

# "SS Vyner Brooke"

Sunk by Japanese bombers in the Banka Straits, Sumatra.

On 14 February 1942.

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## Introduction:

The purpose of researching this tragic event and compiling a memorial document on the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" is to attempt to expand the knowledge of and facilitate a wider historical awareness of the sinking. Also, in the interests of creating a memorial to those currently unidentified victims, to identify as many as possible of the passengers and crew on the ship at the time of its sinking and decipher the fate of these individuals.

In carrying out this research it has also brought to light that the events on Radji Beach were more awful than the general story portrayed in the mainstream media over the past 70 years. Therefore this document has a blunt outcome in that it presents something closer to the truth insofar as the crimes of the Japanese troops involved at Radji Beach.

The reader is to be aware that some of the realities presented in the latter part of this Introduction may be upsetting.

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

The general story of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", and in particular the fate of the twenty one nurses of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) so horrendously massacred on Radji Beach, has become relatively well known in Australia and is well told in the following books in the possession of the researcher:

- Firstly the book **"On Radji Beach"** by Ian W. Shaw (published in 2010) is a very well written and most comprehensive account which rightly focuses almost exclusively on the lives and the deaths of the Sisters from the Australian Army Nursing Service who boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke". The book is highly recommended for anyone wishing to understand the living hell encountered by the nurses from the time of the ship being attacked by Japanese bombers.
- **"White Coolies"** by Betty Jeffrey (first published in 1954 and then reprinted many times since) is the story through the eyes of Sister Betty Jeffrey, AANS, who survived the sinking of the ship and subsequent inhumane internment by the Japanese. It was first written during the three and a half years she was a prisoner of the Japanese in Sumatra.
- **"Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke"** by Ralph E. H. Armstrong (published in 2003) who as a boy in his pre-teens also survived the sinking and then the years of internment in Sumatra
- **"By Eastern Windows"** written by William H. McDougall Jr. (originally published in 1948) gives a valuable insight into the events in his chapter on survivor Eric Germann and also notes his later discussions with child survivor Isidore 'Discha' Warman.
- **"Women Beyond the wire"** written by Lavinia Warner and John Sandilands which covers the story of the survivors from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" as part of the overall tapestry of the experiences of women internees of the Japanese 1942-54.



As a result this document does not attempt to purport to be anything like the full story of the events and experiences of the passengers, because they have already been admirably recorded in the books mentioned above and the biographies of Sister Vivian Bullwinkel.

It focuses on identifying as many people involved and perhaps revealing some previously unanalysed and unrecorded aspects of the sinking and its aftermath.

One of the noticeable gaps in our knowledge of the last voyage of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" is the identity of most of the approximately 105 civilian women, men and children - together with the few service personnel on board and the 52 crew - who, in addition to the 65 Australian Nurses were aboard the ship on its last voyage. This memorial document will attempt to identify the passengers and crew, then record their lives and passing in a respectful manner with the objective of showing them as people living full and positive lives, many of whom were cut short in a totally unnecessary fashion by a brutal enemy.

As already stated the identities of the 65 AANS personnel are clearly recorded and the noble lives of many of those who were murdered on Banka Island are memorialised in literature and records in Australia, Singapore, and the UK and also on the memorial that will be placed on Radji beach in Sumatra on 16 February 2017.

Of the probably more than 100 people killed during and after the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" only 15 of the deaths are memorialised by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, which is partly the motivation for creating a memorial document such as this one.

One of the more chilling aspects of the historical events surrounding the last voyage of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' is that the Australian Army nurses - along with their nursing counterparts from the QAIMNS and the General Hospitals in Singapore - had been sternly ordered out of Singapore at the last minute before the impending defeat and Surrender. This was primarily because news was starting to filter through from China of the terrible atrocities and rapes committed against British and Chinese nurses by the soldiers of the 229<sup>th</sup> Regiment (the 'Ganaka Butai') of the 38<sup>th</sup> Division of the Japanese Imperial Army on Christmas Day 1941, at St Stephens College Hospital, when they attacked and took Hong Kong. One of the first insights into the events on Radji Beach and Banks Island is that, in some sort of cruel synchronicity of history, it was two Companies of these same bestial men from the very same 229<sup>th</sup> Regiment from Hong Kong were landing as the invasion army on Banka Island just as the survivors of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' were struggling through the sea to reach land. Unbelievably, the specific Japanese troops that had been the cause of the urgent evacuation of all Nurses from Singapore had been transported hundreds of miles in the intervening few weeks from Hong Kong and were now waiting for them on Banka Island with a homicidal Officer in Charge in the form of one Major Orita Masaru. How cruel can be the twists of fate in times of war!

But first let us recap to clear up any questions on the sinking and atrocities.

### How many people were on board?

The significant variance in the records and memories of number of passengers on board reflects the chaos on the Singapore docks on those last few days before the surrender to the Japanese. The reality was that by the 12-13 February 1942 thousands of women and children, babies, civilian men and servicemen were pushing, shoving, coercing and threatening their way onto any of the last ships leaving the city before the terror of the Japanese Army arrived from their frontline - which was by then on Bukit Timah Road and in Pasir Panjang.

Numbers given for those actually on board the 'SS Vyner Brooke' range between 227 and 330 people, including the crew.

Captain 'Gubby' Borton states in his report that the people on board comprised:

- Crew: 7 Officers and 45 ratings
- Passengers: 1 R.N.: 1 Army: approx. 180 civilians, mainly women and children.
- Survivors: RN 7: Army 1: Prisoners of War or civilians about 100: internees at Palembang.



- Indicating **227 people** on board, but also that perhaps there had not been an accurate headcount whilst at sea.

The website Naval-History.net says of 47 crew and 181 passengers, 125 were missing – this indicates 228 people.

The records compiled in the Changi POW camp 'Bureau of Record and Enquiry' under Captain David Nelson, SSVF, show – *'Passengers, RNL Army 1, Civilians (mainly women) 180 plus or minus'*. Then he records *'Survivors RNL Army 1 Civilians 100 plus or minus'*. This record seems to reflect the view of Captain Borton which may well have been the case since Captain Borton became a POW and his views would have passed through the POW network to Changi POW camp in Singapore with its information collecting Bureau of Record and Enquiry.

Major William Alston Gebbutt (NAA B3856, 144/1/346) states that on board were "... Lt. R. E. Borton plus 50 crew, including gun crew ..." he also estimated a total of 200 passengers including a number of Eurasian men, women and children - this indicates a complement of 250 people.

In "By Eastern Windows" (p.140) the author quotes passenger Eric Germann as there being "250 passengers", but this presumably includes the nurses and the crew; this is also the number on board quoted in the book "Women beyond the Wire".

Author Ian W. Shaw in his book "On Radji Beach" (p.126) states there were 65 Australian Army nurses (certain), about 150 civilian and military personnel and a crew of 40 – giving a total of around 255 persons.

An interesting statement in this context is that by Lt. Russell F. Wright (who had been the Assistant Embarkation Officer when the 'Vyner Brooke' left Singapore) – he said in his post war signed affidavit in the War Crimes files that he and the other men in his group were refused permission to board the ship because the captain advised "... that their complement was 250 above lifebelt strength ...". He later sailed on another evacuation ship; the 'Mata Hari' and fate brought him back into captivity – and the surviving AANS nurses including Vivian Bullwinkel – at Muntok internment camp.

AANS Ada 'Dickey' Syer believed there to have been 300 people on board "... assorted races and creeds and conditions. Some well dressed and some in rags ..." (Syer).

Other authors have stated:

Joseph Kennedy's book "When Singapore Fell" (p.41) – 200 or more passengers; the same figure as used by Geoffrey Brook in "Singapore's Dunkirk" ; but less than stated in "The Battle for Singapore" (p.323) which suggests **300 passengers**.

Dr. Goldberg – Curth in her report states there were 280-290 passengers but it is unclear whether she means to include crew, which would take the total up to **330 people** on board.

On the Angelpo.com website, Vivian Bullwinkel is quoted as stating there were "... 265 frightened men, women and children, plus the 65 AANS nurses ...", suggesting about **330 people** on board.

Note: The American passenger, Eric German, is recorded in the book "By Eastern Windows" as observing that (p.140) whilst the Europeans were packed into the dining saloon, the Eurasians were jammed in the after hatch, and the forward hatch held the Chinese crew which had been replaced by some Malays with British naval ratings and a few British army lads. This memorial document is notably deficient in that it has no record of the Chinese crew or their fate.



According to the very brief official typed report by the Captain of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", the chronology of the last voyage of the ship was:

- Thursday 12 February 1942 :
  - 2000 – Left Singapore
  - 2400 – Entered DURIAN STRAIT and carried on till daylight.
- Friday 13 February 1942:
  - 0800 – Anchored in small bay at island off LANKA ISLAND
  - 0900 – Enemy plane circled ship, no attack
  - 1110 – Enemy plane circled ship, no attack
  - 1130 – Hove up and proceeded to LIDA CHANNEL, close to shore (LANKA ISLAND)
  - 1500 – Ship circled by three enemy planes – no attack. Planes headed north.
- Saturday 14 February 1942:
  - 0130 – Anchored off GUJING ISLANDS
  - 0600 – A plane signalled, but could not understand signal: then plane used machine gun and flew away to the south.
  - 0900 – Enemy plane circled ship, but no attack.
  - 1000 – Hove, up, and proceeded towards BANGA STRAIT
  - 1300 – Attacked by nine enemy planes. Ship at full speed and endeavouring by continuous alteration of course to avoid the bombs. Low level bombing by planes.
  - 1320 – Orders to abandon ship. Engines stopped, ship listing to Starboard: Port lifeboats all badly damaged (3); and one in starboard side by splinters: two lifeboats lowered away with women and children superintended by Sub. Lieut. SEDGEMAN and Lieut Commandeer WHIGG. All passengers had lifebelts on, and during all previous alerts.
  - 1340 – Ship heeled right over and to Starboard, and remained bottom up for about two minutes, and finally sank. During attack – Lewis gun and 4 inch gun in action. Position of ship 8 degrees north of MUNGOK LIGHTHOUSE when sunk.

Passenger Major Gebbutt, AIF, has left us a very well written and detailed account of the events which is worth understanding and he makes some statements which clearly question Captain Barton's judgement in not remaining anchored close to land during daylight hours. The objective of this order, which was issued to all the ships leaving Singapore during the last few days prior to the surrender, is not recorded but from a commonsense viewpoint was the correct one since passengers and crew would have more easily reached land when attacked, as opposed to being miles offshore and relying on lifeboats and rafts.

Gebbutt's report correlates with the sparse chronological report of Captain Barton insofar as times and places, but when Barton decided to leave the 'Gujing islands' (Gebbutt calls them Goejou Island) at 1000 hours on Saturday 14 February - after being buzzed and machine gunned by Japanese planes - essentially to make a run for it, Gebbutt records "... The Captain stated to me that he considered it suicidal to remain anchored close to land, that the ship could easily be picked up from the air and would provide a sitting shot for bombers: from his experience he believed that he might be able to avoid the bombs in an open fairway. Accordingly he did not obey his orders to anchor [sic] in the day time....".

Gebbutt also notes the serious risk faced by many on board if the ship was actually sunk because total crew and passenger numbers vastly exceeded the capacity of lifeboats – in fairness to Captain Barton this was the case with almost every ship leaving Singapore in the few days prior to the Surrender and most Captains tried their hardest to firstly prevent too many passengers boarding their ships and secondly to warn people of the undercapacity of lifeboats:

"... Early in the journey an examination of the boats was made in company with a ship's officer, who stated that of the six boats carried, two would hold 30 passengers each and the remainder 20 passengers each. Each passenger was given a lifebelt, and lifebelts were altered to fit the children. In view of the deficiency of lifeboat accommodation, all who were strong swimmers were told that if the ship was sunk, they must be ready to





*take to the water. Lectures were given explaining the ship's alarm signals, the method of use of the lifebelts, the method of loading the lifeboats and on general matters should an attack be made..."*

Gebbutt's record insofar as contingency planning is borne out by those also recorded by Australian Army nurses on board and to give the ship's officers and the leaders of the nursing staff their due credit, procedures and training delivered in the 36 hours available were very good for coping with any attack by bombers.

Gebbutt continues with an account of the actual attacks which finally sank the "SS. Vyner Brooke":

*"... After the ship left Goejou island there were three or four alerts before about 1300 hrs when a formation of nine planes were observed flying towards the ship. These planes flew over the ship several times and were fired upon by the Lewis gun. They then went about two miles ahead of the ship, and three dived over the ship, dropping their bombs from approximately 3,000 feet. The anti submarine gun and the Lewis gun were fired, and the ship circled at full speed. The bombs all fell into the sea, exploding close enough to shake the ship. The same procedure again took place when a further three planes attacked. Finally the nine planes attacked together, converging from the centre, half-right and left. This time two bombs hit the ship with a severe jar and rattling; the engines were almost immediately stopped..."*

It seems that three bombs actually hit the ship (p. 151 ORB):

- One bomb which went down the funnel killing all the crew in the engine room - this would have included the "elderly reservist" Lt Reith and at least three of the Malay sailors
- One bomb penetrated the staterooms killing most of the elderly passengers who had sought shelter there (P.165 ORB) - this would have been up to 15 people
- A third bomb killed or wounded the gun crew on the forward deck and the "elderly couple" in the radio operator's cabin.

Major Gebbutt tells us that *"... During the attack the European passengers were assembled in the saloon and lay down on the floor...one of the bombs which hit the ship went very close to the saloon, which was filled with the red glare from the bursting bomb. A ship's officer then told the passengers to go to their boat stations and he led the way. There was no panic..."*

Gebbutt also tells us that *"...of the boats, only two were undamaged by the bombs. These were lowered to the water and the passengers climbed down the rope ladders under the control of the ship's officers. Two other boats were lowered, but became water-logged..."*. Survivor Eric German helped lower the lifeboats as well only to find one immediately filling with sea water *"... Bomb fragments had holed it, as well as three other lifeboats. Only their sealed air tanks kept them afloat..."* (BYE p 142).

Dr Goldberg - Curth says she observed that one lifeboat was undamaged and was filled with sick passengers whilst the remainder of the passengers jumped into the sea.

'On Radji Beach' explains this period of the sinking in a very well structured manner and is recommended reading for a fuller understanding of the chronology and detail of the tragedy.

Gebbutt agrees with Captain Borton that the ship was attacked at 1310 hrs and sank at 1340 hrs and tells us that *"... at this time the ship was at the entrance to the Banka Straits, some 10 or 12 miles from the island. The weather was calm and the visibility good..."*. He is referring to Banka Island which is a large island off the east coast of Sumatra.

Despite the lack of panic evident en masse, the book "On Radji Beach" puts the death toll during the sinking at somewhere between 40 and 50 people, with about 6 people dying as a result of jumping into the sea with ill-fitting life jackets. It appears that apart from those killed in the engine room, in the staterooms and on the deck by bombs and machine gunning; people also lost their lives because they could not swim, because they had been injured badly during the attack on the ship, or were struck by falling rafts, debris or parts of the ship whilst it listed.



It seems that there were a number of 'elderly' men and woman on board who were killed during the bombing of the ship and/or drifting in the sea afterwards – but who individually have not been able to be identified during this research. Along with the gap in identified children and the estimates of the number of children who boarded the ship it would seem that it is the very old and the very young that make up the bulk of victims who remain nameless.

Various reports exist on the fate of nurses killed on board the ship during the bombing, others who died escaping the ship and those who drowned or perished on rafts at sea. These are included in the entries for individual nurses who lost their lives during the period of the attack and the sinking.

Nurse 'Dickey' Syer recalled that the rafts of the ship were little square things made of canvas (Syer) they are also referred to as being made of 'gimrack' (which means something made of substandard materials) - it seems that such liferaft were made of what we would have regarded today as two wooden pallets joined together and covered with canvas, possibly with some cork material inside. They became lethal projectiles when sliding off a ship which was listing or 'turning turtle'.

Major Gebbutt describes the scene that remained after the sinking *"...In the water there was a collection of people and flotsam scattered over about half a square mile of water. The ship's boats were seen several hundred yards away, but came no closer. The swimmers were individually or in groups clinging to wreckage, or floating about ..."*

Many women and children would have also died when the ship listed ( or turned turtle) and fell on the second lifeboat which got away full of women and children – this is where Wilma Young and Jean Ashton managed to struggle away from the ship coming down on them, but it tragically took Dona Wilton down.

As related by Dr Neil McGregor (son of Sister Sylvia (Muir) the bodies of Sister McDonald and two other unidentified nurses were found on a raft in the Indian Ocean two or three weeks later (the raft having floated in that time down to and through the Sunda Straits to the Indian Ocean which is the direction of ocean currents around bank island and Sumatra at that time of the year) – this was also confirmed by Sister Wilma Oram to ex – nurse Dorothy Angell who knew Wilma after the War. Both AANS nurses were told this outcome after being repatriated to Singapore at the end of the War, by a sailor aboard a ship which found the raft. This of course leaves the fate of at least three of the nurses (including perhaps Matron Paschke) and the two children on the raft with them all, unresolved. The last time this raft was sighted being swept southwards down the Bank Straits two of the nurses - Sister Dorsch and Sister Grenerry -were in the sea holding onto trailing ropes from the raft. One piece of information which suggest that one or more of the nurses made an effort to swim for Banka Island further south along the coast (perhaps when they realised that there was no more land in front of them beyond Banka Island) is that contained in the book "Soldier Surgeon In Malaya' by G. Hamilton published in 1957 (source: Barbara Angell on the 'angellpro' website). In this book it is stated that Colonel/ Matron A. 'Annie' N. Sage of the AANS - who greeted the surviving AANS nurses after release from internment in 1945 - was told that the identity disc of Sister Dorsch had been found by a *"... Mrs Armstrong – since died ..."* on a beach on Banka Island. The only Mrs Armstrong interned in Duntok and Palembang was Mrs. Resie Armstrong, mother of Ralph Armstrong who wrote 'A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke'. Mrs Armstrong, Ralph and several other members of the family were on a raft after the sinking that was also swept south down the Banka Straits and landed initially on the Sumatran coast before being taken by fishermen to a beach on the south coast of Banka Island (P.48-49 "SCOVVB") and then to the town of Koba on the north – eastern side of the island. It is possible that either, or both, Sister Dorsch and Sister Grenerry did make it to a beach south east of Duntok but it also opens up the awful possibility that they would have crossed paths with the second landing force of the invading Japanese Army on Banka island – the one making for the airfield and Pangkalpinang (see the later section on 'Who Carried Out This Atrocity' and the related Map 2 of Japanese Army plans). To have met up with soldiers with the record of war crimes in Hong Kong may have almost certainly meant the same fate for these two Sisters and their comrades on Radji Beach.

### Who were the passengers?



The women were a mix of 'Establishment Singapore' British wives, British evacuees from Malaya, Eurasians, White Russians, British servicemen's wives and two Siamese women – a mix of people who only a few days before would have probably not even acknowledged each other if they passed in the street in the stratified and racially separated Singapore society.

However some of the 'establishment wives' such as Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Waddle, and Mrs. Macleod would have known each other very well from years of church going, socialising and perhaps sports such as golf in their younger years.

In considering what other group dynamics took people aboard we can surmise that the school teachers/principals on board who included Kathleen Waddle, Dorothy Doreton, and Dorothy Macleod etc. were probably motivated to leave on this ship because of the networking of their jobs and their husbands.

Interestingly it appears that there were only one family of Chinese passengers (the Chans) and one woman with a Chinese surname (Mrs Nellie Ellen Ghay who was an Englishwoman married to a Chinese) recorded specifically on this ship – but one statement referred to 'Asiatics' plural so it seems that there may have been a several other Chinese couples or families on board who are as yet unidentified.

Insofar as the considering the actual composition of passengers - as part of the process of determining who has not yet been identified in this researched memorial document - one paragraph from the book 'ORB' is key:

*"... About 20 of the passengers were adult males, mostly in their late middle age plus some who were elderly. The majority of this group were retired colonial officials and rubber planters....All of them were accompanied by their wife or, more rarely, by a daughter. There were a similar number of older women, some were married to the men, but others were widowed or the spouses of senior managers from commercial enterprises or the Colonial service. The majority, however, were younger women and children, with around 40 of the passengers being children. Overwhelmingly, they were the wives and children of servicemen who had stayed behind in Singapore with their units. Some of the nurses were concerned about the number of children aboard the 'Vyner Brooke' ..." (ORB.p.133)*

This is a very important paragraph and indicates that the composition of the people on board the ship may have looked like (figures in brackets are the number of people in this category who have actually been identified in this document):

- Males in late middle age and elderly (includes some younger men )      20 (18)
- Females - older women ( classified as over 40 years)                      20 (21)
- Younger women ( estimated at say 30)    30 (32)
- Children    40 ( 11)
- Australian Army nurses    65 (65)
- Crew as recorded by Captain Borton    52 (23)

TOTAL 222 (170)

- Which is very close to Captain Borton's report and the figure given by Major Gebbutt (figures in brackets are the numbers of people fitting into these categories identified from the research for this memorial document). This guides us to the conclusion that the main gaps in identifying those on board – meaning those people who went missing without trace - are probably some 6 -8 elderly men, another 10 - 15 younger women, about 30 children and a similar number (31) of crew.

There are a lot of references to children being on board, but as with so many accounts of the sinkings during the evacuation of Singapore, children are only an afterthought when survivors actually set about recording (generally in internment camps after the 'dust had settled') who was on board and there is no definitive record of their numbers – except for "ORB' (p.133) which states "... with around 40 of the passengers being children...". If that figure is correct (it presumably is contained in one of the Australian Nurses records) then



the death toll amongst children was around 75 percent! Sister Ada 'Dickey' Syer in her post war oral archive held in the Singapore Archives states that soon after departing "... a lot of infants required feeding ...". Research for this memorial document has identified only about a dozen or so children, but there were clearly many more. This is one of the worst – as yet unrecorded parts of this terrible event – since it indicates some twenty to thirty children and babies died during and after the attack on the ship, or in the sea, and will be researched further in coming years.

It seems clear from analysing the various reports and memoirs that the gap between those identified in this document and those actually on board the "SS. Vyner Brooke" - a group of about 30 – 40 people - comprises to a large extent those (often elderly men and women, including a few couples) killed during the bombing on the ship in cabins and staterooms - as well as those who climbed down to, slipped, fell into, or were tipped from lifeboats into the sea but who did not manage to reach other groups and floated away or drowned quite quickly. The infants and children would have been most vulnerable at this latter point of the 'abandon ship' and mothers with more than one child would have had little chance of protecting more than one child at a time.

These people may never be identified unless new letters or diaries come forward.

### What happened on Radji Beach?

On the morning of 16 February quite a sizeable group of some 80 -100 people had gathered on Radji Beach from the two 'Vyner Brooke' lifeboats, and the steel hulled lifeboat which landed early that Monday morning carrying a badly burned Malay sailor (who shortly died and was immediately buried on the beach) and six to eight soldiers (one of which also died quite quickly and was also buried on the beach), apparently from the "HMS Li Wo" or the "Jing Peng" - both of which had also been sunk around the same time in the waters north west of Banka Island.

One of the senior nurses in consultation with either engineering officer Sub-Lt. Jimmy Miller or Sub - Lt. Sedgeman appears to have instructed the civilian women and children, plus Dr Dominguez and A/S Cake and A/S Noble (who were wounded in a manner that prevented them being helpful carrying wounded on stretchers later that morning, as appeared to have been the plan) to start the trek into Duntok and the others would move off after them at perhaps a faster pace. A/S Wallace Cake, RN, in his post war affidavit recalled being "... instructed to go with a party of about 8 women and three children (I think all civilians) up a path from the beach ...". Others describe the group as anything up to 20 people.

In the book 'ORB' author Ian Shaw has written ( p.209) that after the civilian women and children set off for Duntok "... there were considerably fewer than 100 people left on Radji Beach ..." ;

- 21 Australian nurses
  - About 25 uninjured men ( mainly soldiers and sailors but also civilians and including the Chinese doctor, the engineering officer from the 'Vyner Brooke' and a number of NCOs from both the Royal Navy and the British Army)
  - About 25 wounded (he puts it as "...the numbers of uninjured men was matched by the number of wounded, most of who were incapable of walking and would have to be carried on stretchers ...") which would have comprised 2 or 3 civilian women, a couple of civilian men, plus wounded sailors and soldiers.
  - One elderly European woman
- These numbers, totalling 72 people can be used as a general guide.

Page 225 of 'ORB' tells us that the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal accepted the conclusion that the number of people murdered on Radji Beach amounted to 83 people :

- 50 men
- 22 women





- 10 stretcher cases [ we assume that this included women and men]

The official records point to the sequence being that the Japanese split the 50 - 80 people left on the Beach into three groups – the Officers and senior civilian men; the naval ratings and Army ORs and other civilian men; and finally the 21 AANS personnel and the one civilian woman – leaving a small number of wounded women and servicemen on stretchers and in a fisherman's hut. They then took the groups who were able to walk, one at a time, along the beach and murdered them.

Ian Shaw's writing is notable in that he confirms that the Chinese doctor mentioned as being on the beach was murdered by the Japanese – research strongly indicates that this may have in fact been Dr Gay Soon Woon of Singapore (see entry for Gay/Gay below) whose wife, Mrs Nellie Ellen Gay of 61 Rochor Road, Singapore, died in internment in Sumatra in 1944. To date no record of his fate has been found.

The records state clearly and consistently that there were 21 Australian Army nurses on Radji Beach and their identities are well recorded.

There is one discordant note insofar as identity of these nurses given that they were either wearing remnants of their Australian uniform, remnants of civilian clothing or possibly garments donated by servicemen once they had reached the beach. The unexplained fact is that one Corporal Robert Henry Seddon, Royal Marines, who had been sunk on 16 February on the "Jin Ping", had floated at sea in a lifebelt for 24 hours and as he drifted in towards Radji Beach witnessed the massacre of Naval Officers, servicemen, merchant seamen and the 21 nurses and one civilian woman. He states in his post war signed affidavit a couple of very relevant observations he made from his position a short distance out in the sea - he saw three groups formed on the beach; then *"... 2 or 3 men and women made a break for it to get into the water ... one was shot but kept swimming away from the beach to the sea..."* [Presumably Stoker Lloyd]; also *"... Some of the remaining men and women were trying to escape. They were bayoneted and shot..."* and finally *"... the Japs started from my right to bayonet the women one by one from behind their backs ..."*. After floating ashore and playing dead when inspected by the Japanese patrol that were still at the Beach he left the water after a few more hours and spent the night in the jungle. The next day he went back down the beach and says in his post war report ( ) *"... I searched around and found the bodies of fifteen New Zealand and Australian Nursing sisters, 15 British service personnel and 5 merchant seamen ... nearby I saw the bodies of 7 R.N. personnel... the latter included 2 officers"*. Given that there were not supposed to be any nurses in New Zealand uniforms this remains a strange statement by Seddon – although there was one nurse from New Zealand, but she would have been wearing an AANS uniform.

The '7 R.N. personnel... the latter included 2 officers' statement of Corporal Seddon is also an important record. We know that Stoker Lloyd and Able Seaman McLurg made a run into the sea so their bodies would not have been on the beach therefore the bodies seen would have included Sub-Lt Sedgeman, Sub-Lt Miller and five others – we are told they were all naval ratings. Because of their ranking it is possible that these bodies included those of Royal Navy servicemen Able Seaman Brooks, Clements and Keenan. There is also the possibility that the person identified as the mysterious and so called 'Extra Second Engineer' by the name of Gyrwhitt was also in this group.

The overall total also correlates with there having been at least 50 people massacred on the Beach – with a few having floated away at the time they were killed and about six more further up the beach and in a hut (which Seddon does not appear to have found, no doubt because at that time a Japanese patrol appeared and he ran into the jungle). This must have left some 45 -50 bodies scattered around the Radji Beach area.

Major Gebbutt, AIF, who had been a passenger on the ship but who made it on his own to Banka Island that same afternoon by swimming (because there was no room to hold onto on the rafts being used by the nurses and civilians) collected a lot of information on the atrocity during his time as POW and significantly records *"...that Sedgeman and one nurse tried to escape and failed..."*, he also confirms that *"... after the shooting the Japanese bayoneted any bodies of whose death they were uncertain..."*. Corporal Seddon also recorded *"... A few did attempt to rush into the water but they were shot and killed before they were able to swim out of range ..."*



The remaining women, who may have included one or two of the most seriously wounded nurses together with several civilian women wounded also in the attack on the ship, were lying on stretchers and there were up to half a dozen servicemen (perhaps a civilian man as well) in a fisherman's hut or shelter further up the beach.

There remains the mystery of the identity of the "... English boy..." or "... English lad..." mentioned by Eric German as having been in the same submerged lifeboat and the same seat as they rowed to shore - in the second lifeboat to arrive - who that night was the only person to go with Eric and help probably Sisters Casson/Wight/Halligan plus one other move one of these nursing sisters along the beach to the bonfire. This researcher conjectures that the 'English boy' was presumably somewhere between 12 - 18 years of age so as to be described as such. This unidentified boy/young man described as "... The young Englishman ..." on p. 148 was shot and then bayoneted in the first group of eight men on Radji Beach. Was he a son of Mrs Bull or Mrs Stevens?

After shooting and bayoneting the officers, civilian men, ships crew and servicemen further along the beach; and then committing the atrocity against the nurses and civilian woman, the Japanese walked - presumably still laughing amongst themselves as they are recorded to have done when they came back to collect the nurses - back to where they had started and bayoneted the wounded men and women on their stretchers.

