

‘HMS Pahlawan’

- Captured near Banka Island 15 February 1942

[Version 1.0.0: July 2021]



[Photo of the sister vessel ‘HMS Panglima’ – an identical design to ‘HMS Pahlawan’: sourced from securemalaysia.blogspot]

In 1936 the British Admiralty commissioned Messrs.Thornycroft (Singapore) Limited to build two high speed armed launches – ‘Paglima’ and ‘Pahlawan’ - for the Straits Settlement RNVR (‘Straits Times’ 27.1.37). Both names were chosen because, we are told, they meant ‘leaders in war’ (‘Straits Times’ 27.1.37, in a speech by Governor Shenton – Thomas). They were built at the Tanjong Rhu shipyard of Thornycroft in Singapore and handed over to the SSRNVR at the headquarters of the RNVR in Singapore on 26 January 1937 by Commodore M.L.Clarke, RN on behalf of the Admiralty .

Although the original cost (about STG 100,000 per vessel) had been borne by the Admiralty , the cost of maintenance, upkeep and insurance was to “... be a call on the naval part of the Straits Settlement Local Forces vote...”.

'HMS Pahlawan';

Both launches were designed for patrol work in wartime and also suited to training purposes in peacetime.

The specifications for both launches were ;

- Length 76 feet 6 inches
 - Width 13 feet 6 inches
 - 40 tons displacement.
- Which are the same specifications of the Fairmile designed Harbour Defence Launches (HDMLs) used by the Royal Navy at the time and in fact these two launches may have been HDML designs.

They required a crew of 12 engineers and seamen and three Officers, although it is interesting to note that when the launches headed off to Port Dickson in February 1937 they were each carrying 7 Officers and 12 ratings.

Officers were men in the SSRNVR – these were civilians who had volunteered as partime naval personnel with little serious thought (in 1936-37) that they would be thrown into front line warfare. They were drawn from a wide range of occupations – Customs officers, engineers, trading firms, land surveying, rubber plantation estates, tin mining, etc.

Armaments were one 3 Pounder gun; one AA Lewis gun; plus stowage for four depth charges and minesweeping gear.

Power was from two Diesel engines for low speed (11-12 knots) which would give them 60 hours running time before refuelling - plus a Petrol engine to allow a designed full speed of 18 knots. Later sea trials demonstrated they could exceed 20 knots.

The Engineering Officer on board 'HMS Pahlawan' during the February 1942 evacuation voyage, Sub - Lt Innokenty Sibiriakoff, commented in his post war memoirs "... *'Pahlawan' means warrior in Malay, but she was not a very big warrior, really just a patrol boat with two 120 h.p. engines and a couple of guns and several depth charges at the stern...*". He made no mention of the presence of a functioning Petrol engine – whether this had been dismantled because of the real danger from petrol tanks on a ship in times of war is unclear.

In February 1937 the two new launches began an extended cruise from Singapore up to Port Dickson and returning via Malacca.

In 1938 the SSRNVR had in total seven patrol vessels and launches 'HMS Pahlawan', 'HMS Panglima', 'Plover', 'Peningat', 'Kingfisher', 'Curlew', and 'Lady Clifford'.

No official records, newspaper article or books located have been located for the period 1939-1942 which describe how 'HMS Pahlawan' was used in service by the MRNVR in peacetime – except for the comment in the Cork family memoir regarding the Commander of 'HMS Pahlawan', **Lt Philip 'Peter' Cork, MRNVR** ".....*My father was a lieutenant in command of the patrol boat HMS "Pahlawan" and spent a good deal of time at sea on patrol and later on mine sweeping duties...*".

Invasion of Malaya and Singapore:

The invasion of Malaya and Singapore, from the time of the first landings in Northern Malaya on 8 December 1941, was swift and brutal. Within eight weeks the Japanese had taken the Malayan peninsula 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 final chaotic evacuation of civilians - mainly Europeans, Eurasians, Indians, 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 (civilians and skilled servicemen), under what had become almost constant bombing and machine gunning by Japanese planes. Singapore City 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 British 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.

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 vessels like the "SS. Tandjong Pinang" (which at 97 feet only just qualified in the definition for a 'ship') – were assembled in the harbour to leave as a convoy during the 48-hour period of 11 – 13 February 1942. There were also many Naval ships of varying sizes down to launches identified as evacuation vessels.

Sub. Lt. Sibiriakoff noted in his memoirs a very good understanding of the realities of the evacuation *"... I learned later, in Changi POW camp, that 78 small ships left Singapore after 10th February 1942 en route for Batavia, but only 17 reached their destination. Most of those who did reach their destinations had left before 12th February. Of the remainder, 36 were sunk, 20 were captured and the fate of 5 was unknown. By contrast, all the small craft who chose to go to Sumatra, even those who left as late as 15th and 16th February, reached this island, and although the boats had to be abandoned or destroyed there, most of the refugees succeeded in getting away from the enemy..."*.

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 by the Royal Navy) patrol ships, auxiliary minesweepers, flat bottomed ex-Yangtze River gunboats and ex Yangtze River passenger boats, Fairmile design naval patrol launches, RAF fast launches and even a large tugs 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 50 to 100 small ships, patrol boats, launches, junks, tongkangs, praus, sailboats and lifeboats leaving during the 'last window of opportunity' to escape to freedom (as many saw it) only a small minority would make it to safety and apart from 6 or 10 which made it all the way to Batavia the only other successful vessels were - perhaps another dozen - which made the Indragiri river on the

east coast of Sumatra. The other perhaps 60 (no one knows, and we are unlikely to have an accurate understanding until more intensive research is completed) ships would be sunk, run aground, or captured at sea by the Japanese Navy and Japanese bombers with many hundreds of their passengers and crew killed, or taken prisoner. The latter would face three and a half years of extremely harsh, malnourished, and medically deprived mistreatment 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 vessels sunk or captured whilst carrying evacuees from Singapore, during the last few days before the Surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942, have been thoroughly researched and documented.

This memorial document is one of the attempts to prevent the lives of those several thousand men, women, and children who did die during their escape attempt being simply consigned, without proper tangible memory, into the dustbin of history.

Preparation for evacuation:

Innokenty Sibriakoff's invaluable memoirs tell us that on **11th February 1942** “... Two hours after I joined the ship we went to take in supplies and have a trial run. When we returned , Kenny [A.B. Kennedy] and I were both worried men. The engines were running hot and the oil cooler of one of the clutches was not functioning properly, so we asked the Commander's [Lt Cork's] permission to overhaul these.

He also had some worries. The compass was completely out of true bearings, and he had just received orders to 'stand by' for departure. It was decided to do only make-shift repairs, and we worked feverishly expecting to receive orders to sail at any time. All was completed by midnight, but no order to leave had come. Commander Bailey, OC of the MRNVR left that evening on 'HMS Bulan' with some of the auxiliary ships, and at dawn next morning we discovered that only a few of us were left behind, at least on the inner roads of Singapore Harbour where we were moored. The Commanders of the remaining ships began to communicate with one another, wondering what they should do. They feared lest somebody had forgotten to deliver our sailing orders in the general disorder prevailing in the city.

Except for the heavy gunfire at the north of the island , and the explosions of the bombs from the regular Japanese air-raids on the harbour, and an intensive ack-ack fire of our anti-aircraft batteries nearby, one would have thought that the battle for Singapore was already over. There was little circulation on the quays. There were no people about, only a few cars dashing at great speed somewhere. Clouds of thick, black smoke began to rise to the west on Pulau Boukom, the island with the important oil installations.

We spent the day impatiently waiting for orders and listening to the most incredible rumours and speculations about the momentous events around us. We also rather anxiously watched the Japanese planes during the raids. The planes did not appear to be interested in us that day. We must have been small fry not worth their bombs. In the evening we learnt that we were to wait for orders from Admiral Spooner, the Senior Navy Officer still in Singapore . At least this stopped the arguments between the Commanders of the ships around us.

The next day our situation became untenable. The Japs had noticed our existence at last and their bombs began to shower around us on the nearby quays and in the water. That not a single ship was hit by them is due entirely to the magnificent shooting of a shore anti-aircraft battery. They invariably made the Japs nervous, broke their formations and turned them away. However, about 5.00pm. the Japs must have been fed up and flew in great strength over the batteries position and silenced it.

Soon afterwards we received orders to take an escape party of thirteen members of the fighting services and leave that evening for Batavia...”.

Who was aboard ‘HMS Pahlawan’ during the evacuation voyage?

Official information on the people and events of the evacuation voyage of ‘HMS Pahlawan’ is sparse but we can draw on the following **sources**.

