both engines flat out. "You give us air; we'll keep the old ship going" he cried. We got one cover removed when the alarm sounded again and down came the bombs. There was a terrific thump and a blow beneath the deck as though it had been hit by a huge sledgehammer. Obviously, we had been hit at last. A bomb had exploded in the P.O.'s mess and started a fire there. Several men were killed, [One of the men who lost his life, either at the time the bomb struck or on the beach of the island first reached, appears to have been **Lt Colonel John Tarrant Feehally**, RASC, and **Lt Col. Harold Morton James, FMSVF** must have been very gravely wounded because he died of his wounds four weeks later at Djambi. Two civilians in the Mess – Mr & Mrs Lampen-Smith - escaped unharmed] *and others emerged with burns and other wounds. One young Malay seaman was hobbling along dragging a foot which was only hanging on by a piece of flesh. An elderly civilian was sitting on the deck holding his ear which was bleeding and swollen. I went over to help him when the bombers appeared again. Another very near miss and we were both drenched to the skin when a deluge of water came inboard. The fire on board was spreading and there was a call for the firehose. The cook however needed a special spanner to open it. This was in due course produced, but the method of operating it was not clear and some little time elapsed before we tumbled onto the solution. Having got the cock open we found there was no water pressure, the pump having been damaged in the explosion. With no means of fighting the fire, and with such persistent bombing, we were obviously doomed, and the Skipper wisely headed for the shore with the object of beaching the ship. We were quite close to one of the islands and it was not long before we**

were gently grounded and prepared to abandon ship. Any available timber was thrown overboard for those who could not swim. The lifeboat was lowered and took the wounded, women and children. ...”.

**William Francis** later reported to the Malayan Research Bureau “... 30 to 50 bombs were dropped in a pattern bombing from 3 to 4000’ on the ‘GRASSHOPPER”. First bomb to hit went through Petty officer’s Mess causing fatal casualties and a number of slightly wounded. Then the crew reported ‘Fire aft’: hit again in the same place...”.

**John Bagnall** adds “... a few minutes later our ship was also struck and set on fire aft. She was beached on a small island which we knew as Pulau Mas. Some went ashore in the ship’s boats, others on rafts or pieces of wood, and the remainder swam ashore, a distance of 200 yards...”.

**Lt Gerard Rawlings** recalled that “... Those who made it off the ship were strafed in the water and as we floundered towards the beach and sought cover in the nearby undergrowth **I** dragged one of the two Japanese pilot-officer prisoners, a non-swimmer, through the bullet torn water, probably saving the man’s life. Breathless and frightened and having no idea what might lie ahead, **we** made a pact. Neither of us wanted to die. We agreed that, depending on whose forces **we** might encounter first – the Allies or the Japanese – one of us would play the role of captor and the other the role of prisoner...”

**John Robins** takes up the story again “... when they were safely away there seemed no point in remaining on board, so I jumped overboard and swam for the shore. Whilst in the water nine bombers came over again, I felt sure they were about to drop bombs amongst us and struck out for all I was worth. But no bombs came, and I reached shore safely. Somewhat short of breath I stood up on the beach and looked back at the Grasshopper to see another stick of bombs fall on the far side of her. The aiming must have been poor to have missed a stationary target which was offering no resistance. This was the last attack on the little ship which had sustained only one hit from hundreds of bombs directed at her, indeed we were a lucky ship, the number of casualties was small considering the number of people on board...”.

**Laurence Hurndell, RNZN** stated in an interview in 1995 “... **we lost most of the civilians and most of the children, they were killed on the mess deck, they were all sheltering down there you see and the bomb exploded on the mess deck, and all hell was let loose...**”. This is one of those awful records of history because the researcher of this document has been unable to identify any of the supposed children on board and several of the women – it is a harsh fact of historical research that men in times of war often overlook the existence of children and women in the conflict situations when later recording events.

### **Landing ashore:**

We have heard that the island on which the ship was run aground described above as Pulau Mas. In the opinion of the researcher of this document, another source, **Lt Gerard Rawlings**, a Malayan Volunteer in the Intelligence Corps, explains it more correctly: “... Grasshopper was hit twice and set on fire. Her commanding officer, Commander Hoffman, steered the flat-bottomed vessel straight for the nearest island – Pulau Sempeng as deduced many years later – one of the smallest of the hundreds of uninhabited islands in the Lingga Archipelago...”. Once ashore he recalled “... while the ship ‘burned like a beacon’ and we put up with heart-rending screams of the wounded, the ship’s

*survivors' most immediate needs were for food and water, care for the casualties and dying., and planning our immediate next steps...".*

**William Francis** recorded *"... women and children put into the ship's whaler and reached island safely. She beached on island and all went off – 50% had already reached island: then bombers attacked the beached and burning ship: then again. Sir John Bagnall and Francis ran for cover, machine-gunned but no one hurt: about 103 on island: casualties about 30: food got from the whale boat..."*.

**John Robins** takes up the story again *"...Our first consideration was for the wounded. A case of dressings had been brought ashore. I found myself beside the young Malay seaman with the shattered foot. He had no shirt, so I gave him mine; then obtained a large square bandage and endeavoured to bandage his foot ... I am afraid my effort was very poor. Others were improvising stretchers and taking the wounded into the jungle. We had no sooner finished this when the seaplanes were seen approaching. We hastily withdrew and took what shelter we could behind the trees. The planes roared over, machine gunning the beach and trees. The bark of the guns sounded particularly harsh and vicious, but this was the first time I had been on the wrong end of them. Once more we were lucky and there were no more casualties, and to our relief that was the last attack on us.*

#### **Where was 'HMS Grasshopper' attacked and beached?:**

We are somewhat fortunate in the case of 'HMS Grasshopper' that the group of educated and articulate civilians aboard left us several memoirs, letters, and reports to draw upon for the location of the attack and the beaching of 'HMS Grasshopper'. On the other hand, the records clearly demonstrate that not everyone had the same memory of the island's name and there are a few instances of survivors researching years later to find the location.

Understanding the geography is important to finding the tiny island [even using 'Google Earth and Map Carta it is a bit like finding the proverbial 'needle in a haystack'] that became the last resting place of the 'HMS Grasshopper' and indeed the last resting place for over twenty killed in the hull of the ship and later at least six more of those on board who died on the beach and jungle edge.

Firstly, south of Singapore are a large group of islands ('Pulau' means island) including Pulau Batam and Pulau Bintan – these are the northernmost islands of the Riau/Rhio Archipelago. It was through these that the 'HMS Grasshopper' passed on the first night of its escape towards the next 'Archipelago'.

Further south are another group of islands and islets – numbering hundreds with some not much more than sandbanks or tiny islands with mangroves, bushes, and a few trees - but including two large islands named Pulau Lingga and Pulau Singkep. This is the group of islands where the attack and beaching of the vessel took place - amongst the myriad of islands of what is sometimes referred to as the 'Lingga Archipelago'.



Specifically, it took place amongst the small group of islands north west of Singkep, which is 60 km directly to the east of the mouth of the Indragiri River on the east coast of Sumatra and 200km directly south of Singapore. These comprise the more readily identifiable islands of Pulau Bandahara, Pulau Posik, Pulau Rusukbuaya, Pulau Mas and Pulau Sempeng/Sempang/Sempiang

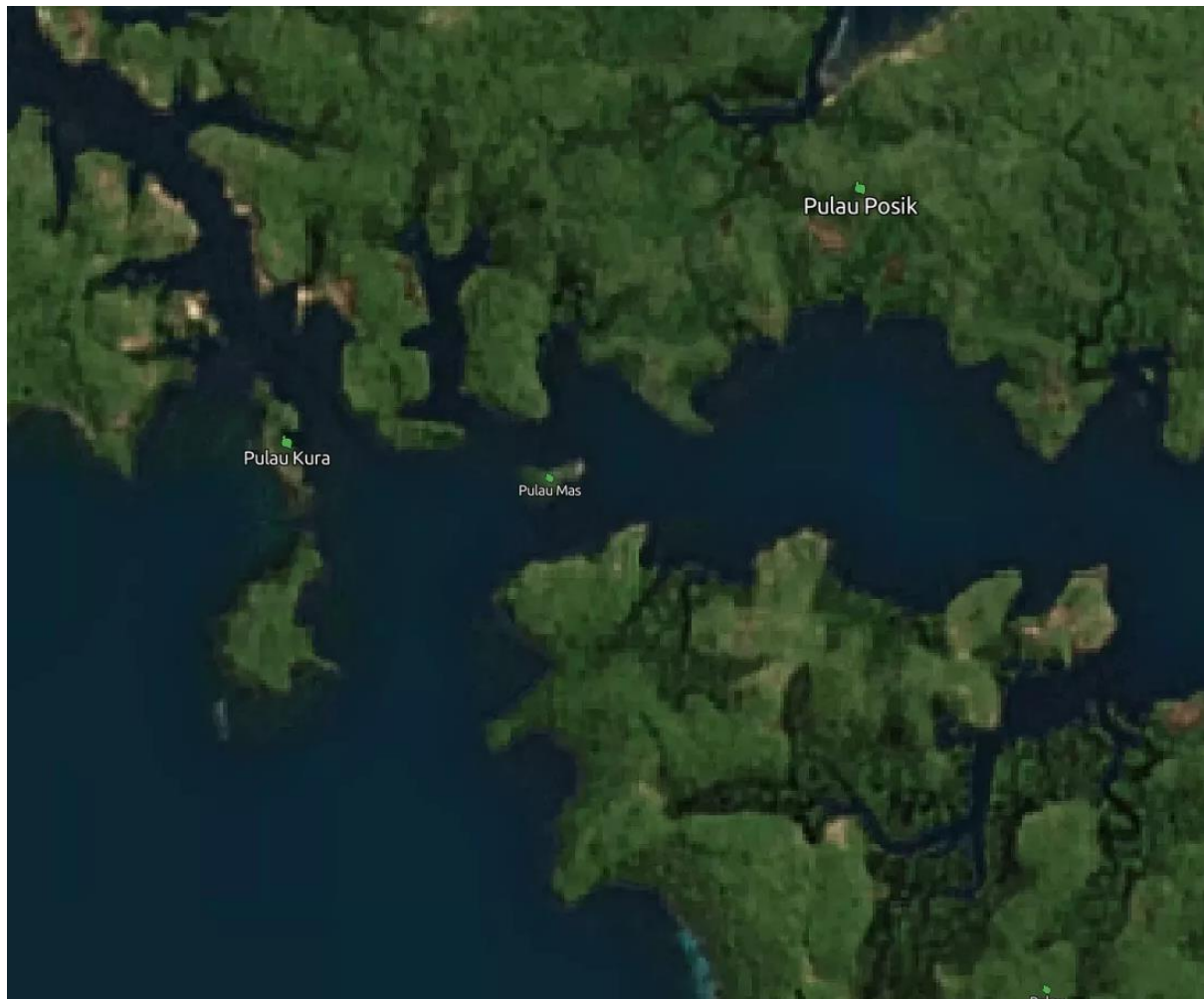


**(see the next map).**



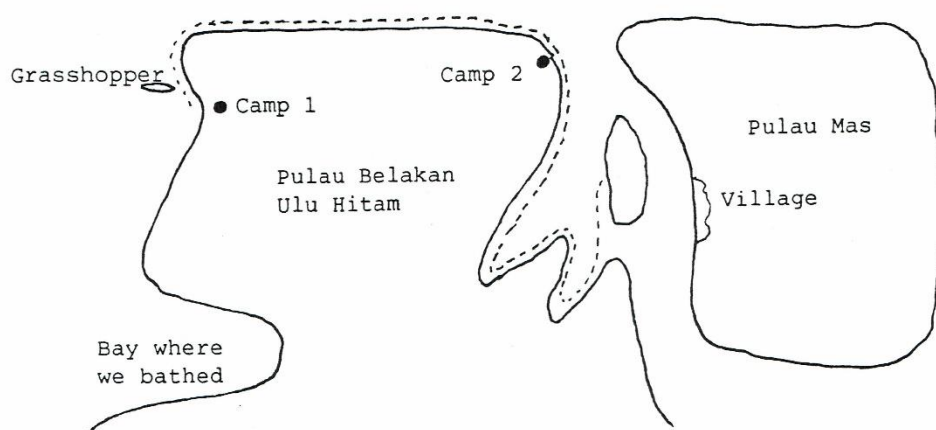
Amongst these are the very small islet of **Pulau Mas** (noted by Sir John Bagnall who recorded “... *She was beached on a nearby island which we knew as Pulau Mas...*”, and also named by John Robins as the island where the ship was beached), **Pulau Sempeng** (named by Lt Rawlings years later when

researching his memoirs), then a variation on that name **Pulau Sempang** (named in the book 'When Singapore Fell' p.62 as being where the 'Grasshopper' was beached about 200 yards from shore) and – presumably incorrectly – a **Pulau 'Sewa Buaya'** by Brewer. There is a consistent theme amongst survivor reports that the island was uninhabited.





**Robins** refines his identified location as 'Pulau Belakan Ulu Hitam' and in his memoirs provides the following hand drawn map and notation about his efforts on the day of the sinking.



The dotted line indicates the route we took in the whaler in our unsuccessful attempt to find the village that night. We were misled by the little island between the two larger ones which hid the village from our view. We rowed and rowed until 5am, when we finally pulled up on the little island stretched out on the sand to sleep the sleep of utter exhaustion.

Sunday 15th February. We were awake again with the dawn and with the aid of light had no difficulty in finding the village. We discovered that most of the inhabitants had evacuated the place and the few who remained were nervous and mistrustful. A Mr. Bennett, who spoke Malay fluently, negotiated with them to try and get word of our plight to the island of Sinkep where there was a British colony. A boat left later with one of our party aboard bound for Sinkep. A messenger was also taken across to our main party telling them to make their way along the beach to Camp 2 where we would pick them up in the whaler after dark. It was deemed inadvisable to do anything during daylight as planes flew frequently overhead. The rest of <sup>us</sup> spent an idle day. Water was plentiful but there was little to eat, a raw egg and some ubi kayu (tapioca tubers) being all we had for the day. We discovered the Chinese owner of a small shop from whom we arranged the purchase of a sack of rice. There was another little shop where we bought a few articles of clothing. I bought a sarong which proved a very useful article in the weeks to come, and which over three years later and after much use I sold for forty times its original cost. We found the survivors of the Stirling at the village and the Fairisle had also hidden herself somewhere along the



But the researcher has not been able to identify any such island - the name 'Belakan Ulu Hitam' may refer to a village? The translation from Malay is 'Behind Head Black'.

There is a real disparity of names applied to the first island survivors reached - but it seems unlikely that the 'HMS Grasshopper' beached on Pulau Mas since that island appears too far up a channel for a 200-foot ship to navigate and then leave such a distance for survivors to swim or wade – it almost certainly seems to have been **Pulau Sempeng/Sempang** (as recorded by Gerard Rawlings and Wegener) and that the survivors then somehow made it north with the Malay fishermen to Pulau Rusukbuaya. A slight variant of this name is where a post war Graves Party' recorded that they found the remains of the vessel and two graves.

[Note: the events and heroism displayed during the attack and sinking of 'HMS Grasshopper' - and later aboard 'HMS Stronghold' in the Sunda Strait - resulted in Ian Forbes being awarded the DSC; Jack Hoffman and Able Seaman Joseph Sparrow being awarded Posthumous MID; CPO Walter Verrion and Able Seaman James MacLeod being awarded the MID. The awards were made on 20 January 1946.].

#### **Survival ashore:**

CWGC records show that 21 men from the crew of 'HMS Grasshopper' died on the day (14<sup>th</sup> February 1942) of the attack and the beaching of the vessel on the island known as Pulau Sempang, but whether they all died on the ship, attempting to reach the island or even on the beach of the island is unclear. It is most likely that it was in all three of those events and locations

We also do not know how many of the passengers died in the attack on the ship apart from a reference to a couple of servicemen being killed when the bomb hit the Mess Room.

One reference in the book 'When Singapore Fell' (p.62) tells us that *"... Grasshopper was hit by a bomb which passed through the petty officer's mess and exploded below, killing a number of servicemen [ presumably Lt Col Feehally] and wounding others [ presumably including Lt Col Harold Morton James, FMSVF] ...they were about 200 yards from the shore and women and wounded were taken off in one of the ship's boats. The wounded included 13 stretcher cases, two of who, both servicemen, died during the night..."*.

**William Wegener** recorded *"... there were about 13 stretcher cases, two of whom died on the night of the 14<sup>th</sup>. Both were men of the services..."*. These two men were presumably buried in one of the two graves found on the island after the war.

**Barnett Cramer** wrote in a letter from South Africa – after he had reached safety – *"...I jumped into the water with my clothes and shoes on and after a fair struggle reached the shore about three eights of a mile away. Our casualties killed and wounded were fairly heavy, we lost all our belongings and found the island had neither food nor water..."*.

**W.T. Francis** noted that **Mrs Annie Smart** was slightly wounded in the attack. Ian Forbes stated that **Commander Hoffman** had been wounded. A handwritten note in the UK archives by passenger/survivor Capt. (Lt.) C.W. Tait states *"...The only Army casualty occasioned by enemy air attack on HMS Grasshopper was Lt (now Capt.) G. Walker, Int. Corps who was wounded, this officer*

*is now attached to CSDIC. Delhi...". This latter statement reflects the chaos of that day and is patently incorrect since Lt Col Feehally is recorded as losing his life and Lt Col James, FMSVHF died of wounds after reaching Djambi on the Sumatran mainland.*

**Colonel Coates** later reported (16.8.43) to the War Office *"...to the best of my knowledge no military casualties were sustained by military personnel on board 'HMS Grasshopper'. To the best of my knowledge casualties were confined to naval personnel... The personnel on board were mainly naval and civilian. There was a Lt Col. Robinson, Indian Army, who subsequently arrived in India, two Indian NCOs, a few intelligence officers and nine Japanese prisoners of war..."*. [To put it politely, Colonel Coates appears not to have been strong on detail since several senior officers were killed and this report to the War Office does not reflect well on his comprehension or memory.].

#### **Other accounts have the number of wounded on the first island at 16 people.**

We are left however with a significant discrepancy when tallying who was on board and who survived to reach shore. It was earlier established that the benchmark for the number of people on board was 140 souls – some estimates put the total at 150 and even higher. Then we have estimates of up to '103 people congregating on Pulau Mas', so allowing for 21 crew and one Army Officer dying on 14 February we are missing a minimum of some 15-25 people.

[Sadly, from the researcher's experience in investigating the reports on many evacuation vessels the reality is that children, women, Chinese people, and Indian people are almost always overlooked in the later memoirs and reports of casualties].

After the sinking on that Saturday, 14 February, women and children plus wounded had been brought ashore in the ship's whaler and with men swimming to the shallow water there were soon a group of about 100 people according to **John Duke** (in close confirmation Bagnall states *"... about 103 on island; casualties about 30..."*) who describes them as a *"... mixed bag, and included a Major General (I forget his name ), Naval ratings, Flying, Naval and Military Officers, about six women, six Japanese pilots who had been brought down during the fighting in Malaya..."* .

One of the 'women' was **Sister Heather Victoria Fisher** of the Malayan Medical Service (who became an internee in Padang and Bankinang camps) who was in 1946 awarded the MBE for *"...when the HMS Grasshopper was bombed in the Durian Straits she tended to the wounded during action and after swimming ashore continued to care for survivors until they reached Singkep island five days later ..."* (Townsville Daily Bulletin' 8.7.46, under the heading 'MBE FOR YEPPON NURSE')

Two unidentified (Dutch according to Ian Forbes) women passengers gave birth on the beach of Pulau Mas, their babies being delivered by the ship's coxswain, Petty Officer George Leonard White, and were duly christened George and Leonard.

**John Robins** described the scene quite vividly *"... Our immediate necessity was water. The wounded were crying out for it. I felt parched myself and I had had some breakfast. Others had not been so fortunate and had had nothing to drink since the night before. But we had landed in the most inhospitable place imaginable. The jungle was thick with closely packed trees from which hung a tangled mass of lianas and thorns. However careful one was it was impossible not to get scratched. The wounded had been carried to a spot where the undergrowth was not quite so dense. Some of them were pretty bad, most of them possessed little in the way of clothing, one or two were quite naked. Some of us went off in a hunt for water. I did not get far before I completely lost my sense of direction amongst trees, trees and more trees, none of which looked any different than the others. Also, I was getting badly scratched and discovered that my kneecap had swollen up like an egg....I eventually found my way back to discover that the lifeboat had returned to the ship and brought ashore some tinned provisions and bottles of ginger beer. Why the latter instead of water I do not*

*know, for it was not thirst quenching and I feel sure that the wounded did not appreciate it. We each had a mouthful of this fizz and a bite of something to eat. The hunt for water continued but the best we could do was to dig in the rotting leaves until a pit was formed and some muddy water seeped into it, which cleared somewhat when allowed to settle but tasted very rank and earthy...”*

**Sir John Bagnall's** perspective on the same scene was “... Some of the men even went back to the ship and obtained from the forepart a few cases of tinned soup and milk and some water. The stay on board was short because the after part of the vessel was still burning and small arms ammunition was continually popping off... two things made for comfort – no rain and no mosquitos: the island was uninhabited. A ration of salty asparagus soup assuaged our hunger, which was negligible, but increased our thirst which was great. E.J.B. said that a search for water should be made immediately and after a couple of hours had been spent in a fruitless search, he and two Indians commenced to dig. A bayonet and empty tins are not the best tools for digging, but the hole in the ground became larger and deeper, and at a depth of two feet, water was found in quantity. The Indians said it was safe to drink as it was, but the Europeans were not enamoured of the dark brown colour and preferred to wait until a supply had been boiled for safety. E.J.B.s stock went up [EJB refers to Ernest John Bennet, Director G.H. Slot & Co, and a friend of Sir John's] ... As darkness came I made myself comfortable for the night with a covering of leaves and hoped it would not rain. Cramer had already gone off to another part of the island to seek water and assistance. At midnight E.J.B. went off in a boat with three sailors on a similar mission. I next saw him at daylight on Monday [16<sup>th</sup> February] on Pulau Baya (Crocodile Island) ...”.