The aftermath of the atrocity is described by two eyewitnesses:

- Leading Seaman William 'Dick' Wilding who had been on the 'SS. Li Wo' (also sunk in the vicinity of Banka Island) and reached the shore in a damaged lifeboat on 16 February after the massacre also made a signed affidavit which is held in the War Crimes file in NAA in Melbourne and tells us that he was with a 'Malay boy' named Abdulla (a Telegraphist in the Malay Navy - or more likely the ORNVR) and they went to a kampong on Banka Island - later meeting Corporal Seddon. On 17 February they all went to Radji Beach and *"... we found a lifeboat and a dozen bodies, all women except two. Some were scantily dressed.... possibly as civilians, some in nurses uniforms and some naked. Flying on sticks on the beach alongside was the Red Cross of a nurse's uniform. We found one Englishman still alive (possibly either Dr Watson or Dr Betteridge) sitting further along the beach. He was an Englishman badly wounded, and I think he could not have lived.... Of the only two women I examined one had been shot and one had been killed by a sword... we then moved further along the beach and found roughly 20 (??) bodies (mostly servicemen) also shot and bayoneted... we were joined on the beach by an American [this would have been Eric German]. He told us that he was a member of a party of nurses, civilians and servicemen who had been killed on the beach ..."*
- Eric German tells us what he found the day after he had been part of the massacre and when he walked back (with the above-mentioned three survivors of another ship he met on the way) and found *"... The stretchers also were where they had been left and in them the patients lay staring sightlessly at the sky. Two stretchers were empty. One had been the wounded soldier Kingsley's [sic - Kinsley]. What had become of Kingsley? Buridge [it appears this was Betteridge and this may be Eric German's or William MacDougall's admitted effort to hide the identity of people he talks so openly of on the beach] and the three women had been bayoneted in the chest. ..."* (p. 152-153 BUE)

#### **Are a number of the victims buried at Radji beach?**

One of the most disconcerting aspects, in the context of honouring the deaths and perhaps the remains, in a mass murder such as the war crimes on Radji Beach is the question of what happened to the remains of many of the victims given that so many people were killed in the area.

Much of official history and modern comment seems to be based on the broad assumption that the sea had washed away the remains of all those nurses, civilian women, civilian men, soldiers and sailors killed at Radji Beach.



This view appears to be largely the result of Vivian Bullwinkel's testimony to the post war investigation and subsequent War Crimes trial in Tokyo where she stated that she returned to the beach each day during her couple of weeks of freedom but that one day ( seems to be 25<sup>th</sup> February 1942) when she went to the beach " ... *she was surprised to find a beach empty of all bodies : a particularly high tide appeared to have scoured the beach clean of all traces of the killings, including the bodies of the Australian nurses ...* " (ORB p.226).

Without demeaning in any way the integrity of Vivian Bullwinkel's statement to the War Crimes Tribunal it is valid to note that an officer who met her and listened to her when she was brought into internment states in an official affidavit that (most understandably given her wounds and starvation) she "....*was in a semi - delirious condition at the time I saw her ...*" (Lt Russell F. Wright testimony in the War Crimes file in NAA Melbourne - he had been the Assistant Embarkation Officer for the departure of the 'Vyner Brooke' from Singapore).

Given the very strong sea currents around Banka Island there is no doubt that some of the bodies of the nurses and the Ordinary Ranks soldiers and Naval Ratings ( the two groups who were actually killed in or at the edge of the sea ) would have been washed away by incoming and ebbing tides : but this is not the full story and on closer inspection there are some records by survivors which indicate that certainly for a period after the killings there would have been quite a number of bodies well beyond the reach of the sea.

To be specific the records show:

- A Malay sailor ( who had been badly burned in the attack on the "SS. Vyner Brooke") died upon reaching shore in one of the first lifeboats and was promptly " ... *buried in the sand ...* " on the night of 15<sup>th</sup> February ( BJE, p.146)
- A mortally wounded soldier who drifted ashore in a metal life boat with five other soldiers on the morning of 16<sup>th</sup> February died and was immediately buried that morning next to the Malay sailor (BJE, p.146) - obviously before about 9.00am
- Depending on whether we follow the sequence recorded in ORB ( Officers first then the ORs and ratings in the second group or BJE ( Ratings and ORs first ) : the first group (eight men according to Eric German, BJE p.147, and six according to the book ORB, p. 212) of victims to be executed - this may have been the ratings and ORs and appears to have included the young English boy ( identity ?) who had helped Eric German bring the wounded nurses to the main group on the first night on Radji Beach- may have had " ... *their bodies thrown into the jungle at the edge of the beach...*" (ORB, p.212), leaving seven bodies presumably in or close to the jungle. Stoker Lloyd, who in his post war affidavit states that he was in the first group to go, had of course escaped. Stoker Lloyd's account is contradicted in Eric German's account which mentions seeing when his group arrived at the execution site " ... *at the waters edge, lying face down, sprawled the bodies of those who had gone before them ...*" ( BJE , p.148)
- The next group - Eric German and the Officers (Sedgeman and Diller) and the senior civilians such as Dr. Watson and perhaps Dr. Betteridge and " ... *several other British servicemen ...*" (ORB, p.212) - were ordered to stand in line facing the sea and from his account they (apart from Dr Watson who had been left sitting against a log before the final spot where the killings took place) were on the edge of the sea.
- Suggesting that there was some post massacre handling of the bodies is also raised in a statement by Stoker Lloyd ( "Singapore's Dunkirk" , p.146) where he recounts that after laying in the jungle **for a few days** " ... *all the male bodies had been piled on top one another in a big heap. When I went along and found the bodies of the Australian nurses and other women* [ we should note this is a plural description of the number of women] ..."
- The Australian Army nurses, as is well known, were ordered to walk in a line into the sea and presumably did so - but there are several exceptions. Eric German the day after the killings found " ... *a 'red-haired nurse' was lying higher on the beach than the others ...*" (BJE, p.152): Corporal Seddon (who was swimming to the beach at the time the killings took place , having survived the sinking of the 'Uin Ping', saw some men and women trying to escape but they were bayoneted and shot. So not all would have been at the water's edge.
- Finally there were, depending upon the source record, between eight and ten men and women "stretcher cases"(probably two or three women and around six men) who had been bayoneted and left dead either in the fisherman's hut or in the shade under the trees at the edge of the jungle





bordering the beach i.e. well above the high tide line. Vivian Bullwinkel's evidence to the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal stated that there were " ... about ten to twelve stretcher cases..." (Knights of Bushido" by Lord Russell of Liverpool, p.103) whilst Eric German said there were five stretcher cases - (Mr Buridge/Betteridge, the elderly magistrate, " ... the nurse with the ripped breast and two civilian women with shrapnel wounds ..." (BJE, p.146)

- Apart from those inevitably washed away by the tides and currents, these 'above the high tide' victims may of course have been buried later by local people in which case, when added to the graves of the Malay sailor from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and the soldier from the "Jin Ping" who were definitely buried by the large group of "SS. Vyner Brooke" survivors assembled on the beach on 15 February 1942 indicates that there were/are probably at least eight people buried in the area of the Beach - but maybe many more.
- One such record of local people burying the bodies comes from a niece of Sister Jean Ashton who along with siblings visited Radji Beach in 2012 after which she has recorded the following to this researcher (email Sue Akeroyd 16.11.16) "...Our aunt was a POW and so two of my sisters and a brother went to Duntok to visit the site as you probably learned from the blog. While we were there we visited all of the significant spots and one day, were lucky enough to be taken to Radji Beach. We walked along the beach and watched the water ebb and flow. There was a fisherman on the beach and we chatted to him and told him what we were there for. It was this man who said that he was very familiar with the story of the massacre because his grandfather helped to bury the dead bodies of the nurses. I do not know his name or anything more than that but he probably still fishes on that section of beach..."

It is also worth recording that whilst the Australian nurses were initially being held in the Duntok cinema building a Japanese soldier asked Sister Hannah what uniform she was wearing - when it was explained he said "... we have just buried 25 women wearing that uniform ..." (Sister Ada 'Dickey' Syer oral history record, end of Tape 2, held in Australian War Memorial, ID # SO 4057). Apart from the obvious implication that the bodies of the nurses (and others?) may have been buried at Radji Beach there is the fact that the number of nurses referred to is more than the 21 nurses executed by machine gun. Given that at least three civilian women were also killed in the massacre (Mrs Betteridge, Kathleen Waddle and at least one other) this number of twenty five women may have more importance than previously attributed to it: because if tasked with burying that many people I doubt that a Japanese soldier would have later made a differentiation about a few women in civilian clothing.

The awful and almost overwhelming question of the remains of men and women, and children, from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and other ships sunk between 13 - 16 February 1942 in the seas around Banka Island and being washed ashore on its beaches, is one that is underscored by the following excerpt from the report by Captain Uemm of the 'Mission to Bangka island, Bintan island and Pom Pong island' during March 1946 as part of the War Graves investigation "... many human bones were discovered along the coastline stretching from Duntok harbour to Tanjong Kalian and north to Tanjong Oelar. These remains are those of shipwrecked soldiers and civilians. It is estimated from interrogation of the natives that they amounted to several hundreds. There are no means whatsoever of identifying the remains, a few bones were however collected, as proof and for examination upon our return to Singapore ...". He does record that they found 347 graves around Duntok (the majority Dutch internees) and talks of 76 AANS graves but it would appear that he may have been classifying all womens graves as AANS.

Apart from the bodies of perhaps 50 - 100 people who lost their lives in the attack on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' or whilst adrift at sea after the ship sank, many of the bodies which were noted as having washed up on the beaches of Banka Island would have been from the at least 900 women, children, civilian men and servicemen who lost their lives in the attacks and sinkings of a large group of evacuation ships around the islands just north, north west and east of Banka Island during 13- 17 February 1942. These ships included:

- 'SS. Redang' ( sunk on 13 February in the Berhala straits between Banka and Singkep islands with up to 110 passengers and crew)
- 'HMS Siang Wo' ( attacked and run aground on 13 February NW of Banka Island - near the lighthouse - with about 200 passengers and crew)
- 'HMS Hwang Ho' ( sunk off Lingga Island and the survivors taken to Banka as POWs - <sup>12</sup> including Lt Cdr. H. Vickers)





- 'HMS Dragonfly' ( sunk on 14 February)
- 'HMS Giang Bee' ( sunk on 14 February in the Banka Straits with around 300 passengers and crew)
- 'SS. Kuala' ( sunk on 14 February at Pom Pong island north of Banka Island with 750 passengers)
- 'HMS Li Wo' ( sunk on 14 February by the Japanese invasion fleet just north of Banka island)
- 'HMS Grasshopper' (run aground at Sempang island, near Singkep, on 14 February)
- 'HMS Scorpion' (sunk near Sempang island on 14 February)
- 'HMS Jin Ping' (A tug sunk by shellfire from Japanese warships near Muntok lighthouse on 15 February with about 75 on board – 50 of whom were killed - )
- 'SS. Gandjong Pinang' (sunk 30 miles north of Banka on 17 February) – with a large group of 180 or so nurses, women and children on board who had been rescued from Pom Pong island after the sinking of the 'SS Kuala'.

A Lt. Russell F. Wright, who had assisted in the embarkation of evacuees onto the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' in Singapore and retained a continuing interest in their welfare (he actually boarded the 'Mata Hari' and coincidentally arrived at Muntok just prior to the first survivors from the 'SS. Vyner Brooke') had an experience as late as 28 February 1942 which reinforced just how many bodies of victims of the shipwrecks were being washed ashore on Banka Island " ... *About a day prior to Sister Bullwinkle's[sic] [ arrival?], while in a working party I arranged with the Jap guards to proceed to the foreshore in an endeavour to identify bodies washed ashore ( also to view some lifeboats ex 'Hong Tat'). I covered one and a half to two miles of foreshore adjacent to the Cinema Camp. There were about 15 bodies on the beach and in shallow water - some were recognisable as nurses. So far as I knew the scene of the tragedy [he is referring to Radji beach] was some distance from Muntok, possibly 20 miles away. An identification party under Air Comdr. DODIN made an official inspection of the beaches in the immediate vicinity of Muntok. I am not sure of the date, but this was just after Sister Bullwinkle's [sic] arrival...* ".

### **Who carried out this Atrocity and what occurred in truth at Radji Beach?**

After the War the Japanese Government, during the demobilisations phase of its forces, was instructed (Instruction #126, dated 12 October 1945) to compile accounts to record the plans and actions of its military arms prior to and during the War. One such document (Japanese Monograph #67 'Palembang and Bangka Operations Record, January – February 1942' was produced and copied into English in 1953 – copy supplied by Dr Neil McGregor April 2017) gives the identities of the military units involved on Banka Island at the time of the sinking of the 'SS Vyner Brooke' together with a lot of detail as to the dates and places of their deployment.

Essentially this report, compiled by senior Japanese officers including the Chief of Staff of the 38th Division, tells us that on 20 January the 38th division of the Japanese Army (at that point still stationed in Hong Kong after invading that city in December 1941), which included the Division Headquarters Companies of the 229<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment who had committed terrible atrocities around Xmas Eve 1941 at many places in Hong Kong, moved to Camranh Bay in French Indochina (Vietnam) prior to invading southern Sumatra and particularly Palembang .

The specifically allocated 'Bangka invasion unit' of the larger 38<sup>th</sup> Division invasion force – being two companies of 229<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment plus shipping engineer elements - left Camranh Bay on 12 February 1942 and arrived at Muntok anchorage at 0100 hrs on 15 February.

The plan had been:



*"... one platoon was to land in the vicinity of Duntok pier, with the main body, composed of one company and two platoons, landing 2,000 metres south east of Duntok ( See map 2).... After securing the airfield and its surrounding area, one company which was to remain for occupation was to capture Pangkalpinang. The remaining troops were to rejoin, as rapidly as possible, the main body of the advance force in Sumatra..."*

As planned one company of the 228<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment remained to occupy Banka Island while the other company, on the 17 February, began movement across the sea to the Palembang area to join the main body of the invasion force attacking southern Sumatra.

[Researchers Note: The following definitions of the typical makeup of Japanese Army units may be helpful in understanding the descriptions used in this memorial document:

- Company – up to 150 men comprising 3 platoons and commanded by a Captain
- Platoon – up to 50 men comprising 3 sections commanded by a Lieutenant
- Section – up to 15 men consisting of three teams commanded by a Corporal
- Team – about 4 men led by a Senior private

These definitions give us a close approximation of the number of Japanese around Duntok and on Banka Island when the survivors of many ships began to land.]

So as the survivors of the 'SS Vyner Brooke' and other ships began to struggle ashore on Banka Island they were not to know that they arriving at exactly the same time as two Companies of the infamous and ruthless 229<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment from Hong Kong which had been involved in the war crimes during Xmas 1941- the very reason for their original evacuation from Singapore !

So the 'die was cast' for a repeat of the brutality and murder experienced in Hong Kong.

Soon after the War, as Allied forces began to land on Banka Island in late 1945 and early 1946 they started to officially investigate the atrocities being reported by the Australian nurses, men and women internees and POWs who were finally being discovered in the atrociously deprived and neglected Belalau internment camp in south western Sumatra.

A Captain Jemm was the first to complete a comprehensive investigation into the events at Radji Beach and (from his report in the War Crimes file held in the NAA in (Melbourne) he was told by a Japanese soldier that it was "... the 'Orita Butai' - No. 1 and No. 2 Companies, the DG Company and the HQ Company..." - who had carried out the massacre (a 'Butai' is a general term for a Japanese Army unit – it seems to be applied to units the size of regiments down to units the size of platoons and is usually accompanied by the family name of the officer in charge of that unit). Specifically his report notes that the soldier told him it was the No. 3 platoon of 'Gamaka Butai' (sic) of 229 Infantry Regiment who had killed the nurses.

The 'Gamaka Butai' or more correctly the 'Tanaka Butai' were, of course, the 229<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the 38<sup>th</sup> Division of the Japanese Army under Major-General Tanaka (also 'Gamaka or Takaka') Ryosaburo who had invaded Hong Kong and were specifically the troops who had raped and murdered European and Chinese nurses at St Stephens Hospital, Hong Kong.

In the file compiled by Captain Jemm there is also an isolated handwritten note recording a statement that appears to have been made by a Japanese soldier (he appears to have been one TANEDURA KIYOSHI) to the effect that it some men named "... SHIMIZI KINICHI and TANEDURA [sic?] KIYOSHI, [were in?] a platoon of 2 Company under 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. KOHIYADO FUMIO who made a patrol to the coast where they met many foreigners who were shot. These included women ...." This suggests that apart from the identified war criminals Captain (later Major) Orita (Masaru) and Sergeant – Major Goro Kato there was another officer in the killing squad at Radji Beach named 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Kohiyamo Fumio?

There also follows in Jemm's file a note to the effect that "... Japs also killed 5 BORs [i.e. five British other ranks] from a sunken gunboat [possibly the 'Li Wo?'] – they were bayoneted one survivor told E.A. DODENEY, RAOC '2' AON..." this looks to be a reference to the same unit that massacred the Australian Army nurses and continued their killing spree around the coast of Banka Island.

It is worth remembering at this point that there were survivors from other evacuation ships – including<sup>14</sup> the 'SS Gandjong Pinang' which had rescued 180 women, children and nurses from Pom Pong island after the



sinking of the 'SS Kuala' there but only to be sunk itself within a day of rescuing these women and children – who were struggling ashore and some of these people were also summarily executed by the Japanese on the beaches. Notably amongst these were the Captain of the 'SS. Gandjong Pinang' (Lt Basil Shaw, RNZNVR, from New Zealand) and a crew member (Able Seaman Oswald Young, ex 'HMS Repulse') landed near the lighthouse near Muntok and were executed on the spot on 21 February. Also Lt Commander Horace Vickers, Commander of the Malay section of the navy was also executed upon landing on Banka – his remains without his head, were found in a plantation behind Muntok by a post war search party.

The book 'ORB' (p.211) - drawing on what Vivian Bullwinkel included in her post-war affidavit to the War Crimes Tribunal - suggests that the size of the Japanese force of troops arriving at Radji Beach was likely to be around 18 soldiers led by a Sergeant-Major and a Captain. This is of course approximately the size of a 'platoon'.

The Melbourne domiciled War Crimes file in the Australian National Archives has nothing further to offer on the subject of pursuing those responsible for the Radji Beach atrocity (the files for this phase of the investigation must be in another war crimes prosecution file perhaps linked with the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal), but it is clear that by August 1946 the Allies had absolutely not given up their hunt for the criminals responsible for the murders on Radji Beach and in 'The Canberra Times' (30.8.46) there appeared a report that " ... *The whereabouts of the Japanese responsible for the massacre of 21 Australian army nurses on Banka Island .... are slowly being uncovered. Lt. Masayuki Takeuchi, commander of one of the companies on the island was recently identified in a POW stockade and is now in Gaiping gaol, northern Malaya. A second suspect, Sergeant - Major Goro Kato, was captured in New Guinea...* ".

So it seems that the Japanese invasion force on Banka Island - comprising two Companies was led by Captain Orita (Masaru with #1 Company led by Lt. Masayuki Takeuchi and #2 Company led by Lt. Kobiyamo Fumo. It seems that the officers of this relatively small invasion force were being given command authority a little above that usually accruing to their rank. In the same manner we seem to have Sgt. Major Goro Kato in command of a platoon – although on the day in question Masaru and Kato look like being the ones ordering the murders on Radji Beach.

Some sources state that the commander of Japanese forces on Banka Island (presumably Captain Masaru Orita) had from the beginning given orders that all survivors of sunken ships landing on the Island were to be killed. In this context it is also reported that the Japanese Naval Commander who captured another ship – the 'SS Data Hara' laden with men, women and children – would not allow the ship to berth at Muntok pier until the Army Commander gave his assurance that they would not be killed.

It seems that there was also another Japanese platoon searching elsewhere on the coast of Banka Island for survivors.

Later in the post war investigation process "The West Australian" (26.10.46) carried this item in a similar story but added that the two men (Takeuchi and Goro) mentioned above:

*"...were regular army veterans who fought against China, participated in the storming of Hong Kong, and followed the Japanese troops into Palembang in early 1942. The companies were detached from the main force for the capture of Banka Island. The entire division later fought in the eastern area and met retribution almost to the last man at the hands of Australians and Americans. In 1942 a battalion of the regiment sailed for Guadalcanal in 14 ships, 11 of which were sunk with 1,000 men. Most of the 500 survivors died in the fighting around Henderson Airfield (Guadalcanal) Another battalion was almost wiped out by the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, AIF, at Buna, only 11 escaping – a third battalion endeavoured to land in the New Admiralty Islands in June, 1944. Half landed and was subsequently reported missing. The other half failed to land and returned to Rabaul. Twenty six survivors are still being interrogated there, including Major-General Tanaka who commanded operations in Sumatra, Captain (later Major) Masaru Orita, who commanded the two companies at the time of the massacre, fought on in the Manchurian front against the Russians in 1945. The Soviet section of the Allied Council for Japan has just informed Australia that this badly wanted man has not so far been found in the Soviet's POW compound..."*



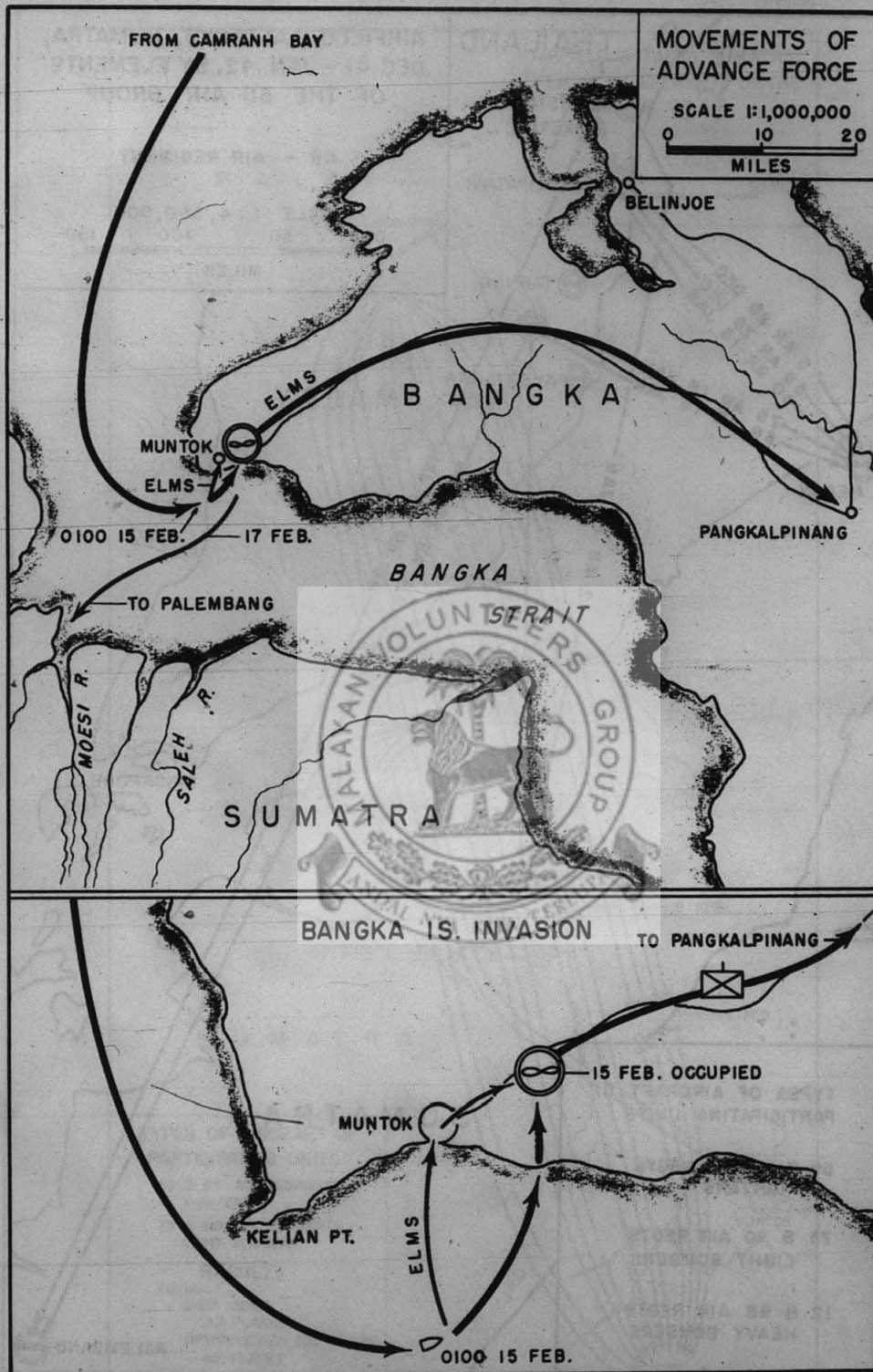
The book 'ORB' (p. 319) also holds the historical view that it was the same soldiers of the 229<sup>th</sup> Regiment at Banka Island who had been the killers and rapists at St Stephens college, Hong Kong six weeks earlier and says " ... It seems likely that Orita had been directly in charge of the soldiers who had raped and murdered their way through St Stephen's College ... and it was certainly Orita who issued the orders for all the killings on Radji Beach ...", then later that book ( p.320) closes the story of the sadistic, psychopathic individual who orchestrated and perpetrated the massacre " ... What happened at Radji beach was the result of a premeditated decision by Orita (Dasaru, who took what he saw as an easy option.... His [own] surrender at the end of the war does not seem to have weighed too heavily on his heart. Orita was a POW in the Soviet union for almost 3 years before his extradition to Tokyo ... on the eve of his being tried as a war criminal ... he committed suicide".

After the war Major – General Tanaka Ryosaburo, 229<sup>th</sup> Regiment, received 20 years imprisonment for the mass murders by troops in his command whilst in Hong Kong.





MAP 2



Scanned by MilSpecManuals



Now moving to the nature of the atrocity against the Australian nurses, civilian women, civilian men and servicemen on Radji Beach the question is 'Did it happen in the manner stated by Vivian Bullwinkel at the War Crimes Tribunal?' which has become the accepted explanation over the past 70 years?

There have been various murmurings and conjectures which need to be addressed to ascertain the full culpability for their crimes of the Japanese Army personnel on Banka Island and the level of total shame these men carry into history – particularly against a backdrop of admitted 'secrets' amongst the AANS nursing survivors.

Firstly, it may be worth contemplating that the social paradigm of the 'stigma' of rape against women has materially altered in the 70 years since 1945, as social 'mores' have changed insofar as any women victims of rape having some sort of ongoing 'damaged honour' and reflecting the growth in the authority, role and independence of women - which has escalated beyond anything that could have been imagined prior to the Second World War or even 1945. This researcher proposes the view that, in considering the information in the next few paragraphs, the reader contemplates whether the paradigm in which we live at any point in history can alter the perceived interpretation and impact of information – particularly when it is a case of reputation, honour, morals and gender role.

The name TANEMURA KIYOSHI also comes up as a witness to the events on Radji Beach in an alleged report by War Crimes Investigating Officer (Captain James Gowing Godwin) "File 152 Bangka island Atrocities, 17 February 1942" in the book "Betrayal in High Places" by James McKay. Described in the book as "... Former Ldg Private Tanemura Kiyoshi of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Platoon, 2<sup>nd</sup> Company, Orita Butai" he had ostensibly been recalled by Godwin for reinterrogation concerning the fate of Dr. V.G. Bowden (Australian Grade Commissioner, Malaya) on Bangka island on 17 February 1942. To quote from the File mentioned in the book "...Kiyoshi admits that his platoon took part in the successful assault on the lightly defended island and that some Europeans (amended to all) were captured, including a number of Australian nurses. Kiyoshi displayed a most worried attitude that was not lost on this investigating officer. His answers to questions were evasive and devious, similar in context to an earlier interrogation conducted by Sergeant A. H. Weston.....He strongly denied being one of the guards... and had sought permission from his immediate superior NCO Sergeant Furukawa (FNU) to rest in the shade of some trees...". Without going into detail described in the book and the supposed File 152, the relevance of Kiyoshi's statement is that he claimed that the nurses had been raped before being returned to the beach, the nurses in fact being "... forced to bathe (ostensibly) whereupon a machine gun had opened fire and disposed (executed) them. Kiyoshi strongly denied participating of the male prisoners by reason of feeling unwell, and because of his disposition, he had not felt inclined to join in the raping incidents during the night with the rest of the platoon....".

Frustratingly for anyone attempting to get to the truth of the Radji Beach atrocity, the researcher of this memorial document has found that the relevant content of the book is no more than an fictional extrapolation of the Banka Island atrocity murders – it has been found from the original files that the report by Captain J.G. Godwin actually starts exactly as McKay states, but the second sentence of Godwin's actual Weekly Investigation Report 152 (dated 13 January 1950) in the NAA Melbourne then states "...Results of this reinterrogation will be reported in the Weekly Investigation Report of Sgt. A.H. Weston ...". On obtaining and reading the original files compiled by Sgt Weston this researcher determined that there is absolutely no evidential foundation for the supposed account by Tanemura Kiyoshi account recorded in "Betrayal In High Places"!

It seems James McKay, despite knowing that there was no recorded admission by Tanemura Kiyoshi for the rape and murder, was going to see history recorded in the way he (and probably many others at the time) believed it to have occurred. So we must put aside the McKay book as a credible source – even although he may have heard rumours to that effect.