- **Sub – Lt. Innokenty Sibiriakoff**, Engineering Officer on ‘HMS Pahlawan’, who many years after the war recorded in his memoirs *“...there were thirteen of us in all, including the Commander and a couple of young sub-lieutenants who were first and second officers. I was pleasantly surprised to find that there would be three members of the engine room staff instead of two. Kenny [AB Kennedy] an Australian who was an estate engineer in Negri Sembilan was second to me. There was also an experienced engine driver from the Soviet Merchant Marine. Finally, there was a nice young Canadian, an agriculturalist by profession, whose engineering knowledge was limited to tractors, but who was very keen and most helpful. The deck crew, too, was a rather heterogeneous crowd. A friend of mine who had been an accountant with the railways was boatswain. There was another friend of mine, a French Broker, a couple of planters and a couple of shop assistants. Except for some yachting, none of them had any qualifications or experience. However, they were all keen to do everything that was asked of them and were a very cheerful crowd, happy to be on the ship at this tragic time of Singapore’s last days.... Soon afterwards we received orders to take an escape party of thirteen members of the fighting services and leave that evening for Batavia...”* - that totals 12 officers and crew plus 13 servicemen, which equals 25 men.
- **Captain David Nelson** in his book ‘The Story of Changi’ – where he records that the passengers were *“...Army 5, RAF 7...”*
- **Richard Gough** in his book ‘Escape from Singapore’ – *“...26 servicemen and crew...”*.
- **Denis Russell – Roberts** in his book ‘Spotlight on Singapore’ – *“...24 survivors, 2 Missing...”*.
- The report compiled by **Commander Reid**, RN., in Palembang POW camp - *“... 3 officers, 11 men, 5 Army, 7 RAF...”* seems to be missing one officer and has too many crew.

From research in a database of Malayan Volunteer records (compiled by the late John Brown) and the schedule recording an analysis of Palembang camp MI9 questionnaires by Jonathan Moffatt, the identifiable European officers and crew can be seen - as Sub Lt Sibiriakoff described - to be from a mix of civilian business and engineering backgrounds.

- **Lt. Philip Dorian Cork, SSRNVR** – Captain of the vessel and an Assistant Rubber Broker with Dupire Morrell, Singapore.
- **Sub. Lt Harold William Raymond Hyde, MRNVR** – occupation unknown.
- **An unidentified Sub. Lt** – since Sibiriakoff (who was 40 years of age at the time), describes both other Sub-Lts. as ‘young’ this could possibly be **either** Sub Lt Ivor Ellis, MRNVR, (who

was aged 21 years in 1942) and captured 15.2.42, or Sub-Lt Francis William Matthews, RNR, captured 16.2.42 and both Palembang POWs.

- **Sub Lt. Innokenty Andre Sibiriakoff, MRNVR** – Engineering Officer and an electrical engineer and manager of the Technical Department, Bangsar Estate (a SOCFIN Co Palm Oil business), Kuala Lumpur.
 - **Able Seaman John Rupert E. Hill, MRNVR** – Manager of the Kingsland Estate, a rubber plantation at Semenyih in south-eastern Selangor.
 - **Engine Room Artificer Albert Roy Kennedy, MRNVR** – an Assistant on the rubber estate named Labu Estate, near Seremban, Negri Sembilan.
 - **Able Seaman C.D. Ritchie, MRNVR** – an Assistant Engineer with the Malaysia Rubber Company, Perak.
 - **Able Seaman Ronald Maurice Mange, MRNVR** – Manager, Malayan Rubber Trading Co.Ltd and born in France so almost certainly the ‘French Broker’ recalled by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs.
 - **Able Seaman William L. ‘Bill’ Mussett, MRNVR** – Chief accountant of the Federated Malay States Railways (and a star rugby player) almost certainly the “...Boatswain – Acct. with Railways...” described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs.
 - **An unidentified Canadian ‘agriculturalist’ as a rating in the engineering room- possibly this ‘young Canadian agriculturalist with experience with tractors’ mentioned by Sibiriakoff is “... CHRISTIE W.D. Canadian, Assistant Planter, 10th Mile Estate, Kempas Ltd, Tangkah [Tangkak?], Johore. Lt MRNVR., but civilian internee, Palembang Men’s Camp. Aged 23 in 1942. Sumatra internee...” (Sumatra Internees database); in case it is the same man, there was also an Actg. Sub-Lt D.H. Christie commissioned into the MRNVR in 1937 (‘Morning Tribune’ 18.3.37).**
 - **An unidentified “... ex Russian merchant mariner’ also a rating in the engineering room.**
 - **Another unidentified rating** who may have been a “ ... shop assistant..” as described by Sibiriakoff. *This may possibly have been Arthur Jackson, a Chemist from Penang (Netherlands Red Cross records from Palembang internment camp) who was interned as a civilian.*
 - *And possibly Able Seaman Frank Norman Robinson, MRNVR an Assistant with Malayan Tobacco who records show was captured 15.2.42 and so possibly the ‘Shop Assistant’ described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs as one of the crew members*
- **no information has been found on the identity of either the five Army personnel or seven RAF personnel** – but it is safe to assume that, apart from the RAF pilot lost overboard later at Banka Island, they were all men who are listed in the register of Palembang POW camp.



Lt. Philip ‘Peter’ Cork, SSRNVR.

It appears that – apart from Lt Cork - the remainder of the officers and crew had been gathered together at the last minute. Innokenty Sibiriakoff recorded being asked whether he could take charge of the engine room of 'HMS Pahlawan' on the morning of 11 February 1942 and *"... a quarter of an hour later , we were on the ship..."*, he inspected the vessel's engine room and agreed so then *"... we immediately returned to HQ., I was given a cursory medical examination, signed some papers and took an oath to His Majesty, and by 11.30am I had become a member of MRNVR. The rank was to be confirmed later, and in the meantime I would be acting as Engineer in Charge...I was instructed to join the ship at 2.00pm..."*.

He also recorded *"...Her Malay crew had left her a couple of days before..."* so , as he recalled *"... the deck crew, too , were a rather hereterogenous crowd.."* which must have also been gathered during the week or so before departure.

Escape from Singapore:

So 'HMS Pahlawan' finally left Singapore on **Friday, 13 February 1942** - carrying 26 men on board.

We again have the benefit of **Innokenty Sibiriakoff's** memoirs *"... After leaving the harbour , 'HMS Pahlawan' set her course through the channel in the minefields which had been laid near the Riau islands. The engines were running quite nicely to my relief, so that I went on deck to have a 1st look at Singapore, which was brightly illuminated by the fires of the oil installations both on the island and nearby. Everybody was on deck except Kenny and the Russian engine driver. There was little conversation. Everyone seemed to be deeply immersed in their own thoughts.It was a lovely dark, tropical night with the stars shining brilliantly in the peacefull sky ... Suddenly we touched something on our starboard side. There was a warning cry from our lookout on the bow. The engine telegraph rang and I rushed down to find that the engines had been stopped. After some confusion on the deck the order "slow astern" came to us, followed shortly afterwards by another "stop" and silence, and then the sound of the dropping anchor chain. Then we learned that we were inside the mine-filed and that we had been very lucky that the mine we had touched had not gone off. Our compass bearings were so untrue that the Commander decided to drop the anchor and wait for daylight. It was just before midnight on Friday, 13th February, 1942 ... we found our position to be just off the safe channel. Satisfied with these findings , we tried to have a few hours sleep. The ship was overcrowded so we had to make the best of it and most of us slept on the deck.*

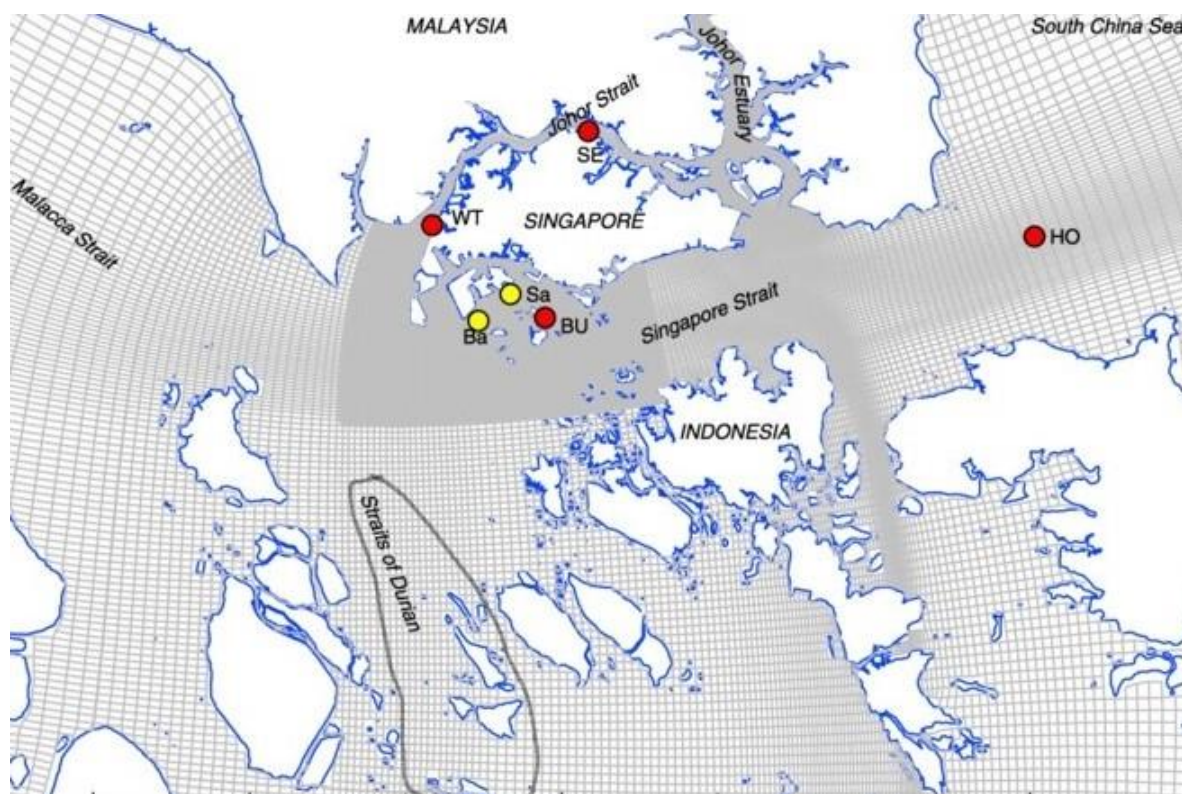
Soon after this 'HMS Pahlawan' was reported *"...sighted by TENGARROAH 0315 14th Feb. off No.5 buoy Singapore S.C...."* (www.naval-history.net) – the 'Tenggaroh/Tengaroh/Tengarroah' was the yacht of the Sultan of Johore which also sailed from Singapore on 13 February carrying army and civilian passenger evacuees, it is presumed that 'Singapore S.C.' means Singapore Channel..