**Sir John Bagnall** was the Managing Director of the iconic, long established, Straits Trading Company Ltd in Singapore and the circumstances to which this wealthy man had been reduced in the escape, sinking and shipwreck could not have been further from his pre-war lifestyle. Without in any way intending to disrespect Sir John his positive and resolute attitude towards the circumstances on Pulau Mas is only further enhanced by the fact that John Duke the Optician recalls of the same night” ... *Sir John Bagnall was there; I still remember him late in the evening wandering around in his shirt only. He was luckier than I, he did have a shirt. I hadn't even got a shirt at that time, only a lifebelt... We couldn't light a fire at any time, as the smoke would attract further bombing, and it was cold that night... To sleep on the hard ground at any time, to one who is not used to it, and to an individual who is over 50 years of age, is an ordeal but to one wounded as well was an agony which I do not believe I will ever forget. The succeeding four nights were bad, although fortunately it did not rain... Late that night someone took compassion on me and gave me a shirt and later I got a dead man's shorts... During the night Bill Steel [Manager, Eastern Bank Ltd Singapore – and who later became an internee in Padang, Sumatra] and I wrapped ourselves around each other for warmth. I think this must have saved my life...”*

**Ian Forbes** then also remembered reporting progress to Captain Hoffman and then lying down for a few hours” ... *listening to the groans of the wounded and the ship blowing herself to bits...”* ('Singapore's Dunkirk' p.198).

The evening of 14 February saw several expeditions to nearby islands seeking help and by the following day contact had been made with a nearby village and some food was obtained.

**William Alexander**, Royal Marine, in his oral history in the Imperial War Museum recalled that after reaching the beach some of the injured died and he helped dig “... *about three graves...*” on the island on which the survivors first landed. [Researcher Note; it is assumed that these men were disinterred by 'Grave Parties' after the war and reinterred in either Kranji Cemetery in Singapore or in the official war cemetery maintained by the Dutch war Graves Trust in Jakarta, Indonesia.]

On the 15th February, the youngest member of the 'crew' (he may have been a passenger) died and was probably buried on the same island - he was **Marine Francis Leaver**, Royal Marines, aged 18 years from Stonehouse, Plymouth. The following day (16th February) another **Marine Francis Frank McNamara**, aged 24 years and from Atherton, Lancashire, died together with **Able Seaman William Preston, RN**, he was also probably buried on the same island. There were certainly two or three graves on the first island according to William Alexander and this was confirmed by a post war graves party (see reference to 'Aberdeen Press & Journal' article of December 1945 at end of this document). The remains of three other people were found in these two graves and could sadly be one of the many crew from the Malaya Section of the SSRNVR who are listed as crew and dying - but with no date of death by the CWGC – or a member of the crew of 'HMS Dragonfly' which had been sunk in the vicinity of the same group of islands, or even a civilian adult or child from 'HMS Grasshopper' ... or even Lt Col Feehally, RASC?

The 'Grasshopper survivors had also met up with a few survivors from 'HMS Dragonfly' on Pulau Mas – one encounter was between **Able Seaman 'Taff' Long** of 'HMS Dragonfly' as he wandered along the hot sand of a deserted island (after swimming miles to the island) and heard voices coming out of the jungle" ... *I heard voices but couldn't distinguish whether they were English or Japanese. Had this island already been occupied? I dived into the bush with my heart thumping like a kettledrum. As I listened, realised it was English. Coming towards me out of the jungle were two of 'HMS Grasshopper's company. One of them was a New Zealander called Pardoe* [Ivan Pardoe, RNZN, would later die as a POW on 20.4.45 in one of the camps on the horrendous 'Sumatra Railway' – and tragically his remains still lie in a small jungle cemetery there along with Australian, British and Dutch casualties – they were all overlooked by the post War Graves Party sent to retrieve remains from the cemeteries along the Railway line]. *They were looking for a native village or whatever...Apparently other survivors from both the 'HMS Grasshopper and 'HMS Dragonfly' were some way along the beach and there were quite a few serious casualties among them...Round the corner of the bay I came upon the survivors from the 'Grasshopper'. What a shambles! Wounded people were lying everywhere. There were no medical supplies – there was no food and precious little water. What water they had had been found by Judy, the Pointer bitch that had been the 'Grasshopper's 'mascot... There were half a dozen dead who had been laid some distance away as there were no tools to bury them. It had been decided to throw them in the sea and hope that the tide would take them out. There were half a dozen Australian nurses who were busy attending to the wounded, both male and female...".*

**So, it seems that the wounded, dying and dead on what has been referred to as Pulau Mas (but was in fact Pulau Sempeng) comprised casualties from both 'HMS Grasshopper' and 'HMS Dragonfly' – which, together with the report that some of the bodies were placed back in the sea, explains some of the discrepancy between the number of dead from 'HMS Grasshopper' on 15 and 16 February, the reports of graves dug and the accounts of the number of dead bodies.**

Insofar as the accompanying Japanese POWs, **Lt Ian Forbes** (SD pp. 196-197) wrote "...*The Japanese prisoners were magnificent. All pretence at guarding them was dropped and they went around calmly and efficiently helping the wounded*". John Duke recalled ... *Those Japanese were extraordinarily helpful. Later on, when shifting camp, they gave us a hand in carrying stretcher cases through the jungle, and that is no easy work, particularly with no roads or bridle paths. The Japanese made no attempt to escape although they had plenty of opportunity. They were funny looking blokes, wore black cotton suits, with white patches let in. Their straight black hair was uncut and stuck out all around like a gollywog's. They were on the afterpart of the ship during the bombing...*".

In **Gerard Rawling's** words, the prisoners "...behaved splendidly right from the start, helping with the wounded, for instance, using jungle mosses whose healing properties they knew about and we did not...".

#### **Movement from Pulau Mas/Pulau Posik to 'Pulau Buaya' / Pulau Rusukbuaya to Singkep;**

On the night of 14 February, and then more actively on 15 February, efforts were made to contact villages elsewhere in the group of islands north of Pulau Singkep.

**Frank Brewer** wrote in his 1943 letter in Ceylon "... The next morning [ which was 15 February] Malays from the nearby island **Pulau Sewa Baya**, brought us over water and arranged to ferry us to the other island at dusk, which meant as soon as the Jap planes were out of the way. We spent one night on the other island where there was plenty of water, nanas, ubi kaya and klapa, and on the second night [which must have been the 16 February] at 23.30 hours a Malay woke us up and we found that a fairly large Dutch Diesel Motor Launch had arrived and, towing a lifeboat, took 763 of us off (that was all except the severely wounded who were still on the first island with others looking after them. A Red Cross launch took them off), and through the inner channels of the Lingga Archipelago to Kuala Raya, a small village in a large bay on the N.W. side of Singkep island. From here we were taken across Singkep island in small motor buses to Djabo which is the principal town of the islands. We were in Djabo ten days. Most of the C & W people were on the 'Kuala' and joined us in Singkep island...".

**Sir John Bagnall** appears to have been in the next group away from the initial island" ... Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup>, was a quiet day with alerts at intervals. I swam a little with the double objective of seeking my belongings and bathing my scratches. On the return of sundry search parties our main body set out at five o'clock to walk along the beach to a spot some three miles distant. Stretched of sand alternated with large patches of coral hundreds of yards in length...I reached my destination as darkness fell and was rather exhausted [ in a separate report **W.T. Francis** tells us that during this walk the group '...found by wading they could walk to the next island ' – which aligns with the hand drawn map by John Robins]....I slept soundly for an hour until called by G.B. two boats were then on the point of departure , the large being loaded with wounded and the smaller carrying people not requiring help...What at first looked like being a short journey gradually became longer and a couple of hours elapsed before we landed at **Pulau Buoya** at a spot where there was a large fishing village... After a walk of some hundreds of yards we took up residence in one of many Malay huts which appeared to have been deserted temporarily... At daylight on Monday, 16<sup>th</sup>, E.J.B. greeted me with good news. He presented me with a large sarong, showed me where there was a well with good water and took me to a Malay house where I drank my fill of coconut milk and a few small pieces of dried curried chicken.... Towards midnight we collected parties at the spot where we had landed 24 hours earlier and embarked on a large motor launch which was to tow a large sampan containing wounded.... The Captain of the gunboat conducted operations and, like everyone else, was anxious to be off at the earliest possible moment so the journey to the island of Singkep could be completed in darkness.... At daylight on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup>, approached we were in sight of Kuala Raya, but were unable to discern the narrow channel and our vessel ran aground...The whole party was soon landed and after partaking of refreshments moved off piecemeal as cars and lorries became available. A journey of 16 miles brought us to the principal town of Singkep, by name Dabo...".

**William Wegener** recorded "... after 36 hours on the island a move was made to **Sungei Buaya**, a neighbouring island [ Sungei means 'river' not 'island' so Wegener was a little amiss in his memory on that point].Some of the wounded did not reach Sungei Buaya for another 24 hours and had it not been for

*the devotion to duty of Miss Fisher, the Nursing Sister, assisted by a struggling and dogged band of naval ratings who improvised stretchers and carried them, there would have been many more deaths among the severely wounded. On the night of Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> February, the survivors and some of the wounded were conveyed from Sungei Buaya by launch to Kuala Raya on Pulau Singkep and landed on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February...".*

On the 18 February a motor launch had cleared the last wounded - some 16 by some accounts from the first island and had them in a sampan or tongkang towed along behind when it picked up remaining civilians and servicemen from 'Pulau Buoya', 'Pulau Sewa Baya' - or probably the island of **Pulau Rusukbuaya** which seems to be the only island with a similar name.

So, by dawn on 19<sup>th</sup> February most survivors had reached **Pulau Singkep** where many received hospital treatment at the principal town of Dabo and were joined by the survivors of other sinkings – notably the 'SS Kuala' which had been bombed and sunk at uninhabited Pom Pong island further north.

**Wegener** recorded "... On arrival at Dabo, the party was met by the Dutch Controller who had remained behind to look after the native population of about 30,000 on the island. Temporary accommodation was found in the hostel next to the Dabo Club for about 30; the wounded were sent to the hospital and the womenfolk were accommodated in the Controller's and Administrator's houses.... On the afternoon of Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup>, a Hurricane fighter plane which had force-landed a day or so earlier near the hostel, was smashed up and destroyed..."

Interestingly, **Gerard Rawlings** also noted that when the two pilot-officer Japanese prisoners were given a chance to inspect the wreckage of a Hurricane fighter that had crashed on Singkep, they greatly admired the British machine as being much more strongly built than the **Japanese Navy Zeros** that they had flown and that were wreaking such havoc on the Allies. Over the next six weeks, through thick and thin, **Gerard Rawlings** and his two Intelligence Corps colleagues made a point of at least one of them being always close to their otherwise unguarded prisoners— for the prisoners' protection. Anti-Japanese sentiments within the straggling band of escapees had been escalating and the lives of the prisoners, "who at any stage of the journey, had they wished to escape, could easily have done so", were increasingly at stake.

Many wounded were cared for in the rudimentary hospital at Dabo and Miss Fisher's nursing efforts were soon reinforced by the skills of nurses who had survived the sinking of the 'SS Kuala' further north in the Archipelago, and then by the arrival of Dr Kirkwood, IAMC.

Despite the efforts of the medical professionals at least two men from the ship died at Dabo – **Ordinary Seaman Thomas Betteridge, RN** on either 21.2.42 or 23.2.42 who was buried in the 'hospital' cemetery (and post war reinterred at Kranji) and possibly **Petty Officer Percy Nurden, RN** on 27.2.42 or 14.3.42 (in which case it is possible he died at either Djambi or Rengat on the Sumatran mainland).

### **Journey from Singkep to Sumatra and Padang:**

Over the next few weeks groups of men and women left Dabo by launch and travelled overnight to the mouth of the Indragiri River on the east coast of Sumatra – then spending days making their way up that long river and being forced to stop at the various river towns such as Tembilihan, Rengat and Ayer Molek as the military allocated spaces on boats, buses, and trucks to the several thousand service and civilian evacuees from Singapore who had made it that far. Then assembling at the top of

the river at the railhead of Sawahloewento for the train down the mountains to Padang on the west coast.

During early March there were still a few casualties in the 'hospital' at Rengat including Laurence Hurndell, RNZN and at least one other crew member who had also been severely wounded when the bomb hit the mess deck – the other unidentified crew member died at Rengat (Interview with Laurie Hurndell, Christchurch 1995). Hurndell was later captured on 23 March 1942 when the Japanese arrived and took the occupants of the hospital prisoner.

We now also know from research that a small group left Dabo and took a shorter sea route to the Sumatran mainland -to the Djambi River and up that river to the town of Djambi. This group may have included civilians Brewer and Barden who ended up in internment in Palembang even further south on Sumatra; and naval ratings like Faint and McNelley who became POWs in Palembang.

The Japanese prisoners were still being transported to Padang. Lt Geoffrey Brooke (Singapore's Dunkirk' p. 70) recollected whilst at Ayer Molek *"...I amused myself watching some giant toads in a ditch. Also, a strange little band of swarthy, bandy-legged Japanese prisoners. In the charge of an Intelligence officer named Clarke, they had been sunk in one of the gunboats and he was hoping to get them to India. At least one was a fighter pilot. All behaved very well; in fact, another brought a loaded rifle to Dillon, saying he did not think it should be left within reach of Japanese prisoners! As the Japs were not allowed to surrender, perhaps they were not looking forward to being reunited with their kind..."*.

From Wikipedia we have a good summary of another side story to the 'HMS Grasshopper' *"...Two of the crew elected not to travel with the others to Sumatra. They were Petty Officer George White and Able Seaman "Tancy" Lee, who were joined by one of the evacuees from the Royal Naval Reserve and two British Army soldiers who were already on Singkep. To prevent trouble with the incoming Japanese forces, they were transferred to the smaller Selayar Island [ this would have been Pulau Selejar north of Singkep]. They were subsequently offered a boat by the island's administrator, and a map of the Indian Ocean torn from a child's atlas. They decided that they would aim to sail to Madras, India, as there were concerns that the Japanese were working their way through the islands. Their departure timetable was brought forward after the island was visited by a boat containing a Japanese officer and five soldiers. They were told by the Japanese to remain on the island and await collection. That evening they prepared the boat and put supplies on board. They departed on 11 April, only travelling by night until they were clear of the islands. During the day, they landed on nearby islands and hid. After four days, the engine broke and could not be turned off. As they travelled through the islands, they passed two Japanese transport ships and were buzzed by a Japanese bomber. Once out of sight of the islands, they navigated using the position of the stars during the night and the sun during the day. After seventeen days of travelling, they landed in India, a distance of 2,680 miles (4,310 km), only 23 miles (37 km) away from their intended destination..."* (Wikipedia).

### **Padang:**

The lucky ones made it to Padang no later than the first couple of days of March 1942 – to board vessels such as W.,T. Francis on the 'De Wiert' on 3<sup>rd</sup> March for Colombo; Bagnall, Bennett, Brewer and Duke on the 'SS Palopo' to Ceylon on 7 March; but the main body of stragglers numbering a thousand - and including John Robins, Mr & Mrs Lampen - Smith, many of the Naval ratings from 'HMS Grasshopper' were too late to catch that last ship out and were forced to await the arrival of the Japanese on 17 March – when Padang was declared an 'open town' to avoid bloodshed.

Lt H.M. 'Tojo' Clarke, Intelligence Officer reached Padang and was selected by Lt. - Colonel A F Warren, Royal Marines, and head of a War office secret unit to escape onwards in a large prau the 'Sederhana Djohanis'. Clarke was initially unhappy because he had promised Singapore Intelligence not to let the Japanese prisoners out of his sight. He was overruled by Lt – Colonel Warren.

On the insistence of the Dutch authorities, Lt Clarke's and Lt Gerard Rawlings' nine prisoners-of-war, who had behaved so remarkably during their entire captivity, were caged—held captive, as if they had suddenly become a threat. Two days before the town surrendered, the **nine** were whisked away at six o'clock in the morning under a Dutch armed guard of eighty men. Gerard and his two Intelligence officer colleagues arrived to find the cage empty. Allegedly, the prisoners were handed back to their own people, which would almost certainly have amounted to their death sentences. **Gerard Rawlings** strongly suspected, however, that the Japanese POWs were executed by the Dutch. He went through a lot of soul-searching at the time and in the years following, speculating on how things might have turned out differently. *"We who had been in close contact with the prisoners for six weeks and knew them as only people who have faced starvation and impending danger together, were horrified when we learnt their fate—that one way or another, they had almost certainly been sent to their deaths."*

[see entry below on Lt Gerard Rawlings for more detail on the Japanese POWs].

This view of the fate of the Japanese POWs was shared by Able Seaman Laurence Hurndell who stated in a 1995 interview *"...There were 10 Japanese POWs, they were later shot by the Dutch..."*.

If correct it is interesting to conjecture what motivated soldiers serving in the Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL) to execute these men – the Dutchmen would have been hearing of the invasion of territory some men had considered their home after many, many generations of their families (some Dutch had lived in Sumatra and Java since the 1700s) and reports of the Japanese atrocities already being committed since Japanese troops landed on Banka island and in Palembang during mid-February would have spread like wildfire.

### **Fate of the Survivors:**

The fate of those men and women who survived the attack on the 'HMS Grasshopper' was as varied as any of the survivors of ships sunk evacuating Singapore – and the complexity of the experiences of people surviving the myriad of vessels sunk or captured was legendary.

As mentioned previously several men died on the first island, then a few others at Dabo (Ordinary Seaman Betteridge), and again once they reached the Sumatran mainland (Lt Col Harold James at Djambi and Actg Petty Officer Nurden at either Dabo or Rengat)

It appears that a couple of naval ratings might have been picked up by the 'Fairmile' (HDML 1062, HMML 432, HMML 310 - it is not known for sure) recorded as travelling with 'HMS Grasshopper' and 'HMS Dragonfly') near Pulau Sempang on the actual day of the bombing and beaching – and travelled south on that small patrol vessel to Banka Island (it seems most likely to have been HDML 1062) before it was set upon by a Japanese cruiser and destroyer in the Banka Straits and blown out of the water. ERA Cuthbertson was almost certainly in this group and possibly also Faint and McNelley

Another small group – particularly of the senior business executives from Singapore and Malaya, together with a few senior officers and most of the Intelligence Officers on board – managed to make their way promptly to Sumatra and across to Padang in time to board an evacuation ship to



Ceylon or south to Java (Captain Jack Hoffman and Lt Ian Forbes were in the latter category). Jack Hoffman lost his life on board 'HMS Stronghold' on 2 March 1942, whilst Ian Forbes survived that sinking and became a POW.

Captain Kalberer, Intelligence Corps, also made it to Padang with other Intelligence Officers but as fate would have it he boarded the doomed 'SS Rooseboom' and lost his life when it was sunk halfway across the Indian Ocean by a Japanese submarine on 1 March 1942 – in fact his date of death is recorded as one day after the sinking, so he presumably died in the massively overcrowded lifeboat that formed the horrific story "The Boat" by survivor Corporal Gibson. All the other Intelligence Officers except Rawlings and Wait made it to Ceylon and then India.

A few, including P.O Leonard White moved around the islands before setting sail in a small boat and successfully sailing all the way through Japanese occupied waters to Ceylon.

Others, mainly the civilians and the naval ratings, made their way slowly to Sumatra, through the river towns of the Indragiri River, then across the mountains and by train to Padang – only to arrive there after the last evacuation ship had left. This included at least 28 naval ratings and servicemen including Lt Rawlings and Lt Wait of the Intelligence Corps and at least 17 civilians, including Miss Heather Fisher, Mrs Lampen -Smith, Mrs Smart and Mrs Coltman - and presumably the two Dutch women and their new babies. The civilians would go on to endure several years in horrible internment camps in Padang before being relocated to the jungle camp a long way north at Bankinang – two men would die there – Messrs. Miller and Sparrow [ see the entries for Mr and Mrs Lampen – Smith for more on the internment camps].

Of the servicemen who became POWs, most would be captured in Padang on 17 March 1942 when the Japanese arrived and would be later transported north to Medan and then the horrific 'Sumatra Railway' camps. Three were separated along the way and were transported to Siam and Burma to work on the 'Burma Death Railway'.