Despite the lack of any evidence for James McKay's view that the AANS nurses and others had been violated on Radji Beach there are two other important pieces of information on the matter of whether the nurses were raped and then murdered we should take into account before reverting to eyewitness statements around the time of the atrocity:



- A journalist with 'Independent Australia', Ms Gess Lawrence, on 19 March 2017 published an article which stated that during two meetings she had personally with Vivian Bullwinkel at a Club in Melbourne, she was told by Vivian that most of the nurses including Vivian had been violated before being shot at Radji Beach. Gess Lawrence also claims that she was told by Vivian that she had been instructed not to divulge this to the war Crimes Tribunal in Sydney.
- This conclusion is also supported by author Barbara Angell on the website Angell Productions, who with questions in mind as to whether there was something behind the obvious secrets being kept by the surviving AANS nurses who returned to Australia, and also the inconsistencies in the statements over the years by the surviving nurses set out firstly to check the veracity of Vivian Bullwinkel's story against the only tangible evidence left from the murders i.e. the bullet holes in the nurses uniform Vivian was wearing on the day at Radji Beach and then apply logic to the evidence left in the affidavits made by the men who survived the massacre or arrived on Radji Beach within a day or so from other sunken ships. Angell's very thorough investigation comes to the conclusion that the AANS nurses, including Vivian were raped and there may have been other nurses also killed elsewhere around the coast of Bank Island.

Research and writing has therefore brought forward a number of pieces of information which drive the logic of what occurred at Radji Beach to a conclusion that some of the AANS nurse were almost certainly violated before they were murdered:

- Firstly the fact that the exact same Japanese troops who raped and murdered the nurses in Hong Kong were the troops who had invaded Banka island and were present at Radji Beach – a situation which left them after the killing of the two groups of men with a large group of defenceless women.
- Secondly, Japanese troops had a practice during their invasion of South East Asia, when coming across a group of men and women, of firstly killing the men before assaulting the women.
- When there is the evidence of men who survived the massacre or were present at Radji Beach after the killings state which states very clearly that some of the clothing on the bodies of the nurses was in disarray or had been removed and some nurses were actually naked – there is no suggestion in any survivor's records that the nurses were naked before the Japanese arrived.
- Barbara Angell's empathetic analysis of the location of the bullet holes in Vivian Bullwinkel's uniform gives real weight to the possibility that she was in a state of undress at the time she was shot.
- Next, but not least, is the article by journalist Gess Lawrence in the 'Independent Australia' of February 2017 which states bluntly that Vivian Bullwinkel confirmed that some of the nurse had been raped by the Japanese on Radji Beach..

The conclusion from the research conducted in compiling this memorial document is that the events at Radji Beach were even more cruel and barbaric than mainstream reports have been indicating and the empathy of those honouring the memory of those women and men murdered at Radji Beach needs to take account of the torture experienced during their last hours - perhaps even more than has been the case to date.

Nothing detracts from the exemplary behaviour and everlasting honour of these brave and noble women.

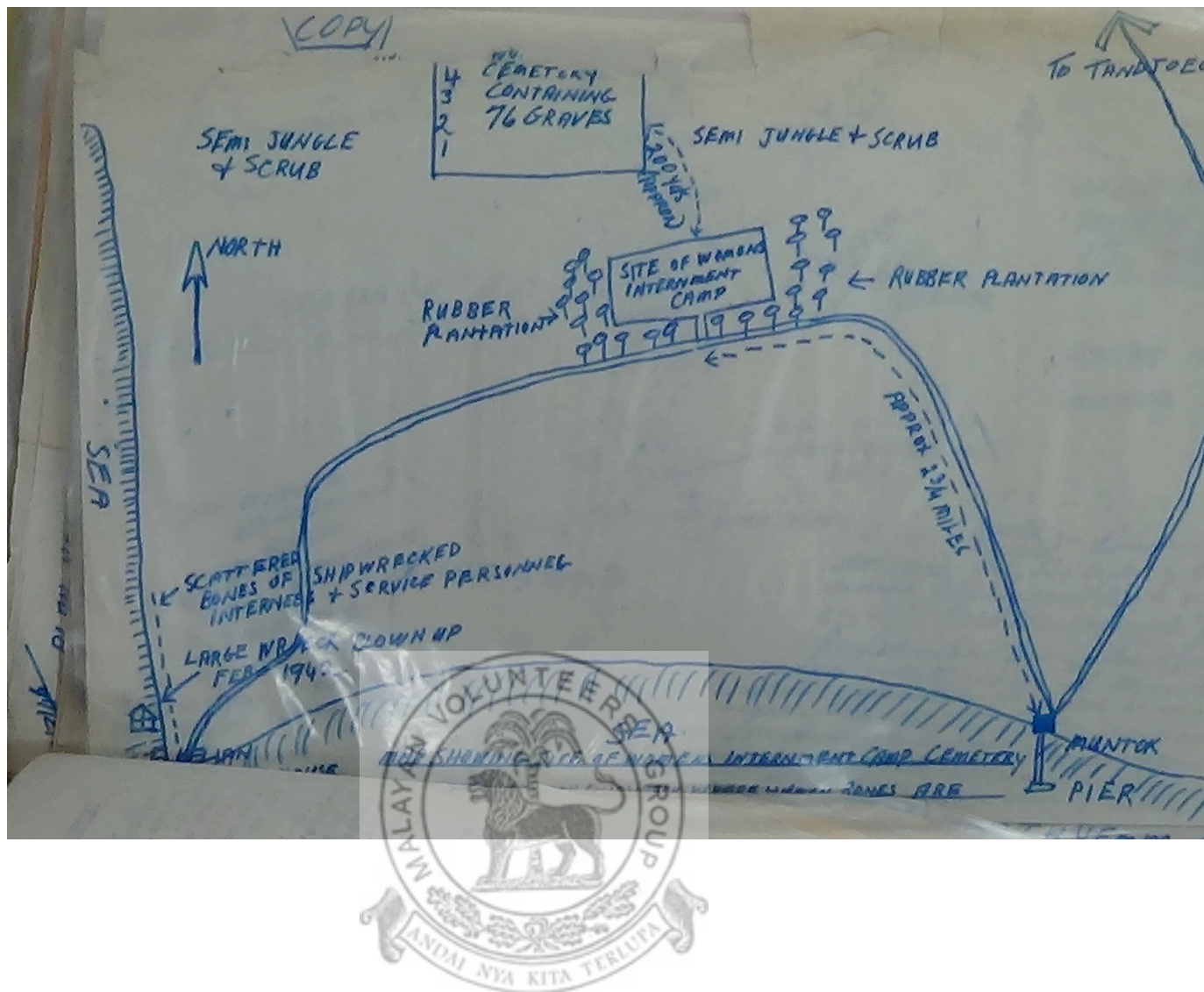
The shame, absence of honour and another stain on the reputation of the Japanese Army can likewise never be removed.



Finally , one piece of information – a hand drawn map (c. 1946) from the War Crime investigation file ( NAA (Delbourne) on the events at Radji Beach - gives some idea of what was found by the investigation party soon after the war:







This researcher's conclusion is that, at least for those with an empathy for the tragedies arising from the evacuation of Singapore and in the context of honouring the memory of all those women, children and men who lost their lives in February 1942 attempting an escape from Singapore by ship: the whole north, north western and north eastern coastline of Banka island is in fact hallowed ground that cannot practically be separated into graves and simple natural spaces.



## Sources:

- **Barton** – the official report held in the UK national Archives by Lt R.E. Barton , captain of the "SS. Vyner Brooke"
  - **BPPL** = List of people from Singapore and Malaya with their last known situation prepared in Changi prison camp during 1942 by (Dr. Jack Bennett (aged about 45 years and described as a merchant with the General Import/Export Borneo Co., internee # 386 in Changi) from internees in Changi Civilian internment camp and POWs and Internees passing through that camp in Singapore during 1942. The list is recorded in tiny "Pin point" writing on eighteen sheets of 'Jeyes' toilet paper that is unreadable to the naked eye. It is held in the National Archives of the United Kingdom and is a unique and invaluable record of the last known sightings of many missing men.
  - **BUCE** –the book "By Eastern Windows" by William H. McDougall Jr.
  - **Coolies** – the book "White Coolies" by Betty Jeffrey.
  - **CORD** – Colonial Office Register of Deaths
  - **Cross** – list prepared by Mrs. E Cross, a Swiss internee in Palembang married to a British immigration officer in Malaya, of 'British Internees In Palembang 1942' with a cipher for each ship on which the internees had travelled from Singapore
  - **CWGC** – the records on the website of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.
  - **Goldberg** – the report by Dr Anne Marie Goldberg – Curth held in National Archives of Australia , '472 WO 30744, pp 104-06.listing names of survivors she knew of on her raft and in internment camps, plus those who died in 'Dundok' and 'Luebok Lingoe' camps
  - **JMOD** – The 'Malayans' database compiled by Jonathan Moffatt, author and researcher.
  - **MDPMD** – The Muntok Memorial Peace Museum website
  - **ORB** – the book "On Radji Beach" by Ian W. Shaw.
  - **SD** – the book "Singapore's Dunkirk" by Geoffrey Brooke published in 1989.
  - **SOS** – the book "Song of Survival" by Helen Colijn published 1997.
  - **SUM** – database of Sumatra internees on the Malayan Volunteer Group website
  - **SCOTVB** – the book "A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke" by Ralph Armstrong
  - **SFPDA** – the newspaper archives at the website of the Singapore National Library containing past copies of the "Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser".
  - **SG** – the newspaper archives at the website of the Singapore National Library containing the past copies of the "Straits Times".
  - **SUER** – Nurse Ada Syers ( later married name Corbitt) , Oral History recording, AWO, ID # SO 4057
  - **Tebbutt** – official report comprising five pages compiled by Major William Alston Tebbutt, Intelligence Officer, AIF, whilst in Changi POW camp later in the War and held in the National Archives of Australia (NAA. B3856, 144/1/346).
  - **WBGW** – the book "Women Beyond The wire" by Lavinia Warner and John Sandilands published in 1982
- plus the list on the next page which appears to have been compiled in Palembang camp by internees of people who were on the ship; but believed by the internees to have been killed , or considered "Missing" ( source is the UK National Archives).





"VYNER BROOKE."

NAME	ADDRESS	REMARKS.
WATSON	MRS. RAFFLES GIRLS SCHOOL S'PORE.	LAST SEEN IN LIFEBOAT.
WATSON	MRS. KUALA LUMPUR.	WOUNDED. HEAD T HAND.
SIMMONS	MRS. MATRON - ST ANDREWS HOSP. S'PORE.	
STANLEY	WILLIAM. VICTORIA HOUSE. VICTORIA ST. LONDON.	SEEN IN WATER.
GOODING	MRS. STRAITS TRADING CO. Penang.	DEAD BODY SEEN IN SEA.
PARFITT	MRS. KLANG.	
PRATT	MR. J. SEREMBAN.	SEEN ON SHIP. BOTH LEGS SHOT OFF.
MADDEN	MR. J.B. TRIPING.	WOUNDED IN BACK & ILL.
WATSON	E.C. JUDGE. IPOH.	LEFT ON BEACH - DEAD.
SPRENGER	MISS OLGA. TUDU ENGLISH SCHOOL. K.L.	BELIEVED DROWNED.
WALLER	MRS. P. J. Dept. S'PORE.	
ATGLINCROSS	MRS. CO COMMERCIAL UNION S'PORE	
BETTERIDGE	MRS. HALLAM. & Co. K.L.	SEEN ON BOARD.
CARR	MISS. CO TRENGROVE & Co. K.L.	" " "
ANGUS.	MRS. MISS & 2 BOYS. SINGAPORE.	
PEARSON	MRS. (SIAMSE).	
RITCHIE	MRS. BOARDING HOUSE - OXLEY RD. S'PORE.	
CHAN	DENYS SON OF MRS CHAN JOO KIM S'PORE.	
MUSTELL	SISTER MALAYAN NURSING SERVICE.	
STRANGE	JAPANE ..	LAST SEEN IN WATER

MALAYAN VOLUNTEERS GROUP

at any rate supply, so far as you can, the information about each individual, or would be interested in this form as being required.

Your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

M. R. N. V. R.,

Large Encl. not used

Subscribed

Attest

Anyone who has corrections, amendments, clarifications or additional material on the passengers of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' 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@extra.co.nz](mailto:mncpether@extra.co.nz). Telephone number is New Zealand 09-4865754 or mobile New Zealand 0274543695.

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Thanks,  
Michael Pether.



### Passenger List (Recreated):

- **ANGUS – Laura Angus (nee Shelley)**, who had married Hugh Angus was on the same evacuation ship out of Singapore as her mother (Mrs. Alice Shelley according to the family history of the de Cruz family (source great granddaughter Lara Poyton in the UK email 8 February 2016): the earliest newspaper record of Laura Shelley is in 1902 when she won a prize in the Infant School of Raffles Girls School (SG 8.1.219020, which indicates she was born in 1895-96: there are records of a Mr & Mrs. Hugh Angus attending funerals and leaving wreaths in the Eurasian community during 1930s until 1941 and then sadly later in the War there is a record of (possibly their son) a Private Hugh Shelley Angus, # 25266, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, SSVF, born Singapore in 1920, who had been sent from Changi POW camp to the Burma railway camps on 12.10.42, died when the Japanese POW transporter "Rakuyo Maru" was torpedoed on 12.9.44 and 1159 of the 1360 men on board lost their lives (JB database of Malayan Volunteers)
- **ANGUS – Mrs. Lucille Angus**: born 1916, employed by Cold Storage (Changi Museum Civilians database): Miss Lucille Angus appears as bridesmaid to Miss Irene Shelley when she married Mr William Campbell Alexander in Penang in 1934 (SEPOA 25.11.34); and also attended the wedding of Miss Louisa Band to Mr. Kenneth Blackler of Penang when they married in Singapore (SEPOA 29.6.38); possibly *ANGUS Ms. Eurasian Matron, St Andrew's School, Singapore*. Changi and Sime Rd internee (JMD); also Mrs Lucille Yvonne Angus, daughter of Mr & Mrs Hugh Angus of Singapore and a Singapore Cold Storage employee. Survived the Vyner Brooke sinking, then interned in Palembang Women's camp, Sumatra, 1942 " ...left Camp 12.2.43..." . Returned to Singapore and became a Changi & Sime Rd internee No. 3299 and when in Changi was in Cell 38 on the top Floor of A Block in Changi Prison (cipher is A.5.38 in Changi records and also shown in SUM: in the List of British Women and Children in Palembang there is recorded a Miss L.M. Angus as an internee in the camp: after the War Lucille married James John Coyle of the RAOC in Singapore and they moved to the UK where they had four children - Roy William ( born 1947), John Geoffrey (appears to have died and may be buried in Nudgee cemetery), Peter Derek (born in 1950 and later moved to Queensland and in 2016 retired from Manager at Bunning's hardware Ltd., to " ... return to Scotland ..." ) and Susan Laura (Martha. In 1957 the family had migrated from Folkestone, Kent to Western Australia. During 1960-1974 Lucille and family lived in Papua New Guinea where James worked for the PNG Administration. She died in 1994 aged 78 years of age.
- **ARMSTRONG – Mrs Theresa 'Resie' Armstrong**. Palembang Women's camp 1942. Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 7.2.45 [51] Muntok. She was the wife of " ...ARMSTRONG H M MERCHANT HEEREN B'LDG WIFE + 2 CHIL PALEMBANG..." who is listed in the secret 'Jeyes' list in Changi; also the mother of Ralph Armstrong, Dixie Armstrong and Mrs Grace 'Anna' Watters-Pryce and the grandmother of Marc Watters-Pryce who were also all on the ship, see also 'ARMSTRONGS OF SRI LANKA' on the internet:
- **ARMSTRONG – Ralph Emil Hilary Armstrong**, son of Mrs Resie Armstrong, who was also a passenger on the ship and Mr H.M. Armstrong who had remained in Singapore: Ralph was about ten years of age when he boarded the ship with his mother two adult sisters and his little nephew Sivo Marc: his story is told in detail in the book he wrote and published in 2003 " A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke"; he survived the sinking with all his family members and they (plus June Bourhill, and a White Russian woman who had been also living in the Heeren Building in Singapore who may well have been Mrs Warman) together floated on a raft for four days without food or water before landing on a small island in the Banka straits: after paying some fishermen to lead them to safety they reached Banka island and after time in Kobe, Pangkalpinang they were taken to Muntok and interned : Ralph was initially in the womens camps because of his age but in April 1943 he was moved to the mens camp: he endured the serious hardships in Muntok and Belalau mens camps and survived the war to return to Singapore : he worked as a clerk at Fort Canning for





many years before finally leaving Singapore in 1974 for Queensland, Australia where he lives today( telephone conversation with Ralph Armstrong (May 2016)

- **ARMSTRONG - ARMSTRONG** (Mrs Dixie Resie Armstrong, daughter of Mrs Resie Armstrong (above), Palembang women's camp 1942, **Sumatra internee**. See Ralph Armstrong story and book 'ASCOTVB'. Died in captivity 5.4.45[32] (Muntok)
- **ASHTON - Sister Carrie Jean Ashton**, SFX 13548, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Jean Ashton was born at Woodside, South Australia on 31.5.05, and the 2 IC of the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital nurses. She enlisted at Wayville, South Australia, on 27.5.41 and was a senior nurse with that AGH group when they were in Malaya and then Singapore (St. Patrick's School, Katong). When the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' began to sink and they had cleared most passengers off the ship, she boarded a lifeboat full of women and children but the ship began to turn over on that lifeboat and everyone had to jump out. So she jumped into the sea with Wilma Oram and Dona Wilton( p. 87 ORB) and narrowly avoided being taken down by the sinking ship ( as tragically happened to Dona Wilton) she then made her way to an overturned raft where a large group of nurses, women and children gathered ( p.174 ORB). She reached Banka Island and was interned at Muntok in the Customs House where because she was the most senior survivor in the 2/13<sup>th</sup> AGH group and a natural leader, she became a camp leader during internment and ran the camp hospital with a nun. Her bravery and effort during the war were recognised by her becoming 'Mentioned in Despatches'. After the war her niece published her wartime diary as a book. Jean Ashton passed away, aged 96 years of age, in 2002.
- **AXON (also referred to as EXHAM) - Mrs Queenie Mary Axon**: AXON (Mrs Queenie Mary Axon (nee Danker), wife of Army L/Cpl Alfred John Axon, Manchester Regiment. They married October 1940 at Johore Bahru. Aged 31 in 1942. With daughter Patricia Ann, aged 3, a Palembang Sumatra internee. Cross list notes "... (?) Died on 28.9.45 in Singapore..." L/Cpl Axon remained in Johore 1945 [Jalan Waterworks JB]. In 1963 Patricia married Bill Bagby, son of Sumatra internee Wally Bagby (JDD); also Queenie Mary Danker married Alfred John Axon from Ireland (SG. 13.10.40) *in this context it is worth noting that the best man at their wedding was a William McClurg (SG. 13.10.40) and when the 'Vyner Brooke' was sunk it appears that one of the survivors appears to have been a Hamilton McClurg (also referred to as 'Jock' (McClurg by survivor Stoker Ernest Lloyd); in 1941 there was the birth notice " ... to Queenie nee Danker, wife of Mr. A. J. Axon, a daughter on 18.7.41 (SG. 23.7.41); in a recording held in the Singapore Oral Archives ( #001717) a cousin of Queenie by the name of Mrs Hedwig Elizabeth Anuar says that " ... Queenie had her baby with her on the ship (presumably Patsy) and during the sinking her baby was thrown down to her from the ship, also that mother and daughter were later in Palembang internment camp, later in the Oral Archive it is stated that " ... Queenie died after a week or so of being repatriated to Singapore from kidney trouble and malnutrition ..."*.
- **AXON (also referred to as EXHAM) - Miss Patricia 'Patsy' Ann Axon**, daughter of (Dr & Mrs. A. J. Axon, SEE ABOVE ENTRY, is sometimes stated as being three years of age when the ship sank but was in fact only seven months old and still a baby; she and her mother survived the War and internment and in 1963 Patsy married Bill Bagby son of the well known horse trainer Wally Bagby (SG. 21.2.63), but this marriage did not last and they were divorced in 1968 ( SG. 20.2.68), in which same newspaper report it is mentioned that there was one son from the marriage.
- **BALFOUR- OGILVIE/OGILVY- Sister Elaine 'Lainie' Lenore Balfour - Ogilvie**, born 1912, was from Renmark in the Murray River area of South Australia, the daughter of a highly decorated Australian soldier and one of five siblings in a successful family of graziers: as well described in the book 'ORB' she was one of those people who excel at most things they undertake in life and are liked by most people they encounter. Recalled as a beautiful singer, she became a dedicated nurse after training at the Adelaide Children's Hospital. In 1940 she enlisted in the AIF as an AANS nurse (# SFX 10596) in 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station and after the Japanese invasion of Malaya served at Kluang and Gampoi caring for hundreds of wounded and earning a reputation for being loved by these men for her singing and personality. Along with other nurses on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she volunteered to be one of the group who stayed on board the ship to the last in the event of a sinking and ensure all the passengers reached safety on lifeboats: in fact after the sinking she was seen holding



onto a rope trailing from Datron Drummond's lifeboat and possibly that is how she reached Radji Beach: in a tribute to the natural, positive, confident character and personality that was Elaine Balfour – Ogilvy it is recorded that (p. 214-215ORB) after observing the massacre of the two groups of men, she suggested that the nurses all run in different directions so that at least some of them would survive. This being probably the most sensible idea that anyone had on Radji Beach she was overruled by Datron Drummond and told they must all comply with Japanese instructions to avoid letting their wounded patients down. Elaine then died with the other 21 nurses on the beach. Interestingly Major Gebbutt in his affidavit recalled seeing, after the massacre, the body of one nurse on the beach some 50 yards away from the main group of victims (as did Eric German BUE p.152) so it is possible that even in her last moments Elaine Balfour – Ogilvy did make a desperate, heroic and independent attempt to survive – which seems completely in character with her positive approach to life and the probable influence of her father's bravery in war – rather than be passively slaughtered by a callous enemy.

- **BATES Sister Louvima (also known as Louvinia) 'Vima' Mary Isabella Bates**, WEX 11169, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Daughter of Mr & Mrs A. E. Bates of South Perth. Little is known of Vima Bates' early life and it is not until 1937 that she first appears in local newspapers as taking charge of the Kalgoorlie Infant Health Centre, presumably as a registered nurse ("The West Australian", Perth, 6.4.37). The following year she was still in Kalgoorlie and appears as a guest at a farewell party for a friend (22.3.38) and later in the year is reported as leaving Kalgoorlie Infant Health Centre ("Kalgoorlie Diner" 7.10.38). She appears to have moved to Perth because in 1939 she is reported as jointly holding a party at the 'Waldorf' ("Sunday Times", Perth, 5.2.39) – this period of her life featured her as a very social person. The paybook photo taken on her enlistment in the AANS, c. July 1941, shows a good looking young woman with brown hair and a direct, confident gaze. She served in Malaya and Singapore and after the 'Vyner Brooke' was sunk we are told she "... made a safe escape from the ship and a short time later was seen alone on a life raft. She soon drifted away from the main group of survivors, however, and was never seen alive again..." (p.165, ORB); in fact it was Sister Ada Syer who, in the sea the night of the sinking heard Louvinia Bates (of the 'flaming red hair') call out and when Ada Syer responded, Louvinia called back her name was 'Bates' and then never seen again (Ada Bates interview # SO 4057 at the AWOD); a bereavement notice placed by her parents (Mr & Mrs A. E. Bates, 190 Douglas Avenue, South Perth in "The West Australian" (26.6.44) notes her family called her 'Vima' – reflecting Vima's social and possibly gregarious nature she had four other death notices in that same paper on the same day, all stating that she was believed to have been killed near Sumatra on 11 February 1942 (details were naturally still very confused until the surviving nurses were taken to Singapore after the Japanese surrender). Later in 1950 a 'War Nurses Memorial Hostel' was opened in Queens Crescent, Mt Lawley by the Governor of Western Australia - one of the nurses memorialised by this building was Vima Bates. Since she was from Western Australia and the RSL remembered her at the Applecross ANZAC Day ceremonies in 2016 along with others on the "Vyner Brooke". Vima is also remembered on the Singapore war memorial at Kranji.
- **BEARD- Sister Alma May Beard**, WEX 11175, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital, was born in 1911 to Edward William and Katherine Mary Beard of Goodyay, WA, and had two siblings. She trained at Perth Hospital and then moved to one of the larger Sydney hospitals to gain experience ("Goodyay Herald", 20.9.40). After returning to WA she enlisted in the AANS on 19 June 1941 and in September 1941 was sent to Malaya for overseas experience ("The West Australian", 1941 which has a group photo of Alma with "... Louvina[sic] Bates, Iole Harper and Dina Hodgson together with Lt. Gen. Sir James Ditchell at a farewell function at the Adelphi Hotel, Perth..." and also "The West Australian" 30.10.45 – the latter newspaper article is accompanied by a pre-war photo of a most attractive young woman). Alma Beard lost her life in the massacre on Radji Beach – when the nurses were forced to the execution place Alma was on the far left of the line of Australian nurses facing the sea – next to Vivian Bullwinkel, and said "... Bully, there are two things I've always hated in my life, the Japs and the sea and today I've ended up with both ..." (ORB, p.216). In 1944 the "Goodyay Herald" (16.4.44) advised that (Mr. & Mrs. E. W. Beard<sup>26</sup> of 'Pellnell', Culham (a town in the Goodyay shire north east of Perth) had received notice



that Alma was now "Missing Believed Killed" on or after 11 February 1942. On Anzac Day 1945 ("Goodyay Herald", 4.5.45) the Goodyay CWA laid a wreath in remembrance of Alma and 10 soldiers of the district. She is memorialised by the Alma Beard Community Health Centre at Goodyay, Western Australia.

- **BEESTON** - Ms Louise Beeston b.1907 Stoke-on-Trent. Teacher, St Andrew's School, Singapore from 1936. Lived at Temple House, Tank Rd, Singapore. Palembang Women's Camp, Sumatra internee. Repatriated on Antenor from Singapore, arriving Liverpool 27.10.45. To Stoke on Trent. Returned to St Andrew's, Singapore. Later Supervisor for all three Anglican schools in Singapore: St Andrew's, St Hilda's, St Margaret's. Retired on health grounds 1960. Died 12.1983 Barnstable, Devon (JDD): according to a list prepared in Palembang camp (Miss L. Beeston was on the "Vyner Brooke" (Cross): some newspaper references are firstly her arriving in Singapore on the "Chitral" from Marseilles (SG. 8.4.36): as a producer of a children's show at the home of General Dobbie (SG. 18.7.36): and finally her arriving in Singapore on the "Rajputna" in 1937 (SEPCDA. 18.1.37).
- **BETTERIDGE** (note that there is no record of a BURRIDGE or BURIDGE) - Thomas Daniel Betteridge, born 1880 Lancashire. Partner, Hallam & Co. [Brokers] Kuala Lumpur from 1929. Lost at sea 15.2.42 on the *Vyner Brooke* **with wife** Carrie Rose Faraday (JDD): Thomas Betteridge spent most of his adult life in Malaya. The earliest reference to him is in the Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser in 1907 when he is noted as arriving in Singapore on the P & O 'Oceania' (SEPCDA 13.5.07): later that year he is reported playing tennis in Singapore and in 1909 he is playing water polo at the Singapore Swimming Club and still participating in tennis. By 1912 he returned from home leave on the P & O 'Sardinia' and the following year he was appointed as the new Manager for Guthrie & Co. in Kuala Lumpur: the following year he was on the Committee for the Selangor Turf Club: Dr & Mrs. Betteridge went on 'home leave' during 1916 and became established residents of KL so that by 1919 Thomas was also appointed on to Committee of the prestigious Selangor Club (it appears he never relinquished his KL links because in 1938 he was still on the Committee of the Selangor Club and involved in a the vigorous debate over whether the Club should merger SEPCDA (March 1939) SG. : in 1921 they were transferred to Guthrie's in Singapore and Thomas took up lawn bowls in his forties: they obviously were well accepted into Singapore society for in 1923 they are listed at a government house 'tiffin' and later that year Thomas is playing competitive billiards at the Singapore Cricket Club: Thomas did not relinquish his original involvement in the Masonic movement in Kuala Lumpur because in 1927-28 he is reported as an officer of Read Lodge, Kuala Lumpur: the following year he moves to Hallam & co as a partner (with A.N. Farquaharson) and that same year (Miss Maureen Phyllis Betteridge was given away in marriage by Thomas to Ernest John Douglas (SG. 3.8.29): 'home leave' occurred every four years or so with the additional break in 1937 when he left for Hong Kong " ... on a short health trip to recuperate after his recent illness ..." (SEPCDA 16.1.37): the 'Jeyes' secret list compiled in Changi states " ... BETTERIDGE THOMAS DANIEL CO LEFT LAKE W. WIFE ..." (BPPL): so at age 62 years Thomas, as a senior member of the business and social establishment in Singapore and Malaya, boarded the ship with his wife Carrie after 35 years of family and business life in the land he had chosen. Little is known of what occurred to Dr & Mrs. Betteridge during the short voyage and the sinking, but it seems highly likely that Thomas is the person referred to by survivor Eric Germann in the book "By Eastern Windows" as "... the South African (Dr. Buridge) ... "since the researcher can find no trace of a man named Buridge in pre-war Malaya. If this is correct Thomas had been wounded severely in the bombing of the ship by a bomb fragment in his kidneys (BJE, p. 146) and probably put aboard the first lifeboat to leave the "SS. Vyner Brooke". On Monday 16 February Thomas was lying on Radji Beach on a stretcher with at least five others. He would have heard the first eight men taken along the beach and executed by the Japanese patrol which carried out the atrocities and then again heard the second group of men taken away and murdered by machine gun fire. Tragically (see below) he may have even been aware that his wife of many decades was also in the group of Australian army nurses massacred on the beach. The account by Eric Germann states that when he returned to the place where the stretcher cases had been left 'Buridge the South African' had been bayoneted in the chest, as had the other stretcher cases (BJE p.153 and this is confirmed in general in 'ORB' p.217 where the author states that a second





group of the Japanese soldiers "... worked its way through the wounded on makeshift stretchers in the shade of the trees, bayoneting them all ..."); so, contrary to the simple and unemotional official records that would otherwise tell the story of his death, was reality of the cruel and unnecessary murder of Thomas on a beach on Bank Island by a psychopathic group of Japanese soldiers: the list compiled in Palembang camp of those passengers they believed had died simply states "Dr & Mrs. Betteridge, Hallam & Co., KL, last seen on board ..."; the official CWGC website simply records "Thomas Daniel Betteridge, civilian, died 14.2.42 in the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' (CWGC); whilst the Colonial Office record has "... Thomas Daniel Betteridge, Hallam & Co., Kuala Lumpur died on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke', Source, Searcher Organisation Clearing House, Reg (DI, Folio 202, Serial 1022" (CORD); the final record of the life of Thomas Betteridge is the Grant of Letter of Administration 1947 (where people die intestate) (Item 1947/273).