It was now **Saturday 14th February 1942.**

We started on our way at dawn, very slowly at first while we all kept watch for possible mines. As soon as we had cleared the minefield we went full speed ahead, tryng to make up for lost time. Our orders were to navigate by night and take shelter at some islands during the day [these were standard orders for these evacuation vessels but tragically had the result that they delayed most vessels reaching the Banka Straits before the Japanese invasion fleet heading for southern Sumatra crossed their paths]. However knowing that the planes would not come till 10.00 a.m. our Commander decided to go as far as possible. Just before

10.00 we came close to a suitable island and stopped there, camouflaging our ship as best we could with branches cut from the trees ashore...”.

[Researcher Note: The vessel motored for an estimated 3.5 hours after leaving the Singapore Channel at dawn on 14th February. There are multiple possible courses it could have set through the myriad of islands in that area of sea south of Singapore - but if they had chosen the course given by official Navy orders and route used by most evacuation ships it suggests that at, say 12 knots, ‘HMS P{ahlawan’ would have travelled some 42 nautical miles (75-80 kilometres) and reached either Durian island or Little Durian island (Pulau Kechil Durian) to the south west in the Straits of Durian].



Map showing Singapore and to south west Durian Channel and Durian islands

Sibiariakoff continues “... Before we reached the island and Commander read our orders and port of destination i.e. Batavia via Muntok on the Bangka Islands, and then destroyed our radio communication. A few of us could not understand the purpose of this last order. It was right to prevent us talking to others and giving away our position, but why destroy our means of hearing the shore stations and getting the latest news about the situation around us? Still, we were in the Navy now and orders were orders, and it was useless to discuss or criticise them...we were all glad to relax in the peaceful surroundings of the island. We had a refreshing swim and then rested in the shade of the trees, where even the sunflies decided to leave us in peace. A sudden alarm signal sometime after midday gave us a rude awakening. We rushed to the boat to find her leaning dangerously towards the sea. Luckily she was stuck in the mud and so did not turn over completely. All available ropes were used to shore her to nearby trees on the beach and prevent further leaning with the quickly receding low tide.... Just after 5.00 p.m. we saw a Japanese fishing boat full of uniformed men wearing Australian hats. We tried unsuccessfully to ask them for help but the boat went by as fast as she

could. I couldn't help wondering if it were the same one 'Captain' and I had put in order before I joined MRNVR. It was past midnight before the tide became high enough for us to try to get out. We all watched anxiously as the engines started and the propellers churned the mud. To everybody's relief 'HMS Pahlawan' moved slowly away from the island and we were on our way again...".

It was now **Sunday 15th February 1942** – the day Singapore surrendered to the Japanese.

Confrontation with the Japanese Navy:

We continue to see the escape through the eyes of **Innokenty Sibriakoff** "... The Commander decided to go ahead to Muntok without stopping during the daylight because our progress had been so slow on account of the time lost in the minefield and on the mudbank and now because of our having to run at reduced speed. It was an uneventful Sunday except for a flight of Japanese bombers towards the south about midday. We could hardly believe our eyes when we saw them,. They spotted us and one bomber came around to have a look, but it returned to join its flight without attacking. Obviously they were not interested in such a small target. Our speculations ran high.....Had we the radio then , we could have altered our course to Sumatra which was nearby on our starboard side, landed there and got away overland. As it was we were going blindly to our destination not knowing what was happening there..."



Innokenty Sibriakoff was absolutely correct- at exactly the same time as the 'HMS Pahlawan' was dislodging itself from the mudbank on the island just after midnight and began motoring slowly south towards Banka Island on **Sunday 15th February 1942**, a huge Japanese invasion flotilla of IJN Cruisers, Destroyers and many smaller warships – plus transports carrying thousands of troops – was heading for the city of Palembang and its nearby oilfields in southern Sumatra and had crossed in front of the intended course of 'HMS Pahlawan'; on the way dropping off several hundred Japanese troops at Muntok on Banka Island at 0100 a.m. that morning. The warships had remained around the northern entrance to the Banka Straits, which separate Banka island from the Sumatran mainland, to catch evacuation ships from Singapore desperately trying to reach Batavia in Java.

He continues in his memoirs "... We continued on our blind course all through Monday 16th February [here the researcher is confused by this date because it appears from all other records that the impending confrontation with the Japanese occurred on 15th February - and from Innokenty's account it is not clear where the vessel could have been all Sunday and Monday if his memoir is correct]. About noon in the full heat of the day , Kenny (Kennedy) surprised me by putting his life-jacket on. He did not look well, but when I asked him if he had an attack of fever he said he didn't. He said he had forebodings and was afraid that something was going to happen to him. I tried to cheer him up without success, and then began to feel uneasy myself. We had had two lucky escapes on this journey which had started on a Friday, what would be the third thing to happen? I was soon to find out.

About 4.00 p.m. we were approaching our first destination, Banka island. Here we sighted two warships, a cruiser and a destroyer coming out of Muntok Harbour and heading North. Except for the Japanese fishing boat, these were the first ships we had seen since we started, and we began to speculate whether they were Dutch, British or American. Kenny and I were near the bridge where the Commander and Second officer were trying to determine the ship's nationality, when the cruiser catapulted a plane which flew towards us. To our horror we saw red circles painted under its wings. We rushed to the engine room, when the bomb from the plane exploded nearby and I saw Kenny fall into the sea. It was my last sight of him.

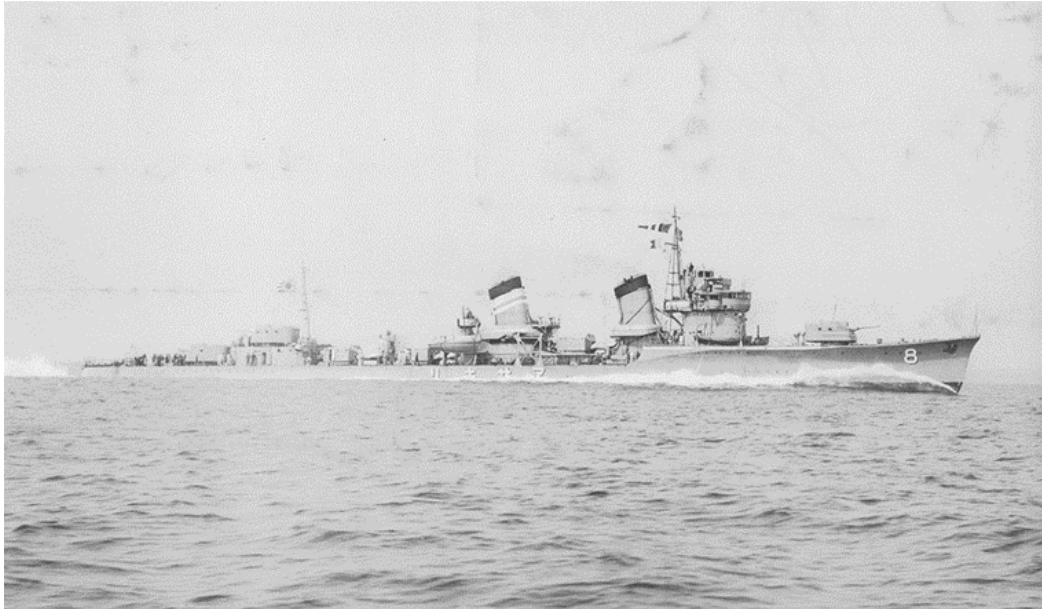


"... After that events moved very fast, but being below, in the engine room, I could not see what was happening. My attention was rivetted to the engine-telegraph and to the carrying out of orders from the bridge. They were very erratic. When the order 'to stop' came after 'full ahead' the Russian Engine Driver insisted on continuing at 'full ahead' and I had to interfere and stop his engine myself. This was not achieved without a struggle while he began shouting that we had all gone mad and would be caught by the Japs. My wristwatch fell into the sludge of the engine bed and my right finger was disjointed. At last the chap quietened down and started to cry with tears streaming down his face.