Six naval ratings would die from malnutrition, disease in POW camps and another (ERA Stubbs) would lose his life on board the POW transport ship 'Harugiku Maru' when that vessel was sunk by the submarine 'HMS Truculent'; and 177 out of the 730 POWs on board died.

### **Post War evidence of the Tragedy:**

After the war – in 1947 – the OBE was awarded to Harold Lampen-Smith and the BEM to John Arthur Cornford Robins, both "...For services to fellow internees in Sumatra during the enemy occupation..." ('Gazette' 1.7.47).

On the 4 December 1945 there were two items in UK newspapers.

- **'The Aberdeen Press & Journal'** wrote under the heading 'GRAVES FOUND ON PACIFIC ISLANDS' [note: geography seems a bit astray!] "... the second search party [ there were two search parties scouring the islands of the Rhio and Lingga Archipelagos for graves of servicemen and civilians killed during the evacuation and fighting] 'Tribute Two' found the remains of the beached hulk of the gunboat Grasshopper which disappeared during the Japanese offensive and two graves with box containing it believed the bones of six people...".
- **'Gloucestershire Echo'** wrote on the same day under the heading 'NAVY FINDS GUNBOAT WRECK' a somewhat similar article but said "... Motor launches of the British East Indies

*Fleet, combing the lonely islands between Singapore and the Netherlands Indies for survivors of the men who escaped from Malaya in 1942, have found the wreck of the river gunboat 'HMS Grasshopper' on Sianpeng island, it was reported today. The vessel vanished during the Japanese offensive. Many marked and unmarked graves, and human remains, have been found..."*

We can sensibly assume that these remains were found on Pulau Sempang and that the graves included **Royal Marines Francis Leaver** and **Francis Frank McNamara** – but clearly included several, maybe another four, people. Perhaps also **Lt Col Feehally's** body was taken off the 'HMS Grasshopper' once it was on the beach? In the same context the question is also left unanswered whether any bodies of the 21 deaths amongst naval ratings from the Malay section of the SSRNVR and Royal Navy ratings were taken off the 'HMS Grasshopper' to shore for burial.

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Anyone who has corrections, amendments, clarifications or additional material on the events, the crew, or passengers of 'HMS Grasshopper' 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@gmail.com. Telephone number is New Zealand 09-4865754 or mobile New Zealand 0274543695.

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Thank you.

Michael Pether.

### Sources:

- BPPL – Barnett's Jeyes toilet record of thousands of men from Malaya and Singapore, prepared in Changi Internment camp.
- COFEPOW website and specifically the research database of MI9 Liberation questionnaires.
- CWGC - website
- Book "Singapore's Dunkirk" - Geoffrey Brooke
- Force z website
- JMM - 'Malayans' database of Jonathan Moffatt.
- Memoirs and letters of civilians from Singapore and Malaya - Sir John Bagnall, Frank Brewer, Barnett Cramer, John Duke, John Robins, and William Wegener.
- Book 'The British Sumatra Battalion' – A.A. Apthorp
- Book 'When Singapore Fell' - Joseph Kennedy
- Wegener report held in UK Archives (CO980/217)

### **Crew and Service Passengers who may have been Crew:**

[NOTE: Green font is used for survivors of the bombing attack on the ship; Black font is used for those who lost their lives in the bombing attack]

- **BAKARIA** - Able Seaman Bin Haji Abdul Salamat Bakaria, MN515, Royal Navy (Malay section), initially MPK, died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' (CWGC)
- **BALL** - Leading Seaman Frederick Walter Ball, P/JX 127951, Royal Navy, born 5.11.10 in Warminster, Wiltshire to Walter Ball and Annie Louise Scane Ball, died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' (CWGC)
- **BARKER** – James Edwin Barker, PJX217617, Royal Navy was born on 29.2.20 and enlisted on 1.9.40, his address was given as 105 High street, Blunham, Beds. He was captured at Padang, western Sumatra and became a POW at Padang, then Medan and finally on the Sumatra Railway (MI9 questionnaire on COFEPOW).
- **BETLEY (sometimes incorrectly stated to be BENTLEY)** - Ordinary Seaman Noel Cedric Betley RNZN, #2966, was from the Manawatu region of New Zealand – he spent his childhood and teenage years in the rural town of Feilding. The earliest record is in the 'Manawatu times' (20.12.34) when Noel won a prize for achieving the most points in boys' athletics at Feilding Primary School. The 'Manawatu Standard' in 1935 has him winning the 'Boys Beginner Race' at Lytton Street School and later that year he is noted as playing the pianoforte at a public concert. By 1936 he is at Palmerston North Technical School competing in the long jump and in rugby. Several years later he seems to do very well in swimming sports at the Levin Swimming Club, and table tennis at the St Pauls Presbyterian Bible Class. He enlisted in the Royal New Zealand Navy and was on the gunboat 'HMS Grasshopper'.. Noel Betley must have reached shore and later made his way to Sumatra – but no record of his journey has been located yet. The Royal New Zealand navy records him at Medan POW camp 1942. Soon after the beaching of 'HMS Grasshopper', the 'Manawatu Standard' (16.4.42) recorded him as a 'naval casualty' and his father being Mr J.E. Betley from Feilding. This was amended when the 'Auckland Star' (5.2.43) recorded him as then being a POW and his mother being Mrs A.V. Betley, 17 Denbigh Street, Feilding. Tragically for the family his brother Roland was killed serving with the RNZAF in 1944. After the Japanese Surrender local newspapers reported that Noel Betley was leaving Sumatra with Able Seaman Hurndell (who had also been on 'HMS Grasshopper'). The 'Manawatu Standard' (28.9.45) recorded Noel as being in hospital in Singapore and the following month he returned to New Zealand. A conversation the researcher had with a member of the wider family in recent years alluded to the fact that Noel had trouble adjusting back to civilian life, which is understandable given the trauma of the attack on the 'HMS Grasshopper' and the truly horrific conditions he endured for three years in northern Sumatra on the Pekanbaru Railway POW camps. Noel Betley died on 9.4.2007 and is buried with his parents, John Ernest Betley and Amy Violet Betley, in Plot 640, Row 6, Block 3 at the Feilding cemetery.

- **BETTERIDGE** – Ordinary Seaman Thomas Betteridge, survived the attack on the ship but was severely wounded and transported from the island to Pulau Singkep and across to the 'hospital at Dabo. In 1942 the handwritten 'Changi Casualty register' compiled in Changi POW camp from information from POWs returning from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies recorded "... Betteridge C. Grasshopper, Died of Wounds. Burial place not stated...". **Ordinary Seaman Thomas Betteridge, C/JX 262283, RN**, 'HMS Grasshopper' died on 21.2.42 at Dabo, Pulau Singkep. The CWGC 'Concentration of Graves' schedule shows that Thomas Betteridge was disinterred from Dabo Civilian Hospital cemetery in Singkep on 1.5.47 and reinterred in grave 27.B.7 at Kranji War cemetery, Singapore (CWGC). With another date of death there is a document in the UK Archives that lists him as "... 'Died of Wounds', O.S. C. Betteridge, 23.2.42 at DABO, Singkep (reported by Cpl J.B. Feltham, RAMC and E.M. Hoskin, RAM) C...".
- **BITTLES** – Able Seaman Robert Mackie Bittles, D/JX170087, Royal Navy, MPK, died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' (CWGC). Robert Bittles was born in 1919 to William and Annie Welsh Bittle (nee Mackie) and came from Cambuslang (a town south east of Glasgow), Lanarkshire, Scotland. He married Rose Ann Bittles (nee Madden), aged 20 years, in 1939 and he had a sister Jane born in 1910.
- **BLAKEMORE** – Leading Stoker Daniel Blakemore, C/K37600, Royal Navy, aged 44 years, died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' son of Daniel & Mary Blakemore (CWGC), he was born on 14 June 1898 at Southwark, London (UK Archives, ADM 363/43/77). Also remembered on Panel 61.1, Chatham naval memorial.
- **BOYNE** – Ordinary Seaman David Forbes Boyne, C/JX262355, Royal Navy, aged 29 years, MPK, died 14.2.42, son of John Proctor Boyne and Elizabeth McKenzie Boyne, husband of Ethel Boyne of Aberdeen (CWGC). David Boyne was born on 19.10.13 in the parish of Aberdeen St. Nicholas, Aberdeenshire to John Proctor Boyne and Elizabeth McKenzie Forbes. He married Ethel McPherson (she died 2014).
- **BROWN** – Able Seaman Thomas Barry Brown, C/SSX 28834, Royal Navy, MPK, died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' he was the son of Frank and Annie Brown of Coatbridge, Lanarkshire (CWGC).
- **COSTA** – Corporal Peter David Costa, PLY X 1831, Royal Marines was" ... on the 'HMS Prince of Wales' at the time of her sinking. He was rescued and taken to Singapore, from where he was evacuated on the river gunboat 'HMS Grasshopper'. Following Japanese air attack, the 'Grasshopper' was run aground on 14 February 1942 and Peter was taken into captivity... Peter died on 3 June 2006, at the age of 86. Peter is survived by his wife Josie and their three daughters, Jean, Jacqueline and Janet...Rev'd. Allan Sheath, Honiton Team Ministry, Exeter Diocese." (force z website).
- **CUTHBERTSON** – Engine Room Artificer 4/C James Cuthbertson, # DMX 74081, RN from (mother's address) 9 Cross Lane, Whiston, Prescott, Lancashire was born on 6.2.20 and enlisted on 25.5.40 (MI9 Liberation Questionnaire). His 73 pages of personal papers in the Imperial War Museum describe how he served on 'HMS Repulse' and survived the sinking of that cruiser in December 1941, being then assigned to the crew of 'HMS Grasshopper' during January /February 1942. It is possible that he was reassigned at the last minute to HDML 1062 but the fact that his MI9 questionnaire records he was on that vessel when he was captured at 'Bankel Pinang' (sic Pankilpinang) on Banka island on 2 March 1942 does not obviate the possibility that he might have been picked up by HDML 1062 after 'Grasshopper' was sunk near Pulau Sempang (there are a number of reports that a 'Fairmile' was with 'Grasshopper' and Dragonfly on the scape from Singapore and that the 'Fairmile' possibly any of 310/311/1062(?) ran aground for a time on Pulau Sempang whilst the bombing

attacks were taking place. James Cuthbertson spent the rest of the war in Palembang POW camp. His papers describe his forced work on the runway extension of Palembang airfield and his repatriation from Singapore to Liverpool in October 1945 on the 'Antenor'. **Only a perusal of his personal papers will answer the question as to why he was aboard the ill-fated HDML 1062.**

- **DRAKE – Leading Telegraphist Elfred Charles 'Ducky' Drake, D/JX 145132, RN.** Survived the attack on 'HMS Grasshopper' and reached Sumatra only to become a POW of the Japanese. He ended up as a POW slave labourer on the Pekanbaru Railway. He died 12.9.45 aged 25 years in Pekanbaru POW camp. CWGC records him as being on 'HMS DRAKE IV' ['HMS Drake' was actually His Majesties Naval Base at Devonport, England, the 'IV' is unclear] but Pekanbaru POW website states that he was the good friend of Laurence Hurndell, RNZN. He was the son of Charles D. Drake and Louie Drake of Victoria Park, Manchester. He died the day before his best mate Laurence Hurndell left the camp for repatriation to NZ on 13.9.45. In a post war interview Laurie Hurndell explained "... The day before I was flown out of Pakanbaru camp I lost my best mate. He died from malnutrition and Beriberi, he had just wasted away. I tried to feed him with soupy rice etc. but he was beyond taking any nourishment. He was among many we buried that afternoon. It was a bitter blow as we had been friends for a long time. I never knew his Christian name; his surname was Drake and he was always known as 'Ducky'. He was a Leading Seaman aboard 'HMS Prince of Wales' and after her sinking he was drafted to 'HMS Grasshopper...". After the war he was reinterred in 2.D.12 in the Jakarta war cemetery.
- **DUNSTER – Able Seaman Arthur Frederick Dunster, C/JX 201763, Royal Navy** (initially listed as Killed) died 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper'. He was the son of Frederick and Maud Dunster of Wandsworth, London (CWGC).
- **FAINT – Norman Kenneth Faint, PLY/X100099, Royal Marines**, ex 'HMS Repulse' then 'Grasshopper, [wounded], captured 10 March 1942, and a POW at Muntok and Palembang Born 1920 – died 2014, at Bretby near Burton-On-Trent. **NOTE: It is unclear how he ended up a long way south of Pulau Singkep – being captured at Muntok on 10 March 1942.** It is possible he was picked up by a passing evacuation vessel - such as HMML 1062 as Cuthbertson boarded - at Pulau Sempang which was itself sunk near Banka island and he remained free on that island until March.
- **FORBES – Lieutenant (later Commander) Ian Dudley Stewart Forbes, RN, DSC** was born in September 1919 "... a scion of the Forbes of Newe baronets and entered the Royal Navy as a Cadet at Dartmouth in 1933. A Sub Lieutenant by the outbreak of hostilities, he first witnessed active service off Norway in the sloop 'HMS Bittern' [that ship was severely damaged by Stuka bombers and its stern blown off] ... Advanced to Lieutenant in October 1940 and having served in the cruiser 'Aurora' in the interim, Forbes removed to the battleship 'Prince of Wales' in January 1941". Ian Forbes was present in the action against the 'Bismarck' and saw the 'HMS Hood' torn apart with the loss of 1400 lives. He was on board 'HMS prince of Wales' when hit was sunk in December 1941 and climbed from the sea onto a Carley float for several hours before being picked up by the destroyer 'HMS Electra'. After shore command of 300 sailors to defend the Naval Dockyard he was assigned to 'HMS Grasshopper'. After reaching shore on presumably Pulau Sempang Forbes was told by Hoffman to go and get help so he and a Malaya sailor swam to a nearby island and later noted "... a Malay sailor volunteered to come with me and his astute handling of his fellow countrymen saved my life. On first meeting they were of a mind to put me to death. Through his intervention they changed their minds and became most helpful to me and the survivors on the island I had left...". Ian Forbes, with other survivors, reached Pulau Singkep, then made the journey

across to Sumatra, reaching Padang and boarding a Dutch ship to Java. He joined the complement of an old (WW1) destroyer 'HMS Stronghold' at Tjilichap and was involved in the costly Battle of the Java Sea on 1 March 1942. The 'HMS Stronghold' escaped that encounter but on 2 March was engaged by a much superior Japanese naval force of a cruiser and two destroyers. 'HMS Stronghold' was severely damaged by shell fire its commanding officers killed and was abandoned sinking. Once again on a Carley float which along with another float saved the lives of 50 men until they were picked up by a captured Dutch KPM steamer the following day. Transferred to the cruiser 'Maia' he and others were taken to captivity in Macassar in the Celebes. Forbes had been sunk three times in these months. He and others in the POW camps in the Celebes endured starvation, disease and some of the worst violence from Japanese guards wielding baseball bats and long heavy sticks, using hobnailed boots and judo throws after beatings. He was moved to Java in 1943 until his liberation in August 1945. He continued to serve in the Royal Navy after the war with commands of 'HMS Veyatie' and 'HMS Maenad' before shore appointments with Naval intelligence and promotion to Commander in 1954. He retired in the mid-1960s eventually settling in Dumfriesshire. He died in 1992. (DNW Auction House auction notes 2013). His personal papers are held in the Imperial War Museum and (document catalogue # 18765, TS 16pp) and the Royal Museum Greenwich (ADL/Z/56).

- **GLOVER – Engine Room Artificer (on the COFEPOW website he is listed as Eng. Captain??) Raymond Arthur Glover, PMX 70430, Royal Navy.** He was born on 12.3.19 and enlisted in July 1940 giving his address as 195 Ash Green lane, Exhall, Coventry. He was captured on 17.3.42 at Padang and became a POW there and then at Medan, finally on the Sumatra railway (MI9 liberation questionnaire on COFEPOW website)
- **HALLETT – Stoker Benjamin Melville Hallett, DJX 188715, Royal Navy,** was born on 21.8.20 and enlisted on 10.4.40. His address was Brown Hill Nurseries, Corseinion, near Swansea, South Wales. He was captured at Padang and became a POW there, then Medan, Aceh, and the Sumatra Railway POW on Sumatra railway (MI9 Liberation questionnaire on the COFEPOW website)
- **HOFFMAN – Commander Jack 'Sanler/Sanger/ Sauzer' Hoffman, Royal Navy** was the Captain of 'HMS Grasshopper'. By the time of the evacuation of Singapore he was considered an 'older man' - he had been born on 28.3.1889 so was in his fifties - who is reported to have been "... a stout old boy..." ('Singapore's Dunkirk') who had bad eyesight and enlisted the help of Lt Ian Forbes to spot the bombs being released from Japanese planes on 'HMS Grasshopper' near Pulau Singkep. He survived the attack and safely made the trek to Padang and then Batavia where he boarded 'HMS Stronghold' in some unknown capacity, with other surviving crew from 'HMS Grasshopper', but soon lost his life on 'HMS Stronghold' on 2 March 1942 when it was attacked by a superior strength Japanese naval force. He is memorialised both on the CWGC website and on panel 62, Column 3 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial. There is no mention by CWGC of a family. Little has been written about his life, but research shows that he was in fact a 'Commander Retired' and had first served in the RN as Lieutenant (promoted 31.11.1911), probably serving in the First World



War, then again promoted to Lt Commander on 31.12.1919. He moved to (or was it back to since he is not listed in the UK censuses of 1901 Or 1911) Penang, Malaya after the First World War in 1920 and started a lengthy career in rubber planting. In 1923 (Straits Times 7.11.23) it is noted that" ... *Lieut. -Commander J.S. Hoffman of Sungei Ketchil Estate, Nebong Tebal, has severed his connection with the estate to take up a billet in the south...*". In 1928 he is noted as playing golf for Dunlop Plantations in Malacca competition and he is recorded retired from the Navy on 28.3.29. In May and November 1932, he makes two voyages on the 'Ranpura' to Europe (SFPMA and ST) and in that same year the 'Straits Times' again reports him being with Kombok Estate, Sungei Gaduk, Malacca.. In 1935 (ST 24.9.35) he is noted as attending the funeral of an C.G.D. Williamson, Assistant Manager, Segamat Rubber estate and Directories show him being employed at that same estate. With the advent of the Second World War, he reenlisted and as a '... Commander Previously Retired' he took command of the ASW (anti-submarine warfare) Trawler 'HMS Wolborough' from 9.12.39 until 18.6.40. In 1940 – and being by then presumably being too old to reenlist in the regular Navy – he is recorded back in Malaya on the Regent Estate, Batang Malaka, NS. The book 'Singapore's Dunkirk' (p.135) records how in 1941 there were many merchant and other vessels requisitioned into auxiliary and patrol duties – most without armaments that were of no use against high flying bombers – and "... *The existing officers were given MRNVR ( Malayan Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve ) ranks., except of course where they were RNR already. Some RNVs were sent out from England and a number of locally retired RN officers were recalled to the colours. One of these was Commander Hoffman of the gunboat 'Grasshopper'...*". Jack Hoffman was in command of 'HMS Grasshopper' by late 1941 and placed in charge of planning and preparing his vessel for a 'Dunkirk' operation to evacuate Allied troops from Malaya during the retreat across the causeway to Singapore – this was never needed in the final event. The database of Malayan Volunteers records "...J. Hoffman, MRNVR, Manager Regent Estate, NS, Malacca (on Naval Service) ..." and, from the records of Captain David Nelson and the Changi POW camp Bureau of Records and Enquiry, he is noted as 'M/V' which confirms his status as a 'Volunteer' at the time.

- HOPKINS – Petty Officer Stoker Reginald Horace Hopkins, P/KX 78613, Royal Navy, survived the beaching of the 'HMS Grasshopper' but reached Padang in Sumatra where, being too late for an evacuation vessel, he was captured by the Japanese and became part of the 'The British Sumatra Battalion'.** The Sumatra battalion was moved from Padang on 9 May 1942 to Medan in Northern Sumatra and on 15 May 1942 he was loaded along with the appallingly overcrowded and insanitary holds of the 'England Maru' to Mergui in lower Burma where the men were made to construct runways for a new airfield, then transported on the 'Tatu Maru' to Tavoy and a succession of POW camps at Tavoy, Thanbyuzat, and thence to the inhuman railway line camps of 18 Kilometre camp, 30 Kilometre camp where the POWs were subjected to starvation, lack of medical care and physical overwork and brutality. Reginald Hopkins finally succumbed to this horror environment and, along with 20 others from the same 'Sumatra Battalion' he died in the 55 Kilometre camp hospital - after his battalion comrades, now in a state of 'total collapse' had moved on up the railway line to the very border of Thailand ('The British Sumatra Battalion' by A.A. Apthorp). Official records show that he died on 22 November 1943 aged 41 years. He was the son of Charles and Florence Ada Hopkins, husband of Emily Ellen Hopkins of Combe down, Bath, Somerset. He is buried at Thanbyuzayat war cemetery, Myanmar, grave reference B4. Z 14. (force z website and CWGC). Reginald Hopkins is also remembered on the Combe Down Second World War memorial plaques.