- **BETTERIDGE – Mrs. Carrie Rose Faraday Betteridge**, little is known of Mrs. Betteridge except for a mention of her whilst she was living in Kuala Lumpur in a group raising money for a plane during the First World War, referred to as 'A Woman's Aeroplane' (SG, 29.3.16) and then in 1939 arriving on the 'Perseus' from Plymouth (SFPDA 20.7.39). Once again there are references in the books 'BJC' and 'ORB' to "... There was also one elderly European woman who had politely declined the offer to leave with the other civilian women and children. Her husband was amongst the seriously injured. They had not been separated in nearly 50 years of married life and they would not be separated now..." (ORB, p.210); by deduction on the identity of the man named Buridge (no Buridge can be found living in Malaya or Singapore at that time) it seems very likely that it was Carrie Betteridge who is described in 'ORB' as "the lone civilian included in the group of women described as "... the 22 nurses joined by an elderly civilian who had refused to leave her husband and now stood weeping in the middle of the line ..." (ORB, p.216); so, most awfully, it seems that Carrie Betteridge lost her life in the massacre of nurses on Radji beach by a group of soldiers who committed one of the more callously unnecessary mass killings by the Japanese of European women in the Second World War: her official record states "Carrie Rose Faraday Betteridge, civilian, died on 14.2.42 in the sinking of the SS. Vyner Brooke ..." (CWGC) and her official death entry in the CORD records are "Mrs. Carrie Rose Faraday Betteridge, wife of G.D. Betteridge of Kuala Lumpur, Selangor died on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", Source C-in-C ALFSEA, Reg. DI, Folio 219, Serial 1085); the final record on her life is an advertisement in 1948 being "... Notice re the estate of Carrie Rose Faraday Betteridge, late of 7 Stoner Road, Kuala Lumpur ..." (SG, 23.10.48).
- **BLAKE – Sister Kathleen Constance 'Pat' Blake, NEX 70528**, 2/10 Australian General Hospital, Pat Blake who was aged 29 years (born 1913?) at the time of the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' was the third daughter of Mr. & Mrs. George Blake of Lindfield, Sydney, NSW ("The Australian Womens Weekly", 15.12.45) and had trained at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. She passed her Nurses Registration Board exams 'General Branch' whilst at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in 1936 ("Sydney Morning Herald", 18.12.36). She must have enlisted during 1940 because she was in the contingent of 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGH personnel who sailed from Sydney in January 1941 for Malaya (AWD). Little is known of her experiences but after the sinking she was captured on Banka Island and endured internment in Muntok, Palembang and finally Belalau where she became very sick. In fact during internment she was "... so ill that she was not aware that one night a rat actually chewed the end off one of her toes ..." (ORB, p.277) She survived and after the War was discharged as Captain Blake in July 1946 (ORB, p.300) – the actual timing of her discharge is put into question however because in "The Sun", Sydney of 2.12.45 there is the report that "... Survivor from the ship 'Vyner Brooke' and of a POW camp, Army nurse Kathleen Blake was married at Shore Chapel yesterday to Lt. Keith Dixon, AIF, to whom she became engaged at the beginning of the war ..." – there is also a photo of the newly married couple in "The Australian Women's Weekly" (15.12.45). Over fifty years later, in the "Sydney Morning Herald" of 11.4.98 there was the funeral notice of "Pat (Kathleen Constance) Dixon" to be held on 17 April 1998 at Ourimbah – a small town on the central Coast region of NSW.
- **BLANCH – Sister Jessie Jane 'Blanchie' Blanch, QX 19074**, 2/10 Australian General Hospital<sup>28</sup>, was born on 18.3.10 in Bangalow, northern NSW; she may have trained at Lismore but was





nursing in Brisbane when she enlisted and was posted to the 2/10 AGH in Malaya. An attractive dark haired young woman in her early 30s she was regarded as a very good operating theatre nurse and someone who remained very calm under even the stress of bombardment. This showed up in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" when she was probably the last person to leave the sinking vessel and had to jump off the stern as it went down bow first. In the sea she joined a group of other nurses clinging to a piece of wood and they remarkably began singing "We are off to see the Wizard" and other songs to keep up their spirits. This group were swept by currents quite close to Radji Beach that night and then also through the ships of the Japanese invasion fleet where the Japanese just laughed at the survivors. By Sunday morning they were carried onto a beach on Banka Island and soon captured by the Japanese and imprisoned in Muntok cinema. She survived the horrors of three years internment in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau and after the war worked as a private nurse. She married Sydney photographer Albert Eaton - Lee in 1950 and in 1973 they retired to her home town of Alstonville, NSW. She appears in the book "Willingly into the Fray: 100 years of Australian Army Nursing" and a book on her life was also compiled - "Blanchie - Alstonville's Inspirational World war two Nurse" by Ina Kirkland. 'Blanchie' passed away in Alstonville, aged 89 years, in 1999.

- **BOURHILL** - (Mrs Dorothy Bourhill was the wife of Alexander George Bourhill (DOB 1953, Maintenance Engineer, Power Station, Municipal Electrical Dept from 1927. Former RQDS ISSVF. Late Changi internee 1943.]; she is mentioned arriving on the P & O 'Macedonia' in Singapore from London (SEPCDA 5.10.27) and five years later returning from home leave with Alexander (SG. 1.3.32); in 1941 Dorothy was a member of the newly opened YMCA Club in Orchard road (SEPCDA 2.10.41); Dorothy was lost at sea on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" - according to 'ORB' p. 165 Dorothy may have drowned - when the second lifeboat capsized - but her daughter June survived, they also had a son in the UK possibly by the name of Crawford Bourhill (SG. 14.12.34 attending Tanglin Preparatory School); official records show " ... (Mrs M. Bourhill wife of A. G. Bourhill, Singapore Municipality, on or since 14.2.42, at sea off Singapore, presumed to have lost her life at sea during the evacuation from Singapore (various private sources),..." (CORD. Reg. M1, Folio 286, Serial No. 1325); Alex & June were repatriated 1945 arriving Sydney on Tamaroa 10.10.45. Alex returned post-war to Electrical Dept. Singapore: appointed Assistant Power Station Superintendent 1949.(JMD) , and her daughter,
- **BOURHILL** - (Miss June Bourhill is first recorded in local newspapers in 1938 as one of the 'Capitol Dollies' of the premier Dance Studio in Singapore performing at the capitol Theatre (SEPCDA 28.10.38 including photo) and the following year as a Flower Girl at the wedding of Miss Sheila McDonnell to Lt Cdr John Mansell at the sailors Chapel (SG. 18.3.39); she was aged 10 in 1942 when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and at the time of the sinking ended up on a little raft with teenager Ralph Armstrong, a White Russian woman [ it is possible that this was Mrs Warman - mother of the small boy called 'Discha' , because author Ralph Armstrong notes that " ... The White Russian lady may well have been living in the same block as us in the Heeren Building in Singapore , but in one of the upstairs apartments ..." and fellow passengers the Warmans had a hairdressing business in the Heeren building] plus a badly burned Malay seaman - their raft collided with another , severing the end one of one of June's fingers. They were all on the raft for three days and nights during which time the Malay seaman began to drink seawater, lost his mind and leapt overboard to his death. The raft appears to have firstly washed up on an island near Banka Island and then some days later the small group were taken to Banka Island by local natives (see pp.43 - 48 of the book SCOTVB); She was interned in the terrible Muntok, Palembang and Belalau camps in Sumatra and despite many in those camps dying she survived which is a tribute to the 'totally devoted' care ( p.128 WBGW) she received from "SS. Vyner Brooke" survivor Mrs. Ena J. Murray who 'adopted' her for the duration of internment [the wife of Kenneth 'Ken' Scott Murray of William Jacks Ltd building supplies department and who was also a Changi internee. Her daughter Sally had been evacuated. Ena and Ken were repatriated to the UK on the 'Cilicia' in October 1945 and returned to Singapore in 1946. later moving to retirement in Jersey where Ena passed away in 1995 (JMD)]. Post war June is mentioned as arriving back in Singapore from School on the 'Charon' for Xmas Holidays (SG. 13.12.47) Today June Brown is living in Ireland (JMD); informal information suggest that June has now passed away? 29
- **BRIDGE Sister Ada Joyce Bridge**, NFX 76284, 2/10 Australian General Hospital (also 2/13 AGH in Singapore), AANS, was born in 1907 in Scone, NSW. Her family home was 'Stoney



Creek', Belltrees. She trained at St Luke's Hospital, Darlinghurst, Sydney during 1930-34 after which she undertook private nursing until enlisting on 15.9.41. In her Army records she is described as 'brown eyes, brown hair' and there is a pleasant photo of her in official (AWD) records. She survived the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" but tragically was amongst the nurses massacred on Radji Beach (ORB p. 218). A small book (PP 36) was written in 1989 by Joan Crouch "One Life is Ours: the story of Ada Joyce Brookes". The local newspaper in 1954 described her as "... a popular and brave district servicewoman ..." and on 27.8.54 "The Scone Advocate" published an article about the dedication by the Scone & District Country Womens institute of its new Baby Health centre and Assembly Hall, "... with all conveniences in Kelly Street, part of the land on which the Cottage stands (facing Kingdon Street) ...", to Joyce Bridge with a most warm description of her "... To those who knew her in private life there remains the memory of a lovely girl with laughing brown eyes, unafraid to face the horrors of war in her eagerness to help nurse the wounded and suffering...". These days the baby centre has been absorbed into the wider medical facilities of the town of Scone but the Country Womens building remains where a photo hangs of Joyce Bridge - sadly the original medals issued to her posthumously which hung in the Assembly Hall were stolen some years ago, but have been replaced with miniatures.

- BROWN - Mrs E.A. 'Dary' Brown.** On the Vyner Brooke with daughter Shelagh [see below] Son Robert Alexander [POW?]? Sumatra internee - Palembang 3.42-11.44 then Duntok. Died in captivity 17.1.45 (Duntok, Sumatra (JMD)): although the first newspaper report of Mr E. A. Brown is him arriving in Singapore to join Brinkmann & Co. (SG. 6.7.36), the first newspaper record of Dary Brown was her arrival in Singapore on the "Roon" in 1910 (SFPDA 8.6.19) and she almost immediately becomes involved in the elite social circle with an attendance at a reception and a Coronation ball at Government House in 1911 (SG. 5.6.11); her daughter was born in 1911 at 'Burnsall' Grange road (SFPDA 4.10.11) she is reported at the Governor's Ball in 1913 and a society wedding in 1915 and in 1916 there is another birth notice for a daughter, again at 'Burnsall' on 23 March 1916 (this must have been Shelagh Brown); more reports of her at Government House dinners; in 1929 there is another birth notice for a daughter at 'Mrs. Stevens Nursing Home', Kenny road, Kula Lumpur (address given as Kalumpang); by 1929 Dary Brown has become an icon of Singapore society and is shown (photos) presenting prizes at the Geylang School sports and organising the Poppy day Appeal at Katong park at which the Governor attended (more photos); photos show her as a tall, stately woman with dark hair; by 1931 she seems to be involved in every community good work and attending society wedding and funeral in fact it was a rare society event at which she was not present; in 1939 the family lived at 'Grove Court', Goodman Road, Katong; the final newspaper report of her is in 1941 at a clothes making group in Singapore; She was the wife of (Dr. Edwin Arthur Brown, OBE 1934 VD JP b.1878 Eccles, Manchester. He arrived in Singapore in 1901. Joined Singapore Volunteer Rifles, Captain 1913, Brinckmann & Co. till 1918, Adiz & Ezekial Exchange Brokers, 1918- Commander Chinese Company, Singapore Volunteers 1913-23 then Acting commandant SVC. Major Retd 1933. Joined Cathedral Choir 1901. Choirmaster 1910-42. Municipal Commissioner for Singapore Merchant and Exchange Broker; Proprietor E.A. Brown & Co. D'Almeida St and resident Nunes Buildings, Malacca St, Singapore. Singapore Musical Society - started the children's concerts and Amateur Dramatics/GES. Singapore Film Censor. Changi and Sime Rd internee. To British Military Hospital, Poona 9.45 then repatriated via Bombay with daughter Shelagh, arriving Southampton 20.11.45 on SS Arundel Castle. Wife (Dary, 2 daughters: Shelagh [see below] & Barbara. Son Alec a POW in Europe. The family lived at Grove Court, Katong, Singapore. He retired to Lyminge, Kent and died on 15.9.55 [77] at Gloucester (JMD).
- BROWN - Miss Dorothy Sheilagh Brown,** born in 1916 in Singapore. Educated in UK returning to Singapore in 1939. Worked at the Ministry of War Economy. Evacuated with mother [see above] on the Vyner Brooke [sunk]. **Sumatra internee,** Palembang 3.42-11.44, Duntok 11.44-4.45, Loebek Linggau 4.45- 9.45. She was a keen singer. Married Arthur Lea and lived in Canada 1946-1952 then UK. Arthur died 1988. Sheila died 30.11.05 [89]. Papers donated to IWD.(JMD): Shelagh Brown is reported to have returned from home leave with her father and sister Barbara on the 'Bremen' in 1936 (SFPDA. 16.4.36); in 1939 she<sup>30</sup> was the bridesmaid at the wedding of her sister Barbara; there is a report describing



how she saved a small boy from drowning in a lake in Singapore – poignant given her later experience on the "Vyner Brooke" (SG, 10.9.40): by the time Shelagh had been moved to Palembang camp she is described by fellow internee, Helen Colijn, as living in House No. 9 with her mother and a dozen other people " ... packed like the proverbial sardines". She became friends with Helen Colijn and they would take walks around Irenelaan in the camp and by then she is quoted by Helen as experiencing her "past sickness" – her longing for the lovely evenings in Singapore when friends took her out to tennis and dinner parties: late in their internment Helen records Shelagh's excitement at being bequeathed a hairbrush on the death of a fellow internee saying " ... its lovely to be able to brush my hair again. It's been more than two years since I did ..." (SOS); Shelagh's manuscript at the IWD is Document 1729.

- **BULL** – (Mrs. Annabelle Bull: she was the wife of Harold Robert Bull, DOA b.1888, who had been educated at Framlingham & Queen's College, Cambridge. He went to Malaya 1911 as Cadet SS. By 1937 District Judge [Civil] SS Singapore and Police Magistrate SS. Captain Gaiping Swimming Club. Aged 54 in 1942. Changi and Sime Rd internee. Wife interned at Palembang. Eldest daughter & 2 children missing? Member of BAO till 1973 (JOD). : it appears that Mrs Ann or Annabelle Bull (nee Benn)( source is freeweb.geneaology.rootsweb.ancestry website) was born in c. 1899 and married Harold Bull( prior to 1923 according to the History of Suffolk website) there is also a reference to one son by the name of Daniel Bull and the freeweb.geneaology.rootsweb.ancestry l website states that she had two sons and two daughters: Singapore newspaper reports show Dr and Mrs Bull were married in 1931 (SG, 26.11.31): as the only woman on board identified with about four children it would seem that Mrs Bull was a the calm and composed mother recorded by Betty Jeffrey ( ORB, p. 150) during the bombing of the ship " ... It was most uncomfortable on the floor [ it seems of the saloon] ...it did not leave much room for my long legs and I always seemed to have a small child's foot under my stomach. The poor little kid was wonderfully brave ... She didn't utter a sound. Her mother had four small children with her and she calmly prayed aloud – the Lord's Prayer. Poor soul. If anyone needed help she did....": during the sinking Mrs Bull and her daughter Hazel managed to cling to the overturned lifeboat in a group with six AANS nurses (Dittleheuser, Clancy, Hughes, Raymont, Gardam and Ashton) two civilian men, a few other women and a Malay sailor named Billy . Mrs Bull said that her other two children had drifted away from her - and Hazel had also lost her 'teddy bear' in the sea so Jean Ashton swam after the teddy and returned it to the little girl. Mrs Bull and her daughter later switched to a raft as did everyone in the damaged lifeboat when it began to sink. (Pp.174-175 ORB: it was the understanding of Mrs Bull and everyone else from the ship that the two children had been lost and this was the situation until after the War when Lady Mountbatten, after hearing the story, flew to Java and within 24 hours flew back again with the children them with their mother by bringing them to the bedside of Mrs Bull who was recovering in Singapore after the internment years. Mrs Bull refers in that article to her 12 year old daughter Millie and 10 year old son Robin. Millie told the newspaper reporter " ... Robin and I had to jump from the boat as the Japanese machine – gunned us. We swam until we were picked up by a raft. We reached Java where the natives helped us for months. Later we were interned. We never believed Dummy was dead. We saw her in the water with hazel on her back. We always prayed fro them. Lady Mountbatten is like a fairy godmother to us, but I did not recognise mummy ...." ( 'The Advertiser' , Adelaide, SA 1931-54)
- **BULL** – (Miss Hazel Bull aged six years: in an article in the "The Advertiser 'Adelaide, post war Hazel's age is given as 8 years of age at the time by her mother. She spent the war in internment with her mother in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau.
- **BULL** – this is Millie Bull. It was the understanding of Mrs Bull all through the war that Millie and her brother Robin had been lost after the sinking, this was until after the War when Lady Mountbatten, after hearing the story, flew to Java and within 24 hours flew back again with the children them with their mother by bringing them to the bedside of Mrs Bull who was recovering in Singapore after the internment years. Mrs Bull refers in that article to her 12 year old daughter Millie and 10 year old son Robin but this may have been her age at the end of the War. Millie told the newspaper reporter " ... Robin and I had<sup>31</sup> to jump from the boat as the Japanese machine – gunned us. We swam until we were picked





*up by a raft. We reached Java where the natives helped us for months. Later we were interned. We never believed Dummy was dead. We saw her in the water with Hazel on her back. We always prayed for them. Lady Mountbatten is like a fairy godmother to us, but I did not recognise mummy ...."* ('The Advertiser', Adelaide, SA 1931-54: Millie Bull, according to "The Advertiser" article post war ( see above) her age was given as 12 years; however the records of the massive ( 10,000 women and children) Tjideng internment camp in Batavia may give a more accurate record. The April 1944 records for that camp, which was almost entirely Dutch women and children record "Bull, M, internee # 4881 , and one other family member aged 8 years of age in Block 10 (Millie's sequence number in the Block 10 was 236) and from the camp records it appears that they were under some sort of care by the New Zealander and Secretary of the Singapore YWCA, Miss Leila Bridgeman (it states ' ... at (Dw. Bridgman[sic]') who had been sunk on the "HMS Giang Bee"(Miss Bridgeman , who was 52 years of age was repatriated to NZ at the end of the War and died in 1974 – there is film footage of her leaving Tjideng camp in 1945 in the NZ newsreel " NZ Cameraman in Singapore" – of course Millie and Robin had already left for Singapore); in 1945 records Millie Bull appears once again in Block 10 as, 'Brits' and 'head of household' for 2 people in Tjideng camp with a POW number of 4878 (interestingly Ms Bridgeman is shown as # 4877 in those records although she is in a different part of the camp in Block 4); it seems very likely that this is ' ... Betty aged 11 years ...' who Lt. Mann saw on the raft with a boy named 'David aged 9 years' and a Siamese woman ( who might have been Mrs Pearson)

- **BULL** –Robin Bull aged 10 years of age at the time of the sinking according to the article in 'The Advertiser' post war (see above) but probably only 8 years or less. Robin and his older sister Millie survived for days on a raft before landing in Java, being cared for by 'natives' for several months and then interned in Java ( see above for Millie Bull). It seems likely that this is the boy named 'David' who Lt. Mann saw was on a raft with a girl named 'Betty' and a Siamese woman? Is this Daniel Bull mentioned above in the entry for Mrs Bull – or is there another son in the family?
- **BULLWINKEL** – **Sister Vivian Bullwinkel** was born on 18 December 1915 in Kapunda, South Australia and trained at Broken Hill (where her father worked in mining). She began her nursing career at Hamilton, Victoria, before moving to the Jessie McPherson Hospital in Melbourne. In September 1941 she enlisted with the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group. As one of the nurses on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" Vivian was allocated an area of the ship as her responsibility and was one of the last to leave – according to the book 'ORB' she was a non swimmer and entered the water after removing her shoes as the ship was heeling over (p.1630. She joined the others at the upturned lifeboat and was with this group when it ran aground at Radji Beach late on that Saturday night and they walked to the bonfire which had been built by First Officer Bill Sedgeman and the nurses with Irene Drummond. Vivian Bullwinkel was the only nurse to survive the massacre on Radji beach on the Sunday and her noble story is well covered in many books, articles and official records ( including her own , now tattered and worn, original statement which is held in the associated War Crimes file in the national Archives, Melbourne). It is not the intention to repeat her story here except to say that she crawled up the beach after the massacre and the departure of the Japanese troops, hid in the jungle , met up with severely wounded private Kinsley 9 who later died in a POW camp soon after 0 and with Kinsley gave herself up to the Japanese some ten days later. She suffered with her comrades through three and a half years of horrendous, cruel, internment and went on to become one of Australia's most distinguished women. Vivian spent the rest of her life in nursing; firstly with the Heidelberg Repatriation hospital in Melbourne and later as Matron/Director of Nursing at the Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, Melbourne. She also gave evidence at the war Crimes Trial in Tokyo. In 1955 she became matron of the Army Nurses Training Unit and in 1977 she married Colonel Francis West Statham, changing her name to Vivian Statham. In 1992 she returned to Banka Island to unveil a memorial to the nurses who were killed on the "SS. Vyner Brooke", those who died in the sinking, and those who perished in the internments camps of Sumatra. She received many great honours and awards during her post war life – including the Florence Nightingale medal, the MBE, and the AOM. Vivian Statham died aged 84 years in Perth, WA, in July 2000. History shows her to be truly a great woman of





- **CALNAN – Sister Ellenor 'Nell' Calnan**, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital came from Culcairn, near Albury, southern New South Wales (p. 166 ORB); she was the daughter of William Norman Calnan and Mary O'Brien and was born in 1912 in Culcairn; she had one sibling, Noel William Calnan (ancestry.com) who was older and died in 1973; she enlisted (QFX 19072) in 1941 aged 28 years of age and appears as a dark haired pleasant faced woman; she died either during the bombing of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" or soon after jumping into the sea as the ship was sinking; after the War Betty Jeffrey and Vivian Bullwinkel, whilst travelling through south eastern Australia drumming up support and money for a new nursing center to be built in Melbourne in memory of the nurses from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" who had lost their lives they apparently took time out of their schedule to visit Ellenor's mother – by then a widow who lived in Wilson Street, Albury (p. 306 ORB); she is remembered on the Wagga Wagga, NSW Roll of Honour (jonesfamilyhistory.wordpress.com)
- **CARR** – a handwritten list which appears to have been compiled in Palembang internment camp shows " ... **Miss Carr**, c/o Grengove & Co., KL ...seen on board " as being on the "SS. Vyner Brooke"; but no one of that name was ever interned in Palembang internment camp; it is possible that this was a Miss Marion Carr (born 1890) who travelled on the P & O 'Corfu' to England in 1932 (SG, 14.4.32 recording her departure from Singapore and ancestry.com recording her arrival on 13.5.32) but this is not proven: the first record of a Miss Carr in Malaya is in 1923 when she left for Europe on the P & O 'Morea' (SG, 14.3.23); and then a mention of her at 'Bukit Fraser' in 1924 and also in that year being a bridesmaid to a Margery Cooper marrying Dr John Walwyn Braley (SEPDMA, 23.9.24); in 1925 there is a photo of Miss Carr when she was in a Gilbert & Sullivan musical in Kuala Lumpur in aid of St. Mary's Church Fund when she looks to be in her late 20s or early 30s ("Malayan Standard Post", 7.3.25); in 1930 a Miss F.M. Carr left Singapore for Europe on the East Asiatic Motorship 'Deonia' (SG, 25.1.30); it is relevant that in 1935 W.D. Grengrove was the proprietor of a music and radio store at 19 Batu Road, Kuala Lumpur which fits with Miss Carr's interest in musicals: just prior to the Japanese invasion there is a record of a Miss Carr helping with refreshments at the Harbour Board Club with the womens section of that Club (SEPDMA, 26.6.41); some of this information re ships voyages may relate to another Miss Carr in Malaya, but it seems that the person who lost her life on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" was the Miss Carr who worked for W. D. Grengrove's musical and radio store in KL.
- **CASSON – Sister (later Lt.) Florence 'Flo' Rebecca Casson**, SFX 13418, was born in Warracknabeal, Victoria on 6 March 1903. She trained as a nurse and the first record of her nursing career is at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in 1935 in a group photo of "Matron Draw with Night Nurses"; soon after that she must have moved up in her career to become Matron at a number of small country hospitals including at Jamestown, Port Pirie and the Pinaroo (the Pinaroo Soldiers Memorial Hospital) a small South Australian country town; on 7.2.41 she enlisted at Keswick, south Australia with the AANS and was transferred to Malaya with the 2/13th Australian General Hospital; after service in Malaya and Singapore she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and at the time of the bombing attack on the ship she was located in the saloon with other nurses where she was hit with a bomb blast – along with Rosetta Wright and Clare Halligan (ORB, p.153) – and the blast caused severe damage to her legs, one of which was possibly fractured and she had to be assisted up to the main deck; somehow her friends managed to get her into the second lifeboat that was launched with severely wounded nurses on board; this lifeboat drifted ashore at Radji Beach later that night and Vivian Bullwinkel and officer Jimmy Miller walked along the beach to where a large bonfire had already been lit by survivors to get assistance with carrying the wounded nurses to the main camp; Flo and Rosetta Wright were the most seriously wounded as described in ORB, p. 200 " ... *they were both strong and brave women. Again shell splinters had caused the damage, with both women suffering deep wounds to the buttocks and upper thighs. They were unable to walk, and had to be fed and helped with their toilet functions. The wounds appear to have caused nerve damage, perhaps fractures, and they needed more specialised treatment than any that could be provided on the beach ... Miller eventually put together a rescue party and set off. The journey to the second* <sup>33</sup> *lifeboat and back with its survivors took over two hours, and the wounded nurses were in*



agony on the return journey, having to be half-dragged, half-carried for most of the distance. Their pain was obvious and it, in turn, increased the distress of the other survivors..."; so when dawn broke on Sunday 15 February 1942, Flo was probably lying on a makeshift stretcher in the shade of the jungle on Radji beach with other wounded being cared for by Datron Drummond's team and a Chinese doctor who had also survived the sinking (possibly a Dr Chan?) plus a group of survivors numbering about 70: it seems that Flo and few other more seriously wounded were later that day transferred to a fisherman's uninhabited hut further down the beach towards the headland: Flo spent another night on the beach being cared for by her companions with what little they had in the way of medical supplies and when dawn arose on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February the survivors were joined by another lifeboat and rafts with many wounded soldiers from another ship sunk in the Banka Straits during the night: the sheer volume of wounded seems to have tipped those in authority to sending the women and children, and a few walking wounded men on a trek towards the nearest town and the nurses were also invited to join that group but declined: so Flo was amongst the group of nurses destined to be murdered by the Japanese: once the Japanese had executed firstly the Officers and then the second group of Other ranks and civilian men they turned their attention to the nurses: forming the nurses into a line facing the sea, with Flo and her wounded friends being supported at the right hand end of the line by Datron Irene Drummond (ORB, p. 216) by other sisters the Japanese carried out one of their most abhorrent atrocities war crimes against Allied women on record: the book ORB records " ... Flo and Rosetta and Clare and the sisters supporting them fell under the gun, grouped together in death as in life ..." (p.217): so life was taken from Flo at the age of 39 years of age after several decades unselfishly of caring for others in need: she is memorialised by a plaque at Pinaroo Soldiers Memorial Hospital where the Health Promotion Room is also named after her: and there is a plaque also at Royal Adelaide Hospital: finally at Doonta cemetery in south Australia, at the grave of her parents, Flo is remembered within her family by a plaque inscribed with the names of she and her brother.