There was an ominous silence on the deck. Bandaging my painful right finger with a handkerchief, I peeped out to see what was happening. I saw our CO. with his lifebelt belching smoke while one of the crew poured water over it to stop the fire. A Japanese destroyer was closing in on us. Our officers and some members of the crew were on deck but I could not see any of the escape party. Then several Japanese sailors jumped on board and rushed to the bridge for codes and other books. They

soon came back looking very disappointed as all our documents had already been dumped into the sea. They removed the gun locks and returned to their ship...”.

This Destroyer was one of either of the powerful Japanese Destroyers named ‘Asagiri’ or Fubuki’ which were accompanying the invasion fleet headed for Palembang in southern Sumatra.



Japanese destroyer ‘Asagiri’ – a ‘Fubuki’ Class destroyer



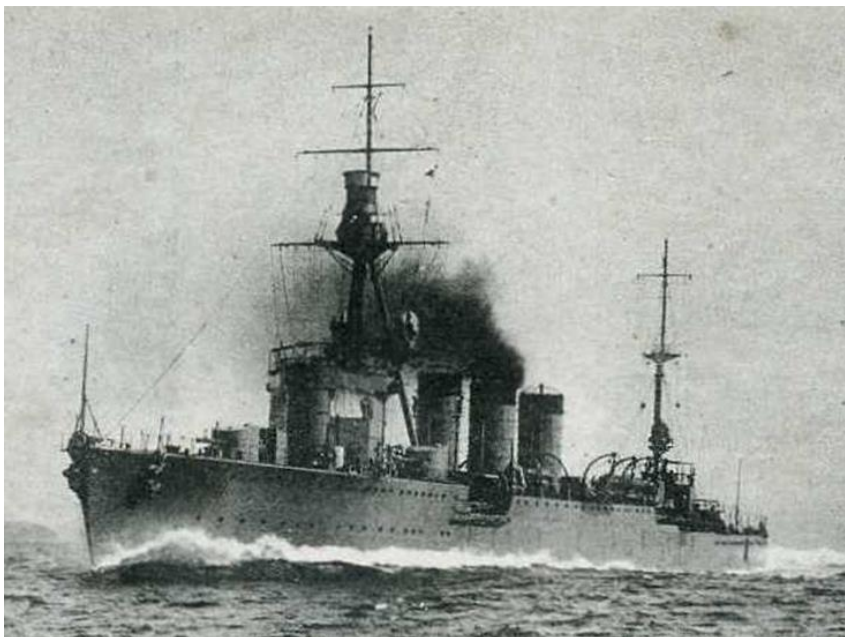
Japanese destroyer ‘Fubuki’

"... Meanwhile their officer was interrogating our Commander, who asked permission to save our men who had jumped over board. Evidently one of the Japanese men of war had fired a few shots across our bow ordering us to stop. The plane also dropped another bomb nearby and it was the shrapnel from this which set alight the CO.'s lifejacket. In the panic that followed most of the men on the deck had jumped into the sea. Permission was granted to fish them out, and having done that we were instructed to report to the cruiser. Tide currents are very strong in these waters and most of our men had been swept quite a distance away. We proceeded at a slow speed and collected all but two. We could not find Kenny or the pilot who had been wounded already in the legs during a landing on one of the Malayan airstrips by our own trigger happy sentries. I remained on deck and helped to drag the exhausted men out of the water.

It was not until we approached the cruiser [this would have been either the four funnelled 'Sendai' which would go on to sink the little tug 'HMS Yin Ping' a couple of hours later in that same area of ocean west of Banka island - or the light cruiser 'Yura' – both were accompanying the invasion fleet] and saw the jeering Japs that I realised we had become prisoners of war.



Light Cruiser '**Sendai**' (above) – which a few hours later sunk the tug 'HMS Yin Ping' near Banka Island – was distinctive as having four funnels.



Light Cruiser '**Yura**'.

Researcher Note: Lt. Peter Cork, MRNVR, had been most prudent not to get his 76 foot, 40 ton vessel into an exchange of firepower with any of these warships – the 5000 ton Cruisers were over 500 feet long with 35 knots of speed and the 2000 ton Destroyers were some 388 feet in length and at that stage of the war were the most advanced, heavily armed and fastest (38 knots) Destroyers in the world. Other evacuation vessels that either fought with or experienced a ‘misunderstanding’ with these warship around Banka Island became within minutes – without exception - shattered , sinking wrecks and the majority of crew and passengers on board killed in the battle or later dying in the sea.

Well over 1100 civilian women, children, men plus servicemen in all branches of the armed services lost their lives in the seas around and on the shores of Banka Island during the week of 13 – 20 February 1942; all were on 25 small evacuation vessels from Singapore which were sunk, captured or beached during this period in the seas around that Island and in the Banka Straits. Naval Auxiliary vessels such as ‘SS Mata Hari’ and ‘HMS Tapah’, and even the HMML 433 which was promptly beached on Banka by its Commander when confronted by these Japanese warships were saved by the presence of mind of their Captains upon encountering the Japanese warships – however similar vessels such as ‘HMS Giang Bee’ , the ‘SS Tandjong Pinang’ , the tug ‘HMS Yin Ping’, and the Royal Navy Fairmile patrol launches HMML 311 and HMML433 suffered terribly because of miscommunication, or an inability to recognize a hopelessly mismatched situation or were too slow in their response to requests to lower the Royal Navy’s ‘White Ensign’ being flown when they encountered the Japanese.

“...Our enemies were neatly dressed and looked perfectly fit and well -fed and were of course, elated by their victories. There was another interrogation by an officer who spoke very good English, and then we were ordered to proceed to Muntok at slow speed and anchor at the entrance of the harbour there and await further instructions. Not a single man was put on board to watch us. They were so certain that we should follow their orders that the cruiser went on its Northern course immediately after our departure, leaving the destroyer with us to see that we did not try to escape. As soon as we came to the entrance of Muntok, it too steamed away at full speed to join its leader.

There was a small launch at the entrance , which showed us the place to anchor below Muntok Lighthouse and then it went away , leaving us alone. However, we had already seen that there were many Japanese men of war and transports in Muntok Harbour[Muntok Harbour is simply a long shallow bay]. Our days of freedom were finished. I had no watch but judging by the twilight I knew that the whole operation of our capture had not lasted more than a couple of hours.. We had walked into a trap as Muntok was firmly in the hands of the Japanese Navy and Army. Had we the radio the whole thing might have been averted. Northern Sumatra was not occupied by the Japs until the end of March.



Muntok Lighthouse is unchanged from 1942 – view from approximately where ‘HMS Pahlawan’ would have anchored.

[Researcher Note: 0700 hrs on 15 February 1942 was the time and date when 'HMS Pahlawan' was captured according to Denis Russell – Roberts in his book 'Spotlight on Singapore' - this appears to be the time it reached Muntok and anchored there for the night ; apart from Russell-Roberts' record of the time and date of capture we have the reliable Captain David Nelson stating the vessel was captured "...30 miles north of Muntok 15.2.42..." and this is confirmed by author Richard Gough. The report/schedule prepared by Cmdr Reid, RN, in Palembang POW camp – no doubt with direct input from Lt. P.D.Cork, who was under Reid's command in that POW camp, states the vessel "... left 13.2.42 ... captured 15.2.42 N. Muntok 50' after engagement...".]

The service passengers and crew of 'HMS Pahlawan' remained on board the vessel that night of 15th February 1942, at anchor in the long shallow bay upon which Muntok town is located - hardly talking, but apparently eating and drinking all they could find on board. **Innokenty Sibiriakoff** relates an anecdote that demonstrates the bizarre twists of confused fate occurring during those chaotic days of the evacuation. He had a suitcase with several photo albums of his life in Malaya on board the vessel so removed all the photos and threw the empty case overboard – amazingly it floated away with the current and reached somewhere on the Sumatran mainland where it was found by another evacuee from Singapore travelling to safety on a more secure route who, when he reached Ceylon and reported his find, caused Innokenty to be classified as 'Missing, Presumed Drowned' and this was what was advised to friends and relatives.

On the morning of Monday 16th February "... a Japanese Navy Launch came and ordered us to proceed inside the harbour. Several captured ships were anchored there already, including the fastest ship of the former Straits Steamship Co., now 'HMS Tapah'.



Muntok town – showing the very long pier and the small, breakwater enclosed, harbour.

"... This time the Japs made a detailed list of everyone on our ship and took us ashore, where we were herded into a local cinema building near the wharf. The place was packed with prisoners, both military and civilians including, unhappily, quite a number of women and children. Most of the women had tears in their eyes, but the children, unaware of the situation, tried to improvise games. The sight was pathetic and yet very moving. Even in such sordid surroundings where there was only enough room to sit closely together on the floor, the men's chivalry showed at its best. The back of the hall and the balcony were cleared and reserved for women and children.



Muntok Cinema building still stands today in the town – except it is now used to breed Swallows making their nests that are famous as ‘Birds Nest soup’.

We ourselves did not fare very well during the couple of days we were in the cinema. We were given some weak tea and a plate of soggy, half-cooked rice. Fortunately, most of us had brought some tinned food from the ships.