- **HOUGHTON – Able Seaman Jack Houghton, P/JX 219794, Royal Navy** was captured in Padang on 17.3.42 and became a POW. He was then moved to Medan and the Sumatra railway. On 5 April 1945 he died aged 45 years (the force z website says he was 31 years of age) – the cause has not yet been identified by this researcher. He was the son of Robert and Ellen Ann Houghton of Hindley Green, Wigan, Lancashire (CWGC and the COFEPOW website).
- **HUGHES – Stoker John Joseph Hughes, P/KX103487, Royal Navy** was captured at Padang on 17.3. 42 and became a POW. He was later moved to Medan and then the Sumatra Railway (MI9 Liberation questionnaire on COFEPOW website).
- **HURNDELL - Able Seaman Lawrence Charles Hurndell, # NZ3012, Royal New Zealand Navy** was born in Carterton in the North Island of New Zealand on 19.9.22 and joined the RNZN in May 1941. After training at 'HMS Tamaki' with 50 other naval recruits he left Wellington on the 'Johan Van Oldenbarnvelt' for Singapore he was seconded to the Royal Navy in Singapore and after further training joined 'HMS Grasshopper'. He was in the mess deck when a bomb struck the ship and was one of only three who survived that bomb. He received shrapnel wounds in his hips and lost a lot of blood so could not walk. Someone threw him overboard and he was placed unconscious on a Carley raft to reach shore. He eventually reached the hospital in Singkep and was operated upon by the well-respected Dr Kirkwood, Indian Army Medical Corps, who had also escaped Singapore but on the Red Cross launch 'Florence Nightingale'. After several weeks he was transported by small boat to the Indragiri River on the east coast of Sumatra and placed in hospital in Rengat – which was where he was taken prisoner by the Japanese on 23 March 1942 (MI9 Liberation questionnaire). It was in Rengat at the 'hospital' that one of the other three survivors of the mess deck explosion finally died from his injuries. (Interview at his home in Christchurch, NZ). The event is recorded by his relative, Barney Neill on the 'Singapore Evacuation 1942' website as *"... bomb hit the ship killing about 40 plus mainly civilians. He was injured in the bombing but managed to wade ashore after the ship was beached. He was captured by the Japanese in a village hospital ... "*. Laurie Hurndell was taken from Rengat firstly to Padang and then north to the Belawan POW camp at the port of Medan where he spent two years working as a forced labourer at the port. In 1944 he was again moved north to be a slave labourer on the Pekanbaru railway where the conditions and death toll were horrendous. He talked of other New Zealanders on the Pekanbaru railway camps with him, Noel Betley, also RNZN and also on 'HMS Grasshopper' and also Guy McLeod a schoolteacher from New Zealand who had been working in Malaya and who in the Pekanbaru camps courageously operated a secret radio in the camps (he recalled Guy McLeod committed suicide a few years after being repatriated to New Zealand). In February 1943 he was reclassified from 'Missing' to 'Prisoner of War with a NOK address of 'Mr H. Hurndell, Park Road, Carterton. He was discharged from the RNZN in October 1945. He was the husband of Edna Eileen Hurndell and the son of Leonard William and Nellie May Hurndell.
- **INGRAM – Leading Seaman Thomas 'Tommy' William Robertson Ingram, C/JX 156927, Royal Navy**, initially listed as MPK. He died 14.2.42, aged 24 years, on the 'HMS Grasshopper'. He was the son of Alexander and Mary Ingram (CWGC). He had been born on the family farm of Coxton, Gartly, Aberdeenshire on 10 June 1918. The youngest of five boys and three girls.



The Ingram family had farmed at Coxton for generations, but Mary and her children had to move out following the death of her husband in March 1924. The family were, for a time at Hillhead of Cults and Myrtle cottage, Clatt before moving to Douglas Buildings at Kirkhill. Tommy joined the Royal Navy around 1935 at 17 years of age. his initial training was done at 'HMS Pembroke', Chatham, Kent. He served for a time on the Sovereign Class battleship 'HMS Ramillies', sister ship to the ill-fated 'Royal Oak' and later the river gunboat 'Scarab'. When he joined the 'HMS Grasshopper' Tommy had risen to the rank of Leading Seaman – his trade badge on photos shows he was a Gun Layer, 1<sup>st</sup> Class. His action station would have usually found him in the confines of a gun turret as part of a small team loading the muzzle of a large gun and assisting the aimer in setting the gun on target. On a smaller vessel such as 'HMS Grasshopper' he would have been in charge of a gun and leading a group of sailors ([www.kinnethmont.co.uk](http://www.kinnethmont.co.uk)). Tommy must have lost his life either in the bombing and machine gunning of the ship or in the sea as it sank.

- **ISMAIL – Yeoman of Signals Bin P. Ismail**, MN127, Royal Navy (Malay section), MPK
- **JAMAL – UD – DIN – Telegraphist Bin H.A. Jamal – Ud- Din**, MN1058, Royal Navy Malay Section, MPK.
- **JARVIS – William G.R. Jarvis, DJX 126416, Royal Navy**, was captured on 17.3.42 at Padang and later moved to POW camps at Medan and the Sumatra railway (MI9 Liberation questionnaire COFEPOW website).
- **JONES – Engine Room Artificer Fourth Class Alfred Victor Jones**, D/MX 68905, Royal Navy was initially listed as MPK. He died on 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' aged 26 years. He was the son of William and Louisa Jones of Yardley, Birmingham (CWGC).
- **KING – Able Seaman Stanley King**, P/J 97030, Royal Navy was killed on 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' aged 37 years. He was the son of Charles Frederick King and Lucy King of Bracknell, Berkshire (CWGC)
- **LEAVER – Marine Francis Samuel Leaver**, PLY/X 2492, Royal Marines, was on the crew of 'HMS Repulse' when it was sunk on 10 December 1941 and (according to the force z website) was later aboard 'HMS Grasshopper'. He is officially recorded as dying on 16 February 1942, presumably on Pulau Posik, aged 18 years making him the youngest crew member known to be on the ship. Francis Leaver was born at Plymouth, Devon in 1923 and had two siblings – Barbara and Albert - he was the son of Theodore (died 1975) and Ethel (died 1994) Leaver, of Stonehouse, Plymouth and is memorialised on panel 103, column 1 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial (CWGC and force z website).

- LEE - Able Seaman 'Tancy' Lee, (note; the 'moniker' of 'Tansey' or 'Tansy' was given to Navy sailors with the surname Lee or Lea) who accompanied CPO George White and they sailed to India
- **LYTHGOE – Ordinary Seaman (also recorded as 'Ordinary Signalman' by his family and the force x website) John Lythgoe**, D/SSX 32464, MPK. And died 14 February 1942, aged 20 years, was "... the son of John and Annie Lythgoe of 10 Cedar Avenue, Lowton, Warrington and the brother of Tom and Ann Amelia ('Milly'). In his early teens he worked at Vulcan Foundry at around age 15 or 16 years. He went on to enlist in the Army, but his father had to ask for his release because he was underage. He then went on to join the Royal Navy. He served first on 'HMS Prince of Wales' and then 'HMS Repulse. He survived the sinking of 'HMS Repulse' ..." (Kelly Waterworth, great niece and daughter of Milly, recorded on force z website). John Lythgoe must have been killed in the attack on 'HMS Grasshopper' and is memorialised on panel 68, Column 1 of the Plymouth Naval Memorial.
- **MACDONALD – Able Seaman James MacDonald**, D/JX 169451, Royal Navy was initially listed as MPK. He died on 14.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' aged 22 years of age. He was the son of Roderick MacDonald and of Catherine MacDonald of Glasgow. (CWGC)
- **MARSHALL – Able Seaman Gordon Winston Hall Marshall**, D/JX 169960, Royal Navy died on 14.2.42 aged 22 years. On the 'HMS Grasshopper'. He was the son of John Henry Marshall and Louise Mary Marshall of Wednesfield, Staffordshire (CWGC) MPK.
- **MCNAMARA – Marine Francis Frank McNamara**, PLY/X 100129, Royal Marines had been on the 'HMS Prince of Wales' but survived that sinking in December 1941 but on 16 February 1942 died, presumably because of injuries suffered in the attack on 'HMS Grasshopper, aged 24 years and the date of death indicates that he was buried on Pulau Sempang. Presumably, his grave was never found because there is no reference to a post war grave in Kranji cemetery, Singapore or in Jakarta. The official record shows that he was the husband of Dorothy McNamara of Atherton, Lancashire. He is memorialised on Panel 103, Column 1 on the Plymouth Naval memorial. (CWGC and force z website).
- **MCNELLEY – Able Seaman Francis Chas Thomas McNelley**, C/JX 227807, Royal Navy was captured on 24 April 1942 - which indicates he was involved in a long escape from Pulau Sempeng (perhaps even having been picked out of the water by the ill-fated HDML 1062 like ERA Cuthbertson) or from Pulau Singkep- and at one stage a POW at Palembang in southern Sumatra. He was later a POW on the Sumatra Railway (MI 9 Liberation questionnaire COFEPOW website)

- **MONK – Able Seaman Donald John Monk**, D/JX 169959, Royal Navy, survived the sinking of the 'HMS Grasshopper' but was captured on 17.3.42 at Padang. He was later moved to the Medan POW camp and after that a POW on Sumatra railway. He died on 11 November 1944 aged 25 years – presumably on the Sumatra railway but must have been reinterred after the war because his grave is in Jakarta. He was the son of Charles William and Emma Monk of Sutton, Cheshire. Donald Monk is buried in grave 2.C.7 in the Jakarta War Cemetery, Indonesia. (CWGC and force z website).
- **MUHAMMAD – Able Seaman Nur D.B.I. Muhammad**, MN 1077, Royal Navy (Malay Section), MPK.
- **MULLEN – Engine Room Artificer Samuel Joseph Mullen**, D/MX5530, Royal Navy was captured in Padang on 17.3.42 and later moved to Medan and then the Sumatra railway (MI 9 Liberation questionnaire COFEPOW website).
- **NURDEN – Petty Officer Percy Eldon Nurden**, P/JX 132763, RN, 'HMS Grasshopper' died 27.2.42 aged 33 years, the son of Mr and Mrs [ Mildred Elsie Maclean Keith Nurden] Thomas Nurden, husband of Ivy Ethel Nurden of Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Also remembered on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Panel 92 (CWGC). He appears to have been born in Rotherham, Yorkshire on 1.9.1908. He survived the attack on the ship but was severely wounded and transported from the island to Pulau Singkep and across to the 'hospital' at Dabo. His death was soon recorded in 1942 by POWs returning to Changi POW camp in Singapore where in the handwritten 'Changi Casualty register' p.44 it was noted that "...Nurdon Percy, ?/PO Grasshopper, Died of Wounds...". In conflict with the official CWGC date of death – and possibly the location – a document in UK Archives lists him as "... 'Died of Wounds', Percy Nurden, Actg. P.O. at DABO, Singkep, 14.3.42 (reported by Cpl J.B. Feltham, RAMC and E.M. Hoskin, RAMC) ...". It leaves open the question of whether Percy Nurden died somewhere else – perhaps Rengat since Laurence Hurndell records a rating off the ship dying at Rengat.?
- **PRESTON Able Seaman William G Preston**, P/UD/X 1509, RN, 'HMS Grasshopper' died on 16.2.42. He was the son of Annie Preston of Belfast and is remembered on Panel 71, Col. 2 of the Portsmouth Naval memorial (CWGC). The handwritten "Changi Casualty Register" compile during 1942 in Changi POW camp, Singapore from POWs returning from the Dutch East Indies recorded "... Preston A.B., Grasshopper, died of wounds? at sea?, Burial place not stated..." It is likely that William Preston died on Pulau Sempang and was buried on that island in one of two graves – both graves held the remains of six people. Presumably, these remains have been buried in a communal grave in either Kranji War cemetery, Singapore or in Jakarta.
- **RAYFIELD – Stoker 2nd Class, Alfred Rayfield**, C/KX 121544, Royal Navy died on 14.2.42 aged 33 years of age, on 'HMS Grasshopper'. One of six children, he was the son of Charles Thomas and Annie Wain Rayfield of Longfield, Kent (CWGC).
- **READ –** in a report to the MRB William Wegener, of FMS railways – in a list of those on board - recorded "... Lt Commander Read, RNR, late of FMS & [indecipherable] Surveys was No '2' of the 'Grasshopper'....". This was almost certainly a reference to **James Henry Clarence Read**, born 1900. Educated Sydney C. of E. Grammar School. In 1928 he went to Malaya as Surveyor-on-Agreement, FMS, at the Survey Department, Kedah, and that same

year was awarded the 'Vellum of the Royal Humane Society' for saving three boatmen in waters around Penang. In 1936 he was promoted to Actg. Lt SSRNVR.. He was, according to numerous newspaper reports, an avid golfer during the 1930s. By 1940 he was Senior Surveyor, Surveys Dept, Singapore SS & FMS. Sub-Lt 1934 to Lt. SSRNVR/MRNVR. Wife L.U.M. evacuated from Singapore on *Gorgon*, arriving Fremantle WA 20.2.42. He survived the attack and beaching of 'HMS Grasshopper' and by whatever route reached Sumatra and then a ship which took him to safety. The 'Australian Women's Weekly' of 3.10.42 recorded that he had reached Australia with an injured hand and had joined the Naval War Auxiliary. Post war he returned to Malaya and in 1950 was awarded the Volunteer Officers decoration, as Lt Commander Read. Whether before or after the war there is a reference to him living at 2 Nassim Road. He was Chief Surveyor, Perak when he retired to Australia in 1950. (JMM and Singapore Newspaper Archives)

- **RENOWDEN – Ordinary Seaman John Renowden, D/JX 168931, Royal Navy** was initially listed as MPK. He died on 14.2.42 (CWGC).
- **ROUE – Able Seaman James Nicholas Roue, D/JX 169187, Royal Navy** was captured at Padang on 17.3.42 and later moved to Medan and then became a POW on the Sumatra railway. (MI9 Liberation questionnaire COFEPOW website)
- **SMITH – Leading Seaman Clarence Frederick Frank Smith, P/JX 143405, Royal Navy**, known as 'Kelly', was born in Leicester on 9.4.19 the son of Percy and Gertrude Smith. He was captured on 17.3.42 (presumably at Padang) and was later a POW at Gloegoer Camp, Medan and the on Sumatra railway. (MI9 Liberation questionnaire COFEPOW website). In June 1944 he was put aboard the 'Harugiku Maru' bound for Pekanbaru, but the ship was torpedoed with the loss of life of 180 POWs. 'Kelly' Smith was picked up by the Japanese and taken to Singapore and then to Pekanbaru. Liberated on 15.10.45 he was taken firstly to Ceylon and then Britain. He returned to his hometown of Bargwath and died in Leicester in 1995. (Shirley Barnes List of the Malayan Campaign).
- **SMITH – St. P.O. William Edward Smith, PKX87116, Royal Navy**, survived the sinking of the 'HMS Grasshopper' but was captured at Padang on 17.3.42 and later moved to Medan before becoming a POW on the Sumatra railway. The CWGC record he later died as a POW on 25 July 1945 aged 29 years on the Sumatra railway, but his remains must have been reinterred after the War to Jakarta. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs William Edward Smith of Fratton, Portsmouth. He is buried in grave number 2. E.2. in Jakarta War Cemetery, Indonesia (CWGC and the website of force z)

- **SPARROW – Able Seaman Joseph G. Sparrow**, D/JX 172435, Royal Navy was initially listed as MPK. He died aged 21 years on 14.2.42 on ‘HMS Grasshopper’. He was the son of Joseph and Rose Sparrow of the village of Southery, Norfolk. (CWGC)
- **STUBBS – Engine Room Artificer 4<sup>th</sup> Class, Norman Stubbs, P/MX 54062, Royal Navy.** POW Medan and Padang, and Batavia (this last location does not make sense and is probably an error ???) died 26 June 1944. Norman Stubbs is reported (on the website of his old school Chichester High School for Boys) as having been a Jockey after leaving school. Upon the beaching of the ‘HMS Grasshopper’ he reached Pulau Posik with other survivors and then the island of Singkep. With other survivors he later reached the Indragiri river and made his way across Sumatra on a 170-mile five-week trek towards Padang but were captured four miles outside that town by the Japanese. He appears to have been on the Padang and then Medan POW camps. He was then one of those 730 POWs who boarded the hell ship ‘Harugiku Maru’ from Balewan to Pakenbaroe to work on the Sumatra railway but, together with 177 other men lost his life when the ship was torpedoed by the British submarine ‘HMS Truculent’. The official record is ‘**Engine Room Artificer 4<sup>th</sup> Class Norman Stubbs, P/MX 54062, RN**, ‘HMS Grasshopper’ died on 26.6.44 aged 23 years, the son of Samuel and Charlotte Margaret Stubbs of Southbourne, Sussex (CWGC). Norman is commemorated on panel 85, column 1, Portsmouth Naval Memorial, Hampshire, at his old school Chichester High School for Boys and the Chichester War Museum.
- **WHITE – Chief Petty Officer George Leonard White, Royal Navy.** He delivered the babies of two women on the uninhabited island upon which the ship was beached – the mothers named both baby boys after George. He also found ‘Judy’ the dog which found fresh water. later after reaching Singkep, George White together with Able seaman ‘Tancy’ Lee, plus two British soldiers and a man in the RNVF decided to sail for India, they were transferred to nearby Pulau Selayar were given a boat and reached India (see pp 231-232 of SD).
- **YUSUF – Able Seaman Bin haji Sayid Yusuf**, MN694, Royal Navy (Malay Section), MPK. He died on 14.2.42 on ‘HMS Grasshopper’. (CWGC)

#### Passengers:

- **ALEXANDER – Marine William Alexander, Royal Marines**, from Ballymoney, Northern Ireland had been a Royal Marine on the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’. In his Oral History recording held in the Imperial War Museum, after the sinking of the ‘Prince of Wales’ he became part of the ‘Plymouth Argylls’ contingent that was formed in Singapore from the remnants of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the Marines from the ‘Prince of Wales’ and ‘Repulse’. He was assigned to guard a group of about ten Japanese POWs who, from the clothes they were wearing, he believed to be civilians. He relates how a group of Australian troops, whom he believed had deserted, became hostile to the POWs he was guarding and began shooting at the prisoners until a British Officer threatened to shoot the Australians unless they ceased firing. This group of AIF soldiers who he states to number “... *about two dozen* ...”

apparently later also boarded the 'HMS Grasshopper'. William recounts that the ship was "... fairly well packed ..." with passengers - he recalls two other Marines by the name of Wootton and Ester, plus mainly Naval personnel, and one or two civilians including a Japanese interpreter who was able to talk with the Japanese POWs. They sailed "... for Java ..." during the night and then experienced Japanese air bombing and strafing the next day so the Captain beached the ship. After beaching he recalls there "... were some injured and some died ..." – **he helped dig about three graves**. Apparently, it was Lt Forbes who organised Landing Craft and several 'Dhows' and told everyone to go to Singkep where they stayed. Later they were on a craft that was towed up the Indragiri River to Rengat where they commandeered two buses. William and others contracted dysentery and as a result several Marines were left behind on the journey as they crossed Sumatra. After reaching Padang he boarded a "... tramp steamer ..." '[probably the 'SS Palopo'] which took them to Ceylon – he mentions that there were quite a few civilians on this ship (a mix of Europeans, Chinese, Malays and Indians) and that "... it was the ship that Brookes who wrote the book ..." was on?