- **CASGLE** – Miss E. Castle is listed in the Mrs. E. Cross list of British Women Internees in Palembang camp as having been a passenger on the "SS. Vyner Brooke": CASGLE Ms Edith Evangeline 'Ena' from Doncaster, Colonial Service Nursing Sister: Seremban 1935, Datron, Telok Anson Hospital, Perak, Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 19.11.44 [50]  
Sumatra(JMD): Miss Edith Evangeline 'Ena' Castle was born in 1895 (UK census 1911) in the Doncaster area and in 1911 was living at Wheatley, Yorkshire (West Riding) which is a suburb of Doncaster, but apart from being a Colonial nursing Sister and specifically Datron of the Telok Anson (the town is now known as 'Teluk Intan' after a name change in the 1980s and the old hospital has been replaced by a new one less prone to flooding) Hospital, Perak, little is known of her life apart from the fact that she took 'home leave' in 1931 leaving on the P. & O. 'Dantua' for Europe (SEPOA 10.4.31) and was from Doncaster: in her late 40s when she boarded the ship in February 1942, she survived the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' but died aged 50 years in Duntok Camp on 19.11.44 ('lostgravesofDuntok') :the official record is **Miss Edith Evangeline Castle**, died on 19.11.44 at Duntok, Banka Island, aged 50 years, daughter of the late Mr. & Mrs. B. Castle of Doncaster, Yorkshire (CWGC).
- **CHAMBERS** - John Lawrence Chambers, BA b.1898, Omagh, Co. Tyrone. Appears in the 1901 Irish census aged 2 years with father James Chambers and mother Sara Elisabeth chambers and four siblings plus three servants. Educated Omagh Academy and Trinity College, Dublin. WW1 Service in France, Egypt and Palestine 1917-1921. To Malaya 1927 as Assistant Engineer PWD FDS, Pte FDSVF [1937]. By 1940 State Engineer Trengganu. Aged 42 in 1942. Evacuated on Marella out of Singapore 10.2.42 [this appears to be incorrect]. Vyner Brooke survivor? Palembang, Sumatra internee. Repatriated to India then on the Ranchi from Madras, arriving Southampton 24.11.45. To Glasgow. Returned to post war Malaya (JMD): in 1932 he is recorded on the passenger list of the Blue Funnel Line ship Achilles' as a Civil Engineer, FDS, from "Fintona" [there is a village by this name], Co. Tyrone. At the time of the War, John and his wife Norah had escaped from northern Malaya together ahead of the Japanese (see next entry on Norah Chambers for this impressive story): there is a reference to him in WBGW (p.52) " ... Norah Chambers who had got her<sup>34</sup> sick husband away and was also accompanied by her sister Ena ... " : also Shelagh Brown



mentions him in her diary when they shared their meal on 13 February with Ena Murray and Shelagh Brown ( SD P. 136): it is not known how John and Norah reached Banka Island but they both ended up as internees in Duntok, Palembang and Loebok Linggau camps.: both survived the War and were repatriated to the UK before once again returning to Malaya on the "Raub" for John to take up the position of Senior Executive Engineer with the PWD (SG. 2.9.46): in 1947 he was transferred to the role of Senior Executive Engineer, Malacca (SG. 16.4.47): and in 1949 he is recorded as Chairman of the Malacca Central District Boy Scout Association (SG. 4.11.49): in 1951 he is recorded on the passenger list of the 'Chusan' from London to Singapore and then a few years later (1956) on the 'Aureol' to Lagos, Nigeria. In later life John and Norah settled in St Heliers on the island of Jersey, as did her sister Ena and her husband Kenneth Murray: Norah died in 1987.

- **CHAMBERS** - (Mrs Norah Chambers, wife of John Lawrence Chambers – see above - (he was the State Engineer with the PWD at Trengganu and a Private in the FMSVF) had been evacuated on the 'Darella' on 10.2.42 but was captured and interned in Palembang), she was aged 37 in 1942, Palembang, Sumatra internee. Norah's 5 year old daughter Sally was evacuated to the UK with Norah's middle sister, Barbara Sawyer, plus Barbara's sons Jim & Tony, on the 'SS Orion' on 31 January 1942 and Barbara's husband Harry Sawyer evacuated on the 'SS Kuala' and finally made it to Ceylon on 'HMAS Hobart' (email Diane Whitehead 22.3.17). Nora's father Mr James Laidlaw Hope died in Changi Prison internment camp on the first day of internment – he was 65 years of age and his wife Margaret had also been interned in Changi. Norah returned to post-war Malaya. Died 1987 (JMD): she is listed in Mrs Cross' list of British women internees in Palembang 1942 as " ... (Mrs M.C.N. Chambers , husband in Palembang ...": Norah had arrived in Malaya in 1927 with her mother and two sisters ( one being Ena Murray) to join their father James Hope an engineering consultant in Perak ... she had been a student at the Royal Academy of Music in London ( WB&W p. 20): John Lawrence Chambers and Margaret Constance 'Nora' Hope had married in Ipoh in 1930, she was the daughter of James and Margaret Hope of Ipoh and her sister was Ena Murray (SPFMA. 1.3.30): there is a pre war photo of Norah Chambers in WB&W (p. 50-51): as the Japanese had advanced through northern Malaya , Norah and her husband John sent their five year old daughter Sally to safety in Kuala Lumpur , but soon found themselves trapped in Kuala Trengganu and had to embark on a quite extraordinary trek over five days and six nights through the hills and jungles of Malaya until they reached a railway line where astonishingly a train to Kuala Lumpur just happened to be passing( WB&W p. 25): the three sisters ( including Ena and another sister Barbara) managed to assemble in Singapore and with the city under bombing daily she took the decision to send Sally with her aunt Barbara and family to Australia in January 1942 ( WB&W p.39): Norah boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" with her husband John and this is made clear when she is mentioned in the diary of fellow passenger Shelagh Brown " ... Given half a tin of Asp. Saus & Pot. at night. Best meal so far! Shared it with Ina Murray, her sister Mrs Chambers and husband, and Mrs Parfait (sic) " on the second day of the voyage as the ship stopped amongst the Rio Islands ( SD p.136): it is not known how Nora/Nora and John managed to reach Banka Island after the sinking: there is a comment in 'ORB' ( 136) that " ... *Norah Chambers was a singer, musician and a teacher and was prepared to give of herself to help make other's lives just a little bit easier ...*": additional information from the database of Internees in Sumatra is that whilst in Palembang she and Miss Dryburgh prepared music from memory for a four part orchestra and " ...as there were no instruments we hummed the accompaniment and it sounded lovely...", then in Duntok camp later in October 1944 she was one of the fine women who , with her sister Ena Murray and also Audrey Owens , who volunteered to carry out the ' ...filthy and nauseating task...' of emptying overflowing latrines.( Phyllis Briggs diary): Nora's father Mr Hope died in Changi. , Repatriated to India then on the 'Ranchi' from Madras, arriving Southampton 24.11.45 with husband John. To Glasgow. Returned to post-war Malaya. Died 1987 (SUD): John and Norah returned to Malaya after the War when he arrived on the "Raub" to take up the position of Senior Executive Engineer with the PWD (SG. 2.9.46): in 1947 he was transferred to the role of Senior Executive Engineer, Malacca (SG. 16.4.47): and in 1949 he is recorded as Chairman of the Malacca Central District Boy Scout Association (SG. 4.11.49): In later life John and





Norah settled in St Heliers on the island of Jersey, as did her sister Ena and her husband Kenneth Murray; Norah died in 1987.

- **CHAN – Dr Chan:** *was there a Dr. Chan or was the Chinese doctor referred to by the Australian nurses on Radji Beach Doctor Gay Soo Woon????? Look at internee lists!!!!!!!*
- **CHAN** – the above record of a page probably prepared in Palembang by internees listing the names of those who died shows a "**Drs. Chan Joo Kim, Singapore**" and her "son Denys Chan" who died: Drs Chan and sons Daris (?) & John, Vyner Brooke sinking survivors. **Palembang internees**. Daris died at Duntok 2.42. Released(SUD); also it appears that a Master Peter Chan survived: in SCOTVB (p.59) Ralph Armstrong describes Drs Chan and her son Johnny, who lived in the same house # 11 as the Armstrong's (and many others) in Irenelaan, Palembang as "...Drs Chan was an Englishwoman who had married a Chinese ..."; there is a rather more dark record in WBGW (p.94) of the attempt by the Japanese to canvass European women in Irenelaan camp in Palembang to 'entertain' the Japanese officers in their leisure hours at an officers club "... A Drs. Chan, in fact an Englishwoman married to a Singapore Chinese conducted this operation. She was a tall, statuesque brunette with a loud voice who could hardly have been less suitable for such a delicate mission. As she moved about the houses she had something like the effect of a wolf in a dovecote ... It turned out to be one dollar per attendance, in Japanese military currency, thirty cents to go to Drs Chan as commission ...", it seems the canvassing by Drs Chan produced poor results: the "List of British women and Children in Palembang" compiled by internees shows "... Chan (Drs. A. (left 24/8/42. Retd. Camp 12/10/42) and "... Chan John & baby (left 24/8/42, ret'd. Singapore with father 12/10/42) – the 24 august 1942 was when a group of Chinese and Eurasian women left Palembang camp to go to Singapore with some going into Changi internment camp. However it looks like Drs Chan, in the final event, stayed in Palembang. .
- **CHAN- Master John Chan** appears to have survived: and Ralph Armstrong in his list of internees allocated to individual houses in Irenelaan, Palembang shows Drs Chan and Johnny Chan in House No. 11 with the Armstrong and Boswell families ( but no Master Peter Chan) but again there is some conflict in official records because a telegram from 'NOK Fremantle' to 'Brillist' in 1945 (NAA files) states that apart from Drs Chan there was a Master Chan and a John Chan who survived (but also that Denis Chan was drowned from the ship). **CHAN – Master Peter Chan** also appears to have been a survivor (source from internee list ??)
- **CHAN – Master Daris (?) Chan** appears to have died in Duntok in February 1942: there is also the record of "... Denis Chan 'drowned from the ship' in the official War Crimes file in the National Archives of Australia( a telegram from 'NOK Fremantle to Brillist' in 1945): it is not clear whether Drs Chan, who was a European married to a Chinese, had three or two sons on board with her and whether her sons included a 'Daris' and/or a 'Denis' or whether this is simply a spelling error on one boys name: finally **it is possible** that one of Drs Chan's children was the "... young Chinese boy ..." (p.184 ORB) grabbed by Australian Sister Iole Harper as he floated past the raft and she was able to lift the child onto an empty life raft and pull it across to Olive Pasche's raft, where she passed the child into the waiting arms of Caroline Ennis ..." on that group of rafts were Matron Olive Paschke, Betty Jeffrey, Iole Harper, and Caroline Ennis – the latter soon took responsibility for holding "... a small Chinese Boy who looked about four ... and a little English girl who was about a year younger ..." ( p.171. ORB) – together with Sisters Merle Grenerry, Gladys McDonald, Jess Dorsch and Mary Clarke. The tragic outcome was that, apart from Betty Jeffrey and Iole Harper who swam to safety, the rafts and its occupants were never seen again.
- **CLANCY – Lt. Veronica Ann Clancy**, #NX 76282, was born in 1910. A Sister in the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital, by the time she faced the horrors of the attack on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she was clearly an assertive woman in her early thirties with a cool head and presence. Her personal papers and memoir are held in the Australian War Memorial museum in Canberra and are to quote ORB (p.242-3) "...what may be the best memoirs of a prisoner of war and Australian nurse ever written ....". Once she had boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" with the other nurses she was one of those who volunteered, in the possibility of the ship being attacked and sunk, to stay on board and swim to shore. In the event, when<sup>36</sup> the ship was attacked, she took cover with others in the main bathroom behind the ship's





saloon ( ORB, p.148) and then during the chaos of the bombs and sinking ship she led the nurses to move amongst those passengers who had been too terribly wounded to be moved to lifeboats, administering heavy doses of morphine knowing they had no hope of survival when the ship sank( ORB, p. 157). Upon jumping into the sea she joined those already clinging to the overturned lifeboat – later joining a small liferaft when the lifeboat sank – it was at this time her sense of right and wrong prompted her to climb on board that liferaft and give the self – centred Dr Goldberg a few good punches when Goldberg refused to take her turn in the sea so that others could climb onto the raft. She and the other occupants of the raft spent the first night after the sinking swimming and attempting to push the liferaft towards land against unpredictable sea currents. The next day she , along with the others , were picked up by two RAAF men in an old launch and Veronica was given a coat by one of the RAAF since she had lost most of her clothing whilst swimming and had used her uniform as a sail to try and get the raft to shore ( QF, p.107) . This group were delivered to Muntok wharf by the launch (which immediately left at the sight of Japanese troops) and Veronica was locked with the other survivors in Muntok cinema. She survived the awful internment camps in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau but whilst in Palembang was diagnosed with myocarditis (ORB, p.254). To quote ORB ( p.242-30 " ... Veronica Clancy was regarded as one of the great givers ... plus she had a wicked sense of humour and an egalitarian attitude ..." She left the AANS after the War in late 1946 and married, later passing away in 1977 (AWO) .

- **CLARKE - Sister Mary Dorothea Clarke**, NEX 70938, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital was born on 20 July 1911 in the small country town of Rylstone, NSW (current population 615) in the NSW tablelands as the eldest of six children of Henry and Flora Clarke. She trained at Coats Hospital, Little Bay, NSW (now Prince Henry Hospital) and by 1937 was in the midwifery branch of the Metropolitan Hospital, Sydney where she passed her nurses registration exams. She enlisted on 7 January 1941 with the 10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital, AANS and embarked on the 'Queen Mary' for Singapore before later being reassigned to Malaya. ORB p.148 records that when the bombing of the ship started she took cover in the main bathroom behind the ship's saloon with other nurses and passengers and after the ship sank she was seen holding onto the raft on which Matron Paschke was sitting – she was last seen (by Betty Jeffrey and Iole Harper who had also been on the raft – p.105 QF) sitting on the raft with Olive Paschke and Caroline Ennis ( who had the two small children on her lap) and Gladys McDonald, with Jess Dorsch, and Merle Grenery holding onto ropes around the raft. The raft was last seen by the other nurses being swept down the Banka Straits towards Java and " ... *swallowed up in the darkness of the night and not seen again ...* " (p.105 QF). More recent information (Dr Neil McGregor email November 2016) advises that a merchant ship found the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses ' in the Indian ocean " several weeks later – meaning that the raft had travelled in that time south and out to the Indian ocean via the Sunda Straits. Perhaps the best epitaph on record for Mary Clarke was contained in a n article in the local Rylstone newspaper around the time of the War wherein it extended sympathies to Mary Clarke's parents and remembering her as " ... *a fine specimen of Australian womanhood, a girl who had everything in life to live for and one who got all that life had to give ...* " .
- **CUTHBERTSON - Sister Mary Elizabeth Cuthbertson**, VEX 38746, was born in 1910, the daughter of Dr W. D. Cuthbertson of Ballarat. She was known to her loved ones as 'Beth' ("The Courier" Ballarat 22.1.04) and was nursing in Ballarat when she enlisted with the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Her Army records photo in the AWO and a photo taken soon after embarkation for Malaya in 1941 show a tall, attractive, dark haired woman who, at the time of embarking on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and her death in the massacre on Radji Beach was aged 31 years. Beth was given an area of responsibility on the ship on its last voyage (ORB p.157) and as recorded by Betty Jeffrey " ... *Beth Cuthbertson searched the ship when it was a very odd angle to make sure all the wounded people had been taken off and that nobody remained while other nurses were busy getting people into the sea. At this stage there were quite a few people in the water ... and the ship was listing heavily to starboard ...* " (p. 138 SD); she presumably landed on Radji Beach in a lifeboat with Matron Paschke with the other nurses. She was killed in the massacre with 21 other Australian<sup>37</sup> Army Nurses. After the war, when Betty Jeffrey and Vivian Bullwinkel were travelling



Australia to raise money for the Nursing centre they planned to build in Melbourne they gave a speech on the subject in Ballarat. An older man approached them after the speech, gave a donation, thanked them for what they had said and explained he was Beth's father ('ORB'). In 2004 Beth's sister was still living in Ballarat and told the local paper ("The Courier", 22.1.04) how the family first learned of Beth's death in listening to a radio interview with Vivian Bullwinkel who read out a list of names of those who died!

- **DANIEL – Mrs S. A Daniel** was on the ship according to the cipher attached to the list of British internees in Palembang 1942 prepared by Mrs E. Cross; another source is "DANIEL Mrs Sarah Emilia 'May', Teleprinter Operator, Malaya Command Signals. Wife of Frederick. **Sumatra internee.**; she is also listed by Dr Goldberg – Curth as one of those women from the ship who died in 'Luebok- Lingoe' – simply listed as Mrs Daniel: She died in captivity 5.8.45[44] Sumatra (JDD): **Mrs Sarah Emilia/Amelia 'May' Daniel** is only mentioned once in Malayan newspapers before the war – when she was on the committee for the Selangor Poppy Day fund raising fair (SG, 26.10.39) and presumably made it to Radji beach by lifeboat or to Duntok via the RAF launch : she was aged 44 years when she died two weeks before the war ended and was the daughter of Harry and Flora A. Bamford (Victoria Institution website); it was reported after the war (SG, 14.9.47) that she and her husband Frederick had one son (a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt in the Royal Artillery in 1947, who had been in the UK since 1933) and two daughters who were still at school in the UK in 1947: [insofar as her husband he was Frederick Daniel BSc. b.1899. Educated Lady Danners School, Bakewell and Manchester University. Colonial Education Service: General Science Teacher, British Guiana 1922 then to Malaya in 1930. Science Master, Victoria Institute KL from 1930. In Australia on 7.12.41. Returned to Singapore 23.12.41 and reported to DAS HQ, Singapore. Aged 43 in 1942. **Changi and Sime Rd internee.** Wife died in Sumatra. He wrote and conducted Science classes in Changi. Repatriated to the UK n Antenor, arriving Liverpool 27.10.45 Science Inspector post-war then Principal, Victoria Institute 1946. Retired 1949 Lived and gardened in Aberystwyth. Died 29.7.71 at Ivybridge. (JDD)];
- **DARLING – this is a post war married name for Pat Gunther. See GUNTHER.**
- **DAVIS – Sister Winnie May 'Win' Davis, NEX 70498, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group.** Win Davis was born on 7.7.15, the oldest daughter of James and Lorna Davis, Goldstream Street, Ulmarra, which is in the Clarence river District of NSW. She first enlisted in the emergency Unit at Victoria Barracks, Sydney on 10.12.40. Upon arriving in Singapore she was attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> AGH (Duntok Peace Museum website). From photos at the AWD she was an attractive, petite woman. On the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she was allocated responsibility for the forward part of the ship (p.48, ORB) with Pat Gunther and Kath Neuss and they set themselves up in an officer's cabin on the portside. As the ship sank it was so low in the water she literally stepped off the ship's deck into the water with pat Gunther( p.163, ORB) and once in the water she clung to a deck chair floating by(ORB, p.170) before she and Pat Gunther reached a raft on which were the ships Eurasian radio operator and two British sailors( one of whom was badly burned and later slipped into the water and drowned) plus another nurse and three civilian women (being Mrs Brown and her daughter Shelagh and a woman who became unconscious and drowned). They were later picked up by a Japanese ship, taken to Duntok and imprisoned. Win endured three years of harsh internment in the Duntok, Palembang and Belalau camps during which she played her part in maintaining spirits. Tragically, less than a month before the war ended she succumbed to the ravages of beri beri and then dysentery in the camp hospital at Belalau/ Loebok Linggau and died on 19.7.45. She was buried in wretched circumstances covered only with an old rice sack to cover her in death at the cemetery at the top of the hill at that awful camp. (p.222, QH). Her remains were moved after the war to the Jakarta cemetery where she now lays in rest. She is memorialised (as a graduate of the hospital) on the stained glass panels of the 'Window of memory' at War Memorial Hospital, Waverly, NSW. Probably the best epitaph to Win Davis is contained in the book "While history Passes" by Sister J.E. Simons, " ... one of our youngest Sisters, was a marvellous girl who gave herself to her friends ..."
- **DAY – Dr George Day.** The inclusion amongst the passengers of the "SS. Vyner Brooke"( in a book on the sinking by survivor Ralph Armstrong) of Dr George Day " ... who had been our swimming instructors at St Andrews in Singapore being one of the ship's officers, guiding us down [ to the lifeboats]..." (p.36, SCOTVB) appears to be a case of mistaken identity because another record shows "... DAY G.L. [George] Physical Director, UDCA Orchard Road. Cadet (MVA) Killed in flying accident 7.11.41[25](JDD); in 1939 George day



had been Physical director of the YMCA and in 1940 was the judge at St. Andrews School inter house swimming championships: this death is evidenced in a 'Straits Times' report (in the 9.11.41 edition "Honours at funeral of RAF Officer & Cadet") on the funeral of "... (Dr George Day, popular Malayan sportsman... who joined the DVAF on Oct 25 this year as a cadet under training in the Govt. Training Flying School scheme in Singapore and his instructor, Flight lieut. Wills died on Friday morning ... they were buried at Bididari Cemetery on 8.11.41".

- **DELFORCE** – Sister Cecelia May Delforce, QFX 19071, 2/10th Australian Hospital Group. Cecilia was born on 7.9.12, the youngest of the six children of Samuel Delforce and Lydia Elizabeth Ogden of Augathella, western Queensland. She first nursed in Augathella before nursing four years at Stanthorpe General Hospital, and then in Brisbane where she signed up for the AANS in May 1940. In January 1941 she was attached to the 2/10th AGH and arrived in Singapore in February 1941 (Helen Stillman, [issuu.com](http://issuu.com)): her photo in the AWOD archives shows a demure, attractive lady but she was a girl from the country and on page 172 of the book 'ORB' there is an amusing insight into the personality of this young woman from a large family in outback Queensland since the other nurses on the ship "... believed she was one of the best swearers they had ever heard, with a gift of combining traditional vernacular with modern idiom ...": after the ship sank Cecilia found herself floating in the sea on debris and covered in oil from the ship's bunkers. She drifted with the currents past islands, bodies and life rafts. More than 18 hours later she found herself washed ashore at the northern part of Banka Island. After recovering from her ordeal she walked up the beach where she found a path that led into the jungle (Helen Stillman, [issuu.com](http://issuu.com)): we should then look to page 189 of 'ORB' to pick up her story "... as she followed a track that led through it leading to the rear of some sand dunes, she heard a rifle shot. In front of her, a Japanese soldier had just shot a prisoner, probably a local volunteer with the Netherlands East Indies Forces. Several others, with their hands tied behind their backs, stood nearby. The soldier seemed surprised to see Cecilia, indicating a small hut nearby. When she opened the door, Cecilia saw there were several women inside, including some nurses wearing uniforms that she did not recognise. There was no further shooting and within an hour another group of Japanese soldiers arrived and marched the women the relatively short distance to Duntok ...": so Cecilia joined her fellow nurses in over three years of the harshest internment and deprivation through the camps of Duntok, Palembang and Belalau. Where survival became their focus and Cecilia cut firewood to earn her livelihood "... no doubt a skill she learned at home in Queensland ..." (Helen Stillman, [issuu.com](http://issuu.com)): Cecilia was the first to leave the AANS on being repatriated to Australia after the war and was discharged with the rank of Lieutenant on 9.1.46 but soon after was awarded mention in despatches for her leadership as a POW: in 1946 she married Allen McPhee in Wollongong, NSW, and they went on to have two sons. In later years they moved to the Gold Coast where she passed away, aged 98 years, in March 2011. She was the last of the 24 nurses who survived the war to pass away and it is an insight into her strong feelings of comradeship that she requested no flowers at her funeral – since she was not able to bury her friends in Sumatra with flowers she did not believe she should have flowers either. (Helen Stillman, [issuu.com](http://issuu.com))
- **DOMINGUEZ** - John Gallagher Dominguez, born 1879 Wandilong near Bright, Victoria. Left Singapore on the Vyner Brooke [sunk]. (Mining Engineer, Anglo-Oriental Mining Ltd. Palembang, **Sumatra internee**. Died in captivity 11.9.44 (Duntok (SUO)): John Dominguez was born in the small gold rush town of Wandiligong (near Bright in Victoria) on 6.3.1879, as the youngest son of Antonio Salvador Dominguez (a Spaniard) and his wife Mary Ann (nee Gallagher and an Irishwoman). He was later employed as a winchman and then a farmer in other small towns in north-eastern Victoria, Australia, named Lower Buckland, Parpunkah and then back to Wandiligong. He married Agnes Gertrude Dunphy on 7.12.1907: in 1921 he is mentioned as being in Indi, Victoria: they must have moved to Malaya during the 1920-30s and the first mention of them in Malayan newspapers is in 1936 when they left for a few months leave in Australia on the 'Nieuw Zealand' (SEPDA 18.6.36) and returned on the same ship later in the year (SEPDA 3.10.36): it is possible they had at least one son who moved from Australia with them because there was a Sgt John<sup>39</sup> Anthony Dominguez, born in Australia in 1911, employed by Anglo Oriental Mining and 1<sup>st</sup>





Btn Perak, FMSVF, and married to Mabel, who became a POW – he may have been the person named 'Jack' in the 1945 death notice – below – in Australia for Mr & Mrs. Dominguez): According to rootsweb.ancestry.com "... It is alleged that John was managing a rubber plantation in Malaya when the Japanese invaded...": in 1942 John Dominguez had reached the age of 62 years: Mr Dominguez is listed in the report by Dr. Goldberg as a "Vyner Brooke" passenger who died in Muntok: the official post war record by the Colonial Office was 'J. G. Dominguez, Anglo Oriental Tin Ltd., died 11.9.44 in south Sumatra of Colitis and Beriberi (CORD, Reg M1, Folio 114, Serial No 680): there was a death notice in "The Argus" on 20.10.45 for both Mr & Mrs Dominguez which states "... at internment camp, Muntok, Banka Island ... loved father of Jim and Jack, grandfather of Brian, Ian and Judith ...": neither he nor 'Gertie' are listed on the CWGC website.

- **DOMINGUEZ** - (Mrs Agnes Gertrude 'Gertie' Dominguez, nee Dunphy, born 1881 The Buckland near Bright, Victoria. Wife of J.G. [married 1907]. Left Singapore on the Vyner Brooke [sunk]. Palembang Sumatra internee. Agnes Gertrude 'Gertie' Dunphy had also been born near Bright, Victoria at "The Buckland" and married John Dominguez on 7.12.1907. See the story of John Dominguez (above) for what is known of their life in Australia and Malaya: she died aged 63 years of age in Muntok camp and her death was recorded in the same death notice as her husband. Died in captivity 9.11.44 (Muntok.(SUM)):
- **DORSCH – Sister Hilda/Haulda/Hulda Dillicent 'Millie' Maria/Marie Dorsch**, SFX 10597, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station, Australian Hospital group. [NB: there is a huge amount of discrepancy in the names show for Sister Dorsch in even the AWD records (Roll of honour/POW records/photos etc) and most other references to her that should be cleared up out of respect for Millie Dorsch's memory.] In the book 'ORB' she is referred to as 'Jess' Dorsch but it is not clear why this is used perhaps this was her nickname amongst the nurses on the "SS. Vyner Brooke". For the purposes of this record we will refer to her as 'Millie' Dorsch. With the name of 'Senior Sister Dillicent Hilda (Marie Dorsch)' she is recorded as the [only] daughter of Adolph John Walter Dorsch and Elsie Victoria Dorsch of Hove, Holfast Bay, South Australia (CWGC and Singapore Memorial, Column 140). She was from the Adelaide area of South Australia where her family were prominent in educational and religious affairs (ORB, p.92). Her photo in the AWD archives shows a demure pleasant woman. The date of her birth is shown on the RSL Virtual Memorial as 'Lt. Dillicent Hulda (Maria Dorsch born Brighton, South Australia on 25 February 1912' (rslvirtualwarmemorial.org.au). Sadly this researcher has not been able to find any internet record of her early life, nursing training or career. After the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" Millie was last seen in the sea (with Sister Merle Grenery) hanging onto trailing ropes off the raft upon which were Matron Paschke, Mary Clarke, Gladys McDonald and Caroline Ennis together with the two small children. (P.234 ORB) as it was swept down the Banka Straits (p.234 ORB). ORB states that they were never seen again but new information (email November 2016 Dr Neil McGregor advising that his mother Sister Sylvia Muir who was on the ship was told this in Singapore after release from internment in 1945) has come to light that in fact this raft with the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses was located several weeks later by a ship in the Indian Ocean. Clearly and understandably during the war the authorities had no knowledge of the fate of Millie because she comes up in official POW records, then the Army casualty list on 9.7.42 as 'Missing – Dorsch M.H. M. S-nurse, Hove' and then later in the war there is the record in the Public notices of the "Advertiser" (Adelaide, South Australia) on 29.6.44 "... To the memory of our dear friend Lieut. (Millie Dorsch) (AANS) believed to have lost her life by enemy action after the fall of Singapore – forever remembered by (Dr. and Mrs. Cook, Betty and Murray, 2<sup>nd</sup> AIF...'. Memorials to her service are that she is listed (as Sister Hilda (Dillicent Dorsch) along with the names of 77 other AANS nurses who gave their lives during WW2 on the memorial at Kapunda: and also her medals are held – under the name of Nurse Millie Dorsch – at the Brighton (South Australia) RSL Sub-Branch with the notation that they were donated on her behalf "... as being a resident of the Brighton area killed in action during WWII ..." (brightonrsl@bigpond.com.au). So Millie must have lost her life in the sea or still on the raft as it was taken by the powerful sea current that run down the east coast of Sumatra into the Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean. 40
- **DOYLE – Sister Jess Gregory Doyle**, NFX 70449, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group, was born in Gladstone, Mosman on 27.11.11 (ancestry.com) the daughter of Richard Henry Doyle and



Nina Rebecca Gregory. Little information has been found on her early life but she did pass her Nursing Exam in December 1935 at Prince Henry Hospital, Sydney. She may have lived and worked in London soon after during 1936-37 (ancestry.com). After the sinking of the ship it is not clear how Jess Doyle made it to land on Banka island, but it was clearly not through Radji Beach, and she ended up an internee of the Japanese in Muntok, then Palembang and finally Belalau internment camps and suffered severe malnutrition and deprivation during those years. It is clear she was a *personality* "... outgoing and bubbly. Jess was always good for a story, many of which were directed against herself and her family who were prominent in sporting circles in Sydney. Her maternal uncle was Jack Gregory, the finest all round cricketer that Australia had provided to the point ..." (p.127-128, ORB). She also featured as a potential 'international' cricketer in one of the internment camps when the women internees - by now skeletal - began to assemble an England versus Australia 'cricket match to boost spirits. The book 'ORB' also relates how - being small, dark and attractive, Jess was one of the women that the Japanese internment camp officers wanted to staff their so called 'club' in Irenelaan, Palembang - this was a resounding failure for the Japanese in the face of the brave and forceful reaction of the Australian Army Nurses! Upon her release after the war a photo (in the AWD archives) was taken of Jess Doyle which shows exactly how malnourished she and the other women had become - an indictment on the Japanese forever. Captain Jess Doyle left the AANS in March 1946 to be married to Norman Gilmour (MacAulay of the 2/30<sup>th</sup> Battalion 9<sup>th</sup> Division AIF) who had been a Transport officer and Staff captain in Singapore and then a POW in Changi camp. She also received a 'Mentioned in Despatches' in 1946 for '*... services rendered whilst in Japanese hands ...*' (AWD). They later moved to New Zealand for Norman's work and had two daughters and a son. Norman passed away in 1968 in Australia and Jess returned at some stage to New Zealand (Upper Hutt) where she passed away on 27.6.93.