The next day we were drafted to unload a rice ship. There were no wheel-barrows or anything to help us transport the heavy 100kg bags of rice from the wharf to the godown some distance away. They had to be carried on our backs. I still wonder how I survived the ordeal... that night we had to sleep in a crouched position in the cinema and when I awoke ... we were ordered to get ready to move elsewhere. The civilians and women and children were taken away first... at last we reached the General Hospital, but evidently we had been taken to the wrong place for it was reserved for civilian prisoners only.... Our destination was not far away and had formerly been the barracks of the local gendarmerie. After the sordid over-crowded cinema, they looked quite palatial. Six of us were given a room 10' x 12' which gave us space to stretch out. Also there was plenty of running water which was something we had missed so much since leaving Singapore. As soon as we had put our bags down we hurried to take showers and wash our dirty clothes.... My stay at the barracks was short. The next morning a party of Japanese Naval ratings, led by an elderly and kindly looking Engineer -Officer, came into our camp and called several names, including mine. We were all engineers of captured H.M. ships. An identification tag with 'N7' on it was pinned to my shirt. This cheered me because it was a lucky number. We collected our things and were marched to Muntok where a launch took us back to our ship. The Japanese Engineer-Officer asked me to give him the position of the stocks of fuel oil and mechanical supplies the next morning. Then he wished me good luck and left me on 'N7' which had formerly been 'HMS Pahlawan'. It was a strange sensation to find myself all alone on the ship, now considerably disordered by the things which her former crew had discarded. All around me were enemy transports and men of war, and Jap planes flew overhead..."

At this point Sub-Lt. innokenty Sibiriakoff became permaently separated from the remainder of the officers and crew of the former 'HMS Pahlawan' - we will later continue with his story of 'HMS Pahlawan' being returned to Singapore as Japanese vessel.

In the family memoirs of the Commander of the vessel, **Lt. Philip 'Peter' Cork, MRNVR**, son Ian Cork has written " *...My father was a lieutenant in command of the patrol boat HMS "Pahlawan" and spent a good deal of time at sea on patrol and later on mine sweeping duties. At the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 he was ordered to take "Pahlawan" to Sumatra with nine refugees. Unfortunately, there was a Japanese cruiser and five destroyers in their path. My father was captured and was somewhat amused because the Captain of the cruiser apologised for having to hand the prisoners over to the Army. At that stage, my father didn't know what he was in for, but it didn't take long to find out. He spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner - three years at Palembang in Sumatra and six months at Changi in Singapore...* ".

Casualties:

During the past 80 years since these events occurred there has been little public knowledge of the experiences and fates of the vessel or the men on 'HMS Pahlawan' - even in official records.

Reports were consistent from the start that there were two men 'Missing' as a result of the capture of 'HMS Pahlawan' on 15 February 1942; which occurred some distance from the coast in the seas northwest of Banka Island. Author Richard Gough stated "*...two passengers were later reported missing following capture on 15th...*"; Captain David Nelson described "*...2 missing believed killed ...*" and this is repeated exactly in Cmdr. Reid's schedule. Reid has added the words "*...after engagement...*" insofar as the capture of the vessel.

There is a CWGC record on one casualty – although the CWGC do not mention the fact that he was aboard 'HMS Pahlawan' - and that is **ERA Albert Roy Kennedy, MRNVR** who is listed as 'Missing, Believed Killed or Drowned' in a schedule in the UK Archives.

The kind support of the Sibiriakoff family in allowing access to their father's memoirs has finally cleared up the identity of one of the men being Albert Kennedy and also how he lost his life in the first bomb attack – and also gives us an insight into the fact that the other casualty was a **RAF pilot** previously injured in Malaya.

A schedule of RAF casualties on and around Banka island during this period is attached as an Appendix to this document, but analysis of the names on the schedule by the Researcher has proven unsuccessful in determining exactly which RAF Pilot was the person on 'HMS Pahlawan' who died in the sea.

The death toll would however have been much worse – probably half the crew and passengers - if Lt Cork had not promptly surrendered to the overwhelming Japanese naval force. Even those already in the water would have faced dire consequences upon reaching the beaches on the north western coast of Banka Island, because the order had been given by the Japanese officer in charge of the two Companies of troops in the invasion force which had just landed at Muntok to kill any shipwrecked survivors they came across – this order was carried out with terrible consequences for survivors from 'SS Vyner Brooke' (including 21 Australian Army nurses and several civilian women), 'Pulo Soegi' and 'HMS Li Wo' on the following day , 16th February 1942. The northwestern beaches of Banka Island over the next couple of weeks were strewn with the bodies of literally hundreds of people killed in the sinking of those mentioned and other vessels – those remains all lie in the sands of Banka even today.

However the coming years of deprivation, malnutrition and disease in Japanese POW camps also took its toll and another 'HMS Pahlawan' crew member **Able Seaman Charles Ritchie, MRNVR**, an engineer with Malayan Rubber Trading, sadly died in Palembang POW camp of 'colitis, bronchitis and dysentery' in 1943 and was buried in Palembang City Cemetery grave E/1.24.

'HMS Pahlawan' and men in Japanese Captivity:

Whilst the remaining officers, crew and servicemen passengers of 'HMS Pahlawan' remained as POWs in Muntok - either working on the wharf or on a nearby airfield as slave labour before being shipped across the Banka Straits in March/April 1942 to Palembang and then enduring years of captivity in camps in that city; **Sub.Lt Sibiriakoff** was already a POW back on the vessel upon which he had first escaped Singapore.

He continues in his memoir (by now it is estimated to have been **20th February 1942**) *"... To keep myself busy I began to put things in order and clean the ship, nor did I forget to hide away some food and drink. I had a hunch I should remain on the ship for some time and after by three days' experience ashore, took the precaution not to be hungry during that time. For the first time since leaving Singapore I had a peaceful night, sleeping in the engine room. It became my usual sleeping place for the next two months.*

The Navy Launch with the same Engineer-Officer came again next morning. While I was giving him the details of the stocks, one of the sailors dived into the wardrooms and emerged with the bottle of champagne and few bottles of whisky. They were the ones I had brought onto the ship. They had been put on top of a cupboard and then been forgotten. I protested that they were my personal property but the Engineer-Officer good-naturedly replied that they 'had been', but were now the property of the Imperial Japanese navy. However, when he saw how upset I was by the incident he presented me with a couple of bottles of my own whisky. It occurred to me that owing to the peculiar circumstances I should thank him, and he was delighted ... when the Japs had departed I remembered my watch. It had not suffered from its immersion in the oil sludge and after cleaning it I hid it carefully so that it would not become, in its turn, the property of the Imperial Japanese Navy. However it was not destined to survive POW life. About three years later I sold it for ten times its original value on the Japanese Black Market to supply me with much needed 'banana currency'.... The next day the kindly old Engineer-Officer turned up again with supplies, and he brought with him five RN ratings and two Japanese guards. He gave me orders to have everything ready for departure for Singapore next morning.

*The naval ratings were a cheerful bunch of boys. After their stay ashore they were very hungry and as soon as the Japanese launch had gone away they rushed to the pantry to prepare a meal. The Japanese guards, who did not speak English at all, were quite complacent and let us do as we pleased. During the meal we became acquainted. They were an RN. Stoker, Petty Officer George Acock [this was **Petty Officer Stoker George Atkinson Acock**, C/K 66405, RN., from Liverpool who had been aboard 'HMS Scorpion' when it was sunk on 13 February, by the same ships which captured 'HMS Pahlawan'] and two other stokers [one may have possibly been **ERA Arthur Bailey Chatfield**, RN, also a survivor of the sinking of 'HMS Scorpion'], and **Leading Seaman Harry Porter** [this was **Leading Seaman Henry Porter**, J97544, RN from Uxbridge who had been captured in the Banka Straits on 15 February], and another A.B. as deck crew. From the beginning they accepted me as their leader. However they dismissed as sheer nonsense my opinion that we would be POWs for three to four years. They expected to be free by Christmas. They did accept my warnings about Japanese susceptibility and their inferiority complex and the ease with which they can become vicious on the slightest provocation, sometimes for reasons inexplicable to a European.... George had been quite a time in China and had travelled as far as Chungking....".*

23th February 1942 he continues “... Ten days after leaving Singapore , we were now on our way back again. We travelled by day in a convoy of captured ships, escorted by a supply ship and two destroyers. Our instructions were to tie up each evening at the supply ship from which our guards received their food rations.

Everything proceeded satisfactorily until the third day. We had reached our anchorage when Harry (L/S Henry Porter), apparently misunderstanding the orders of our Japanese guard began steering ‘HMS Pahlawan’ to ‘HMS Tapah’ instead of the supply ship. Hearing swearing and cries on deck I went up and told Harry to steer to the supply ship at once as we were instructed. We tied up there and the guards went on board. My boys began preparing the meal in the wardroom and I went to the forward deck to wash.

Suddenly I heard a commotion coming from the wardroom and came out in time to see my boys coming up in a hurry, followed by a Japanese marine and our own guards. When they were lined up on deck the Marine proceeded to slap them hard one by one, while he jabbered something in a strident, excited voice. Tying my towel around my waist I rushed aft and asked the Marine what it was all about. His answer was to slap me too. The blood rushed to my temples and I instinctively slapped him back. All I remember then is trembling with rage while two of my chaps held me back from further fighting, and facing the furious Jap who had poked his revolver into my belly. There was a moment of complete silence, when a quiet voice said something from the deck of the supply ship. The Marine put his revolver in its holster and returned to the ship followed by our guards. I looked up and saw the old Engineer-Officer amongst the crowd of onlookers who were silently watching the incident. He told me to dress and that he would come later to talk with us. At that moment I noticed that my towel had fallen on the deck and I was completely naked. Badly shaken I finished my bath and dressed myself. In the wardroom the boys were eating their food in silence, depressed by the whole incident. Evidently they had received their punishment because they had continued to sit and eat when the Japs had come into the wardroom. They had not thought it was necessary to stand for a Japanese P.O....”