- **ASH – Michael Basil Ash**, B.Sc. [Agric] Educated Sedbergh School. Chartered Accountant 1931-1937 Peat, Marwick & Mitchell. ICI India 1937. Agricultural Advisory Dept ICI Malaya, Robinson Rd, Singapore 1939. Lt MRNVR. Left 1940 after serious accident while golfing?? According to diaries and records left Singapore February 1942, to Padang, Sumatra then Colombo. Later Lt Colonel. Indian Army. MID & OBE. Post-war 1946-62 Secretary & Finance Director De Havilland Engine Company. 1962-63 De Havilland Aircraft Company. 1963-71 Managing Director - Hawker Siddeley Dynamics. 1971-72 Chairman Hawker Siddeley Dynamics Engineering Company. Retired. Wife Elizabeth; children Fern, David, Gay, Cherry, Michael & Peter. Died 7.6.2005 Somerset. (JMM).
- **BAGNALL – Sir John Bagnall**, JP b.1888 Liverpool. Educated Liverpool Institute then with Alfred Holt & Co. Liverpool 1904-1912, Chairman & Managing Director, Straits Trading Co. Ltd, Singapore 1923. Unofficial Member of Legislative & Executive Council SS. Twice Chairman of Singapore Chamber of Commerce. Lived at Woodside, 59 Grange Rd, Singapore. Knighted 1936. Evacuated 2.42, ship sunk but he reached India then to Jo'burg SA. Wife evacuated. He died 29.9.54 [66] Johannesburg (JMM).
- **BARDEN** - Hubert Barden, b.1899 at Huddersfield. Accountant, Eastern Bank, Medeiros Building, Malacca St. Singapore. Married Lorna Mary Payne of Singapore & WA 1933. Lived at 50 Barker Rd, Singapore. HMS Grasshopper Palembang, Sumatra internee. Lorna & daughter Nanette Louise [b.1934 Singapore] evacuated to the UK. He taken to Australia on Highland Brigade, arriving Sydney 15.10.45. To Indonesia 1948, India 1953 then retired to South Africa 1960 (JMM); " ... BARDEN H EAST BK LEFT INT. PADANG ... " (BPPL); " ... Mr. Steel, Manager, Eastern Bank Ltd & H. Barden, accountant sailed on the "Kuala" and, I understand from the Manager of the Eastern Bank, Bombay, that they were last heard of in Sumatra ... " (Proud), Proud 's advices are incorrect - he does not appear to have been on the 'SS Kuala' and there is a reference to Gordon, Steels number two..." as having been on the 'HMS Grasshopper'; Mr. Barden appears in the internees list for Palembang so the question is, what route did he take from Pulau Singkep to end up so far south and a prisoner of the Japanese at Palembang, compared to other survivors of the 'HMS Grasshopper' who travelled across to Sumatra at the mouth of the Indragiri River and across to Padang?.
- **BENNETT** – E.J. Bennett "...whose wife had left on the Kuala ..." ref John Dukes and Bagnall's records; **Ernest John Bennett**, JP, he travelled to Singapore 1912 and by 1913 Singapore newspapers record the start of a very wide involvement in sport - playing for Singapore v. Malacca in football, also tennis and cricket (he was still playing cricket in 1937) for the SCC, squash at the Tanglin Club in 1932, and golf in 1933. By 1914 working for Behr & Co. in



Penang and then moved to Singapore – it appears that it was around this time he met and married the widow, Violet Douglas Fittock, whose husband Charles Fittock had died in Hong Kong in 1912 leaving her with two daughters and a son. In 1915 Violet and Ernest had a daughter at the Penang Maternity Hospital (SFPMA 16.11.15). Ernest must have had a good relationship with his stepdaughters because he was chosen to ‘give the bride away’ at the 1926 wedding of Miss Allen Maude Fittock to Frank Walker of Boustead & Co (SFPMA 30.6.26) – Lt Charles Fittock, MRNVR was an usher at this wedding. Then a few years later in 1931 his second stepdaughter, Miss Mabel Fittock, married James Barton of the Asiatic Petroleum Co. Municipal Commissioner, Singapore. Director G.H. Slot & Co. Ltd, Robinson Rd, Singapore. He was a Member of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce; in 1944 a member of the Licensing Board for liquor licences and in 1946 when he returned he was one of the former members of the Singapore Chamber of Commerce who restarted the Chamber. Aged in his 60s he evacuated on ‘HMS Grasshopper’ but survived the bombing and beaching of that vessel and reached Pulau Singkep, then Sumatra, travelling across to Padang then across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon on the ‘SS Palopo’ and finally India. He returned to Singapore after the war and in 1947 he bought from Mt Blackwood, the Surveyor General for Singapore, the property known as ‘The White House’ and the accompanying five-acre island of Pulau Selegu on which it was situated, then opposite Jardine Steps, and connected by a foot bridge to Blakan Mati (it now forms the base for the cable car tower to Sentosa). He died on 16.12.50 at St George’s Hospital, London and his island and house were placed on the market for ‘\$95,000 or near offer’. It was developed into an entertainment island in 1967 and was presumably the forerunner for the conversion of the entire island of Blakan Mati into what is now Sentosa. (JMM and Singapore Newspaper Archives). His wife was Mrs Violette Douglas Bennett - mentioned in the narrative (above) as distraught and in tears evacuating Singapore and being forced onto ‘SS Kuala’ the day before the ‘HMS Grasshopper’ left - she lost her life either on the ship or in the sea at Pom Pong island when the ‘SS Kuala’ was bombed, machine gunned and sunk on 14 February anchored 400 metres from that uninhabited island. Violet Bennet was 61 years of age. [Researcher Note: there is the possibility the Lt Charles Fittock (the stepson of EJB) might have been aboard ‘HMS Grasshopper’ since he was later recorded as being in a party of evacuees in a launch from Pulau Singkep to Sumatra – but he might also have been on the tug ‘St Breock’].

- **BLACKWELL – Albert George Blackwell**, b.1892 London. To Jamaica 1931-1935. Later to Singapore. Engineer/Manager, Cable & Wireless. Aged 49 in 1942. Interned Padang & Bankinang Men’s Camp. Sumatra internee. Repatriated from Singapore on the Cilicia, arriving Liverpool 27.11.45. To Bermuda 1945-1949. Died 1962. (JMM). On the first island on which the survivors landed John Robins in his memoir’s notes “... *As regards shoes I was better off than a number of people who had kicked off their shoes when they were in the water, Blackwell, who had come ashore clad only in a shirt, having lost his trousers and incidentally 200 dollars, had managed to re-equip himself from someone’s suitcase which had been brought ashore. He had a torn shirt to spare and though wet I was grateful for it...*”. Later Robins notes that Blackwell arrived at the intermediate island base the survivors moved to on 15/16 February and in fact trying to keep warm that night slept against each other. He reached Pulau Singkep with others in the party but from then on he appears to have lagged further behind on the escape route across Sumatra with the result that he arrived in Padang too late to be evacuated and thereby became an internee.
- **BOURLON? /BOUNTON? /BOURLIN?** – listed by Wegener as on the ‘HMS Grasshopper. Could be “*BOURLIN G.P., Russian Mining Engineer, Anglo-Oriental. Evacuated to Sumatra*

*then India.” (JMM). The Bourlin /Anglo Oriental connection may be worth noting since Paul Siedlecki, also an employee of Anglo Oriental completed a report to the Malayan Research Bureau, Sydney in 1943 confirming he was on the ‘HMS Grasshopper’ and that he worked for Anglo Oriental and was a Technician in the RAF Auxiliary. He records that after reaching ‘Kota Daboe’ on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, “... from Daboe he left on the 19<sup>th</sup> with Dr Mann, the dentist, and **Mr Bourlon, a Russian Officer attached to the Chinese Army, who was doing investigation work, and is now back in Chungking. They went north to Lingga and there learnt that the Japanese were on Saniang [ Senejang?] and Bankok [Banka] islands, so they went back to Singkep again, where from the north shore they sent Mr Bourlon over to Daboe to get in touch with certain people and ask them to come away. No-one, however, would come. When they reached Indragiri and Renggat [ Rengat] on 23rd February, a launch left for Singkep under a Dredgemaster [this would have been Captain Bill Reynolds in the Japanese fishing boat later used as the ‘Krait’] a tall man, about six foot four inches, well known in Ipoh...”***. During and after the war, the BOURLIN surname surface a few times – a D.G. Bourlin had correspondence with Paul W. Frillman in 1944 when he was liaison officer for the American ‘Flying Tigers’ fighter group in China; then in the investigation into suspected spy Owen Lattimore , an American, during the early 1950s when a ‘person referred to as a ‘soldier of fortune’ by the name of Dimitri Bourlin was raised as a possible connection; finally a Dimitri Peter Bourlin – who gave his occupation as an ‘anti-pirate guard’ was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to imprisonment with the importation and possession of drugs in Kuala Lumpur ( Straits Times 31.5.52) - he said he was an undercover agent and helping the American authorities and Singapore Special Branch in their fight against narcotics .

- **BRAY - Percy Archibald Bray**, b.1890 Buckland, Somerset. To Malaya 1924 on P.& O. ‘Morea’ with his wife and child. Employed as Shift Engineer FMS.1929 Power Station Superintendent, Electrical dept, FMS. In the 1930s he was regularly active in golfing competitions. 1936 Asst Electrical engineer and 1937 Generation Engineer, Bungsar Road Power Station, Kuala Lumpur. 1940 Senior Electrical Engineer, Selangor State. Executive Electrical Engineer, Power Station, Electrical Dept FMS, KL. On ‘HMS Grasshopper’. Interned Padang & Bankinang Men’s Camp, Sumatra internee. Repatriated via Canada, arriving Liverpool on the Duchess of Richmond from Canada 15.11.45. Died 1970 Frome, Somerset (JMM and Singapore Newspaper Archives).
- **BREWER - Frank Willman Brewer**, FRIBA b.1886 Richmond. Educated King’s College School and King’s College, London University. Partner, Smith & Brewer [Architects], London 1907-1919, Captain RE 1915-1918. Singapore architect since 1920 [Cathay Building, Singapore Swimming Club, New Palace, Johore]. President of the Singapore Boxing Board of Control office at 51 the Arcade, Singapore. Singapore **LDC 12.40 to ARP Singapore**. Palembang, Sumatra internee. Returned to Singapore post war then retired to Jersey. Died 8.4.71 London.
- **BRIDGES – Lt Col. W.F. Noel Bridges** who later boarded the ‘SS Ban Ho Guan’ had been a passenger on the ‘HMS Grasshopper’. FMSVF, 314012, aged 52 years, Surveyor Gen Survey Department SS FMS, was on HMS Grasshopper, [and incorrectly stated as] “...lost at sea 14.2.42...” but later left from Padang, enemy action (MVJB); Captain David Nelson of the BRE in Changi POW camp believed Noel Bridges had boarded the “SS Ban Ho Guan” (p. 225 ‘TSOC’) and in the POW diary of Captain Nelson he explains how Noel Bridges left Singapore when he states [incorrectly although these other ships did leave at the same time as the ‘HMS Grasshopper’]“... Colonel Bridges , Surveyor – General on ‘Kuala’ or ‘Tien Kwang’ ...” ; also “...Bridges W F N Surveys left 13/2 for Java...” (BPPL);then “...Bridges W F N “ appears on a list of people on or believed to be on a ship called the “SS. Ban Mow” ( list in document



in IWM); surprisingly the CWGC are clearly unsure when he died because the record show **Lt. Col William Francis Noel Bridges**, DSO.,# 14012, FMSVF, aged 52 years, husband of Doris Francis Bridges of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, he was Director of Military Surveys, Malaya 1941-42 and he died between 1 January 1942 and 31 December 1942 (CWGC) ); Captain William Francis Noel Bridges served in the First World War in the 25<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion of the Australian Army and was awarded Mentioned in Despatches ( Australian War Memorial); in 1918 with the rank of Major he received the DSO ( Australian War Memorial)and this is reported in the Singapore newspapers with the notation that he was already working for the Malayan Survey Department prior to military service. It is interesting that Major Bristow( the embarkation Officer for the Padang departure of the ‘SS Ban Ho Guan’ had, by the end of the War made the acquaintance of Noel Bridges wife, Mrs. Doris Bridges (of Yewhurst, Chorley Bridge Road, Rickmansworth, Herts.) along with the widow of Major Ernie Ryder – it is clear that the loss of the “SS. Ban Ho Guan’ weighed heavily on his mind because he was very conscientious in writing to families of those on board trying to help with an explanation for the ships loss. His letters imply that he had got to know Noel Bridges at some stage either in Malaya or in Sumatra; the Bridges family have in their possession a poignant record of Noel Bridges last days being a letter he wrote to his wife whilst he was in Padang. He records that he was being billeted( with Charles Best) in a comfortable family home in Padang and he had arrived in that town on 23 February after ten days escape journey from Singapore which he had left on 13 February and travelled “ ... *partly by warship, partly by swimming ,by sampan, by motor boat, by tug, by bus and train ...*” confirming his experience of being sunk on the “HMS Grasshopper’ and then buying a sampan from its Malaya owner before transferring to a faster motor boat to reach Sumatra. He records in his letter that Messrs Best, Clark-Walker, Husband and Goss are in Padang at the time of his letter and also that other Malayan Survey Department men being Wilton, Robert Williams, Blackman and Jerram were also in Padang (the latter name is a bit of a mystery because Jerram was a POW Singapore and Thailand). Messrs Wilton and Williams boarded another ship to Tjilichap and then the ‘Zaandam’ safely to Australia whilst Blackman reached Colombo. Noel Bridges was, from his letter, closely acquainted with General Gordon Bennett of the Australian Army (not surprisingly because the military relied very heavily on the Malayan Survey Department for most of the maps being used in the war against the Japanese) and makes an oblique reference to possible doing some work for “... *my very highly placed friend ...*”. The letter ends with a pencilled note that General Gordon Bennett is about to leave Padang urgently and he will carry the letter to Australia (presumably giving it to Mrs. Bridges personally in Melbourne or posting it with at least one other letter, being the one from Alexander Clark – Walker in Padang).

- **BROWN** – “... Mr. E. G. Brown, Acting Chief Engineer Way & Works, was on the ‘HMS Grasshopper’...” (WEGENER report #142 to Malayan Research Bureau. This is “... Eric Gordon Brown, BSc AMICE, b.1890. Educated Burton-on-Trent Grammar School, Malvern College & Birmingham University. WW1 Service as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt to Captain RE 1916-1919. To Malaya 1919 as Assistant Engineer [Open Lines] FMS Railways. By 1940 Acting Chief Engineer Way & Works, FMS Railways. Aged 52 in 1942. Captain retd. Evacuated 2.42 but Sumatra internee...” (JMM). Eric Brown had been an enthusiastic sportsman and engineer in Malaya during the 1920s and 1930s – playing rugby, golf and tennis and involved in the Malayan Association of Civil Engineers. In 1933 he was appointed Divisional Engineer for FMS Railways. By 1946 he would have been of retirement age (which was 55 – 60 years in Malaya and Singapore at that time) so does not appear to have returned to FMS Railways after the war and his harsh internment in the Padang and Bankinang camps of Sumatra.
- **BROWN** – “...Capt. P. Brown – Japanese speaker, now in India attached to 4 Corps. Was on the ship when it left Singapore ...” in a letter from Lt Morris HQ Eastern Command to AAG Ops HQ Eastern command dated 30.3.43. Also, **Lt. R.P. Brown, Intelligence Corps**. He clearly

reached Padang and safely evacuated across the Indian Ocean to Ceylon and India.

- **CLARKE** – “... Lt. H. M. [sic: W.E.M.] Clarke, Intelligence Officer and Japanese interpreter (Wegener) who later escaped Padang on the ‘Sederhana Djohanis’. He was the Intelligence Officer placed in charge of the Japanese POWs by Captain Kalberer at Dabo on Singkep.. Also referred to as “...*Capt. W. Clarke – now in India attached to CSDIC, New Delhi...was on the ship when it left Singapore...*”. by Lt Morris in a letter to HQ Eastern Army on 30 March 1943. This is **Lt. W.E.M. Clarke, Intelligence Corps**, who escaped to Bombay (his report 27.4.42). The escape on the 45-foot native ‘prauw’ (like a ketch) named ‘Sederhana Djohanis’ which had rotting sails and rigging, could hardly sail into the wind and did best with the wind behind was an epic piece of sailing. It was under the command of R.N. Broome, ex- Malayan Civil Service supported by the legendary Ivan Lyon, a sandy haired Gordon highlander captain. The remainder of personnel were a mix of naval (RN, RNVR and MRNVR), SOE., and Army officers. The plan was to work up the coast of Sumatra about 200 miles to a latitude about that of Ceylon and then sail straight across to Ceylon. It took five weeks, but they reached their destination safely.
- **COATES – Colonel James Bertram Coates CBE, MC.**, had been appointed GSO of the 9<sup>th</sup> Indian Division in September 1940 and sent to Malaya – prior to that he was in command of the 1<sup>st</sup> Btn The Queens Royal Regiment. His own records state that “... *on 2 February 1942 he was appointed to command 6/15 Infantry Brigade with the acting rank of Brigadier and sent to the west coast of Singapore to stem a Japanese landing. He recorded that ‘this was not operationally possible, and the Brigade withdrew to Singapore itself where I established my Brigade headquarters. On 12 Or 13 February I was ordered to select a party for evacuation from Singapore. I saw general Heath, the Corps Commander, under whose command the Brigade then was. He told me to go with the party... at Singapore we embarked in ‘HMS Grasshopper’, a Yangtse gunboat (Captain Hoffinen RN I think) and sailed and sailed on the night of 13/14 February....’*. Apart from his own memoirs and account there were a number of very senior and successful British company executives on the ‘HMS Grasshopper’ and to put it politely – they (particularly John Robins) also recorded his presence on board, but in the most contemptful and derisory manner. Coates would appear have conducted himself, at least in their eyes, in an arrogant and unhelpful manner and perhaps there was some truth in their assessment because Coates own attitude is borne out by his not even knowing the correct name of the Captain and also recording “... *Our party consisted mostly of civilians and I remember that we made the Head of Malayan Railways our cook...*”. Robins also commented on the fact that, from the start, passengers had felt resentful towards Coates because after they first left Singapore “...*at dusk...*”, the ship’s captain had been ordered to return to Singapore and “... *then began a long and weary wait, for the latter part of which we were under fire from a gun firing from the direction of the Swimming Club, to the east of the town.... It was an uncomfortable hour though, with nothing to do but sit around and wait to be hit. There were audible sighs of relief when about 1am we made preparations for departure once more. The reason for our return was now apparent. A Brigadier General now came aboard. If I felt antagonistic towards him then it was nothing to the poor opinion I formed of him later...*”. Later, whilst most of the survivors reaching shore after the beaching had lost most of their clothing or had little in the way of possessions and were often caring for the many wounded on the beach and in the jungle wounded – the ‘Brigadier’ appeared with” ... *his three Indian bearers had arrived carrying his suitcases, which with many instructions re the care of same, were deposited in the boat. He then attempted to get in himself but in passing my oar he tripped over it and went down full length in the water, full uniform, Mae West, brass hat and all...*”, once this boat party reached land again around the

island the 'Brigadier' disappeared again, and John Robins went to look for him *"... I found his party bivouacked beside the path about halfway. He, however, was installed in a small bell tent. I gave the message to one of his satellites and the great man himself emerged from the tent and said, in his commanding voice" Who is this man raising a scare?". I refuted that and merely repeated the message I had for him and left. The more I saw of this insufferably pompous man the less I thought of him..."*. Probably the worst reflection on the poor leadership, awareness and interpersonal skills of Coates was the fact that he reported to the authorities in India that there had been no military casualties whereas men with a similar rank to his own on the vessel had been either killed at the time of the sinking or mortally wounded. Coates made it to Singkep, then across Sumatra to Padang and from there on 26 February boarded a ship to Colombo. After he reached India he was appointed GSO (Ops) Eastern Army and then in 1943 returned to the UK. For his services during the Second World War, he was made an OBE and Mentioned in Despatches. He died in 1988.

- **COLTMAN Mrs Doreen Oakley Coltman** KL Housewife Of 165 High St KL. On 'HMS Grasshopper' in February 1942, Interned at Padang then Bankinang Camp. Sumatra internee. (JMM). Miss Doreen Coltman, British, aged 43 years, of 165 High Street, Kuala Lumpur was listed as being in the British Women's Camp in Padang and arriving at the Mission Complex in Padang on 24.6.43 (Mr. H. van den Bos); the 'British Malaya' journal of June 1944 lists as in Sumatra Camp as Doreen Oakley Coltman, Housewife. Doreen was the wife of Arthur Oakley Coltman of Booty & Co, Kuala Lumpur. Then, as a person who had been on the "Kuala", she is again listed after the war as Ms. D. S. Coltman, to UK on "Antenor". Arthur Oakley Coltman, MBE, was an Architect, Proprietor, Booty & Edwards, 165 High St KL Changi and Sime Rd internee. Retired to Lindfield, Sussex. He died on 20.12.61 Sussex.
- **CRAMER –Barnett Joseph Cramer** MSc b.1892 in Manchester, Lancashire. To Singapore 1914. Married Constance Mary Harrington (1909 -1991). He was a Metallurgist and General Works Manager Straits Tin. After the attack on 'HMS Grasshopper' he reached Padang and was on the SS *Palopo* from Padang to India then to Pretoria SA. Daughter Betty Cotterill – in Australia. Retired from Straits Tin, Singapore after 30 years' service in 1947. (JMM). Barnett Cramer wrote a report for the Malayan Research Bureau (No 135.) on his escape from Singapore on 'HMS Grasshopper'. His report confirms the experiences shared by others in this memorial document - in his case when the ship was beached he states *"... I jumped into the water with my clothes and shoes on and after a fair struggle, reached the shore about three eighths of a mile away..."*. He travelled with Bagnall and others via Singkep to Sumatra and boarded the 'SS Palopo' for safety in Ceylon. A few days later he was shipped to South Africa. Barnett Cramer died in 1977 at Ramsgate, South Africa.
- **DAY - Edward Victor Grace Day**, CMG 1952, b.1896 NZ Educated at Timaru Boys High School and Christ's College, Christchurch NZ. Served as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt (Gazette records promoted in 1920) in the 6<sup>th</sup> Btn, The Rifle Brigade, attd 2/10<sup>th</sup> Gurkha Rifles. In 1921 a Cadet in the Straits Settlement. Various Malayan Colonial Service appointments. Collector of Land Revenues Malacca 1937. Sgt 4SSVF retd. Resident in Perlis 1941. Evacuated to Sumatra 13.2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' [sunk]. Later reached Ceylon and spent the rest of the war in the Cocos Islands and India. Returned 1945 as Resident Commissioner then Adviser, Kedah. Also, Resident Commissioner, Malacca 1946-7. Retired in 1951 after 30 years in Malaya. Wife Dorothy Daisy (Norman) died on 26.1959 London SW1. Daughters Dorothea & Isabel. He died 23.6.68 Bexhill-on-Sea, Sussex. (JMM)
- **DOBSON – Lt W.B.C.H. Dobson, Intelligence Corps** is recorded in the report by Lt W.E.M. Clarke, Int Corps, as a *"...Chinese and Thai speaking interpreter and ..arr Bombay..."*. So, he reached safety in India.