- **DRUMMOND - Matron Irene Melville Drummond** was born on 26 July 1905 at Ashfield, Sydney, daughter of Cedric Drummond, marine engineer, and his wife Katherine, née Melville, both Queensland born. Educated at Catholic schools in Adelaide and at Broken Hill, New South Wales. Irene returned to Adelaide, trained as a nurse at Miss Laurence's Private Hospital, qualified in obstetrics at the Queen's Home and worked at Angaston Hospital. In 1933 she moved to the Broken Hill and District Hospital where she proved to be a compassionate and extremely competent nurse, well liked and respected by her superiors and colleagues. She served as a surgical sister, assistant-matron and acting-matron.

Appointed sister in the Australian Army Nursing Service, Australian Imperial Force, on 8 November 1940, Drummond was called up for full-time duty with the 2nd/4th Casualty Clearing Station in January 1941. Next month she sailed for Singapore to join the 2nd/9th Field Ambulance. Briefly back with the 2nd/4th C.C.S., she was promoted Matron on 5 August and posted to the 2nd/13th Australian General Hospital in September. When the Japanese invaded Malaya on 8 December, the hospital was situated near Johore Bahru. In January 1942 it was hurriedly moved to St Patrick's School, Singapore. Despite chaotic conditions—brought on by the hasty retreat, enemy air-raids and increasing admissions of battle casualties—Drummond's quiet efficiency helped to ensure that the wards were operational within 48 hours.

By early February 1942 surrender to the Japanese appeared likely. Although the nurses had begged to be allowed to stay with their patients, they were put on board the steamer, *Vyner Brooke*. Scooping up a small Chinese boy as the *Vyner Brooke* sank, Drummond escaped in a lifeboat.

A group of survivors, including Drummond and twenty-one fellow nurses, came ashore at Radji Beach, Banka Island. They were joined by some twenty British servicemen from another sunken ship. Having discovered that the island was already in the hands of the Japanese and that no help could be expected from the local population, on 16 February the party resolved to surrender. One of the *Vyner Brooke's* officers was sent to Muntok to negotiate with the Japanese. While he was away Drummond suggested that the civilian women and children should leave for Muntok. Shortly after the civilians departed, a Japanese officer and twenty soldiers arrived at the beach.



Ignoring pleas that the remaining group was surrendering, the Japanese separated the men from the women. The men were marched around a small bluff to another cove: there they were shot and bayoneted. The Japanese returned to the nurses who had been left sitting on the beach and ordered them to walk into the sea. All knew their fate as they entered the water in silence. The Japanese soldiers opened fire with a machine-gun. Irene Drummond was one of the first to die.

She was mentioned in dispatches in 1946. A children's playground, the Sister Drummond Memorial Park, opened at Broken Hill Hospital in 1949, commemorates her. ("Australian Dictionary of Biography" by Julie Gorrell). This researcher contemplates the possibility that such a memorial is most fitting to Irene Paschke and the nurses on the raft protectively holding and caring for two small children on a seemingly endless and cruel sea. There is so much more to the leadership of Irene Drummond throughout the war up to the events on Radji Beach and it is recommended that anyone interested have a read of "On Radji Beach" to obtain a full understanding of this staunch leader.

- **ELMES – Sister Dorothy 'Bud' Gwendoline Howard Elmes, NEX 70526, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group.** (known as Benda or Bud to her family and Buddy to her friends) was born in Armadale (Melbourne, on 27 April 1914 to Robert Maynard and Dorothy Jean Elmes (nee Howard). She had one elder sister Beatrice Jean Howard Banks (nee Elmes). She spent most of her life in Melbourne and Cheshunt in Victoria's King Valley. She was the personality of the family, an outgoing, attractive confident young woman with a quirky sense of humour. Her friend Jean Smithenbaker (Smithy??) noted *"Buddy was a most exceptional person....hair worn in a bun....hazel eyes, an infectious laugh and a long striding walk.....on the rare occasions she wore high heels she was decidedly awkward. Buddy was tolerant and kind to both humans and animals. She was tone deaf and an avid reader...her expression of endearment was to address one as "old hound" or "old tripe hound".* She trained as a nurse at Corowa Community Hospital [on the banks of the (Murray River)] for 4 years, graduating in May 1939. In 1940 she was described by her matron as *"one of our best trainees"*. The local vicar opined she was a *"young woman of excellent character and lady like training with a cheery disposition"*. She was appointed to the Australian Army Nursing Service in November unaware of her destination. She disembarked at Singapore on 18<sup>th</sup> February 1941. She says in a letter to her aunt in March 1941 *"our quarters here are very comfortable...the climate is not frightfully hot but rather sticky. The country is very pretty here, rice seems to be the main thing that is grown. The English people living about here are awfully good to us, inviting us out to tennis and swimming and afternoon tea etc. It must be a bit of a strain to them to have large numbers of plain, unattached females parked on them"*. Her last letter to her parents was on 8 February 1942 from "Abroad". *"We have been fairly busy, not so much busy but on duty over 12 hours a day....all we have for a light is a lantern with blue paper wrapped around. Sorry this is so short but there is nothing to write about these days"*. Bud was evacuated from Singapore on 11 February 1942 on the 'SS Vyner Brooke' and following the sinking of the ship, somehow made her way to land. Two days later on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1942 she was marched into the water at Radji Beach and massacred by the Japanese with 20 other nurses. The one survivor of the massacre, Sister (then Captain) Vivien Strachan (Bullwinkel) advised Bud's niece that Buddy *"was wonderfully brave – like her colleagues when they were ordered into the sea. None cried out or called for mercy."* A letter sent to Bud by her mother on 2 March 1942 showed her anguish, *"Oy Darling little Bud, Oh dear, I wish I knew where you are in the world."* This letter was marked "Returned to Sender". Her parents searched frantically for information, but it was not until June 1944 that the Red Cross advised that "S/Nurse G Elmes is now officially listed as missing believed to have been killed on or after 11/2/42". Her mother never gave up hope and for many years, even though she had by then been advised of the details of her daughter's death, thought Bud would turn up at their cottage in Cheshunt. (Sara Alsop - nee Banks, niece, email 29 November 2016). Little is known about Bud's last voyage on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' apart from the fact that, after somehow attaching herself to either a raft or lifeboat she made it to land and then two days later, this lovely caring young woman in her late 20's was brutally murdered by the Japanese Army on Radji Beach with twenty other Australian Army nurses on 16 February 1942.





- **ENNIS – Sister Caroline Mary Ennis, VEX 38751, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital.** She was born in Swan Hill, Victoria on 13 August 1913, the daughter of Hugh Martin Ennis and Mary Josephine Ennis and the eldest of four children and known as 'Carrie' to her family. When she was about nine years of age her father died and her mother married Joseph Graham about three years later (nephew Stephen West email 6.6.17) – which explains why some official records list her mother as Mary Josephine Graham of Cheshunt, Vic (ww2roll.gov.au). Caroline helped look after the younger children before she went nursing (nephew Stephen West email). She passed her Nurses Board exam in April 1936 whilst at Beechworth Hospital ("The Argus", 2.4.36, trove.nla.gov.au) and it seems that she worked at the bush nursing hospital at Jackandandah (nephew Stephen West email) where there is a memorial plaque with Caroline's name inscribed, plus the Wangaratta Base Hospital in 1940 with Dorothy Elmes and also possibly the Corowa Hospital since she was included (with Dorothy Elmes) in their ANZAC service in 2013. *"...Her family remembers her as a fun loving girl with many friends. She loved ballroom dancing and was quite a good tennis player. When she came home during the holidays she would always have something for her sisters and her brother. A very kind, caring and loving family member. A very good friend, always ready to assist others ..."* (email from nephew Stephen West 6.6.17). She was nursing in the north east of Victoria when she joined the AANS in Melbourne on 20 August 1940. When Caroline was on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" it is recorded by Betty Jeffrey (p.153, ORB) that she was lying flat in the saloon *"... chatting with Sister Ennis about near misses ..."* and that when a bomb eventually hit the ship – it went down the funnel to burst in the engine room and the gun with its crew was blown over the side *"...Sister Ennis and I made a bee-line for the bridge... taking a child with us, we were the first out. We left the children with an Englishwoman and dashed toward the bridge, only to find it was an unrecognisable mess and burning fiercely ..."* (p.137, SD). Soon after the sinking Caroline was seen already sitting on a raft *"... Also sitting out of the water was Caroline Ennis, who was holding two small children, a Chinese boy who looked about four years old and a little English girl who was probably a year younger ..."* (p.171, ORB). The young Chinese boy had been floating past Betty Jeffrey who, grabbed him and lifted him onto Olive Paschke's raft - into the waiting arms of Caroline Ennis (p.184, ORB). Another comment by Betty Jeffrey *"... Aboard the raft Caroline Ennis had assumed the responsibility for the children and had developed a particular affinity with the little English girl who was soon calling her Auntie Caroline ..."* (p.186, ORB). They floated on the raft all Saturday night and before dawn on Sunday they drifted through a convoy of small Jap transport ships carrying soldiers and equipment. Although the raft actually bumped into those craft, there was total silence as they passed through them (p.186, ORB). Their raft was swept about by strong currents and they could not reach the shore - on the Sunday morning they could see Muntok pier and they had been swept south along the Coast of Banka Island so that they were parallel with large trees and mangroves - the northern beaches had disappeared. Betty Jeffrey and Iole Harper had during the night volunteered to lighten the raft and swim alongside but it seems that at dawn they were swept away by the strong currents – they *"... called out but there was nothing either group could do about their situation. Betty and Iole watched the raft grow smaller, with Mary Clarke and Gladys McDonald sitting on either side of Olive Paschke, and Jess Dorsch and Derle Grenerry in the water alongside hanging onto the trailing ropes. And there, back to back with her matron, sat Caroline Ennis, cradling two small children in her lap. The raft and its occupants were never seen again ..."* (p.187, ORB). However new information (email November 2016, Dr Neil McGregor advising that his mother Sister Sylvia Duir who was on the ship was told this in Singapore after release from internment in 1945) has come to light that in fact this raft with the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses was located several weeks later by a ship in the Indian Ocean. So Caroline Ennis probably lost her life in the sea or still on the raft as it was taken by the powerful sea current that run down the east coast of Sumatra into the Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean. This caring, happy woman from a loving family, someone who obviously had a strong love and affinity for children is commemorated (with Dorothy Elmes) at King Valley Road, Cheshunt Hall, Vic. 3678, by trees planted in 1995, together with a memorial plaque. She is also recorded on a plaque at Wangaratta hospital and the Memorial panel<sup>43</sup> '96' at the AWOD. Her name is recorded on the CWGC website where her parents are noted



as from Doyhu, Victoria, Australia and which also tells us that Caroline's name is on Column 141 at the Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore.

➤ **EXHAM** – see **AXON**

➤ **FAIRLEY**- Mrs Marie Suzanne Fairley died 13.2.42 on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CWGC); she was the wife of James Henry Barrie Fairley, BSc [Edinburgh], ADICE, WW1 Service: Captain, Royal Field Artillery, District Engineer, Sudan Government Railways 1929-1931, Executive Engineer, Batu Pahat 1936 then HQ Staff, PWD, JB, Sapper 792 JVE. He was lost at sea on the "Giang Bee" 13.2.42. Wife Marie Suzanne lost at sea 15.2.42 on the Vyner Brooke. Their child? J.H.B. on deceased list of Journal of Institution of Civil Engineers 1946. Drs in National Probate Register (JDD): there is a record of James Fairley being appointed Exec. Engineer PWD Batu Pahat, Johore in 1936 (SG, 5.5.36); the Colonial Office death register records "James Henry Barrie Fairley, presumed to have lost his life following the sinking of the 'Giang Bee'. Source: Governor of Singapore, Death certificate 30.11.46, Register No. DI, Folio 273-138, Serial No. 1285": There is no mention of him in the CWGC records but is on the deceased list of the Journal of the Institution of Civil Engineers: in September 2014 his name was added to the CWGC database of deaths during WW2 as part of a private effort known as "In from the Cold": (Mrs. Marie Suzanne Fairley (with the same CORD ref and Serial No. 1286) was presumed to have lost her life following the sinking of the 'HMS. Vyner Brooke' on or after 14.2.42; In the SG archives Mrs. Fairley and a child are listed on a ships passenger list either arriving or leaving Singapore prior to the War (JDD); in 1941 Marie Fairley was involved in running a toy stall at the fund raising fair held by the Womens section of the Malaya Patriotic Fund in Johore (SFPDA, 5.5.41); on the 12 February 1942 Dr and Mrs Fairley boarded a 'water boat' in Singapore Harbour after obtaining exit passes and under the instructions that men were to be taken to the "HMS Giang Bee" and women to the "SS. Vyner Brooke" which we can only assume the authorities believed to be safer (for women) since it was a merchant ship and not flying the White ensign of the Royal Navy (report by Dr James Reid whose wife and children were instead placed on the 'Mata Hari' rather than the 'Vyner Brooke' and as a result survived the War); **it has not been possible to trace their child mentioned above and if correct determine whether the child (she/he) was also on the ship?**

➤ **FAIRWEATHER**- Sister Lorna Florence Fairweather, SFX 13431, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group. Lorna was born on 31 January 1913, at Stirling West in the Adelaide Hills, the daughter of Percival Sidney and Florence Annie (nee Johnson) Fairweather and one of five siblings. Her parents were devout Methodists and instilled in their children a love of family and community. She attended Nailsworth Primary School eventually completing her Qualifying Certificate [a coincidence of history is that the slightly younger Vivian Bullwinkel - who would stand also on Radji Beach on that fateful morning of 16 February 1942 - was at the same time attending the neighbouring Prospect Primary School in Adelaide, whilst living with her grandmother, and a slightly older Millie Dorsch - who would lose her life on a raft in the Banka Straits or Sunda Straits after the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' - had both also attended Prospect Primary School]. During this time Lorna lived firstly at Second Avenue, Sefton Park and then eventually at 78 Galway Avenue, Broadview. She then attended Adelaide Girls high School where she decided that nursing was her vocation. She trained at the Mareeba Babies Hospital where she was known for her compassion and caring nature (Panel commissioned by the Prospect Local History group for Nailsworth Primary School in 2015 under the "100 years of ANZAC for South Australia" program). Lorna specialised in paediatrics during her training and was one of the most highly qualified nurses in the AANS: she was also relieving Matron at the Crippled Children's Home at Somerton, SA, when she enlisted (ORB, p.142). Enlisting in the AANS she departed for Singapore in September 1941. Whilst it is not known how she reached Radji Beach it must be surmised that she was in one of the two lifeboats which landed. Photos in the AWG archives and on the memorial panel at Nailsworth Primary School show a lovely young woman, slightly studious who clearly only thought of her fellow human beings in a caring light. Her life ended on Radji Beach with a group of trusted and loved friends, under a hail of bullets from Japanese troops who without doubt were the antithesis of Lorna Fairweather - men who had not a shred of human decency and makes the researcher trust that history reaped a punishment on them that meant they did not live long lives.

➤ **FARMANER**- Sister Peggy Everett Farmaner, WFX 3438, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station. A newspaper article records that she " ... Was the daughter of Dr and Mrs George F. Farmaner of 9 Lapsley Place, Claremont, WA and part of an old pioneer family well known in that area. She was educated at Methodist Ladies College and St Mary's Church of England



Grammar School, from where she matriculated. She did her nursing training at Perth Hospital. When war was declared she was in Sydney but immediately returned to her home State to enlist. In August 1940 [aged 28 years] she left on the 'Queen Mary' for Malaya. She worked with four other nurses at a Clearing Station in the most forward area of North Johore. The Nurses then moved to Kluang where they established a hospital on a rubber estate. On January 20, 1942 they were again evacuated at two hours notice, were moved to another place, which within 12 hours was found to be the wrong place. From here they moved to Singapore... The last letter her parents received from her was written on February 9, 1942. She was killed a few days later. 'God knows the position is desperate but I am strangely unperturbed. Don't worry about me, mother' she wrote ... " ('The Daily News' Perth, WA, 19 Sept 1945). The newspaper article is accompanied by a photo of Peggy - a refined looking young woman proudly sitting for the photo in her nurse's uniform. In happier times earlier in her life, a newspaper article and photo ('West Australian' 17.6.37) records her at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Ball of the Methodist Ladies College Old Girls Assn at the Karra Katta Club. After the ship sank Peggy reached the lifeboat with Matron Drummond and grabbed a trailing rope (p.169, ORB) and so reached Radji beach. She was one of the Australian nurses forced into a line facing the sea and murdered by Japanese troops at the beach. Peggy Farmaner is included in the memorial to all the nurses unveiled in 1999 by Mrs Vivian Statham (nee Bullwinkel) and Wilma Young at Honour Avenue (at the lake near the tennis court of the Botanical Gardens), Kings Park, Bicton, WA. - Her plaque is number M264. Perhaps the best memorial to Peggy is reported to have occurred when the surviving nurses returned to Australia on the 'Danunda', "...when the nurses were spending the night at Hollywood Military Hospital, Perth, the reception rooms were banked with flowers. For each nurse was a special gift of a posy from the garden of the late Sister P. Farmaner, one of those who died on Bank Beach. Her mother brought the flowers to her daughters comrades ... " ("The Australian Womens Weekly" 3.11.45)

- **FREEMAN - Sister Rubina Dorothy 'Dot' Freeman**, VEX 39351, 2/10th Australian Hospital Group. Dot Freeman was the daughter of Albert Edward and Ada Beatrice Freeman and was aged 32 years when she died in internment in 1945 just a few days before the Japanese officially surrendered. She was the sister of Miss N. Freeman (AWO). [Go date no information on her pre-war life has been found by the researcher and it is not known how she reached Banka Island after the ship sank. Anything on this period known to a reader of this document would be appreciated by the researcher to enhance the memorial record of Dot Freeman.]. On 7 February 1942 whilst she was nursing in Singapore "... long range Japanese artillery appeared to deliberately target the school [this was the Methodist Girls School hospital annex]... during that barrage, one medical orderly and one patient were killed while Dot a junior staff nurse from Melbourne was lucky to escape unscathed ..." (p. 95, ORB) and then "... she was now in a front line situation later the same week with Jap planes machine gunning all around the field hospital she was working in with Matron Paschke and the others ..." (p. 96, ORB) Dot certainly presents as an unselfish and indeed generous person - in 1944 Dot and her best friend Rene singleton volunteered (whilst in Irenelaan internment camp in Palembang) to move out of their now totally overcrowded house accommodation and they built a small lean-to in the backyard of the house ( p. 258, ORB). Also in 1944, again whilst in Irenelaan, Dot was one of the nurses who set up a bakery to use every scrap of rice they could beg, borrow or steal ( p.263, ORB). However the three internment camps dot found herself in during the war were some of the worst of the Second world War and severe starvation, sickness and death were a constant feature of her very harsh existence during those years. "... On 8 August 1945 Dot - Rene singleton's best friend - died [at Belalau] from a combination of malaria, dysentery and beri-beri. She too, had been fading away for some time and simply curled up into a foetal position, closed her eyes and passed away ..." (p.278, ORB). She was "... buried in the cemetery at the top of the hill at Belalau (Loebok-Linggau) - in wretched circumstances with only an old rice sack to cover her not knowing that peace had come at last ..." (p.222, QN). Her grave remains were later removed to Jakarta after the war and she now lies in ..... (Duntok Peace Museum). She is memorialised along with the other AANS nurses who gave their lives during the Second World War on the Kapunda memorial. A brief epitaph is the statement by Betty Jeffrey's in her book "while history passes " "... Dot Freeman, another Victorian was a sweet girl, with whom internment went very hard ..." ("The Age", Melbourne . 26.6.54)





- **GARDAM – Sister Dora Shirley Gardam**, GEX 2183, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station. Note, incorrectly spelt surname in the book 'Quiet Heroines' as Gardham. Shirley Gardam was born in Ulverstone, Tasmania the daughter of Richard Alfred and Dora Emermengarde Bickford Gardam (who died aged 61 years on 21.3.42) and sibling to two sisters and a brother. She trained in Launceston General Hospital, Tasmania with Jessie Simons before they both enlisted in the AANS for Malaya. Her photo in the AWC Archives shows a most refined looking woman. Interestingly, although apparently Shirley's hospital matron in Tasmania thought she might be 'too nervous' to work in a Casualty Clearing Station with its usually front line proximity, the fact is that Shirley was personally selected with all the nurses of that unit by its commanding officer Colonel Tom Hamilton (ORB, p. 92) and later when the nurses were ready to evacuate he had sufficient confidence in her personally – no doubt after observing her fortitude under the bombing and shell fire they had experienced – to give a letter he had written to his wife back in Australia (ORB, p.113). After the "SS. Vyner Brooke" had sunk Shirley was one of those nurses who managed to reach the overturned lifeboat with Sylvia Muir, Ditz Dittleheuser, Veronica Clancy, Gladys Hughes, Dina Raymont, and Jean Ashton. To their absolute credit his group managed to actually right this large, heavy, capsized craft and some of the nurses gave up various parts of their clothing to plug the holes created by machine gun fire and shrapnel (ORB, p. 175). Later they abandoned the life boat which continued to sink and they all congregated around rafts. They were eventually rescued by two RAAF men in a launch and taken to Muntok where they were immediately interned at the Muntok cinema building. Later in internment it is recorded that young Shirley came to the forefront amongst the nurses with her "... musical talents and sweet disposition ..." and she became a feature playing the piano found by the internees and giving lectures on Tasmania (ORB, p. 246). Her life in internment has the tangible legacy in the archives of the AWC (PR 86/129) in the form of a "Hand drawn birthday card and two portions of notes with greetings from Palembang camp". Like all the internees in the harsh and deprived internment camps of Muntok, Palembang and Muntok again in 1944 Shirley suffered increasingly from starvation, a lack of resources for hygiene and disease. For her it seems the return to Muntok was the tipping point in her health and she saw her friends Rene Singleton and Blanche Hempstead succumb to the ravages of beri beri before she too died. To quote from 'ORB' she was a "... victim of starvation and neglect as much as the dysentery that eventually took her away. She died swiftly and left behind a host of friends who would always remember her tall fair girl who was loved by all who knew her. During her three years of captivity, Shirley had not received a letter from home and was unaware that her mother had died in 1942. Like Dina Raymont, Shirley had always loved flowers: her coffin was covered in them when it was lowered into the ground in the little jungle clearing ..." (ORB, p.269). This explanation of the death and burial of Shirley Gardam, whilst accurate, does not convey the reality of her death – her 'coffin' was merely slats of wood and it took up to 20 starving, sick, skeletal women internees to carry her emaciated frame. She was the last Australian nurse to die on Bank Island.
- **GARDEN** – in Goldberg record she states that a 'Sr. Garden', who had been in the 'RAF' launch which picked them up from the sea after the sinking died in 'MUNDOK' [sic]. This will be a misspelling of the name of Sister Shirley Gardam.
- **GERMAN/GERMANN** – Eric Harrison Germann a US citizen from Buffalo NY. The first reference found on Eric German is in the 'Morning Tribune' (4.9.37) where Dr. W. Eric German is recorded as being a passenger on the 'P & O Naldera' bound for Penang. American brewer, Malayan Breweries from 11.41. Sent to Singapore to step up beer production for the troops. Bayoneted on Pom Pong Island (sic, this is meant to mean Banka Island) February 1942 but survived the massacre of 18 men. Palembang Sumatra internee. There is a full chapter on "The Saga of Eric German" in the book 'BUJ' and earlier (p.41) it describes him as a "... 31 year old brew master.... New York was his home. He had been called to Singapore shortly before the war's outbreak to help step-up production of beer for troops brought in to strengthen Malaya's defences: his physical description in the book states (p.40). "... he was a big, well built fellow in fantastically patched shorts and shirt which did not conceal his powerful neck, broad shoulders and slim hips. Below the shorts<sup>46</sup> was a pair of well-muscled legs. ...I was looking into a pair of harsh, blue-grey eyes. A



*scraggly, sandy coloured beard covered his face but not enough to hide a prominent jaw and a wide, but thin lipped mouth. My first impression was that I wouldn't want to meet him in a dark alley ... the wide mouth grinned and his whole face transformed into the rugged features of a good guy...*" - perhaps this explains the amazing survival success of Eric German both during and after the sinking, again after having been bayoneted on Radji beach, as well as through internment camps?. Also in 'BJE' by William MacDougall it states that Eric boarded the ship wearing "... a pair of high leather boots and a fireman's helmet, donned while helping Singapore's bomb-set conflagrations ...". Eric gave MacDougall a very detailed account of the voyage and events at Radji Beach whilst they were both POWs in Palembang (see BJE, pp. 142-155 for the full account). In summary he helped lower the lifeboats and then entered the sea trying to help women struggling towards lifeboats and rafts. He then realised that there were more people back on the ship and returned to climb back up a ladder and reached the deck only to have three year old 'Discha' Warman thrust into his arms. Eric held his hands over the child's mouth and nose and jumped "... *Discha was quiet and smiling when they bobbed to the surface and they both laughed ...*". He took Discha to the nearby submerged lifeboat and handed the child to a "... *fat civil engineer*" - a man who was later to die at the hands of the Japanese on Radji Beach. With three rafts attached to the submerged lifeboat they rowed the whole contraption to the coast near Radji Beach by about 2030 hrs that same night. About thirty survivors (First Officer Sedgeman, some soldiers, sailors nurses, civilian women and children) had reached Radji Beach earlier and lit a bonfire. Eric probably helped the seriously injured AANS Sisters Casson, Wight and Halligan along the several miles of beach to the bonfire that night. Two days later on Monday 16 February, after the small group of women and children had moved off to Muntok led by Dr Dominguez and accompanied by two wounded sailors, Eric German saw the Japanese take the first group of eight men (including Stoker Lloyd who survived) along the beach, over a small promontory of rocks and driftwood about 200 feet away and murder them. The next group with Sedgeman and German were then ordered to march the same route - German and Sedgeman were ordered to lift the injured Dr Watson on his stretcher and take him as well. After being unable to lift him over the 'rocks and driftwood' the Japanese officer told them to leave Watson at that point - leaning up against a log. They were then ordered to stand in line facing the sea - German began to pray - . First Officer Sedgeman made a dash for the sea and was gunned down. The next thing German knew he was face down in the sea and in pain - he played for dead. After some time he could see the Japs had left him but he continued to lie still - which was just as well because two Japanese soldiers soon reappeared on the rocks and surveyed the scene. After signalling some sort of confirmation that all were dead they too left. Eric German waited a long time and then ran up the beach into the jungle and then south about a mile until he found a small stream running into the sea where he hid and rested, at that point finding that he had been bayoneted completely through the chest. The following day he continued further south and came across three survivors of another ship. He took them back to the scene of the atrocity where bodies of the victims lay on the beach and on the stretchers. After being given water by some Malay fishermen he continued in to Muntok and was interned in the cinema. Eric endured the privations of internment in Muntok and then presumably Palembang, Muntok again and finally Belalau. After the war he returned to his career as a brewer in breweries in New York then outside the USA - in Ecuador in 1947 (where he married) then in Costa Rica, Puerto Rica, Spain, Rotterdam, and Nigeria. In 1974 he retired to Florida with his wife Connie - later in 1989 he was noted as 'retired' and playing badminton in Boca Raton ( news.google).

- **GLENCROSS** - Barbara Louise Glencross (nee Ellercamp) was the wife of Gordon Glencross: they were married circa 1940 (Gordon Glencross obituary in DVG newsletter July 2010) *her husband was Gordon (Dackenzie) Glencross, b.1918 Streatham. In 1938 he was appointed Assistant, Commercial Union Assurance Co. Ltd, Robinson's Rd, Singapore. Enlisted in the Volunteer forces in June 1939. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt 2SSVF POW Singapore to Thailand 10.42. Ended the war at Nakorn Nyok. Wife Barbara Louise last seen Keppel Harbour on 12.2.42 and believed lost at sea on "SS. Vyner Brooke". Gordon returned to Singapore 1946. 2<sup>nd</sup> wife Betty: daughter Sonia. Son Peter born 1949. Later with New Zealand Insurance HK then from 1951 General Manager NZ Insurance, Australia. Died April 2010 Sydney. Wife Jocelyn. (JDD): in*



1946 Gordon Glencross was still searching for his wife as shown in a 'Straits Times' advertisement of August that year " *... Glencross - Mrs Barbara Louise (wife of Lieutenant Gordon (Dackenzie Glencross) last seen Singapore docks 12 February 1942. Anyone with further information please inform F/Lt. E.H. Prior, RAF Tengah, Singapore ...* " (SG, 8.3.46); the list compiled by internees in Palembang camp of those they believed had died during or after the sinking states simply " *Mrs. Glencross, c/o Commercial Union S'pore ...* " ; the official record of the death of Barbara Glencross is contained in the Colonial Office Record of Deaths which states ' *...Mrs. Barbara Glencross, wife of G.M. Glencross of Singapore, presumed to have lost her life on or after 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke". Source C - in - C ALFSEA ...* ' (CORD, Reg. D1, Folio 283, Serial 1314); there is no record of her death at the CWGC.