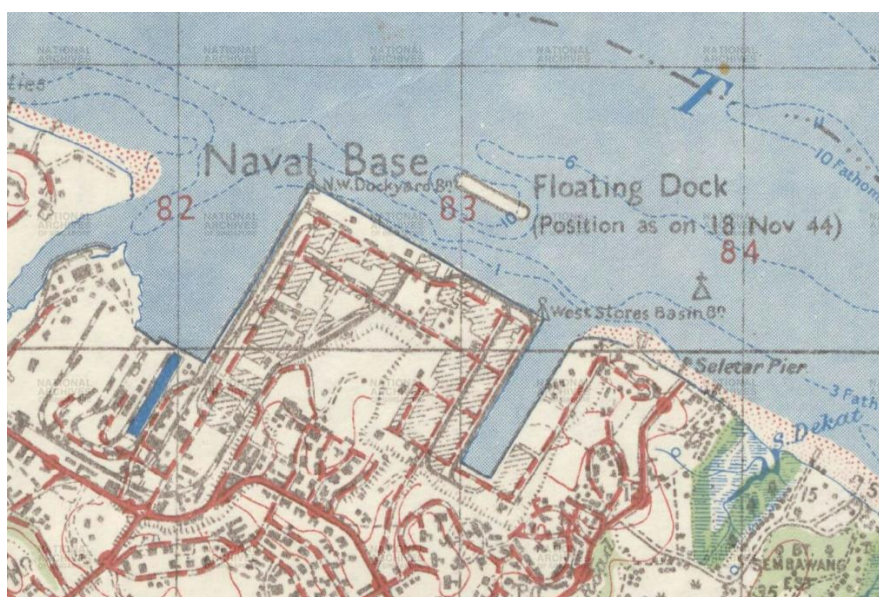
This incident and the misunderstanding of the instructions by the Japanese guard as to which ship to be approached were sorted out positively, and respectfully in the case of the British naval personnel, by a visit from the Engineer-Officer who appeared with a bottle of whisky and a glass in his hand. Apparently, “...smiling sadly...” he gave a paternal talk to all British present. Sibriakoff clearly was impressed by this man – and no doubt for good reason given the generally cruel, often sadistic and contemptful attitude of most Japanese naval and military towards POWs and Internees during the war. He recorded “...I feel I owe not only my life to him, but my confidence in the basic decency of human beings. During the next three years this belief was put to great strain for I did not meet such a man again during the rest of my POW life...”.

“...The convoy reached the eastern approaches of Singapore Island on the morning of 27th February ... We did not see the town but were sent straight to Selitar[sic: Seletar] Naval base via the Straits of Johore, which separate the Island from the mainland.... Selitar Naval Base was also full of activity, but by the Japanese this time. We did not see evidence of much damage. The oil tanks had been destroyed and there was still a lot of fuel around in the water. The big floating dock was sunk , but its superstructure was visible above the water and the Japs had already started salvage operations ... Japanese flags were everywhere. We could see some of their transports with supplies but only a few men of war. During the next couple of weeks it seemed as if the Japs did not know what to do with their captured ships, and the crews were left practically alone, doing nothing...”.



Map of Singapore showing the path of the Japanese invasion of the Island and the location of the British Naval Base, Seletar and Keppel Harbour.

The Royal Navy base/'Naval Base' / 'The Base' in Singapore was possibly known to some as the Sembawang base or even 'Selitar base' as Lt Sibiriakoff has mentioned, but Seletar was more often a reference to the airfield – Seletar is to the east along the Johore Straits from Sembawan. There must have been water traffic from the naval base to the Seletar anchorage because there was a 'Seletar Pier' at the Naval Base.



Royal Navy Sembawang Naval Base in the Johore Straits showing Seletar Pier.

Things altered for the Allied naval personnel on 'N7' in the middle of March 1942 when Japanese Marines and a Petty Officer came aboard. The vessel left Seletar on the 18th March and motored around to Keppel Harbour, in the main civilian harbour on the south side of Singapore, provisioned and then moved across to Pulau Bukom – where there was the first opportunity for the crew to walk on land again since Muntok. Then they spent five weeks crewing the vessel whilst it was used on 'police duties' from sunset to sunrise as the Japanese looked for contraband smuggling by Chinese and Malays between Sumatra and Malaya.

The Royal Navy personnel appear to have remained on the Imperial Japanese Navy 'N7' ('HMS Pahlawan') until November 1942 – although Sub.Lt. Sibiriakoff appears to have also been on 'HMS Tapah' between April and November 1942 – and then were moved to Loyang, which was another anchorage (near Changi) in the Straits of Johore and were presumably on another vessel such as 'HMS Tapah'. Later in the war they were relocated to Selarang and finally Changi POW camp.

The final fate of 'HMS Pahlawan'/'N7' is unknown.

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Anyone who has corrections, amendments, clarifications or additional material on the events, the crew, or passengers of 'HMS Pahlawan' 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:

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- Book 'Escape from Singapore' by Richard Gough (p.220)
- Book 'Spotlight On Singapore' by Denis Russell-Roberts (p.184)
- Book 'The Story of Changi' by Captain David Nelson
- JMM – the database of 'Malayan's compiled by Jonathan Moffatt, historian and author.
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- Sibiriakoff family – Ina Nur and Michael Sibiriakoff and the memoir of Innokenty Andre Sibiriakoff..
- Singapore Newspaper Archives, National Library of Singapore.
- UK Archives, Kew, London.
- Website www.naval-history.net

Crew:

- **CORK – Lt Philip ‘Peter’ Dorian Cork, SSRNVR.** Born 29.3.09 in Bromley, Kent, England and educated at Malvern College, which is set in the Malvern Hills, at Malvern, Worcestershire. After leaving school ‘Peter’ taught briefly at Malvern College and then worked for his father’s stockbroking firm before travelling to Singapore in 1929 and gaining a job with rubber brokers, Dupire Morrell. In 1936 he met and married Edna Gladys (nee McBride, b. 8.3.15- d. 2.6.04 in the Gold Coast, Queensland , Australia) in Singapore in March 1938. They lived in the Capitol Apartments in Singapore CBD , then in Tanglin Gardens before purchasing land in Cornwall Gardens for the sum of \$S 4,500 and built a home, which they sold a year later when ‘Peter’ gained the understanding he would be sent away with the Navy after the outbreak of war. This did not eventuate, so in 1940 they built another home at 39 Astrid Park in Singapore (homes in that street today sell for \$S75-85 million !) in which they were able to create their new home. After being refused entry to the RNVR in 1929 because he wore glasses, Peter had enlisted as a Volunteer in the Straits Settlement Royal Volunteer Artillery but he was an enthusiastic sailing member of the Royal Singapore Yacht Club so in 1939 was invited to join the SSRNVR and underwent training on ‘HMS Laburnum’ (the old hulk anchored in Singapore Harbour and used as the HQ of the SSRNVR). The secret ‘Jeyes’ toilet paper list in Changi internment camp recorded “...CORK PETER D DUPIRE M POW PAL...”.
- **ELLIS (one of a couple of possible “...young Sub Lts...”)** – “...ELLIS IVOR RENNIE LOWICK RNVR GIANB B... (BPPL); there is also a record (based on his MI9 interrogation form and Palembang POW camp register) that Sub. Lt. Ivor Ellis, MRNVR, “HMS. Laburnum” (the MRNVR depot ship at Singapore), aged 21 years (born 28.12.21) and who enlisted on 12.12.41, was captured in the Banka Straits on 15.2.42, then interned in Palembang and finally in Changi. I Ellis had been “... granted a commission as an acting sub-lieutenant in the Malayan RNVR...” only a matter of weeks before the evacuation of Singapore (SFPMA 10.1.42). he worked for Rennie, Lowick & Co., company secretaries, Singapore. Interestingly he completed two separate MI9 questionnaires and they record his POW experience beginning on 1.3.42 in Palembang and no mention of a few weeks in the Muntok POW camp – although he does mention working on ‘airfields’ which Muntok POWs were forced to do when first captured. He gives his NOK as “... ‘Brother’ Mr. David Ellis, Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corp., Bombay, India...”. The capture date of 15 February does not align with either him having been in the GB lifeboat which reached Banka Island, nor the lifeboat which reached Sumatra and whose occupants were picked up by ‘HMS Tapah’ – nor does he appear on the detailed log written by the captain of ‘HMS Tapah’. **It may be that the usually most accurate Changi internment camp BPPL record is incorrect insofar as Ivor Ellis having been aboard ‘HMS Giang Bee’.**
- **HILL - Able Seaman John Rupert E. Hill, SE/XE..., MRNVR** – Manager of the Kingsland Estate, a rubber plantation at Semenyih in south-eastern Selangor. No MI9 on the

COFEPOW website – but it may simply not have been researched yet. NOK on Palembang POW camp register was (Wife) Mrs. Hill, c/o G.E. Bonner, 9 Victoria Pde., Torquay. The secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper list in Changi internment camp records "... HILL REJ KINGSLAND RNVR RATING POW P'BANG...". Almost certainly one of the two 'Planters' who Sibiriakoff describes in his memoirs as crew members.