- DUKE – John Duke**, FBOA b.1889 Glasgow. Educated Hillhead High School, Glasgow & West of Scotland Technical College. RAMC Optician WW1 Singapore Optician. Lived at 12 Battery Rd Evacuated on HMS Grasshopper[sunk] wounded—reached Padang then to Ceylon on the SS Palopo. Arrived Capetown SA joining his wife there. According to a letter John Duke, the Optician wrote to his wife during the war, Duke and Bill Steel, Manager Eastern Bank Ltd., met up at the premises of Eastern Bank prior to evacuating and together went down to the Singapore wharves. Then John Duke recalls “... with one suitcase each, and waited for six hours, dodging in and out of a shelter that was there, as the shelling around was infernal. A lot of it came within 100 yards of the shelter. ...I at last got through the gate (the Harbour Board Gate opposite Bolland’s about 200 yards from Clifford Pier). Our Government exit passes were carefully examined and then we had to wait for another half hour, pending the arrival of the Master Attendant’s boat to take us off to the waiting ship in the harbour. At this point there was a sudden alert, Bill flopped down. I got under a motor truck. A stick of bombs fell within 300feet of us. Bill was unhurt but I was wounded in several places. Subsequently Bill and Gordon go me aboard a small warship (about 600 tons) I was put in the sick bay and attended to by a hospital nurse who happened to be on board [this may have been the Australian nurse, Miss Heather Fisher]. Among other bits of shrapnel which she removed from my body was a piece in my nose about the size of a threepenny piece ...The next morning about 10 o’clock a Japanese plane came over the ship and let loose a bomb which glanced off the side of the ship.... About 11 o’clock three squadrons of Jap bombers suddenly came overhead – I believe there were 50 in all; then we were for it. I got into a messroom with Bill.... The guns on our ship were simply futile, so we represented just good target practice for the Jap airmen... I was wounded again in the wretched pantry: Bill and I got under a table; there was a hellish crash. I found out later that the bomb had hit the upper structure immediately above the place in which we had taken shelter. All I can remember is floating in a sea of ink, wonderful slimy thick stuff. When I regained consciousness, I found myself under neath a whole mass of broken parts of the messroom furniture. I got out with difficulty as I was again wounded. My left arm had gone wrong and I had a pain in my left lung when I breathed. There were a number of dead lying about, those who had not taken cover and the blast got them.... Finally, we approached close to one of the islands, roughly four miles off, and I decided to take the chance of swimming ashore ...Fortunately I had a lifebelt. The sea was like glass; it was a lovely sunny morning; perfect for a bathe, or a picnic – some picnic! Five other men had jumped with me and were swimming for dear life – and that’s no lie... While in the water I had a spectacular view of the bombing of our poor old ship...She wriggled from side to side ,turned and went back on her course and turned again....Suddenly the ship was blotted out in a mass of spray; she took fire seemingly and then was driven ashore, where she was machinegunned by low flying planes as I was swimming...Ultimately, when I got close enough to the shore for them to see me , some people there sent me out a lifebuoy, and then a boat and took me ashore....We couldn’t light a fire at any time, as the smoke would attract further bombing, and it was cold that night. Bill Steel was good to me. He was fully clothed as he had stuck to the ship and succeeded in dashing ashore before the ship was machinegunned....”. Duke continues his story “... At the end of four days we were taken off by a small motorboat and landed on the Dutch island of Singkep where I lay for a week in a native hospital on hard wooden beds used by natives in peacetime...All the Europeans had left for Batavia, with the exception of the Resident, and that fellow did stout work...At this stage I was separated from Bill as I was a hospital case under the wing of the RAMC and he was with the main party outside in bungalows...He also lent me some money but it was never used as the Dutch would not take it, so I turned it into his account with the



*Eastern Bank when I got to Colombo...After three weeks in hospital I was sent away in a small hospital launch... we sailed across the open sea at night, then two days up a typical Malayan river... we travelled for three days after that by bus and train and at length arrived at Padang [sic: Padang] where we were accommodated in a school for three more days. The boat that eventually took us off was a little tug 200 RPM. Used in the interisland trade, she had no wireless and did 8 knots p. h.... Bagnell [sic: Bagnall] and Bennett were aboard along with a Colonel who had just won the VC...the journey took 10 days.” Duke reached Colombo in ‘SS Palopo’ and then was moved on to Durban in an Orient liner which had good food and accommodation.*

- **ESBESTER/ ‘ESTER’ – Royal Marine Reginald Peter Esbester, PLY X 101191, Royal Marines** was born on 12.7.22 and enlisted on 4.9.40. His address was 27 Cadogan Road, Knowle, Bristol. He served on the ‘HMS Prince of Wales’ when it was sunk in December 1941 and was, possibly, guarding the Japanese POWs on board ‘HMS Grasshopper’. He was captured (presumably in Padang) and became part of the ‘British Sumatra Battalion’ (book “the British Sumatra Battalion” by A.A. Apthorp). Following Padang, he states that he was in Mergui, Tavoy and Thanbyuzayat etc. (MI9 Liberation questionnaire on COFEPOW website0. It appears he was still alive in 2002, living with Joan Esbester (who died in 2009) in Torquay, Devon, plus a ‘James A. Esbester’.
- **FEAKES - George James Feakes**, Cable Engineer, Cable & Wireless. Aged 49 in 1942. He appears to have been born in Adelaide and passed his Junior Certificate in 1907 (Trove) ‘The Register’, Adelaide, 28.12.07). The ‘Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser’ wrote on 5.11.34 “.. Mr G.J. Feakes who was, for nearly two years, engineer with the Eastern Extension telegraph Company on Cocos Island and who has returned to Sydney from Singapore .... Said that life was interesting on Cocos Island considering all the difficulties. Tennis courts were provided, and billiards were played also. Fresh fruit and vegetables were provided in the barrels dropped from passing ships...”. He may also have spent time in China in 1936 (‘The Daily News’, Perth 6.3.36). On HMS Grasshopper [sunk] then on Dabo Island. **Sumatra internee**. Listed as “known to be safe ‘by the Managing Director of C & W in the ‘Advertiser’, Adelaide, SA, on 25.9.45 (TROVE); Repatriated to Australia on ‘Manunda’ 10.45 (JMM), to meet with the Head Office of Cable & Wireless in Melbourne” ... Mr Feakes was born and educated in this State and joined the extension service of the Eastern Extension Cable Co (now Cable & Wireless Ltd) in his youth...” (‘The Western Australian’ Perth, WA 19.10.45). In 1946 Mr. & Mrs G. Feakes disembarked from the ‘Marella’ in Singapore from Sydney, Melbourne, and Fremantle (‘Straits Times’ 6.11.46)
- **FEEHALLY** – sources pointing to this senior officer being aboard included “...Maj. J.T. Feehally, RASC ... Known to have embarked on HMS Grasshopper and still recorded as Missing...” (handwritten note in UK Archives). Another UK Archive document lists him as” ... Lt. Col. Feehally, Fortress H.Q..” and “... Maj. J.T., RASC, Missg...” . From research into documents by survivors we construe that Lt. Col Feehally was in the messroom of ‘HMS Grasshopper’ ‘with Mr & Mrs Lampen- Smith when the bomb struck – two Army officers were said to have died in that explosion - and the official record states, **Lt. Colonel John Tarrant Feehally, #40614, Commanding Singapore Fortress, Royal Army Service Corps**, AMNI. Mech. E. died between 13.2.42 -14.2.42(CWGC). He was born in 1908 and attended Farnham (1919-1924), he was the son of Colonel J. Feehally and Mrs E.M. Feehally of Athlone, Co. Westmeath, Irish Republic and the husband on M.H.A. Feehally of Bayswater, London (CWGC). He must have been in Singapore some years before the war since in 1930 he is reported as leaving on ‘SS Kashgar’ for Europe (ST, 16.5.30). In 1938 the ‘Gazette’

recorded that Captain J.T. Feehally was promoted in the 'Inspection & Experimental 'Staff. In 1935 he married Miss Madge Hilda Annie Collins (Bath Chronicle & Weekly Gazette, 7.9.35). In 1938 the 'Gazette' reported his promotion as Capt. J.T. Feehally in the 'Inspection and Experimental Staff'. Mrs Madge Hilda Annie Feehally died in 1966.

- FISHER - Miss Heather Victoria Fisher**, MBE 1946 Nursing Sister, Malayan Medical Service. Aged 42 in 1942. On HMS *Grasshopper*[sunk] then Padang, Sumatra internee. (JMM) Heather Victoria Fisher was born on 3 May 1900, at Mt Morgan, Queensland, Australia, one of eight children of David Hindaugh Fisher and Gertrude Hannah Fisher. She trained at Rockhampton General Hospital ('The Telegraph, Brisbane 24.9.45) and in 1939 she arrived in Singapore from Sydney on the 'Nieuw Holland' (SFPMA 11.3.39). She was employed by the Malayan medical Services ('The Telegraph', Brisbane 24.9.45) and, aged 42 years (which was much older than most other nurses serving in Malaya and Singapore), boarded the 'HMS Grasshopper'. She is one of the 'women' or 'nurses' referred to in a few memoirs. Letters and as attending to the wounded on the ship and on the islands – presumably including at Dabo on Pulau Singkep and then on the Sumatran mainland. Like several other nurses attending to wounded along the escape line her sense of duty required her to lag behind with the wounded – rather than rush ahead for an evacuation vessel from Padang – and as a result would have arrived at Padang too late to board an evacuation vessel. She became an internee in the awful Padang (Fraterhuis and other sites) camps and then in October 1943 moved with the group of working British nurses to the jungle camp at Bankinang north of Padang. She is listed as such a 'working nurse' in the memoirs of her fellow nurse Marjorie de Malmanche (p.30) who describes in detail the foul conditions, malnutrition and serious diseases the nurses had to contend with at Bankinang amongst the 2300 - mainly Dutch-women and children interned at that camp" ... *Our medical supplies were now all used up..... Malaria was rampant. There was never less than 400 suffering Malaria attacks every day. Miss Fisher and Miss Krauth both had severe recurring attacks. Miss Fisher was a little older than the rest of us and was very senior in the Colonial Service. She had left Singapore on a gunboat – Grasshopper, I think,... they were shelled, and the Captain had to beach the vessel. Casualties were heavy and Miss Fisher received the OBE [ sic: it was the MBE] after the war for her services during and after the action...*". In 1945 Victoria Fisher was released from Bankinang a, transported to Padang, and then moved by plane to Singapore for recuperation. In September 1945 "... Mrs D. H. Fisher of Yeppoon has received word that her daughter Sister Heather Fisher of the Malayan Medical Services is safe and on her way to Yeppoon..." ('The Telegraph, Brisbane, 24.9.45). The following month 'The Courier' Brisbane (9.10.45) reported that Sister Heather Fisher will arrive on the 'Highland Chieftain'. Miss Fisher was indeed awarded the MBE in 1946 for "...when the HMS Grasshopper was bombed in the Durian Straits she tended to the wounded during action and after swimming ashore continued to care for survivors until they reached Singkep island five days later ..." (Townsville Daily Bulletin' 8.7.46, under the heading 'MBE FOR YEPPOON NURSE'). She returned to Malaya for work after the war and retired in 1948 – the Malaya Tribune' of 19.2.48 reported "...Miss H. V. Fisher, MBE, Matron Grade 1, Malayan Nursing Service, formerly of Alor Star has gone to Australia on leave prior to retirement...". On 3.10.55 she married Frank Shercliff (1888-1956) in Brisbane and died on 22.2.60, aged only 59 years, in Brisbane.
- FRANCIS - William Thomas Francis**, Acting Commercial Manager, Eastern Smelting, Penang. Volunteer Private in **3SSVF**. Evacuated 14.2.42 on HMS *Grasshopper*. Arrived Colombo on the Johann de Witt 14.3.42. (JMM). William Francis first arrived in Singapore in 1924 aboard the 'SS China' and by 1932 was working in Penang. A keen sportsman he is shown playing

tennis in Ipoh in 1934 and cricket for the Penang Cricket Club in 1935. In 1936 he is reported arriving back in Malaya on the 'President Monroe', playing rugby for Penang and attending a wedding in Penang. He married (SFPMA 20.1.37) in 1937 to Miss Esme Shand, only daughter of Mr & Mrs S.W. Shand of Penang at St Georges Church, Penang. After their honeymoon they returned on the 'Corfu'. In 1939 he is recorded playing soccer for Penang Europeans against Kedah Europeans. He recorded his experiences in the evacuation from Singapore on 'HMS Grasshopper' in report #131 to the Malayan Research Bureau, Sydney in 1943. He reached safety as mentioned above and was in Colombo by March 1942. After the war he returned to Malaya and in 1949 is listed as Acting Registrar, Penang for Consolidated Tin Smelters.

- *GORDON – "...the number two of Bill Steel..."*. this appears to be a reference to Hubert Barden.
- *JAMES – "...Lt Col. James, Planter, Negri Sembilan was on the 'HMS Grasshopper'..."*. (WEGENER report #142 to Malayan Research Bureau). This is **Lt. Col. Harold Morton James**, MC and Bar, MM, MBE, born 14 August 1896 in London to Frank and Marion James, 17 Amhurst Place, Stamford Hill. His life was to be filled with high achievement, He attended Malvern College (at Malvern in Worcestershire) with distinction – a Prefect and in the First XI. Then attended Jesus College, Cambridge University. Harold James served in World War One also with high distinction – as a Captain in The Duke of Cambridge's Own (Middlesex Regiment) his bravery saw him awarded the Military Cross (and Bar) and the Military Medal. One source has him with the Manchester Regiment & Royal Flying Corps. He became a Barrister at Inner temple, London and was also at one time an Assistant Master at Seabrook Lodge School, Hythe in Kent. By 1920 he was in Malaya and began what was to be an extraordinarily long and successful amateur career in cricket playing for Negri Sembilan in the colony – after briefly representing Selangor he then must have moved to Negri Sembilan because from 1922 until 1934 he played for that State - at one stage the team played against the visiting Australian national team and by 1933 he was reported as 'skipper' of the Negri Sembilan State team. He made his professional career that of a rubber planter working for Dunlop Plantations Ltd at Kuala Pilah and in 1930 being placed in charge of the Australasia Estate at Mambau. In 1928, described (Malaya Tribune 27.1.28) as *"... planter of Bahau and well known cricketer..."*, he married Miss Juliet Faulkner at St Mark's Church, Seremban. In that same year he was also commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt in the MSVR. There was one daughter, Juliet Marian James, and JMM records: wife Juliet [Anita?] evacuated to Perth WA when the Japanese invaded as well as there being a son Thomas. 1934 newspapers reported that he was appointed Captain in command of 'E' Company, MSVR, Negri Sembilan and later in 1941 promoted to Captain of the Local Defence Corps of Negri Sembilan. During the 1930s Mr and Mrs Harold James had reached the heights of Malayan social status, being invited to dine with the Governor General, Sir Shenton Thomas. In contrast to the MRB report placing him on 'HMS Grasshopper' another source has him evacuating to Sumatra on 'Relau' 2.42. Harold James must have been one of those described as 'servicemen' who were seriously injured when the bomb hit the Petty Officers mess room and one of those then stretchered to Dabo on Pulau Singkep - the official record shows he died on 13 March 1942, aged 57 years, the son of Frank and Marion James and the husband of Juliet James, Dalkeith, Western Australia and is recorded on Column 401 at Kranji cemetery. (CWGC). Another source states he died at 'Djambi Hospital' (John Brown database) so we must assume that he was moved from Dabo

– possibly because of the seriousness of his wounds, the shorter distance across the sea, south to the Djambi River (rather than west across the sea to the Indragiri River and placed in hospital at Djambi. Wife Juliet remarried 1946, to Australian Edward George Staunton who had been Registrar of Vehicles in Malaya and a Changi and Sime Road internees during the Japanese occupation (JMM). In 1947 (ST. 2.1.47) there was an advertisement for any creditors claims on the estate of Harold Morton James deceased.

- **JOYCE** – C.N.W. Joyce, Cable & Wireless Ltd., “believed missing or died on ship” i.e., ‘SS Redang’ (COR); also “JOYCE CNW C & W LEFT ABT 13/2 NEI? ... “(BPPL); **Mr. Charles Norman Wishart Joyce**, from Chislehurst Kent. Cable & Wireless. Formerly a Private in the Scottish Company 1SSVF. Wife Piercy had been evacuated. Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 15.3.43 [53]. Son A.E.W.(JMM); also, Charles Norman Wishart Joyce, died aged 53, on 15.3.43 in Sumatra, son of Mrs. E. M. Joyce, ‘Lynwood, White Horse Hill, Chislehurst, Kent and husband of Piercy H. Joyce. (CWGC). He died in Padang, Sumatra on 15.3.43 according to the CORD RegisterM1, Folio 132, Serial #788. This is backed up by his mention as having “died in captivity in the far east” in a list issued by the Managing director of C & W in September 1945 (‘Advertiser’, Adelaide 25.9.45). There is obviously a contradiction insofar as whether he died on the ship or in internment. The fact of the matter is that he was not in the only lifeboat to get away from the “Redang” and in the account left by John Robins of C & W describing the sinking of ‘HMS Grasshopper’ he records meeting ‘Joyce & docker’ in Dabo and. that “... They had had a similar experience to our own but had been bombed whilst at anchor at Pompong island ...” – Charles Joyce had evacuated on ‘SS Kuala’ or the ‘SS Tien Kwang’.
- **KALBERER** – Captain Roderick John Fraser Kalberer, #161230, Intelligence Corps is listed (including in the letter from Lt Morris, HQ eastern Army dated 30.3.43 to AAC (Ops) , HQ Eastern Army as “... Japanese speaker, G.III(I), HQ Malayan Command , was last seen by me on Singkep Island after the ship had been bombed and beached, on or about 21 February 1942.I heard that he succeeded in reaching Sumatra and that he left there by boat...” ) as one of the officers in charge of the Japanese POWs on ‘HMS Grasshopper’ and survived the attack and beaching. He must have made the journey with that group to Pulau Singkep and then to Sumatra and the town of Padang. Lt. W.E.M. Clarke, Intelligence Corps, in a report dated 27.4.42 from Bombay stated “... Capt Kalberer left Padang on Mar 1 to 3 and has not been heard of since. His instructions when putting me i/c of Jap. Pris at Dabo, Singkep were to proceed at all speed to Colombo...”. Roderick Kalberer boarded the ‘SS Rooseboom’ and lost his life in the sinking of that vessel - or (since his officially stated date of death is one day after the sinking of the ‘SS Rooseboom’ on 1.3.42) as one of the more than 100 survivors who experienced a truly awful, prolonged death on the solitary lifeboat that left that ship. Only four people - one serviceman (Cpl Gibson), a woman passenger (Doris Lim) and two unidentified Malay/Javanese crewmen - reached safety a month later. All others of the 250 plus on board the ship had perished. He is officially listed as died on 2.3.42 (CWGC), but with no family mentioned. He is also memorialised on the Brookwood 1939-45 Memorial for Missing servicemen who have no known grave. An ‘R.J.F. Kalberer’ is recorded as born in 1911 (myheritage.com) in England. The “Gazette’ of 2.3.41 lists him as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt, and he is mentioned a number of times in Singapore newspapers during March to July 1941 as playing cricket for the Singapore Cricket Club. The ‘Morning Tribune’ of 8.7.41 has an article on the society wedding in Singapore of Flt.Lt. Gidley Braid and Miss Pamela Hunt-North at which Roderick Kalberer is listed as one of the guests amongst a group of the top echelon of Singapore society and Military hierarchy.
- **LAMPEN-SMITH -William Harold ‘Bill’ Lampen-Smith**, born London, England 1902, awarded the MBE in 1947 (“... for services to fellow internees in Sumatra during enemy occupation...”, ‘Gazette,’ 27.6.47). Harold Lampen -Smith was a Telegraph Engineer, with the Eastern Extension Cable Co and then Cable & Wireless Ltd in Singapore. Aged 40 in 1942. On ‘HMS Grasshopper’ with wife Mary [below]. He was interned at the Military Club, Padang then



from 6.42 at the Catholic Club. Then to the Military Prison, Padang 1.43 then Civil Prison 4.43. To Bankinang Men's Camp 10.43. Sumatra internee. (JMM). Harold gave a signed statement to Police in Wellington, New Zealand on 24 October 1942 on his internment experience, from that we learn *"...I was first interned in the Military Club in Padang. Fifty of us were put in there in the evening without any arrangements whatsoever being made for us... We had to buy our own cooking utensils etc from our own money, and also food. Some days later we had to hand over all our money to the Japanese and were told we could buy our food etc through a native to the extent of 15 cents per head per day, which meant that we had a small quantity of rice twice a day and a little vegetable...we stayed there until the end of June 1942. we were then moved to the Catholic Club... they did not want us to have any contact with outside natives whatsoever and built a higher wall round the compound. We stayed there until the end of January 1943 when we were visited by a Japanese NCO accompanied by a party of Malay Police. He ordered us to hand over all the money which we had, this being the little which some had managed to retain... we were taken to a Military prison still in Padang and there were quartered in the cells. In April 1943 we were taken to the Civil prison with the Dutch. This prison was originally built to house about 600 and there were about 1000 of us there. The British section were quartered in a large shed and was not bad apart from the fact that when leaked, the rain came in all around us... We moved out on 22.10.43 to a place called Pankinang [sic Bankinang] in mid Sumatra. We were shifted in two lots of about 500 each and we were quartered in an old rubber factory, and we were made to leave our mattresses behind, and said they would be sent on, but we never received them. We had to sleep on bare boards with only 69 centimetres space. Food conditions here rapidly became worse and we only had one rice meal a day with very little meat and the other two meals consisted of sago-pap, which consisted of sago mixed with water. Owing to the poor diet Beri-beri and tropical ulcers became more frequent, but no medical supplies were made available, not even bandages. There was no hospital arrangements except a partitioned off piece that we made, and the sick were attended to by three Dutch Doctors, who were in the camp. Conditions gradually got worse and worse and although we made repeated representations for more food we were told that owing to the lack of transport they could not do anything about it. Every month they cut down on something of the ration, and early in 1945 there was a bad epidemic of dysentery, and between April and June 1945 there were over 50 deaths from dysentery. Towards the end of June, the Japs did give some medicine for dysentery but by this time the epidemic was over.... We became so weak near the end that we were unable to do the necessary camp work..."* In an interview with Mrs Lampen – Smith upon their repatriation to New Zealand at the end of 1945 she told the magazine of the condition of her husband *"... he was terribly gaunt. His long, beard was streaked with grey. He had just spent four months in the camp hospital with beri-beri and other diseases and had not been expected to come through..."*. Harold died in 1977 aged 75.