- **GIBSON** - Mrs. Dorothy 'Dot' (Dabel Gibson is identified as having been on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" from the list titled 'British Women Internees in Palembang 1942' compiled by Mrs. E. Cross and this list also records that " *...Gibson D. (Mrs) left the camp on 4.12.42 for S'pore...* " which indicates she was one of the Eurasian families allowed to return to Singapore in late 1942: the records of Changi Museum have her listed as Dorothy (Dabel Gibson, born 1905, housewife, #1837, British/Eurasian (Changi Museum website) but Dorothy clearly spent most of the war at liberty in Singapore because she was not actually interned there until 25.3.45, when she was interned in Sime Road camp) - in late 1944/early 1945 many Eurasian people were interned in Sime Road as the Japanese became more desperate and paranoid : she was 37 years of age when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" after the ship sank Dorothy Gibson is mentioned by Australian nurse Wilma Oram " *... a voice called out, and a woman swam a short distance to the raft and asked if she could climb aboard. Wilma welcomed her aboard and the woman introduced herself as Mrs Dorothy Gibson. A civilian evacuee. The two then untied the oars and decided to try to row to Banka Island...* " (ORB P.170) .Later that night of 15 February Dorothy and Wilma were " *... sitting quietly on their raft, was almost run down by the Japanese invasion fleet supporting the invasion of southern Sumatra and Banka Island. They too had seen the bonfire on the beach but it was too far away and the current was too strong for them to have any possibility of reaching it...the current eased a bit, and Wilma and Dorothy were able to paddle ashore amid the Japanese landing craft. Once ashore they were promptly taken prisoner by the Japanese ...marched under guard to one of the larger buildings in the town an old customs house...* " (ORB, P188) - so Dorothy was saved from being a victim of the atrocity on Radji Beach simply by the random nature of strong sea currents: it is not known who Dorothy was married to before the war but it must have been an Australian because of the following, " *...Mrs Dorothy 'Dot' Gibson, Palembang, Sumatra internee. Repatriated 1945 arriving Sydney on Tamaroa 10.10.45 ...* " (JDD).

- **GOLDBERG - CURTH** - Dr. Annemaria Eleanor Goldberg - Curth was certainly the most controversial and divisive figure in the story of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" [researcher's note: whilst the entries for passengers on the ship are intended to be respectful but factually accurate, occasionally someone appears for whom it is more appropriate to simply lay out the facts on record and let the reader decide. Much of the material quoted hereon is from the official Australian Government Immigration department file NAA A434, 1948/3/11818], but firstly the "Jeyes" list records " *... GOLDBERG D B G RAMBULAN LEFT NEI? WIFE PAL...* " : In the diary of Phyllis Briggs is noted " *...Dr. Goldberg - a German Jewess, she had been on one of the ships from Singapore and up until September 1943 had lived in freedom in Palembang and worked in the hospital. She was an unpleasant woman with little sympathy for the sick. Never ill and always well dressed...* " (SUD); Often referred to as Doctor Goldberg, her name was Annemaria (sometimes she used Annemarie/Annamaria on documents) Eleanor (sometimes referred to as Eleanora) Goldberg - Curth. She was born in Grebnitz, Silesia on 24.2.04 the daughter of Judge Emil Curth from Silesia and Gertrude Curth (nee Brodnitz) from Berlin. Qualifying as a medical doctor she moved to Pisa, Italy and met and married Dr Erich Goldberg in 1934. In 1939 they were apparently moving to Australia but whilst in Malaya they stopped in Ipoh, Malaya where Erich secured a temporary role as a doctor in the Tanjong Rambutan Dental Hospital and Annemaria began a practise as a general practitioner - she was a specialist in children's health and <sup>48</sup> 'internal medicine'. Insofar as what is on record this was the first time she displayed her





ability to be abrasive with people and 'be misunderstood' - something which crops up in her recorded history many times. In the official files in the Australian Archives her file is voluminous and throws up many questions as to her motives and behaviours, including the following advices from the British High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur on the pre war picture of the Goldberg - Curths: when working in Ipoh the Goldberg - Curths were considered to be " ... carrying on anti-British propaganda amongst the native staff ... " and "also showed great interest in shipping movements ..." ( Dr Murdoch , Medical Superintendent of the Hospital who resigned his position because of his negative working relationship with Erich , Murdoch took an intense personal dislike to him and resigned to move to Perth , Australia); in July 1941 Erich resigned from his position and the High Commissioner, KL, gave them until August 1941 to leave Malaya or they would be interned as enemy aliens. Soon after in Singapore, Erich was charged with Fifth Column activities and, according to Annemaria, he then tried to commit suicide. They attempted to gain approval to go to Australia - but were told they would only be admitted to Australia as internees and then immediately deported at the end of the war. In November 1941 they were both actually interned in Singapore. Annemaria later stated to the Australian authorities that they gained an exit pass to leave Singapore (this seems a little strange given their internment) on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" but Erich was unable to board because it was only taking women and children [ this may or may not be the truth because there were many other men on board]; she duly boarded the ship with other passengers and states that she never heard of Erich again [ researcher's note: whilst she later gave a date of death of death of Erich as August 1992 - obviously a typo and presumably meant to be 1942 - there remains the possibility that Erich may have been summarily executed at the Singapore wharves as a 'Fifth Columnist' by someone who knew his recent history. There are a number of unofficial reports of this occurring to 'Fifth Columnists' around the wharf area during the last few days prior to the Surrender]: the first mention of Dr Goldberg - Curth after the sinking of the ship is from 'ORB' (p.176) wherein it is recorded, presumably from the memoirs of the Australian nurses, that - when it was agreed that all able bodied adults on a small life raft should take a turn in the sea to ease the strain on the 23 people ( included Mrs. Neubronner, Mrs Chambers, Dr Chambers, Mrs Murray, Mrs Bull and her daughter Hazel, Miss Doreton and the boy John Chan) clustered on and around the drifting tied together rafts - Dr Goldberg refused to share the burden and take a turn in the water. Because there is no record of her ever having children, she is inexplicably quoted as saying " ... *I am the mother of three and more important than any of you ...* ". That prompted Sister Veronica Clancy to climb aboard the raft and punch Dr Goldberg as hard as she could in the middle of the back, but despite Goldberg's screams she refused to budge off the raft. This was then closely followed by Sister Blanche Hempstead climbing onto the raft, putting Goldberg in a headlock and dragging her backwards into the water. The matter is recorded as solved. The group of rafts was later picked up by an old motor launch with two RAAF airmen aboard and delivered along the coast to Muntok wharf where the women were all interned. Thus began the hostile relationship between the Australian Army nurses and Dr Goldberg - Curth which was to continue throughout internment and well into the post war era. 1945-47 official files created when Annemarie Goldberg - Curth was attempting to enter and then stay in Australia, contain written affidavits from half a dozen Australian Army nurses, including Sister Nesta James, who had a serious contempt for and anger with Dr Goldberg- Curth's behaviour whilst they were interned and what they considered to be her collaboration with the Japanese. Ellen Hannah said the doctor told the Japanese as soon as she was captured at Muntok that she was German and should not be interned, whilst Wilma Oram quoted the doctor as saying " ... *I'm a German, I am German, I am your friend ...* " and both nurses record that Dr Goldberg - Curth was then set free from the 'Customs House' internment camp at Muntok in February 1942:until April 1942 when she was brought into Palembang camp " ... *for a very short period ...* " then released again and allowed to work on a paid basis at Charitas Hospital until August 1943 :the nurses also alleged in their affidavits that she caused death and imprisonment of some internees, that she slapped a sick and dying Sister Raymont ;, refused to get up to patients at night, gave preferential treatment to patients with money but who were not very ill,<sup>49</sup> benefitted from extra rations obtained from funds contributed from male POWs and



wealthy people outside the camp, and was very friendly with the Japanese guards. Sister Vivian Bullwinkle recorded for the official enquiry that Dr Goldberg – Curth “... was never known to do a kindly act to anyone. She was first and what was left over went to her friends who could pay. She was a very selfish woman whose actions were inspired only by expediency ...”: to be fair, after the war, the doctor was able to elicit several letters of support from other internees (including missionary teacher Miss Glasgow and the Swiss national married to a British citizen, Mrs Elsa Cross) during the post war enquiry by the Australian Army and Australian Immigration Dept into her conduct whilst in internment: in the various phases of being an Axis ally living free in Sumatra to paid medical professional working in the internment camp hospitals at Duntok, Palembang and Belau during the war Dr Goldberg – Curth seemed to prosper and according to Ellen Hannah “... she suffered practically no hardship ...”: suffice to say immediately after the war the doctor applied for and seems to have initially obtained a medical post in the Dutch East Indies before the Dutch authorities cancelled that appointment and her application to live in the DEI after enquiries amongst internees: she then tried to gain medical registration in Australia but this was declined for the same reason and finally, after enquiry her application for residency in Australia was declined as well: by then she was the owner of a staggering 30 packing cases of her possessions which had been shipped out of Singapore to Fremantle during the week before the Surrender on the ‘SS. Gorgon’ (this was remarkable because almost everyone else boarding ships for Australia by then was restricted to one suitcase) and during 1946/7 after the declaration of the death of her husband she had inherited his “... not inconsiderable estate ...” which the records show to have been 600 pounds and \$ (D) 10,000!! Much of this money appears to have been held for safekeeping by the Swiss Consul in Malaya. With all avenues in Australia closed and her reputation in tatters, she returned to Singapore in 1948 and the file shows that, as she left, the Australian Dept of Immigration cabled the Singapore authorities to remind them “... of her history ...”. She is soon mentioned in the Straits Times (26.10.48) as a voluntary woman doctor at the newly opened St Andrews Mission Hospital working three or four times a week at that hospital. She was clearly one of life’s ‘survivors’ and had the means to support herself comfortably in post war Singapore because she seems to have lived for many years in the upmarket Goodwood Park Hotel where she surfaces again in 1952 applying for naturalisation in Singapore (SG. 17.10.52). What there was more to making this application than simply gaining residency in Singapore was soon revealed by the fact that two months later she is reported in newspapers as marrying none other than the Chief Justice of Singapore, Sir Charles Murray – Aynsley, at St Andrew’s Cathedral (SG. 21.12.52) and must have felt truly victorious or vindicated socially when she was then able to use the title of Lady Murray – Aynsley. Sir Charles had been a Puisne Judge in Singapore since 1937 and had been appointed Chief Justice in 1946. His first wife had died suddenly in 1951. They continued to live in Singapore until 1955 when Sir Charles retired - he later died in Florence, aged 74 years of age, in 1974. Lady Annemaria Eleanor (Murray – Aynsley (to quote her death notice) died at Cox Hill Manor nursing home, Chobham, Surrey on 13.4.1997 aged 90 years of age (The Gazette).

- **GOODING** – Stanley W. Gooding was born in 1903 in Australia and became a long term resident of Singapore and Malaya: the ‘Malayans’ database has the following “...GOODING S.W. [Stanley William] To Singapore 1913. Manager, Straits Grading Company, Ipoh. Wife F.H. evacuated – living in Fleet 1948. He was lost at sea 14.2.42 on the *Vyner Brooke*. Daughter Ellen Patricia.” (JDD): the first mention of him in Malayan newspaper is when he arrived in Singapore from London on the P. & O. ‘Sardinia’ on 6 June 1913 (SG. 6.6.130: by 1916 he had established himself in Singapore where he had become a member of the Singapore Cricket Club and is mentioned in several ‘Straits Times’ reports representing that club in cricket and tennis: as the first world war progressed he must have been interested in joining up but like many men in the tin, rubber and oil sectors he was prevented from doing so as the report of the Singapore manpower Advisory Committee reported in 1917 when they stated that S. W. Gooding, Tin Buyer, Straits Grading Co. Ltd “... Cannot be spared till replaceable by War ineligible. Certificate” (SG. 2.5.17): during 1918 and 1919 he is again frequently reported as representing the SCC in tennis, cricket and association football, on 15.11.18 he played in front of 2,000 people for the SCC on the



Esplanade ground and is reported as " ...Gooding did good work for SCC against the team from the Straits Chinese Football Association" (SG, 15.11.18), around 1920 he appears to have ceased active sports games and there is a mention for the first time of a Dr & Mrs. Gooding (not necessarily Dr S & Mrs S.W. Gooding) attending as guests at a wedding in Singapore (SG, 13.8.20); no further newspaper reports are in evidence until 1928 when he boarded the liner 'Aenas' with Mrs Gooding and also the Misses Gooding for a voyage from the UK to Singapore (presumably after a home leave); at this point he must have received a transfer to Ipoh because he appears in 1931 as Secretary of the Perak Cricket Association (which post he retained until 1937 when he moved to the General Committee) with comments made by the President that it had had a " ... full season of matches thanks to the energetic efforts of the Secretary (Dr Gooding ... " (SEPCDA 9.1.31) ; in 1932 he is shown again boarding the 'Aenas' from the UK to Singapore (SEPCDA 2.1.32) and upon arrival he took charge of the Dengelembu Agency in Ipoh soon after he was in Pusing (a small town about 5 km from Batu Gajah and also within the massive tin ore deposits of the Kinta Valley - one of the world's great resources of tin at the time) in 1934 : he again sailed for 'home' (SG, 26.11.34) and must have had a nine months leave, since he did not return from the UK until August 1935 on the 'SS. Patroclus' (SEPCDA 9.8.35) ; he then joined the 'Non Benders Cricket Club of Malaya' and was the Perak Representative for several years (SEPCDA 14.8.365); in 1936 he was again on leave in the UK (SG, 15.10.36) ; and the final newspaper record is of him on board the 'Aeneas' in 1939, again this time from Marseilles to Singapore (SG, 30.3.39) ; when the Japanese invaded Malaya it was not many weeks before they arrived near Ipoh and Stanley's wife, Marjorie Gooding was at her house at 94 Gopeng Road, Ipoh when a friend drove up to the house and told her that they had to leave at once because the Japs were only half an hour down the road. Stanley was already in Singapore on business and they reunited there. When Marjorie achieved an exit pass on the "Duchess of Bedford" Stanley took her down to the Singapore docks and wrote his will on the back of an envelope and got a passerby to witness it: aged 53 years in 1942, Stanley Gooding was an older man by Malayan pre War standards: the 'Jeyes' secret list compiled in Changi records " ... GOODING STAN WILL STRAITS TRADING CO. LEFT 12/2 ... " (BPPL); having boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" he lost his life in the sea after the sinking and the story of his death is recorded in a letter from a family friend who was also on the ship and made a huge attempt to save him. Mrs Myrtle Ward knew the Gooding family well and only became aware of the fact that, despite his wide sporting abilities, Stanley was unable to swim just before the bombers struck. She knew then that she may have to assist Stanley if they ended up in the water. As events transpired, as the ship was sinking, Stanley managed to escape by lowering himself through a hole in the ship's side but the time he entered the water he either had been wounded or had become unwell because after Mrs Ward reached him in the sea he only remained conscious for a few minutes. She tied him to two life belts and a piece of wood and attempted to keep his head above water - sadly he passed away a few hours later whilst in the sea off Banka Island. After what should be considered heroic efforts, Mrs Ward was finally convinced to allow Stanley Gooding to slip away in the sea later in the evening; in the list compiled in Palembang camp of those people the internees believed had died in the sinking there is "Dr. Sam Gooding, Straits Trading Co, Penang, Dead body seen in sea ...": the simple record at the CWGC is "Gooding, Stanley W. died 14.2.42 in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", husband of F. H. Gooding..." (CWGC):

- **GREER- Sister Jean 'Jenny' Keers Greer, NX 70937, 2/10<sup>th</sup>** Australian General Hospital, was born on 13th October 1913 at Petersham, NSW. Anecdotally the records give a picture of a spirited, fun loving woman and this fits with a photo in "The Telegraph" Brisbane (24.12.38) titled "Over She Goes" which show Miss Jean Greer having fallen from her roller skates and being picked up by the Instructor with the caption " ... rolling in holiday spirit ...". She enlisted on 16.12.40 and was attached to the 2/10<sup>th</sup>. As the "SS. Vyner Brooke" left Singapore harbour Jenny's nature came to the fore again when she began singing "Wish Me Luck As You Wave Me Goodbye" (P.123, ORB) and later after the ship sank, she and four other nurses were sitting on a plank in the sea when she led the nurses in "Were Off To See The Wizard" (ORB, P.163). They all drifted on this plank away from the main group of nurses talking and reminiscing at one stage, even coming near to Radji Beach and its bonfire on the night of the sinking, before early on Sunday morning being carried straight to a gently





sloping beach. They walked and came upon a small village before walking towards Duntok and on the way surrendering to a Japanese soldier who took them to the old cinema building to be interned. Jenny suffered with the other nurses through the harsh and deprived internment camps of Duntok, Palembang and Belalau before being freed several weeks after the Japanese Surrender. In 1943 ( 'The Sydney Morning Herald' 30.10.43) mentioned " ... *Mrs J. Greer of 17 Napier Street, Petersham, has been notified by the Department of Defence that her daughter, previously reported missing with the 10<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group is presumed to be a POW...* ". Emaciated from years of internment, as were the others, it is recorded (ORB, p. 289) that Jenny " ... *had been one of the biggest nurse in 1941 but upon being repatriated to Singapore in 1945 weighed just over 20kg - one third of her enlistment weight ...* ". Jenny was discharged in September 1946 and was able to resume her relationship with her pre war 'beau' whom she had met in Sydney in December 1940, becoming married the following year. In Singapore (SG. 16.2.47) it was reported with the title " *Ex POW nurse married at Cathedral*" it was noted that " ... *Miss Jean Greer, a former Australian POW nursing sister was married in Singapore at St Andrews cathedral yesterday to Mr Duncan Robert McLeod Pemberton ... son of Mr & Mrs. Pemberton of Inverness, Scotland. He is attached to Sarawak Oilfields ... A reception followed at the Adelphi Hotel...* ". They later moved to Chichester, England and many decades later Jenny passed away there on 7 December 2001.

- **GREGORY - Mrs. Muriel A. Gregory** was identified as being on the " SS. Vyner Brooke" in the list prepared by Mrs. E. Cross titled British Women Internees in Palembang camp: she was born in Bangor, Wales c. 1903, and appears in Welsh papers in 1916 ( 'The Chronicle' 4.2.16 ) passing exams conducted by the Bangor Diocesan Sunday Schools and then in 1918 achieving Senior Certificate at the Bangor County School for Girls ( this school was merged with two others in 1971): it is presumed that she attended University during the early 1920s, she was clearly a very intelligent woman: it is not known when or where she was married but her husband was " *GREGORY C.P. [Charles Pressley] 'Greg', a former London journalist. Manager of 5 Estates in the Temangan area, Kelantan [Duff Development Corporation, Kelantan]. DAS District Supervisor, HQ Finance, Changi and Sime Rd internee. Wife Muriel died in captivity, Sumatra. He remarried 1946 - wife Dorothy. He died 16.8.51 Bridport, Dorset (JDD)*": the first newspaper record is of Mr Gregory writing a letter to the 'Straits Times' on rubber planting (SG. 19.7.32) and he appears in 1934 going on home leave on 'Hector' and then returning five months later on 'Patroclus' ( but no mention of Mrs Gregory with him) and then in the context of Duff Development Corp (SG. 30.10.34 and 12.4.41): there is no record of Mrs Gregory in Malayan newspapers: she would have been about 39 years of age when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke": the final record for Muriel is when Greg Gregory inserted the following death notice in 'The Times' on 14.11.45 " ... In proud and loving memory of my dear wife Muriel Gregory ( nee McKie ), M.A. (Wales), B.Litt (Oxon) of Bangor, North Wales and Kelantan, Malay peninsula who died in a Japanese prison Camp at Duntok, Sumatra on 14 Nov. 1944 after 33 months internment courageously endured. A truly brave woman and a most devoted wife. In my thoughts every hour of every day. G.P. Gregory, Kelantan, Malay Peninsula ...": the official record is " Muriel Gregory, B.Litt., M.A., aged 43 years, of Castle Bank, Bangor, Wales, died 15.11.44 at Duntok Banka Island, daughter of William and Edith McKee of Castle Bank, Bangor, Wales, wife of Charles Pressley Gregory (CWGC).

- **GUNTHER - Sister Janet Patteson 'Pat' Gunther**, NEX 70493, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital (posted to 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station). Pat Gunther was born on 31 August 1913 on a farm near Casino, NSW - the second of eight children of Arthur and Jane Gunther. Pat attended so called 'bush' schools at Mongogarie and Deep Creek before leaving school at the age of 12 years to help on the family farm. She trained as nurse at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital at Camperdown, NSW before passing the "General Nursing" exams and becoming registered in 1936 ( "Sydney Morning Herald" . 8.12.36) and then worked in private nursing for three years. It appears that she enlisted with the AANS in 1940 and joined the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGH before being posted to the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty clearing Station in Malaya. In the SMH archives (smh.com.au) there is a photo of Pat which shows an attractive young woman. The book 'ORB' records Pat's obvious fascination and delight with the new sights, sounds and flowers of Singapore and Malaya (ORB, p.33 etc) Once on the 'Vyner Brooke'



and just prior to the bombing attack Pat – along with her friend Kath Neuss and also Winnie May Davis – were responsible for the forward part of the ship and made themselves comfortable in an officer's cabin on the port side of the ship (ORB, p. 148). 'ORB' also teaches us that Pat was injured in the bombing of the ship but helped her more seriously injured friend, Kath Neuss, into the second lifeboat to be launched to join Rosetta Wight and Clare Halligan. Pat herself was thrown into the water when the lifeboat overturned and she then drifted alone for a while before being joined again by Winnie May Davis. She was later helped onto the raft that Jessie Simons had earlier reached and joined Mrs Bull (and daughter) plus three badly injured crew (one called 'Stan' was badly burned and that night he slipped off the raft and drowned). They ended up amongst the landing craft of the Japanese force invading Banka Island and – most surprisingly – were helped onto one of these craft by Japanese sailors and taken to a nearby beach. The next day they were taken under guard to Muntok and interned in the cinema. Pat then began her three and a half years of survival in the harsh internment camps of Muntok, Palembang and Belalau. In the camps she "... proved more than a competent artist whose sketches and drawings were always sought after as gifts ..." (ORB, 250). She had at least one very bad attack of malaria (muntokpeacemuseum website) and her weight dropped to 33 kg. She left the AANS in February 1947 having continued working for the 113<sup>th</sup> AGH in Concord in Sydney – that year she was awarded 'Mentioned in Despatches' for "Services rendered whilst in Japanese hands". Pat Gunther continued nursing until 1957 when she married Colin Darling – a widower with four children – and moved with him to live at Wollongong. She published two books – "Portrait of a Nurse" and also "An Eastern Interlude" (1998). Colin passed away in 1970 and Pat Darling died at her home in December 2007 – the last of the 'Vyner Brooke' nurses.

- **HADDON – Mrs Haddon???** A 'Mrs Haddon' is listed by Dr Goldberg – Curth as having been one of the women from the 'Vyner Brooke' who died at 'Loebok-Lingoe' (along with Mrs Daniels and a Mrs Price). Given that there are a number of spelling mistakes for surnames in Dr Goldberg-Curth's official statement in the NAA, plus there was no one with that name or anything similar in the list prepared by Mrs E. Cross in 1942 of the women in Palembang camp – it must be assumed that this is actually **Mrs Eva Madden** who died in Loebok – Linggau shortly after arriving in that last and dreadful camp.
- **HALLIGAN – Sister Clarice 'Clare' Isobel Halligan**, VEX 47776, 2.13<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group, was born in 1904, the daughter of Emily Watson Halligan of Kew, Vic., (AWO). In the battle against the Japanese, and after the British retreat to Singapore, we know that Clare was based with the others from the 2.13<sup>th</sup> at the Methodist school and, along with Matron Paschke and six others she nursed in essentially a 'front line' situation with Japanese planes making machine gun attacks all around their field hospital (p.96, ORB); during the bombing of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" Clare was badly injured by a bomb blast at the same time as Rosetta Wight and both "... suffered deep shrapnel wounds to the back of their thighs and buttocks, wounds that penetrated to the bone .... Partially in shock and bleeding profusely, both women were unable to move ..." (p.153, ORB). fellow nurses helped her up to the deck and into what would be the second lifeboat to be launched, however this lifeboat overturned as it hit the sea and overturned, throwing most of its passengers out (p.160, ORB) nevertheless Clare managed to hold onto the upturned craft and – in what must have been excruciating pain – endured many hours of this situation before the sea currents eventually washed the upturned lifeboat and its survivors ashore at one end of Radji beach at about 2200 hours that night. Clare's wounds, whilst terrible, were apparently not quite as severe as those of the other two wounded nurses and she was "... able to walk and simply needed some stitching and some medication to be guaranteed a full recovery ..." (p.199-200, ORB) – but there is no doubt that she would have been in agony as she managed to make the journey along the coast to where the first lifeboat had lit a bonfire. Clare would have been in real pain during the next two days until the time the Japanese troops arrived at Radji beach and proceeded to massacre firstly the officers, serviceman, crew and civilian men from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" before in an unbelievable act of totally senseless brutality they lined up the nurses near the waters edge – with Clare and the other wounded nurses towards the left facing out to sea – and opened fire with their<sup>53</sup>



machine gun. Thus ended the life of a woman in the prime of life whose life had been dedicated to caring for others in pain and suffering.

- **HANNAH (married name ALLGROVE) – Sister Ellen Davis (Nell) Hannah, SX 10595, 2/4<sup>th</sup>** Casualty Clearing Station, was born on 12.10.10 in Perth, WA. She was a builder's daughter who grew up in Adelaide where she began nursing. Her nursing colleagues called her Davis (it seems that her husband who she married after the war called her 'Nell'). In August 1940 she enlisted at Goodwood Park, SA. There were a few occasions in her escape from Singapore that circumstances meant she survived almost b against the odds – when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she was offered an officers cabin as accommodation but declined under orders from Matron Paschke and it was given instead to an elderly couple – this turn of events saved her life because during the bombing that cabin received a direct hit and the elderly couple were killed. After the sinking of the ship Davis "... spent three days in the water. Some of us , myself included could not swim ..." ( pow-of-japan.net – Winstanley) - she had the view that the fact she could not swim saved her life otherwise she would have been able to swim over to the lifeboat with Matron Drummond aboard and reach Radji beach and the terrible fate of those particular nurses. Instead she grabbed a passing liferaft and joined those nurses, who after a day and night at sea were finally pulled to shore by a Malay fisherman and they soon after walked into Muntok and internment. Clearly a strong character who was well regarded by her colleagues Davis was the senior surviving nurse from the 2/4yth CCS and when Vivian Bullwinkel arrived in camp, Davis was one of the few senior people in whom Vivian confided the details of her survival on Radji beach. During internment Davis kept as positive an attitude a possible at one stage borrowing a sewing machine from a Dutch internee and making new clothes from old garments ( ORB, p.2510 and early in the internment years proving , along with her friend Jessie Simons, to be one of the best "chook stranglers" in camp ( ORB, p.250). She endured the deprivation and starvation of the years in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau camps "... I was only 4stone 6 pounds (approx 26 kg) when liberated and near the end of my tether ..." (pows-of-japan. Net – Winstanley). After liberation she returned to Australia and was discharged with the rank of Captain in late 1946. She apparently wrote to her pre-war friends Joe and Marjorie Allgrove and found that Marjorie had lost her life in the same convoy evacuating Singapore - in fact on the 'SS. Kuala' which was bombed and sunk at pom Pong island in the same broad area as the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and on the same day 9 14 February 1942). Joe had also been a PPOW and had survived the terrible rigours of the Burma Railway camps. She and Joe (Joseph William Allgrove), who was a rubber planter, struck up a relationship and they married in 1946. They returned to rubber planting in Malaya where Davis ran the plantation's medical clinic. They had three children and life was good until the Malayan Emergency and its associated terrorist attacks by Communist Chinese. " "...After the Malayan emergency drove them out of Malaya in 1953 they settled in Dedham, England and grew apples ... she fought hard for full entitlement pensions for all of the Australian nurses who had been interned and frequently returned to Australia for reunions ..." (book "The Facing Island" by Jan Bassett, p.50) . Davis died on 29 October 1993 in Australia, shortly after a reunion which had taken her and six other nurses who survived the War back to Radji Beach to unveil the memorial which has stood there for many years. Another member of the large group of relatives and nurses which went to Radji Beach on that occasion remembers that the seven surviving nurses were badly shaken and overcome – the sights, smells and sounds of Banka Island where they had been prisoners was overwhelming.
- **HARDING – William Smythe Harding,** is recorded by the CWGC as being on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and losing his life on 14.2.42 in the sinking, this possibly has been sourced from the Colonial Office Register of Deaths which has "...William Smythe Harding, United Patani ( Malaya) Rubber Estates Ltd, presumed to have lost his life on or about 14 February 1942 in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", source Searcher Organisation Clearing House, Reg. M1, Folio 203, Serial 1025 ..." (CORD); also "... HARDING W.S. [William Smythe] b.1891. To Malaya 1912. Planter Manager, United Patani Estates, Sungei Patani, Kedah. Left with A. Mourin c.12/13.2.42. Lost at sea 13.2.42 on the "Giang Bee", wife was Margaret. Colonial Office Deaths Register places him on the "Vyner Brooke" but the diary of a "Giang Bee" survivor [G.S. Reis] records otherwise ... "(JDD); the 'Jeyes' toilet paper record created





*secretly by the internees in Changi states "HARDING W S U. PAGANI BVD P'BANG ..."*  
(BPPL):