- **HYDE – Sub. Lt. Harold William Raymond Hyde, MRNVR.** His MI9 Liberation questionnaire shows his date of birth as 9 January 1912. Singapore newspapers record him playing cricket for the SCC in 1935 and then for the Selangor Club, Kuala Lumpur in 1939. In 1940 he is reported as requesting an exemption for serving as a Volunteer and the later that year making a small donation to the war Fund. His MI9 again shows his enlistment date as 11.12.41 (being a few days after the Japanese invaded Malaya indicating that his earlier application for exemption had been approved) and then being captured 16.2.42 in the Banka Straits. On the Palembang POW camp register he gives his NOK as 'Father' Mr. H.E. Hyde, 3 Seymour Crescent, Hemel Hempstead, Herts. He was in the 'draft' from Palembang to Changi POW camp on 26.5.45. In his MI9 Liberation questionnaire he recorded his address as 'Fir Grove', Three Cups, Nr. Heathfield, Sussex but Harold Hyde seems to have, for whatever reason, declined to record any of the POW camps he was held in during the war. , d. 2002 (JM Palembang schedule). There is no mention of him in the secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper list compiled in Changi internment camp.
- **JACKSON** – in the UK Archives are some dogeared, handwritten, pencil notes from Netherlands Red Cross interviews with ship survivors who had become internees. There is one entry (Image 1481 Researcher files) which appears - if it is following the normal format of the NRC interview records from Palembang camp - to state that "... Kennedy [was on board] 'Palahawan left 13/2/24 , [witnessed by] A.Jackson [and confirmed] Christie..." – this could only have been possible if Jackson had also been on the vessel and the only Jackson in that camp was one **Arthur Jackson.**, Chemist, Dept. of Chemistry, Verment Road, Penang. After the war Dr. A. Jackson returned to Singapore as a lecturer at Raffles College, ; in 1947 was the Singapore Government chemist; in 1948 the Chief Chemist for the Federation of Malaya; and by 1957 the Director of the Singapore Department of Chemistry. He received an OBE in 1960.
- **KENNEDY - Engine Room Artificer Albert Roy Kennedy, MRNVR** – a file on "Missing Believed Killed or Drowned" in the UK Archives records the following "... (an Assistant in [the rubber estate named] *Lebu Estate* [near Seremban] *Negri Sembilan*; had wife and two children; by profession, an engineer; further information about his wife's residence etc. can be got from Guthrie & Co., Gracechurch Street, London. Wife and children believed to have proceeded to Australia during Jan 1942) ...". The secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper list compiled in Changi recorded "...KENNEDY J LABU GUTHRIE RNVR MISSING EX PALAWAN..." – which of course has a differing initial for this person - and the database of Malayan Volunteers compiled by the late John Brown recorded the same name with the initial 'J' being a "...Sub. Lt J. Kennedy, MRNVR reported Missing Believed Killed..." but no other details. Official records give a slightly different record – possibly based on Albert Kennedy having earlier been in the Negri Sembilan Defence Forces but with the same date of death – the official record of his death is "...Corporal Albert Roy Kennedy, Negri Sembilan Local Defence Force, died 15.2.42, husband of E.V. Kennedy of Granville, Sydney, NSW, remembered on the Singapore Memorial Col 401..." CWGC). This is the 'Kenny' described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs.

- **MANGE** – “...MANGE R. M. [Roland Maurice] born 1902 Paris. To Indochina then Branch Manager, Moine Comte & Co. Ltd, 9 China St, Ghaut, Penang [import/export] from 1933. Appointed Consular Agent of France in Penang 7.36. By 1940 Manager, Malayan Rubber Trading Co. Ltd, godowns, Singapore Harbour Board. Captured after ship sunk off Banka 16.2.42. A/B MRNVR POW Palembang, Sumatra. Wife Marie Louise & two daughters evacuated to India. He was post war MD Optorg, Hong Kong then took up farming, growing pyrethrum, in the Kenyan Highlands. He died 9.1959 Greystones, South Kinangop, Kenya...” (JMM). Born in France and captured 16.2.42 (JMPDB) so almost certainly the ‘French Broker’ recalled by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs.
- **MUSSETT** – “... MUSSETT W.L. [William Lavender] ‘Bill’ ISO b. 1901. RAF Service 1918-1920. To Malaya 1925 as Audit Inspector, FMS Railways Accounts Branch. By 1940 Chief Accountant, FMS Railways. Rugby player and golfer. Wife Sally evacuated. RNVR to Sumatra. Returned to Malayan Railways post war. President of the Malayan Rugby Union 1949. Retired to farm cattle near Victoria, Australia then moved to Queensland. Died 21.9.64 Southport, Queensland...” (JMM). He was captured on 16.2.42 and a POW in Palembang (JMPDB) so is almost certainly the “...Boatswain – Acct. with Railways... “described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs as a member of the crew.
- **RITCHIE - Able Seaman Charles Duncan Ritchie, SE/XE 5, MRNVR-** an Assistant Engineer/Manager with the Malaysia Rubber Company, Perak at the time of the Japanese invasion (the late John Brown database of Malayan Volunteers). Earliest records are C.D. Ritchie winning the pools doubles competition at the Batu Anam (Johore) Club in 1923 (ST. 2.4.23) then Mrs C.D. Ritchie returning from Europe on the ‘Errin’ in 1932 (ST 13.2.32). Also, “... RITCHIE C. D. [Charles Duncan] Assistant [1935 Directory] then Manager, Sungei Wangi Estate [Malaysia Rubber Co. Ltd], Setiawan, Perak. A/S MRNVR. Died in captivity 16.10.43 Palembang. Wife Mary and daughter J. evacuated on Orion, arriving Fremantle WA 6.1.42. Mary died 24.1.63...” (JMM). The secret ‘Jeyes’ toilet paper list compiled in Changi internment camp recorded “... RITCHIECD S.KLAN H.BARKER POW P’BANG...” .The Palembang POW camp register tells us that his NOK was “... ‘Wife’ Mrs C.Ritchie, c/o Harrison & Crosfield, Great Tower Street, London...” and confirms he died 16.10.43 and was buried in “... Europ. Cem. P’bang E 1/24 (near Charitas Hospital)...” .The John Brown database of Volunteers tells us that Charles Ritchie, sadly, died in Palembang POW camp of ‘colitis,bronchitis and dysentery’ and was buried in Palembang City Cemetery grave E/1.24.The official record of his death is sparse “... Able Seaman C.D. Ritchie, SE/XE5,MRNVR, died 16.10.43 buried at Jakarta War Cemetery grave 1.F.14 (transferred from Palembang grave 4.E.3)...” (CWGC).The other “Planter’ described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs as a crew member’
- **ROBINSON - ROBINSON F. N. [Frank Norman],** born 1911 London. To Malaya 1939. Assistant, Malayan Tobacco. Married Constance Margaret Jarrett 1939 Singapore. A/S MRNVR HMS Sultan [shore base]. Palembang, Sumatra internee. (JMM) captured 15.2.42 and so possibly on ‘Pahlawan’. No MI9 sourced. Possibly the ‘Shop Assistant’ described by Sibiriakoff in his memoirs as one of the crew members.
- **SIBIRIAKOFF - Sub. Lt Innocenty Andre Sibiriakoff , MRNVR,** born Petrograd 27.12.01. Innocenty Sibiriakoff escape Vladisvostok 1918 went to Belgium then Malaysia and post war to France. Married Yvette Marie who was French and they had one son, Rolland Vladimir Andrei born c. 1936. Yvette and her son evacuated

from Singapore to India with her sister Mrs. Maria Subbeli (JM) . She is recorded arriving in Buenos Aires by ship on 28.9.42 then in May 1943 filing divorce proceedings against Innocenty in Reno, Nevada, USA whilst he was a POW. The secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper list compiled in Changi recorded "SIBIRIAKOFF I X SOCFIN POW...". Innocenty moved to Australia in 1968 and , whilst in the process of buying a property in Sydney met his second wife Mollie Joan Westgarth (b. 2.9.19), they later lived in Macquarie, NSW (1970s and 1980s) . They had three children Andre, Michael and Ina. He passed away on 8.10.80 and is buried at Wentworth falls, Blue Mountain City, Leura, NSW. Mollie passed away on 22.1.95. First son Vladimir was last known to be a real estate agent in New York.

Passengers:

There were thirteen passengers according to Sub Lt Sibiriakoff; Captain David Nelson recorded "...Army 5, RAF 7.." and the report by Commander Reid , RN., in Palembang POW camp agrees with Nelson.