- **LAMPEN-SMITH** - Mrs Mary Janet 'Mavis' Lampen-Smith (nee Balmer from Palmerston North, NZ), wife of William Harold Lampen-Smith, was from the small rural, area of Raumai, near Ashurst, north of the provincial city of Palmerston North in New Zealand. She had a somewhat rural experience in her early years and showed academic aptitude by winning a junior National scholarship to Wanganui Girls College. By January 1927 – and at a time when young women travelled little internationally - she was travelling into Asia, sending messages from Shanghai that she was *"... Bright, happy, and smiling, don't worry..."* to her parents according to local newspapers and later in September 1927 she was in Kaiboroe, Java

sending reports back to the local rural newspaper about native Javanese dancing and coffee cultivation. She married in 1930 and was reported travelling with her new husband on the 'Ruahine' from New Zealand to England, before they both returned to Singapore. She briefly returned to New Zealand in 1931 when Harold Lampen-Smith was transferred to work in the Cocos Islands. On 23 October 1945 Mrs Lampen-Smith made a signed statement to a Detective Sergeant in Wellington (source: New Zealand Archives, Wellington) when she and her husband were living at 40 Simla Crescent, Kandallah. She stated that they had been living in Penang since November 1940 (prior to which they had been in Batavia) and "... *when the fall of Singapore was imminent...*" they were evacuated. Mrs Lampen-Smith explains that she was in hospital prior to her evacuation from Singapore – this was because she was suffering from a shortage of Iron in her blood after donating a lot of blood for the wounded in Singapore. From a magazine interview with Mrs Lampen-Smith conducted when she returned to New Zealand at the end of the war and also from the memoirs of Cable & Wireless employee and fellow passenger, John Robins, we learn more of what Mavis Lampen-Smith had to endure during February 1942, Robins wrote "*... Back at the office I found that Lampen-Smith wanted transport to fetch his wife. She had been very ill following donation of blood. (in the magazine interview Mary explained '...when the Japs entered north Johore I went unconscious and did not regain consciousness until they were entering Singapore in February 1942...'). She could not walk unassisted and her sight had been affected so that she was unable to focus and objects appeared to her at times upside down. Out at Cable Road we found ourselves nearer the front line than at Keppel Harbour. The smoke of battle was causing a haze which was unpleasantly close. Firing was incessant, accompanied by the drones of planes and the angry rat-tat-tat of machine gun fire. Mrs Lampen-Smith was lying in bed seemingly unperturbed by all this racket. I sat and talked to her and drank a glass of beer whilst Lampen-Smith busied himself with packing. At the office once more we installed Mrs Lampen-Smith on a camp bed in the baggage room on the ground floor of the Office...* [at that point European employees of Cable & Wireless drew lots to see who would go on a ship named 'SS Redang' that day - 12 February 1942 - and who would stay – of the six C & W. men in the room that day one, Lionel Bassett, who left at that point died in the sinking of the 'SS Redang' together with a very large group of C & W employees and another, Charles Joyce, died in internment in Sumatra] *an hour or so after their departure, Lampen-Smith appeared in the instrument room. This was a great surprise to us, but it transpired that he had been with his wife in the baggage room at the time of the draw and knew nothing about it. He took it very philosophically, but Mrs Lampen-Smith must have been more than a little surprised that she, the only women in the party, had been overlooked. That too was an extraordinary trick of fate, for they also survived the war.* [Researcher Note "the 'SS Redang' left Singapore with 24 employees of Cable & Wireless on board – only 2 of these survived the war. 14 died in the shelling and sinking of the 'SS Redang' and of the 10 who made it to shore, 8 died in the truly hellish internment camps of Muntok (Banka Island), Palembang and Belalau on Sumatra. Harold and Mary Lampen-Smith would have almost certainly not survived the war if they had been 'lucky in the office draw and boarded the 'SS Redang'"]. John Robins continues "*... There was practically no traffic on the roads, the trolley-bus service had ceased, presumably due to broken wires. On arrival at the Depot, we found the coolies looting the stores. Joyce [the man who died later in internment] harangued them, but they only grinned sheepishly. No doubt they continued after our departure. There was nothing to stop them. After all it mattered little, if they did not have the goods the Japs would...the noises of battle began to rise again, and pieces of shrapnel began to whistle down unpleasantly close ... On our return trip we saw many cases of looting going on from the godowns. One felt that civilisation was crumbling, and 'every man for himself' principle taking its place...Immediately outside the Office was a battery of four 4.7-inch AA guns. What with the firing of those and the bursting of bombs, bedlam seem*

to have been let loose outside... [then the following day] ... Late in the afternoon came the message from a Government authority that we should in half an hour, with one suitcase per man, be at a certain quayside prepared to evacuate. ...then the building was shaken by an explosion, accompanied by the noise of falling masonry and shattered glass. We had received a direct hit. A bomb had burst on the roof hurtling chunks of masonry down the well of the building, breaking most of the windows in the well... [at the dock gates] ... Joyce and Docker had waited with the Lampen-Smiths at the gate, hoping for an opportunity to get a lift for Mrs Lampen-Smith [ Joyce and Docker became separated from this group at this point and evacuated on other vessels] ... We met them halfway and gave Mrs Lampen-Smith a ride on a luggage barrow for the rest of the way, an incident which raised a good laugh and eased the tension of a somewhat grim situation....[ We had to board a tug immediately which took us out to 'HMS Grasshopper', a riverboat of about 1000 tons [ the account of the voyage of the 'HMS Grasshopper' then matches the main narrative of this memorial document and we pick up again at the next event would have involved the Lampen-Smiths in the Petty Officer's mess room on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February] ... there was a terrific thump and a blow beneath the deck as though it had been hit by a huge sledgehammer. Obviously, we had been hit at last, a bomb had exploded in the P.O.s Mess and started a fire there. Several men were killed, and others emerged with burns and other wounds. One young Malay seaman was hobbling along dragging a foot which was only hanging on by a piece of flesh. An elderly civilian was sitting on the deck holding his ear which was bleeding and swollen... the lifeboat was lowered and took the wounded, women, and children (in the post war magazine interview Mavis explained she' ... was propped into a lifeboat and then, to dodge machinegunning from the Zeros, her husband and another survivor dragged her into the sea...' ) ... [ Robins does not see Harold and Mary Lampen – Smith again until they reach the second island] ...Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February. With the dawn I was glad to find that Blackwell, the Lampen-Smiths and Feakes had arrived. Riviere however, with about 25 others, of whom 16 were wounded, were still scattered along the beach of the other island...some chickens and other stores were purchased from the Malays and with the sack of rice we did better for food, which was cooked over a wood fire in 4-gallon kerosine tins. Half coconut shells provided us with bowls and crude spoons were fashioned out of wood... [ Robins then does not mention Harold and Mary again – they appear to have been separated during the journeys by small boat to Pulau Singkep and later across the sea to Sumatra and up the Indragiri River to small towns and finally one he calls Taloe where he recounts] ... I walked out there one day to see the Lampen-Smiths; it was amazing to see the recovery Mrs Lampen – Smith had made considering her condition when we left Singapore and all that she had had to endure since. She was able to walk about well and was very cheerful and optimistic, though her eyes were still troubling her.... The war news we received whilst at Taloe was not very cheerful. The Japanese occupied Palembang and Medan and were now only two or three hundred miles south of us. Every day's delay lessened our chances of getting away, but we could do nothing to expedite matters. The days dragged on; it seemed much longer than four days when at last, on Sunday March 8<sup>th</sup>, we were roused from our bunks with the news that lorries had arrived and to be prepared to move... [ then at the next town named Sawaloento] ...At the hotel we found that the Lampen-Smiths had joined the party, they had made the journey in a private car. They were cheerful and revelling in the unusual comfort, helped along by a bottle of port and some biscuits. Then followed a light supper, soup and sandwiches, sitting at a table with a spotless white tablecloth. The last refinement was sleeping in a bed again. They were very large beds and I shared mine with Blackie and Lampen – Smith. Mrs Lampen – Smith slept in a child's cot in the same room...." [The C & W party finally reached the port town of Padang on the west coast of Sumatra – but too late for the last evacuation ship, so we finish with John Robin's description of their

fate] ... The Japanese were not far away and were expected to enter Padang any day. It was hard to have got so far under such unpleasant conditions and to be pipped at the post. Such things we felt could not happen to us, but as the days dragged on we became more and more reconciled to the prospect of indefinite internment. We speculated on what or conditions would be like but were under no illusions that they would be anything other than unpleasant. On Tuesday March 17<sup>th</sup> we awoke to hear the news that the Japanese had entered Padang, and it was not long before we had visual evidence of this, when we saw numerous carloads of Japanese troops pass on their way to the Hotel Central which they were making their headquarters...". So now we move to Mavis' experience as an internee – in fact the only woman internee from New Zealand in the Padang and Bankinang camps - as described in her October 1945 Police report and again the magazine interview on her return to New Zealand" ... About a week after they came in the Japanese took the British and Dutch people as prisoners and I was amongst those who were taken to a small house. There were 40 odd women in the crowd I was with; there were four small rooms for us all (the house had no water, light bulbs, food or fuel) ...A Chinese named de Beste a resident there sent us a blanket and a mat each and was in every way kind to us, and one of his men brought us our bread and our stores. I remained in this camp until the end of June 1942 when we were moved to a second house in the same compound, and our numbers were added to by other women who had been patients in the Salvation Army hospital. There would about 52 of us together by then. This house had four rooms and a verandah... We had a fuel stove which we supplied with fuel which we bought and did our own cooking. We allowed ourselves about 25 cents a day for food. We were there for a few months and in a very short notice we were shifted to join the Dutch women's camp in Padang. They were housed in the Catholic Brothers School and other housing belonging to them. There were about 2500 women in this camp and there was really no proper accommodation for us ...I was there for some months and then we were all shifted to the Padang Gaol. I understand that it was built to house 600 and there were 2500 of us there. There was no sewage in this camp and the sanitary arrangements were very bad...we did get vegetables and food in this camp although in small quantities. We were there about 4 months and then we were all taken to Bankinang near PAKAMBAHRU by train and travelled all night (about 12 hours by train, and then by Army lorry for about 75 miles over the mountains... This would be at the end of 1943. I remained there until peace was proclaimed. This was a camp which had been specially built for us. There were five big sheds and we slept on wooden platforms which ran the length of the shed in two layers, and we were allowed 59 (75?) centimetres of space each...I sold my blanket when I got there to buy food and had no blankets to sleep with. I also sold my engagement ring (Mavis received between 60 and 70 British pounds for it but had only spent one pound "... when I was relieved of the rest..." ) ... There were a lot of deaths in this camp from Beri-Beri, tuberculosis and dysentery mostly... I was about 10 stone when first taken prisoner but went down to 4 stone 3 lbs ('Those months were just calculated starvation' she said' and every month we got less to eat' Latterly their daily ration consisted of one small cup of rice and a smaller quantity still of flour, which they made into blubber pap which tasted like starch. Every few weeks they got a small issue of sago plant tops, or a scant supply of vegetables and perhaps two inches of meat bone clean as a whistle. The women used to crush the bone up and make soup from it. Many times, at night I have got up and sprinkled slat on the palms of my hands and licked them to make me feel less hungry. She also ate rat once, but the British doctors warned against eating the rodents and contracting further disease. The prisoners had sufficient food to cook one meal a day only...' ) .... The Japanese slapped women on the face including myself... after working to get the vegetable garden



*growing we were not allowed to have the vegetables. A small plot was also worked inside the camp, but this was destroyed as well....* ". Although her husband was only a mile away in the men's internment camp at Bankinang, Mavis did not see him again until December 1945.

- **MACFARLANE** – Lt Duncan L. M. MacFarlane, #P/154758/1, Intelligence Corps. was one of the Intelligence Officers in charge of the Japanese POWs. He was the "...*Japanese interpreter...*" referred to by Lt Forbes ('Singapore Dunkirk' p. 198) in the same book the author refers to him as **Lt. D.L.M. MacFarlane** and who reached Padang, then Tjilichap and there boarded the 'Zaandam' which safely reached Australia. A telegram in the UK archives refers to him as '**Duncan MacFarlane, Intelligence Corps**' with a notation" ... *Lt D.L. MacFarlane, arr. Australia...*". Lt Rawlings later recommended Lt McFarlane for decoration because of his courage when he "... *swam 5 miles in shark infested waters to get help from a kampong...*".
- **MANN** - William Wegener in his list of those aboard 'HMS Grasshopper' noted "... Mann Dental Surgeon, KL.."; it is not known who this person was – perhaps Dr Mann, Dental Surgeon KL on HMS *Grasshopper* 14.2.42. Not in the 1940 Directory. (Henry Robert?) (JMM)
- **MILLAR/MILLER** – fellow passenger and survivor William Francis recorded that "...*Miller – Straits Trading: Steele [sic: Steel] of Eastern Bank (now in Sumatra). Cramer Straits Traders (Capetown). 2 Petty Officers- one from 'Grasshopper', one from 'Dragonfly' formed party and found that by wading they could walk to the next island where they set up a base: here there were coconuts: they stayed for two days..*". This would appear to be "...*John Millar, b.1885 Dumbarton. Accountant, Straits Trading Co. Ltd, Pulau Brani Smelting Works, Singapore. Wife Annie evacuated. John Millar was interned at Padang then Bankinang Men's Camp and died in captivity 12.4.45 [61] Bankinang...*". (JMM); but in conflict is the Jeyes toilet paper record, compiled in Changi Internment camp, that he was on the 'SS Kuala' i.e.," ... **MILLAR John Str. Trad. Kuala...**" (BPPL).
- **MILLER** – "... *Miller, Agricultural Dept., KL, was on the 'Grasshopper...*" (Wegener report to Malayan Research Bureau). Also, there is "... **Sir Norman Cecil Egerton Miller, b.1894 Ramsgate. Educated Aberdeen House, Ramsgate & Privately. Worked or the Post Office 1909-1914 then War Service with Royal Engineer Signals 1915-1919. Returned to Post Office 1919-1925. Seconded 1925 to Tanganyika Tsetse Research Branch, Game Preservation Dept. To Malaya 1928 as Assistant Entomologist, Agricultural Dept SS & FMS KL. On HMS Grasshopper. Wife F.E. evacuated to S.A. then S. Rhodesia. Padang internee...**' (JMM).
- **MORRIS** – **Lieutenant Morris, Intelligence Corps.** (Chinese and Thai Speaker), a Malaya Command Interpreter. He reached Colombo and was recorded as being in Ceylon.

- RAWLINGS – 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Gerard Cecil Iwui (Inri?) Rawlings**, a Malayan Volunteer in the Intelligence Corps, attached to Malay Command no doubt because of his linguistic skills, was born in Sumiyoshi, Osaka on 4 February 1913. He was a schoolmaster and spoke Japanese, German, French, and Malay, he had enlisted on 12.12.41 (notably after the Japanese invasion of Malaya so may have arrived in Malaya from elsewhere), then ‘Gazetted’ as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt on 30.1.42, and he was captured Padang 17 February 1942. On his MI9 Liberation Questionnaire Gerard Rawlings recorded his address as “... ‘Upper Wendoverdean Farm’, Wendover, Buckinghamshire. Tel. Wendover, 2298...” (database of Malayan Volunteers compiled by the late John Brown and other sources). A report by Lt W.E.M. Clarke, IC., dated 27.4.42, Bombay, recorded that “... *These 2 officers [Lieuts Waite and Rawlings] were still at Padang on March 9<sup>th</sup> with 9 Japanese Pris. Of War...*” – a pencilled notation on that report records Lt. Rawling’s initials as ‘G.C.’ and that he was a POW. Then from the memoirs of Gerard Rawlings (condensed and edited by his nephew, Graem Castell, and which the researcher has been kindly permitted to quote in this document) we learn of Gerard’s wartime experience – which, because of his language skills, was to be exponentially better than almost all others captured after the attack on ‘HMS Grasshopper’. Firstly, in beleaguered Singapore, and as a very newly commissioned 2nd Lieutenant and Japanese translator in the Intelligence Corps, Gerard Rawlings was one of the Intelligence Officers from Malaya Command placed in charge of a group of Japanese prisoners of war. Many decades later Gerard Rawlings wrote: “...*When it became clear that Singapore would fall our prisoners, of whom we had thirteen, were given the choice of being handed back to their own people or being evacuated with us. Four of the thirteen were hospital cases, too badly injured to be moved. The rest chose to come with us. Japanese soldiers were under orders [from their higher command] that they must on no account be taken prisoner, even if this meant committing suicide. This instruction failed to take into account that an unconscious soldier might not be in position to take his own life, and in all thirteen cases the prisoners in my care had been unconscious when captured. They begged that their next-of-kins should not be informed, as this would bring disgrace on themselves and above all on their families. They at first asked that we should ‘give them death’...*”. After the attack and beaching of ‘HMS Grasshopper’ “...*those who made it off the ship were strafed in the water by the Japanese bombers and as we floundered towards the beach and sought cover in the nearby undergrowth. I dragged one of the two Japanese pilot-officer prisoners, a non-swimmer, through the bullet-torn water, probably saving the man’s life. Breathless and frightened and having no idea what might lie ahead, we made a pact. Neither of us wanted to die. We agreed that, depending on whose forces we might encounter first—the Allies or the Japanese—one of us would play the role of captor and the other the role of prisoner. One aspect of that saga was the exemplary behaviour of the Japanese prisoners. They behaved splendidly right from the start, helping with the wounded, for instance, using jungle mosses whose healing properties they knew about and we did not. Interestingly, when the two pilot-officer prisoners were given a chance to inspect the wreckage of a Hurricane fighter that had crashed on Singkep, they greatly admired the British machine as being much more strongly built than the Japanese Navy Zeros that they had flown and that were wreaking such havoc on the Allies.*” Over the next six weeks, through thick and thin, Gerard Rawlings and his Intelligence Corps colleagues made a point of at least one of them being close to their otherwise unguarded prisoners at all times—for the prisoners’ protection. Anti-Japanese sentiments within the straggling band of escapees had been escalating and the lives of the prisoners, “*who at any stage of the journey, had they wished to escape, could easily have*

*done so, were increasingly at stake...". Almost a thousand survivors from several dozen vessels of all sizes which had escaped Singapore – many of which had been sunk – had struggled to firstly even reach the shores of Sumatra and then make their way slowly up the Indragiri river, stopping at the small river towns until transport onwards could be arranged – and then across the mountains that form a spine of Sumatra and down to Padang by train quickly enough before the departure of the last of the small number of ships calling in at Padang in early March 1942. The memoir continues " ...The Japanese were closing in. On the insistence of the Dutch authorities, my nine prisoners-of-war, who had behaved so remarkably during their entire captivity, were caged—held captive, as if they had suddenly become a threat. Two days before the town surrendered, the nine were whisked away at six o'clock in the morning under a Dutch armed guard of eighty men. I and my two Intelligence officer colleagues arrived to find the cage empty. Allegedly, the prisoners were handed back to their own people, which would almost certainly have amounted to their death sentences."*

**Gerard Rawlings strongly suspected, however, that they were executed by the Dutch.** He went through a lot of soul-searching at the time and in the years following, speculating on how things might have turned out differently. *"We who had been in close contact with the prisoners for six weeks and knew them as only people who have faced starvation and impending danger together, were horrified when we learnt their fate—that one way or another, they had almost certainly been sent to their deaths."* The Japanese took over Padang on 17 March 1942. and the British were either interned if civilians or made POWs if military. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Rawlings with his language ability in Japanese and Malay, *"...from being a very junior and very inexperienced officer, suddenly found myself consulted on every possible aspect of policy."* He was on duty eighteen hours a day but received tremendous support from the British Command. *"There was always a hot meal for me, even if nobody else got one, and a bed (the only one in camp) and a sentry at the door to make sure I got some sleep."* It was not long, however, before he was transferred to the Japanese Headquarters, which had until the arrival of the Japanese been the British Consul's house. Gerard was quartered in a tiny outhouse in the grounds. It had a small concrete verandah and an old cane chair for him to sleep on. He was fed Japanese rations, which suited him well since he had been born in Japan. The guards were friendly and seemed to regard him as one of themselves; the Japanese placed extraordinary trust in him. His primary role was interpreting. His main problems were boredom and missing being able to speak with others in his own tongue. Six months later, he was transferred to Changi POW camp, Singapore. the huge internment complex on Singapore Island. It was to be Gerard's home until almost the end of the War. With his fluent Japanese and rudimentary Malay, Gerard was again used throughout imprisonment at Changi as one of the few interpreters. One of his tasks was to translate for Japanese officers when they were berating prisoners. He would lace his translated harangues with humorous or mocking comments of his own and sometimes with lines from the Lord's Prayer. He would speak with sufficient invective to impress the Japanese, whilst leaving his fellow prisoners in no doubt as to whose side he was on.