Insofar as the seven RAF personnel on board we know that one RAF 'pilot' was lost at the time he had been "*...wounded already in the legs during a landing on one of the Malayan airstrips by our own trigger happy sentries...*" – **there follows below a schedule of those RAF who lost their lives in the vicinity of Banka Island during the weeks around the time that 'HMS Pahlawan' was sunk.**

POW Crew on Return Voyage to Singapore:

- **ACOCK – Stoker Petty Officer George Richardson Acock, C/K 66405, RN.,** had been aboard 'HMS Scorpion' . He was born on 23.6.06, the son of George Richardson Acock and Elizabeth Acock. He enlisted in the Royal Navy on 23.6.25. His home address was 144 Northbrook Street, Liverpool 8, Lancashire. In 1929 he married Grace Murphy in West Derby, Lancashire and they had one daughter. He was on 'HMS Scorpion' when it was sunk on 13.2.42 and captured Banka Strait 18.2.42, then selected amongst the POWs in Muntok on Banka Island by the Japanese to be part of the crew of the small patrol vessel 'HMS Pahlawan' on its return journey to Singapore, he became firstly a POW back in Singapore at Seletar Naval Base in March 1942 (under Sub Lt Sibiriakoff of the MRNVR); then along the coast in the Straits of Johore at Loyang in November 1942; then Changi in July 1944 and finally 'Krangi' [his spelling] in June 1945. (COFEPOW – MI9 Liberation questionnaire). In a list of casualties from 'HMS Scorpion' held in the UK Archives there is noted against his name "*...(Chatham) (last seen driving lorries at Muntok uninjured, ex HMS Falcon) ...*". George Acock died in Knawsley, Merseyside in February 2001.

- **CHATFIELD (probable identity of one member of the crew on the voyage back to Singapore)**– ERA Arthur Bailey Chatfield – who had also been on ‘HMS Scorpion’ when it was sunk escaping Singapore. In a casualty list held in the UK Archives is noted also as “...’Missing’...H. Chatfield, ERA (Chatham)...”. This was **ERA Arthur Bailey Chatfield, CMX 50361, RN**. Born 20.9.12 and enlisted 4.12.38 whose home address was 37 Normanhurst Ave, Bexleyheath, Kent. His MI9 questionnaire tells us he was captured in the Banka Straits on 16.2.42 and records his first POW camp as ‘Naval Base Singapore April 42 to June 43’; then Selarang Barracks June 43 until May 44; and finally, Changi Gaol May 44 until August 45. It is not clear whether he drifted southwards away from the other survivors to the Banka Straits and was then – as were a few other naval ratings from vessels sunk in the area – promptly captured and ordered to take a ship back to Singapore (this is presumed to have been ‘HMS Pahlawan’) where he and others were held (usually on a ship anchored) near the Naval Base in the Straits of Johore.
- **PORTER** – recorded as ‘Harry Porter’ by Lt Sibiriakoff, this in fact is almost certainly (from his MI9 questionnaire) **Leading Seaman Henry C [Charles?] Porter, J 97544?, RN.**, who was born on 14.3.05 and enlisted on 9.6.20 so was a very experienced Royal Navy rating. He was captured on 15.2.42 but it is not known on which ship he evacuated Singapore. He gave his address on the MI9 questionnaire as 20 Copthall Rd., Oxbridge, Middx. Insofar as his POW years he recorded that from Feb. 1942 until November 1942 he was on board ‘Palahawan’ [his spelling] and gave his own name as ‘Camp Leader’; then from November 1942 until 1 July 1944 he was [presumably on board some sort of vessel] at Loyang (for this he gives the name ‘Siberiakoff’ as Camp Leader) and thereafter at ‘Changi under Col. Newey etc’.
- **SIBIRIAKOFF – Sub Lt Innokenty Andre Sibiriakoff, MRMVR** (see above).
- **Unidentified RN personnel** – a “...Stoker...” and an “...AB as a deckhand...”.

ROYAL AIR FORCE:

KILLED IN ACTION

(includes drowned in action or drowned in consequence of ship sinking, or in consequence of having been ordered to abandon ship)

Officers:

Wing Commander R.A. CHICHESTER, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 14.2.42.
Pilot Officer H.F.M. PAUL, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 16.2.42.
Pilot Officer G. RUTHERFORD, buried at sea 15.2.42.
Pilot Officer TONOV, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea 15.2.42.

Other ranks:

LAC. CHICHESTER, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 14.2.42.
Sergeant W. HULLOCK, buried at HUNTON 25 yards ^(Apt. Group)
S.E. of R.E. corner of cinema near the Pier. 16/4/42.
Sergeant E. CRATT (buried at HUNTON 25 yards N.W. of R.E. corner of cinema near the Pier). 16/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
Sergeant MONTAGUE (buried at sea 15.2.42). ^(SHR. Section)
1252122. Corporal E. FAIRBANKS, R.A.F.V.R. ^(SHR. Section)
(buried with POWSON (this group) 15.2.42.)
S.A. 2.1. ELTON, W. ^(Apt. Group) buried BANKA ISLAND 17/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2.2. WANCE, A. ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 16.2.42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2.3. BERRY, W.C. R.A.F.V.R. (buried at sea 15.2.42). ^(Fighter Group)
S.A. 2.4. BERRY, J. ^(Apt. Group) buried BANKA ISLAND 17/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
LAC. TUCKER, A. ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 15.2.42. ^(Apt. Group)
LAC. BOWEN, D. ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea 15.2.42. ^(Apt. Group)

MISSING:

Other ranks: ^(Apt. Group)
Corporal BERRY, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 17/4/42.
LAC. WATKINSON, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42.
A.C. 1. FAIRBANKS, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea. 14/4/42.
1252122. A.C. 1. T.B. BOWEN, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea. 14/4/42.
A.C. 1. WILLY, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 17/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
91118. A.C. 1. MCKATTEL, W.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
1177613. A.C. 1. DOLMAN, J.H., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42.
635121. AC. SWIFT, ^(Apt. Group) buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(SHR. Section)

MISSING:

Other ranks: ^(Apt. Group)
Sgt. J. MERRICK, R.A.F.V.R., buried BANKA ISLAND. 14/4/42.
Sgt. TRANNAN, A.A., " buried BANKA ISLAND. 14/4/42.
545204. Cpl. WILKINSON, " buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
Cpl. CHALNERS, W., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
Cpl. WYNDHAM, C., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
632213. S.A. 2. C. LAURENCE, R.C., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2. C. WILSON, R.C., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2. C. UNDERWOOD, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2. C. DODD, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2. C. MCGINNIS, J., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
S.A. 2. C. MALONE, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. 1. WILKINSON, " buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. 1. WILKINSON, A., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. 1. WILKINSON, R., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. 1. LOONY, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. ADAMS, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. WILLIAMS, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. WILSON, B., R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. SPAINFORTH, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)
A.C. GOWIE, R.A.F.V.R., buried at sea. 14/4/42. ^(Apt. Group)

NAME.

ADDRESS.

DATE.

LIST CPAGE 3

R.A.F. (continued).

MISSING (continued):-

569643	L.A.C. DATSON, D.H.	(ASRS)	16/2/42
2295	A.C.2 MOORE, F.A.	(ASRS)	16/2/42
	Cpl. A. SPARKES.	(243. W.R.V.R.A.F.)	15.2.42.
	Cpl. - HORTON.	"	"
	L.A.C. L. YARDLEY.	"	"
	L.A.C. HUGHES, W.	"	"
	L.A.C. J. UNDERWOOD.	"	"
	L.A.C. - RICHARDS.	"	"
	L.A.C. - "PADDY" VAUX.	"	"
	L.A.C. - "TAPPY" DAVIES (or DAVEY).	"	"
	A.C.D. DIMON.	"	"
	A.C. - GUY	"	"
	A.C. - LUCAS.	"	"

DIED (contd.)

Officers: P/O Paul Stevens, died approx. 25/4/42 of exposure in open boat 500 miles approx. S. of Java. Buried at sea. Age 21.

Other Ranks: No. 926871 L.A.C. PEROWNE, W.H. 20/8/42 at Charitas Hospital, Palembang Grave No. E.II/47 New European Cemetery, Palembang.

Cpl. L.G. Stiff RCAF died approx. 23/6/42 of exposure in open boat 20 miles approx. S. of Sumatra. Buried at sea. Age 21.

L.A.C. K. MARLOW RAAF died approx. 3/7/42 (as result of exposure in open boat) at BUKITINGA lighthouse S.W. Sumatra. Buried in Cemetery about 1 mile from lighthouse. Age 24.

LIST D

LIST C

PAGE 2

Page 2

ROYAL AIR FORCE: Continued).

DIED OF WOUNDS:

Officers: Flight Lieutenant R.W. ARMSTRONG, R.A.F.V.R.
(Interred at MUNTOK Cemetery, BANKA ISLAND,
11.3.42). *fighter group*

Other Ranks: 1000442. A.C.I. TATE, G.W., R.A.F.V.R. (ASRS)
(interred MUNTOK Cemetery, BANKA ISLAND,
18.3.42.).
643047 Cpl. W. KELLY, R.A.F. 17/2/42 at Charitas
Hospital, Palembang

DIED:

Other Ranks: 1250898. A.C.I. GARRARD, N.F.; R.A.F.V.R. (ASRS)
(Died of Dysentery in CHARITAS Hospital,
PALEMBANG 12/4/42)

941974. A.C.I. WILCOX, S. 17/5/42
(Died of Dysentery and malaria in
CHARITAS HOSPITAL, PALEMBANG - buried
Grave No. E.34 in New European Cemetery
PALEMBANG).