- **RICHARDS** – a document in the UK Archives lists *"... Brigadier RICHARDS – DDST. Malaya Command..."* and Lt Col. C. W. Richards, RASC, POW Tawian camp... as last seen going on board the 'SS Grasshopper' on 13<sup>th</sup> February. Nothing was heard of the ship since...". These reports must be incorrect because Lt Col his (post war honorary rank of Brigadier was Gazetted in 1946) C W Richards was captured in Singapore on 15.2.42 according to his MI9Liberation Questionnaire – perhaps he was being confused with Lt Col Coates?

- **RIVIERE - Cecil Harold Riviere**, b.1894 Wells, Somerset. The earliest record of him in Singapore is in 1940 when he donated \$50 to the War Fund (ST, 7.6.40), then there is a photo of Mrs C.H. Riviere making 'comforts' in Singapore at a St John and Red Cross working party ('Morning Tribune' 5.9.40). During the war, there was an enquiry by LTC E.G. Riviere in 'The Times' 23.11.43 – "...missing since embarking from Singapore to Sumatra...". Manager, Cable & Wireless, Singapore. On HMS Grasshopper – he is mentioned by John Robins in his memoirs as still on the first island with the wounded on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February and then again on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> February when he had been picked up from the first island by the launch that then took most people to Pulau Singkep. He was captured at Padang, presumably on 17<sup>th</sup> February, before being made an internee in Padang and Bankinang. His wife was Muriel Gertrude Riviere. Post war he was back in Singapore for a few years and is noted playing golf at the Royal Singapore Golf Club at Bukit Timah whilst Mrs Riviere was noted at a charity drive at Mrs Edwards' house at 31 Nassim Road. He died 1983 Somerset and she 1989 (JMM and Singapore newspaper Archives). His granddaughter has written a book about his life titled 'Able & Tireless': Cecil Riviere 1894-1993", the summary of which is "... A British Engineer for Western Telegraph & Cable & Wireless for 40 years based in locations around the world, Cecil Harold Riviere was a first-hand witness to the fall of Singapore to the Japanese army in World War 2. He survived a dramatic escape on HMS Grasshopper, which was bombed & sank. He undertook a challenging journey to Sumatra, across the South China Sea, up the torrid Indragiri River, through dense jungle, over mountains and into Padang, where he was captured by the Japanese. He endured the most harrowing three and a half years in internment. His determination to keep busy and his skills at mending and building things for others in the camp earned him the nickname "Able & Tireless" by his fellow prisoners. Weighing little more than seven stone on his release from captivity he was one of the lucky few to survive the horrors of a Japanese civilian internment camp. In his 99 years, Cecil was a chorister in Westminster Abbey, took a mayday call from the Titanic in 1912, and travelled the world in the days before travel was commonplace. He was based in Porthcurno in Cornwall, Madeira, Cape Verde Islands, Portugal, Brazil, Argentina, Malta, and Singapore, where he helped to keep global communications open during World Wars 1 and 2. He had a zest for life, a passion for building and mending clocks, and a lifelong love of golf. This is his story. Sue Dormer is the granddaughter of Cecil Harold Riviere and although she knew him for 34 years, he never talked about his experiences in the Far East. She wishes she had known more when he was alive..". Note: a correction to the usage in the book as 'Able & Tireless' applying only to Cecil Riviere - it was the name given to the small group of five 'Cable & Wireless' men in Padang and Bankinang internment camps because their training allowed them to become 'Jack of all Trades'. They were later during the war joined in this group by two members of the Asiatic Petroleum staff, Robertson and Scott-Ram who were survivors of the 'SS Redang'. And they then became known collectively as Kongsu Toujou (Group of Seven), (p.109 memoirs of John Robins).
- **ROBINS – John Arthur Cornford Robins**, BEM 1947 b.1905. Assistant Engineer, Cable & Wireless. Reported lost at sea 2.42 but a Padang, Sumatra (JMM). John Robins wrote a wartime diary "Guest of the Mikado" which is in the Imperial War Museum. It is an extremely valuable and honest record of the last voyage of 'HMS Grasshopper' and was used importantly in the construction of this memorial document. In 1947 John Robins was awarded the BEM "... For services to fellow internees in Sumatra during the enemy occupation..."
- **ROBINSON – Major Robinson**, Indian Army (Cramer report to MRB). Also "... Lt Col. Robinson, Indian Army, who subsequently arrived in India..." (Coates letter to The Under-



Secretary of State, Liverpool dated 16 Aug 1943) – no other information has been found on this person.

- **SANDERS** – “...Mr J.O. Sanders, Transportation Manager, FMS Railways was on the ‘HMS Grasshopper...” (WEGENER report # 142 to Malayan Research Bureau). This is “...**John Owen Knight ‘Jos’ Sanders**, CMG 1948, AMICE b.1892. Educated Elstow School, Bedford & Owen’s College, Manchester University. To Malaya in 1924 as Works Manager, FMS Railways KL. By 1937 General Manager. Wife Margaret Mary PhD [died 29.10.58 London W8] evacuated. He escaped to Bombay. Post-war General Manager, Malayan Railways. Lived at 3 Spooners Rd KL. He died 21.3.54 [62] London (JMM). John Owen Knight Sanders was a passenger on ‘HMS Grasshopper’ with other senior executives of FMS Railways and survived the bombing and beaching of the ship, then making it to safety in India. He returned to Malaya after the war and was instrumental in the rebuilding of the war-ravaged railway system in that country – in 1948 he presented a paper titled “Post War Railway Rehabilitation in Malaya” to the conference on ‘Civil engineering Problems in the Colonies’. He became general Manager of the Railways in Malaya until November 1953 when he appears to have retired. He was knighted on 1.1.54 as “... General Manager Railways and Member for railways and Ports, Malaya...”. He died on 21.3.54 (‘Singapore Standard’ 24.3.54).
- **SHAW** – Shaw, Japanese Interpreter (Cramer report to MRB); also “...*Capt Shaw, now in India G.III (I), Southern Army, was on the ship when she left Singapore...*” in a letter from Lt. Morris, HQ Eastern Army to AAC, HQ Eastern Army.
- **SIEDLECKI - H.P.G. de [Paul] Siedlecki**, of Polish origin. Consulting Architect, Anglo-Oriental KL. In 1937 appeared in newspapers being fined for not being a registered Architect (Malaya Tribune 1.7.37). Technician, Kuala Lumpur, RAFVR. On HMS *Grasshopper* 14.2.42. Wife S. evacuated pre-hostilities to WA on Charon 11.41. Post-war Consulting Architect, Caltex Oil [Malaya]. In 1952 granted a Certificate of Naturalisation (‘Singapore Standard’, 5.1.52) In 1960 Principal, Yorke, Mason & Co. [Engineers & Architects] KL. Wife [2?] Valentine. He died 28.10.61 London (JMM). He completed a report to the Malayan research Bureau, Sydney in 1943 confirming he was on the ‘HMS Grasshopper’ and that he worked for Anglo Oriental and was a Technician in the RAF Auxiliary. He records that after reaching ‘Kota Daboe’ on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, “... *from Daboe he left on the 19<sup>th</sup> with Dr Mann, the dentist, and Mr Bourlon, a Russian Officer attached to the Chinese Army, who was doing investigation work, and is now back in Chungking. They went north to Lingga and there learnt that the Japanese were on Saniang [ Senejang?] and Bankok [Banka] islands, so they went back to Singkep again, where from the north shore they sent Mr Bourlon over to Daboe to get in touch with certain people and ask them to come away. No-one, however, would come. When they reached Indragiri and Renggat [ Rengat] on 23rd February, a launch left for Singkep under a Dredgemaster [this would have been Captain Bill Reynolds in the Japanese fishing boat later used as the ‘Krait’] a tall man, about six foot four inches, well known in Ipoh...*”. He reached Padang on the 26<sup>th</sup> where he boarded the ‘Danae’ for Colombo and then the ‘Ranchi’ for Bombay. Later he was on the ‘Castillia’ to South Africa.

- **SMART - Leslie Masson Smart**, CBE, b.1889 at Fordoun, Kincardineshire, Scotland the son of William and Jane Masson Smart. Educated Glenbervie School, Kincardineshire, Scotland. Worked for Kenya & Uganda Railway 1913-1927 receiving a series of promotions, then Tanganyika Railway then Gold Coast. To Malaya 1935 as General Manager FMS Railway HQ KL. Member of Federal Council. Aged 53 in 1942. On 'HMS Grasshopper' and reached Dabo and Padang, where he was made an internee in Padang and later Bankinang, with wife Annie, aged 56. (JMM). It appears that he had a son by the same name who was made a Lieutenant in the Army Cadets in 1958. Leslie Smart died in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
- **SMART – Mrs Annie Mitchel Smart (nee Gray)**, wife of Leslie Masson Smart. Born 64 Dunbar Street, old Aberdeen in 1913. In January 1941 she was reported as being on holiday in Australia and New Zealand (SFPMA 20.1.41). In Kuala Lumpur she was a member of the St John's Ambulance Brigade of the Selangor Railway Workshops Division (ST ,7.8.40). She was slightly wounded in the bombing of the 'HMS Grasshopper'. Captured in Padang she became an internee in the Padang and Bankinang Camps in Sumatra (see entry for Mrs Lampen – Smith who was in the same camps). She died in 1945 but the circumstances are unknown.
- **SPARROW** - Herbert Robert Sparrow, b.1889 at Stoke by Nayland, a small ancient village in Suffolk. Educated Regent St Polytechnic. Travelled to Malaya to take up appointment as Assistant Electrical Engineer FMS in 1920. Over that decade took part in Rifle Shooting contests. Electrical Engineer KL 1927. Various appointments as a Chartered Electrical Engineer: 1935 Chief Electrical Engineer, 1937 - Advisor on Electricity, Malaya States. 1938- Director Electrical Dept KL/ Selangor. Evacuated on HMS *Grasshopper* [sunk] and became and internee firstly at Padang and then Bankinang. Wife Dorothy Anne evacuated to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. There was a son, Robert Alfred Sparrow (1923-1998). Herbert Sparrow died in captivity 12.9.45[56] Padang (there is no CWGC record of his death). Dorothy died 7.3.49 aged 53 years, Newcastle-on-Tyne. (JMM and Singapore Newspaper Archives).
- **STEEL** – this is Bill Steel, a friend of John Duke, who was also a passenger, and is recorded as being on 'HMS Grasshopper'. According to a letter John Duke, the Optician wrote to his wife during the war, Duke and Steel met up at the premises of Eastern Bank prior to evacuating and together went down to the Singapore wharves. Then John Duke recalls *"... with one suitcase each, and waited for six hours, dodging in and out of a shelter that was there, as the shelling around was infernal. A lot of it came within 100 yards of the shelter. ...I at last got through the gate (the Harbour Board Gate opposite Bolland's about 200 yards from Clifford Pier). Our Government exit passes were carefully examined and then we had to wait for another half hour, pending the arrival of the Master Attendant's boat to take us off to the waiting ship in the harbour. At this point there was a sudden alert, Bill flopped down. I got under a motor truck. A stick of bombs fell within 300feet of us. Bill was unhurt but I was wounded in several places. Subsequently Bill and Gordon go me aboard a small warship (about 600 tons) I was put in the sick bay and attended to by a hospital nurse who happened to be on board [this may have been the Australian nurse, Miss Heather Fisher]. Among other bits of shrapnel which she removed from my body was a piece in my nose about the size of a threepenny piece ...The next morning about 10 o'clock a Japanese plane came over the ship and let loose a bomb which glanced off the side of the ship.... About 11 o'clock three squadrons of Jap bombers suddenly came overhead – I believe there were 50 in all; then we were for it. I got into a messroom with*

*Bill.... The guns on our ship were simply futile, so we represented just good target practice for the Jap airmen... I was wounded again in the wretched pantry: bill and I got under a table; there was a hellish crash. I found out later that the bomb had hit the upper structure immediately above the place in which we had taken shelter. All I can remember is floating in a sea of ink, wonderful slimy thick stuff. When I regained consciousness, I found myself under neath a whole mass of broken parts of the messroom furniture. I got out with difficulty as I was again wounded. My left arm had gone wrong and I had a pain in my left lung when I breathed. There were a number of dead lying about, those who had not taken cover and the blast got them.... Finally, we approached close to one of the islands, roughly four miles off, and I decided to take the chance of swimming ashore ...Fortunately I had a lifebelt. The sea was like glass; it was a lovely sunny morning; perfect for a bathe, or a picnic – some picnic! Five other men had jumped with me and were swimming for dear life – and that’s no lie... While in the water I had a spectacular view of the bombing of our poor old ship...She wriggled from side to side ,turned and went back on her course and turned again....Suddenly the ship was blotted out in a mass of spray; she took fire seemingly and then was driven ashore, where she was machinegunned by low flying planes as I was swimming...Ultimately, when I got close enough to the shore for them to see me , some people there sent me out a lifebuoy, and then a boat and took me ashore....We couldn’t light a fire at any time, as the smoke would attract further bombing, and it was cold that night. Bill Steel was good to me. He was fully clothed as he had stuck to the ship and succeeded in dashing ashore before the ship was machinegunned....” . Bill Steel was with John Duke through the islands until Pulau Singkep, where Duke was hospitalised. Other sources state, **William ‘Bill’ N. Steel**, b.1893. An ex-Argyll from Stirling. Manager, Eastern Bank Ltd, Singapore. Wife Mary, aged 47, evacuated on the Empress of Japan and arrived Liverpool, then to Stirling. He became a Padang, **Sumatra internee** after surviving ‘Kuala’ [sic: should be ‘Grasshopper’] sinking 14.2.42. Repatriated on Antenor from Singapore, arriving Liverpool 27.10.45.(JMM); also “STEEL W EAST BK PADANG? LEFT WITH W. J. DUKE...” (BPPL); also “... Mr. Steel, manager, Eastern Bank Ltd, and H. Barden, Accountant sailed on the ‘Kuala’ and, I understand from the manager of the Eastern Bank, Bombay that they were last heard of in Sumatra ...” (Proud) [this again an error.*

- **TAIT** – “...Capt Tait, now in India at GS19a) GHQ, New Delhi, was on the ship when she left Singapore...” stated in a letter from Lt Morris, HQ Eastern Command to AAC (Ops) dated 30.3.43. Lt C.W. Tait, intelligence Corps.
- **THOMPSON** – a report (No.192) to the MRB by Captain Reynolds (the ex – dredging /mining engineer from Malaya with the Japanese fishing boat – later the ‘Krait’ -who saved the survivors from the ‘SS Kuala’ on Pom Pong and took them to the Indragiri River) records the successful escape by “...Engl. Lieut. Thompson, RNR. (with the ‘Mauretania’) together with Coxswain White, RN; leading Seaman Lee, RN and an English Army Sgt Major- Name Unknown...”.
- **WALKER** – “...Lt G.S. Walker, Intelligence Corps., arr Ceylon...”
- **WAIT/WAITE** – noted by Lt Morris, HQ Eastern Army in his letter of 30.3.43 to AAG (Ops), HQ Eastern Army as “... **Lieut Waite- Japanese speaker**, [ with Lt Rawlings] IO at HQ Malayan Command... Last seen alive by me at Ayer Mullik (sic-Ayer Molek) in Sumatra on or about 27 February 42... still alive and in good health...Capt W Clarke told me that he saw them in Padang (Sumatra) sometime in March 42 ...”. A report by Lt W.E.M. Clarke, IC., dated 27.4.42, Bombay recorded that “... These 2 officers [Lieuts Waite and Rawlings] were still at Padang on March 9<sup>th</sup> with 9 Japanese Pris. Of War...” – a pencilled notation on that report records Lt Wait’s initials as ‘P.T.’ and that he was a POW. There is no MI9 Liberation Questionnaire for that name on the COFEPOW website.

- **WALTHO** – *Sidney Charles Waltho*, b.1897. *Weights Inspector, Straits Trading Company. Air Raid Warden, Pulau Brani. Wife Bessie evacuated to UK. He was evacuated it appears on the 'SS Kuala' – not the 'HMS Grasshopper' - as far as Dabo,, where he is recorded by John Robins of C & W in the launch to Sumatra mainland. Reached Padang. Died in captivity 8.4.45[48] Bankinang, Sumatra* **WALTHO S.C. [Sidney Charles] b.1897. Weights Inspector, Straits Trading Company. Air Raid Warden, Pulau Brani. Wife Bessie evacuated to UK.. Died in captivity 8.4.45[48] Bankinang, Sumatra**
- **WEGENER** - **William Frederick Wegener**, AMICE CBE b.1897. Educated Crossley School, Halifax & College of Technology, Manchester. Chartered Civil Engineer. By 1940 Chief Mechanical Engineer FMS Railways. Evacuated 2.42 on 'HMS Grasshopper' , reached Dabo and was there asked to make up a list of men at the hostel. He made a list of civilians and servicemen in his report to the Malayan Research Bureau, after reaching Padang he left on the *De Veert*. Wife Bernice [nee Tetlow – married 1928] evacuated with daughter Janet on *Aorangi*, arriving Fremantle WA 23.1.42. To Kenilworth, Cape SA. Retired to Chelmer, Queensland then Randburg, Transvaal. Managing Director, Union Carriage & Wagon Co. SA [1950s] (JMM). William Wegener retired in August 1952 and received the CBE for his work in the rebuilding of FMS railway infrastructure after the war.
- **WOOTTON** – in his oral History at the IWM Royal Marine William Alexander mentions two other Royal Marines he knew on the ship as 'Ester' (this appears to have been 'Esbestor') and 'Wootton'. Royal Marine Reginald Peter Wootton, PLYX 101191, was also on the 'HMS Prince of Wales' (force z website) when it was sunk and then assigned (probably to also guard the Japanese POWs) to the 'HMS Grasshopper'. His MI9 Liberation Questionnaire (records that he was born on 12.7.22 and enlisted on 4.9.40, his address being 37 The Grove, Bridgnorth, Shropshire. He was captured on 17.3.42 in Padang, Sumatra and became part of 'The British Sumatra Battalion' moving to Mergui, Tavoy, Thanbyuzayat etc (Book 'The British Sumatra battalion' by A.A. Aphorpe and COFEPOW website). On the 'force z' website, his niece June Sykes has added that "... he and three other marines [ presumably William Alexander, Reginald Esbestor and ?????] eventually became part of the British Sumatra battalion. He was repatriated in 1946 and lived to be a deacon of the Claremont Baptist Church in Shrewsbury, Shropshire. He died in Sept 1993 ..."

#### Unidentified people on ship:

- "Children" mentioned by Robins as getting into the lifeboat (Robins p. 91) also mentioned in SD p.187.
- Two pregnant Dutch women who gave birth on Pulau Mas and had their sons named after Leonard George White?

- **Hospital Sister on board the ship who attended to John Duke's shrapnel wound – must have** been Miss Heather Victoria Fisher.
- *"... nurses from the gunboat Grasshopper more or less took over the native hospital at Dabo ..."* (SD p.67) – we know Miss Fisher a nurse with the Malayan Medical Service was on board 'Grasshopper', but there may have been some confusion in this statement since there were also nurses at Dabo who had survived the sinking of the 'SS Kuala'
- A Brigadier (Lampen -Smith) or Brigadier -General (Robins) or Major-General (Duke) "... and his staff" (Brewer) - which we can probably assume is Colonel Coates - but we have not identified his *"three Indian bearers ..."* (Robins p. 95).
- Colonel Coates mentions *"...two Indian NCOs ..."* as being on board in his letter to the War Office in August 1943.
- *"two service Officers"* who had been in the Commanders cabin with Mr & Mrs Lampen - Smith, the officers were killed outright by one bomb (Brewer) – this was presumably Lt. Col John Feehally, RASC and one other unidentified officer.
- *Army personnel – some were killed in attack.*
- *"Japanese POWs"* – Williams says about ten" civilians', whilst Duke (p 4) six Japanese pilots who had been brought down during the fighting in Malaya. Wegener says eleven Japanese POWs and Rawlings says 13 POWs were in Singapore but four stayed behind.