- **HARPER – Sister Iole Harper, AANS.** Iole was born in Guildford, Perth the oldest of nine children and the daughter of a state cricketer. She stayed at school until she was 18 years of age and then helped her mother at home until aged 22 years she started as a trainee nurse at the royal Perth hospital. Anecdotally in 1930 she is reported in "The Daily News", Perth as "... Miss Iole Harper has gone to Gingin for a short stay with relatives ...". After completing her training, Iole travelled to Sydney where she worked at several large hospitals. After three years she returned to Perth to live at home and work at a private hospital - she enlisted with the AANS in August 1941 (ORB, p. 49); home was in York Road, East Guildford ("The West Australian" 29.9.45 includes an attractive photo of Iole Harper). Iole was (standing at 150 centimetres) the smallest of the AANS nurses on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' and she was the final nurse to board the 'SS. Wanganella' for Singapore. After the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' she managed to reach Olive Paschke's raft where she handed a small Chinese boy up onto the raft and it was there, hanging onto a rope trailing from the raft that she met Betty Jeffrey for the first time (ORB, p.184). The nurses on that raft took turns to row or sit on the raft, or lower themselves into the water and hang on (ORB, p. 187) and a praiseworthy tribute to Iole is contained in the book "Singapore's Dunkirk" where it is observed that "... the raft was being paddled, somewhat ineffectually with pieces of planking, until another sister, Iole Harper, climbed on board. 'Iole was wonderful; when not rowing she would get off, swim all around, count everybody and collect those who got tired of hanging on, making them use their feet properly to assist in pushing the thing along ...' (SD, p. 139). Later during the first night, along with two Malay sailors also swimming in the sea, they were swept away by currents. Iole and Betty spent 72 hours in the water. – the first day as part of the group around Oatton Paschke's raft and the rest alone, the two of them swept along by fluky currents and after struggling through impenetrable mangrove swamps for several days they were (on 18 February) taken into the 'coolie lines' in Muntok (ORB, p.195). Whilst interned in Palembang Iole worked as a washerwoman and nursemaid to a Dutch family (ORB, p.257) and she was part of the 'bakery' team in Palembang which strove to "... to use every scarp of rice they could beg, steal or borrow to produce little rice savouries that they would either sell or swap for more substantial foods ..." (ORB, p.263). In 1943 (Dr & Mrs H. R. Harper of East Guildford finally received notice that she was interned in Sumatra ("The West Australian" 23.10.43). On her repatriation to Australia "The Australian womens Weekly" (3.11.45) reported that when the 'Danunda' berthed at Fremantle "... the Western Australian Iole Harper put her arm through her mother's and would not let her go ...". Iole was discharged from the AANS in 1946 as a Lieutenant. In 1947 ("The West Australian" 7.6.47) there was reported the wedding of Miss Iole Harper, daughter of Dr & Mrs Harcourt Harper of East Guildford to Dr Arthur Burkitt of Sydney at St Matthews' Church, Guildford. She was attended by her sister Miss Nan Harper..." there is no mention of the 'Vyner Brooke' or her POW years but there is a photo of the pretty bride and her new husband. Iole Harper died in 1999.
- **HARRIS – Sister Nancy Harris, NEX 76285, 2/13<sup>th</sup>** Australian General Hospital. Described variously as aged 28 or 29 years at the time of the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' Nancy was presumably born around 1913. Research has failed to find out much on her family and early life – although in the book 'ORB' it says she was from a medical family - but she first appears in regional newspapers attending Balls as a teenager in the Byron Bay area of NSW. In 1934 when she would have been around 21 years of age it was reported in the 'Northern Star', Lismore, NSW (21.12.34) that "... Miss Nancy Harris of Byron Bay has left to join the nursing staff of Prince Henry Hospital [this was a hospital also known as Coast Hospital and was merged some 40 years later with two other hospitals to form the current Prince of Wales Hospital in NSW]. Before leaving she was presented with a fountain pen by the staff of the Byron Bay Post Office..." [This indicates she was probably employed in the Post Office between her schooling and her nursing career]. In 1936 there is another report in the same newspaper that "... Nancy Harris has spent three weeks holiday with her parents at Byron bay before returning to Sydney to resume duties at the Coast Hospital...". Again in 1937 another paper ("Tweed Daily", Murwillumbah, 13.1.37) reported that "... Miss Nancy Harris after spending the holiday with her parents (Dr. & Mrs. G. Harris at Byron Bay has returned to Prince Henry Hospital to continue training...". It is assumed that in 1938 she would have passed



her Nurses exam in NSW. One record states of her life around this time that she "... trained at Royal North shore Hospital, joined the staff of the dental hospital on completing her training. Just before the war she travelled in Fiji, China and Japan ...". From her paybook photo taken on enlistment on 21 August 1941 (AWO Archives) Nancy is shown as a slim young woman with wavy brown hair, hazel eyes and with a confident direct look at the camera. After arriving later that year in Malaya, in a twist of history and several months prior to the wartime boarding of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' in February 1942, Nancy and Vivian Bullwinkel, had already experienced the layout of the ship because she had actually attended a dinner party hosted by Reserve Officers of the Royal Navy on the ship in Malaya in 1941 (ORB, p.117). After the ship left Singapore on its last voyage and whilst under attack, Nancy apparently shared a 'battle station' with Vivian Bullwinkel (ORB, p. 141) – it makes this researcher contemplate just what those two women would have said during that moment of the bombing attack about this their second experience aboard the ship? Nancy presumably was either in the first lifeboat to reach Radji Beach (although this would only have been if she was ordered on board that boat to care for the wounded) or, more likely, was one of the large group of nurses holding onto the upturned submerged second lifeboat and accompanying life rafts which landed further along the coast with several badly wounded nurses. Nancy would have then walked, with the wounded, along the coast to the beacon bonfire lit by the first lifeboat survivors. On the day of the mass murder of the sailors, soldiers, civilians and nurses on Radji beach and as the nurses watched the Japs return from murdering the second group of men along the Beach, Nancy is reported ( obviously via Vivian Bullwinkel's memory) to have observed to no one in particular "... Its true then, they don't take prisoners ..." (ORB, p.214). So Nancy Harris a dedicated young woman in her late twenties, who had grown up in the peaceful and serene environment of Byron Bay, was killed for no sane reason with her close colleagues and friends on Radji Beach.

- **HEMPSTED (spelt Hempstead in some newspapers) – Sister Blanche Hempsted, QFX 22714, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital.** Captain Blanche Hempsted, described as "... a quiet Queenslander ..." (ORB, p.93) was born in Alfred Street, Fortitude Valley, Brisbane on 9 September 1908 to Percy Hempsted and Bertha Louisa Hempsted (nee Howard). She had a younger brother Claude Howard Hempsted who tragically died at age 11 years in 1925 when he fell under a train carriage whilst running after the train to open a door ("Daily Standard", Brisbane, 11.6.25). Blanche was only a teenager of 16 years when this tragedy occurred. It seems that she attended St Margaret's School in Brisbane (although she appears in the current website records of the ex pupils of Slade and St Catherine's Schools?) Her life from that point onwards appears to be a hectic social calendar of dances, parties and Balls according to quite a few articles in "The Telegraph", Brisbane, newspaper and this period of socialising seemed to continue for a decade until about 1934. She was a bridesmaid on at least two occasions in 1932 and 1934 and gave kitchen teas for the prospective brides ("The Telegraph", Brisbane 21.3.32 and "The Queenslander" 29.3.34 – the latter newspaper item shows her as a sophisticated and very attractive young woman in the bride and bridesmaid group photo). A wartime report on her being a POW mentioned that she trained at Brisbane Hospital ("The Telegraph" 6.3.43). Blanche enlisted on 27.4.41 in the AANS – her paybook photo does her no justice in terms of her looks. In complete contrast to her earlier bridesmaid's photo she is shown on this occasion to be a plain and most serious looking woman of about 5 feet 5 inches in height. As an insight into the personality of this now mature woman and a measure of her sense of equity and fairplay, it is laudable to note that after the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" Blanche reached a raft on which were several civilian women and nurses plus the infamous Dr Goldberg. When Dr Goldberg refused to take her turn amongst the raft survivors and spend time in the water to give others a rest, firstly Veronica Clancy clambered aboard and gave the arrogant and uncooperative Doctor a punch in the back which did not dislodge her - and then Blanche in a more direct fashion climbed out of the water, put Dr Goldberg in a headlock and dragged her backwards into the sea (ORB, p.176). This group were later picked up by a passing RAAF launch and taken to Muntok pier where they were captured by the Japanese and – along with Sisters Ashton, Greer, Short and Clancy - interned in the Customs House. Blanche<sup>56</sup> then began the three years of harsh and deprived internment in Muntok, Palembang and



the finally Duntok again. She would not have been aware that in September of that year her father passed away in Brisbane ("The Courier-Mail", 16.9.42) leaving her mother alone in Brisbane. The following year the local newspaper ("The Telegraph", Brisbane, 6.3.43) reported that Blanche (along with sisters Dittleheuser and Trotter) were "...safe and well as POWs in Singapore...". Later in 1943 Blanche was able to send a postcard (dated as March 1943) as a POW to her Mother ("The Telegraph", 7.12.43) and let her know that she was in Palembang camp – it shows the typically coded structure of remarks to evade the Japanese censors – and she said "... The thrill of being able to write after 12 months silence and to let you know I am absolutely fit and well, in fact never felt better in health. Had trouble with my ear at first, always do with ocean water, but it was soon rectified. We are in a pretty little place, quiet and peaceful, away from any sort of turmoil. You will be disappointed to know your album is at the bottom of the sea. When allowed to send parcels please include a good strong toothbrush for we have lost everything, but nevertheless we are among friends who do their best to keep things and us well and contented. Sisters Short, Trotter and Blanch are here with me. Keep well and look forward to the happy day when you will be welcoming me home again ...". Mrs Hempsted considers that her daughter's reference to ocean water affecting her ears indicates that the ship she was on must have been bombed prior to the fall of Singapore. Blanche earned a reputation as a nurse in the POW camps as a hard worker ("White Coolies") and she survived until the second and high death toll move back to Duntok camp on Banka Island in early 1945 where it is clear that years of increasingly harsh treatment, dietary deficiencies, neglect and poor hygiene conditions in these basic camps took it toll. Blanche developed beri beri and a serious cough (which the other nurses felt was a developing cancer) and after being seriously ill for several weeks she died of beri beri in Duntok on 19 March 1945. She slipped into a coma and died within 30 minutes. Her coffin was a rudimentary box made of slats of wood nailed together by the other skeletal women internees. This was filled with flowers and buried in a clearing in the nearby jungle (ORB, p.268-269). It is not clear when her mother learned of her death - most families did not know until after the return to Australia of the surviving nurses, but there was an insert in the "Moryborough Chronicle, Wide Bay and Burnett Advertiser", Queensland, 18.9.45 which recorded that she had died in camp and gave her address as "Verney Road, East Gracefield, Brisbane". It was not until some 18 months later that in "The Telegraph", Brisbane, "Roll of Honour" column there was another insertion "Hempsted - Pauline Blanche - In loving memory of Captain Pauline Blanche Hempsted, Australian Army Nursing Service, died prison camp Duntok 1945 'Her Duty Nobly Done'".

- **HODGSON – Sister Dinnie Ivy Hodgson**, WFX 11174, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. [NB: Dinnie's surname is sometimes misspelt, as in the book 'ORB', as Hodgson). There is little information on the life of Dinnie Hodgson at the Australian War Memorial Museum website but more can be found on the RSL site. She was born on 16 August 1908 in Perth, WA, the daughter of John William Hodgson and contrary Hodgson. Her father, who had come from England as a fitter and turner took up farming in Yealering in 1908 (the year Dinnie was born). Yealering is a small agricultural service town in the 'wheatbelt' region of Western Australia, about 220 km south of Perth (today the population is about 200 and apart from a hotel/pub dating from 1925 and a couple of shops there is little else). Insofar as her schooling little is known except for the fact that she attended the Presbyterian Ladies College in Perth in 1923 (aged about 15 years) but left after one year. Her relatives described her as "... a good country girl, used to standing up for herself ...". She enlisted in the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group, AANS, at Swan Barracks, WA on 14 July 1941 showing her home town as Yealering, Wickepin. Her paybook photo shows a lean faced, dark haired young woman who typified the country woman her relatives described. Dinnie does not seem to be mentioned in any of the literature on the AANS nurses on the 'Vyner Brooke' but we know that she somehow made it to Radji Beach by the 15 February and was one of the nurses murdered by Japanese troops on 16 February 1942. Her life and work is commemorated by a plaque on the Lake Yealering memorial gates at the local primary school, Sewell Street, Yealering, 6372, WA. These gates were erected by the people of the Yealering District in 1954 in memory of those men and women who gave their lives during





the War. She is also remembered on Plaque Number 262 in Honour Avenue, Kings Park, at Bicton, WA.

- **HUGHES - Sister Gladys Laura Hughes**, VEX 61331, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Gladys Hughes was born on 9 September 1908 in the small town of Waikino which is hidden deep in the beautiful Karangahake Gorge in the Bay of plenty region of New Zealand. Her father James Hughes and her mother Elizabeth Shore Hughes were at the address of 7 Prospero Terrace, Mt Albert, Auckland, New Zealand after the War. In 1922 Gladys aged 14 years passed her First Aid exams at Waibi technical School in the bay of plenty region( [paperspast.natlib.govt.nz](http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz)). A graduate of Thames Hospital in 1932, she later took midwifery training at St Helens Hospital, Auckland. She was also at other times on the staff of Rotorua Hospital and Patea Hospital in the North Island of New Zealand. In 1938 she went to Australia and undertook private nursing in Melbourne and was the Matron of a country hospital in Victoria for three years. (Kia Tiaki: The Journal of Nurses of New Zealand: v.38, p.275, 15.11.45).at the time of her enlistment into the AANS she appears to have resided at 186A Park Street, West Brunswick, Vic( ORB, p. 148). Her paybook photo shows a stout young woman with dark hair and a cheery smile. On the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' at the time of the attack by Japanese bombers Gladys took cover with other nurses in the main bathroom behind the saloon( ORB, p.148) and after abandoning ship she swam to the overturned ( second lifeboat to be launched) lifeboat to join Sylvia Muir, Ditz Mittleheuser, Veronica Clancy and others. All that night this group tried pushing and swimming with the lifeboat they were clinging to with its complement of mothers and children and Dr Goldberg. They were all later picked up by a RAAF launch which dropped them off at Muntok pier where they were taken prisoner by the Japanese in Muntok Cinema. During her subsequent years in internment Gladys was generally regarded as the best cook in Palembang camp (ORB, p. 258). Towards the end of the war at the living hell that was Belalau internment camp Gladys was 'outposted' to what was called the upper camp whilst all the other Australian nurses remained housed in the 'lower' camp. The isolation of her work as a nurse in the 'upper' camp at Belalau was believed by Betty Jeffrey to have contributed to her deteriorating health and morale, for after suffering from malaria and dysentery for some time she died on 31 May 1945. She was carried by her friends to a shallow grave in a nearby glade and buried there. Gladys is now buried at Jakarta War Cemetery, Jakarta, Indonesia.
- **HUTCHINGS - Mrs Kathleen Mary Hutchings** of 12 Balmoral Rd, Singapore. Wife of Major P.G. Hutchings SSVF and who died in captivity. She survived the Vyner Brooke sinking 15.2.42, Palembang Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 12.4.45 [46] Palembang(JDD): Kathleen Mary Deeks was born c. Dec .1898 in Lewisham , London: in what appears to have been her second marriage [ in her death record her parents are Dr & Mrs. W. Deeks], and as Kathleen Mary Mears of Forest Hill, London, aged about 31 years of age , she married Philip Townshend Hutchings in 1929 at St. Andrews Cathedral, Singapore [reception was at the home of Dr & Mrs. J.C.E. Collinge who was later a leader in Changi Internment camp] ( SFPDA 24.12.29); Philip Hutchings had arrived in Singapore in 1923 to join the staff of Joseph Gravers & sons Ltd ( SG. 17.10.230: he was a active sportsman involved in rugby, tennis and flying; by 1931 they were living in Penang; in 1938 a group photo of Cold Storage Creameries staff farewelling Philip Hutchings, who was about to go on home leave, shows both Philip and Kathleen ( SG.3.7.38): Cross list says DOD 19.4.45.(SUM): Kathleen Hutchings is identified as being on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" from Mrs. E. Cross' list of British Women Internees in Palembang and would have been about 43 years of age when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke": her husband also died as a POW in the first year of the war against the Japanese " *HUTCHINGS P.G.[Philip Townshend] Educated Oundle. Lived at 12 Balmoral Rd, Singapore. Wife Kathleen [+Sumatra] Major ISSVF POW Singapore to Thailand. Died in captivity 27.11.42 Wantan. Grave at Kanchanaburi...*"(JDD): the official record is " ... Kathleen Mary Hutchings, aged 46 years, civilian, died 12.4.45, daughter of William Walter and Kate Deeks, wife of Major Philip Townshend Hutchings (SSVR) who also died in captivity. Died at Palembang...."(CWGC). It appears that Kathleen and Philip died without leaving any family.
- **INNES - "Innes, Ipoh, Killed on board Vyner Brooke** ( Civilian Casualties file): **Robert Innes**<sup>58</sup> lost his life in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" on 14.2.42 (CWGC):this is probably



based on the records of the Colonial Office Register of Deaths " Robert Innes, J. Wilson & Co., Malaya died on or about 14.2.42 in the vicinity of the Banka straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CORD, Folio 01, Register 206, Serial 1037, source C, in C. ALFSEA); it seems that the correct name of this company was G.W. Wilson and Co but nothing else is known of the life of Robert Innes; also **INNES R.** [Robert] of J. Wilson & Co., Ipoh. Lost at sea 15.2.42 on the *Vyner Brooke* (JDD); the secret 'Jeyes' document created by Changi internees states " ... **INNES R. G W WILSON & CO. IPOH LEF6** ..." (BPPL); in a contradictory report (it is unclear from the punctuation in the report whether the statement refers to Robert Innes) the 'Straits Times' after the War stated that he had been in Padang Sumatra on 17.2.42 (SG. 29.5.46) which leaves open a suggestion that he either survived the sinking or was never on the "SS. Vyner Brooke".

- **JAMES** – in the book "On Radji Beach" (p.137) there is a statement, which appears to be based on the recollections of the Australian nurses, referring to a young woman named 'Daudie James' being amongst the passengers before the ship was attacked – "... For optimism and good humour the nurses couldn't go past Daudie James, a young cockney girl, newly married to a soldier she had to leave behind in Singapore ..."; given the absence of any other person with this surname in Palembang internment records (apart from Nurse Nesta James) or in CWGC records, it is possible that this is ' ...Mrs Mildred F. James, housewife aged 39 in 1942, Palembang Women's camp 1942, Sumatra internee. Repatriated on Antenor from Singapore, arriving Liverpool 27.10.45 ...' (JDD); in the lists of women internees in Palembang internment camp there is recorded a Mrs. M.F.M. James but there is nothing else to link her to the woman on the "SS. Vyner Brooke"; pre War newspaper records in Singapore show a Mildred James receiving her Home nursing certificate (SG. 10.7.390 and then soon after passing her First Aid examination on Blakan Mati island (SG.30.8.39) so that she could enrol in St Johns Ambulance – the fact that she was on Blakan Mati indicates that she was married to someone in the British Army.
- **JAMES - Sister Nesta Gwyneth James**, VEX 39347, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Nesta was born in 1904 in the UK (SU0). She was the daughter of Mr. & Mrs D. James of Shepparton East, a large agricultural town in northern Victoria, and she was raised in what is said to be an affluent family. She had begun her training as a nurse by 1926 ('Shepparton Advertiser' 21.6.26) and it is notable that her family appeared for one reason or another in this newspaper at least once a month for the next decade, so they must have been prominent residents in that town. In 1928 she is again mentioned as a trainee at Melbourne Hospital and the following year reported to have passed her final Nurses exams at that same hospital ('Shepparton Advertiser' 20.12.28). The same newspaper reported her in 1932 still at Melbourne Hospital but on holiday in Cairns and the Great Barrier reef; then in 1933 boarding the "Danunda" (the same ship that she would be repatriated home in 1945) for a holiday in Perth to visit friends. In 1938 she left Melbourne to go to Johannesburg ('Shepparton Advertiser' 14.2.38) and she remained there as a nurse before returning in 1939 after war broke out in Europe ('Shepparton Advertiser' 11.12.39). In 1940 she was appointed Matron of Dunolly District Hospital ('Shepparton Advertiser' 5.8.40). She enlisted in late 1939 and by February 1941 she had arrived with the AANS in Malaya. She was second in seniority in the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGH to Matron Olive Paschke in Malaya. After the attack on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' and the ship sinking, Nesta James found herself alone in the sea - she managed to find an empty liferaft and was taken even further away from the main group of survivors by the strong sea currents in the area. She drifted with the currents for 12 hours, not really seeing or hearing from anyone else (ORB, p.188). Early the next day (Sunday) she washed up on a beach near Duntok lighthouse (Tanjung Kelian)- she went into the lighthouse where there were two Malays who told her that the Dutch lighthouse keeper had fled. Soon Japanese soldiers arrived and proceed to steal the one hundred Straits dollars she was carrying. She went back to the beach where she came across fellow survivor Phyllis Gunbridge and, after being refused access back into the lighthouse by the two Malays, they went into the jungle where they were joined by other survivors from the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' [researcher's note: is anyone able to identify who these other survivors were?]. Together this group walked towards Duntok and were captured by the Japanese. As the most senior nurse surviving from the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGH Nesta assumed a leadership role in the internment camps (along with Jean Ashton) because of her age.<sup>59</sup>



experience and strength of character 9 ORB, p.261). During that time (November 1942) Nesta's father died in Australia. Whilst in Palembang she was instrumental in refusing and obstructing the efforts by the Japanese to use the nurses as 'comfort women' at a so called club the Japanese officers wanted to establish. Nesta survived the rigours and deprivations of the hellish camps in Duntok, Palembang and Belalau and after her repatriation was discharged from the AANS with the rank of Captain in October 1946. She later married with her name changing to Nesta Joy. In 1947 she was 'Mentioned in Despatches' in recognition of her effort and bravery during the Battle for Singapore. Nesta was interviewed in 1983 and this record is held in the AWM. She passed away in 1984 and is memorialised on a plaque in honour avenue, Point Walter, Bicton, WA.

- **JEFFREY – Sister Agnes Betty Jeffrey**, VEX 53059, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Betty Jeffrey was born in Hobart, Tasmania on 14 May 1908 the second youngest child (of six) of William Jeffrey and Amelia Matilda Jeffrey. William Jeffrey was employed by the General Post Office, as an accountant in the Postmaster General's Department and his job meant frequent interstate transfers. "... After many years of travelling interstate, the family finally settled down on East Malvern, Victoria, the town Betty Jeffrey would call home for the rest of her life..." ([www.awm.gov.au/education/resources/nurses](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/resources/nurses)). In 1926 Betty Jeffrey passed her leaving Certificate in English at Warwick Girls School, east Malvern (trove.au). Various sources say Betty worked as secretary, or a school teacher (ORB, p.41), before taking up nursing and the AWM educational resource has an unexplained comment that "... She had not been happy with other hospitals, so had put off her training for many years ...". It may have been also that her involvement in a motor accident and the injury of a child in early 1934 in Brisbane motivated her to take up nursing (trove.au). In 1939 Betty passed her Nurses Board exams (General Nursing) and in 1940 she passed her Midwifery exams for the Nurses Board ("The Argus", Melbourne, 14.3.40). Also in 1940 she enlisted in the AANS embarking in May 1941 on the 'Zelandia' for Malaya in May 1941 ([www.awm.gov.au/education/resources/nurses](http://www.awm.gov.au/education/resources/nurses)). Later on the 'Vyner Brooke' Betty recorded her feelings and the events around her as the bombs struck the ship (ORB, p.152) she was lying on the floor of the main saloon with Caroline Ennis and a large group of elderly men, civilian women and children. Shattered glass fell all around her and there were many serious injuries – some fatal. Betty led a group of a dozen or more whilst carrying a small child which she gave to an English woman and returned to the saloon carrying out bandaging of wounded as she went. (ORB, p.155-156) The ship began listing badly after the first few lifeboats were launched and the remaining passengers simply had to slide or jump into the sea with their lifejackets on – it seems that many people would have lost their lives during this process from falling debris, life rafts and simply the power of hitting the water with the old fashioned jackets. Betty swam between groups of nurses in the sea looking for Olive Paschke (ORB, p.171) and finally found her on the group of rafts which had been tied together. This was the one also carrying Caroline Ennis and the two small children plus sisters Harper, Grenerry, McDonald Dorsch and Clarke. Betty and Iole Harper were with this group, holding onto the trailing ropes of the rafts all through the first night as it was swirled around the sea off Banka Island by strong ocean currents. When dawn broke Betty and Iole, volunteering to lighten the raft entered the water again and were swimming alongside when suddenly the currents separated them from the rafts that still carried Matron Paschke, the five other nurses and the two children, and Betty had to watch her friends being swept away down the Bank Straits never to be seen alive again. Betty and Iole were eventually washed up on a mangrove swamp on Banka Island that day and spent that day the following night and the morning of Monday 16 February struggling through sharp mangrove spikes and being constantly bitten by mosquitoes. On the Monday, after 72 hours in the water, they were found by Malay fishermen, helped to a hut given water and few scraps of food and after that helped to the main road to Duntok. They were taken into the 'coolie lines' at Duntok and interned with other Australian nurses. Betty then entered three and a half years of incredibly harsh and deprived internment at Duntok, Palembang and Belalau camps. During this time she and Flo Grotter set themselves up as hairdressers for the wealthy Dutch internees. She also became the Australian representative on the camp rations committee and apparently "... was always the source of a good joke, or an even better rumour ..." (ORB, p.262). In the truly horrible Belalau camp Betty became very ill with





the combination of ailments that afflicted all the internees there and her friend Wilma Oram was so concerned as to her survival that she actually had a grave prepared for her (ORB, p.278). Betty survived, was repatriated to Singapore and then on the hospital ship 'Danunda' to Australia and in late 1947 was one of the last to be discharged (with Vivian Bullwinkel) from the AANS. She worked closely with her friend Vivian Bullwinkel to establish a Nurses' memorial center in Melbourne – a living memorial to those Australian nurse who had died in all wars and in particular their fallen comrades – an dream that had first been discussed whilst in Palembang internment camp. They travelled all over Australia to promote their fundraising efforts and raised 123,000 pounds (ORB, p.307) and the center was opened at 431 St Kilda Road, Melbourne in 1950. Betty was the first administrator of the center and then its patron from 1986 until her death. In 1987 Betty Jeffrey received the OACD (the 'Medal of the Order of Australia') and around this time she also wrote the excellent book "White Coolies" about her experiences during the war. Betty Jeffrey passed away on 13 September 2000, just three months after the death her very good friend Vivian Bullwinkel – their work was done and they go into history as icons of Australian nursing.

- **KEATS – Sister Ellen Louisa 'Nell' Keats**, SFX 11647, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Nell Keats was born at 'Gunyah' (a private nursing home at North Unley, a suburb of Adelaide) on 1 July 1911, the daughter of Mr and Mrs C. C. Keats of Dulwich, South Australia ('The Express & Telegraph', Adelaide, 6.7.15). She had twin younger brothers (one was later listed as 'Missing' during the War) and she attended St Peters Collegiate Girls School, Adelaide ('The Advertiser', Adelaide, 12.12.41). In 1927 she is listed as passing her pianoforte exam for the School Exams and in 1932 she passed the 'Invalid Cookery Examination' conducted by the School of Dines – by then she would have been about 16-17 years of age. She commenced her training at Parkwynd Private Hospital in 1933, transferring to Adelaide Hospital to complete the course. In 1937 she passed her final exam for the Nurses Board of South Australia and was employed at the Adelaide Hospital as a staff sister (Health Museum of South Australia). Nell enlisted with the AANS on 3.2.41. A studio portrait of Nell taken in 1941 prior to her departure for AANS service shows a serious, pleasant faced young woman, of 5 foot 3 inches in height, in her nursing military uniform (Health Museum of South Australia) – a similar impression is given in her paybook photo in the AWD. According to the documents in the AWD lodged by Davis Hannah, Nell's letters home from Malaya to her mother "... were positively upbeat ..." (ORB, p.80). Little else is recorded of the life of Nell Keats in literature on the 'Vyner Brooke' nurses, but we know that she somehow made it to Radji Beach – possibly by life boat – and was amongst the group of nurses murdered by Japanese troops on 16 February 1942. Along with seven other nurses from the 'Vyner Brooke' who lost their lives at sea and on Radji beach, Nell Keats is memorialised on a brass plaque in the Royal Adelaide Hospital Chapel [If anyone has more information on the life and achievements of this dedicated young woman whose life was so brutally taken it would be appropriate to amplify this record].
- **KERR – Sister Janet 'Jenny' Kerr**, NFX 6279, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Jenny Kerr was born in 1911, the daughter of John James Kerr and Ida (Maud Kerr (nee Ellwood) of Woodstock near Cowra (Note: most records show only one or the other of Mr. & Mrs. Kerr as Jenny's parents and the reason for this appears to have been that they were divorced in 1930). She followed her mother's footsteps into the nursing profession – Ida was the Matron of Woodstock Hospital in western NSW – and graduated as a nurse at St George's Hospital, Padstow/Kogarah?, NSW. She was a theatre sister at St George's Hospital for many years (Grove, "Queensland Times", 11.5.46) and in 1946 a plaque to the memory of 'Sister Janet Kerr' was unveiled at the Hospital. Sister Janet Kerr enlisted on 21.8.41 and her paybook photo shows a serious looking woman with brown hair and brown eyes. Not much is on public record of Jenny's life and so we move forward to the fact that she was on the 'Vyner Brooke' and made it to Radji Beach, presumably on one of the two lifeboats which arrived there and further along the coast. Jenny, aged 31 years, was amongst the group of nurses murdered by Japanese troops on Radji beach on 16 February 1942. A newspaper record of the time ("Cootamundra Herald" 5.10.45) states "STOCKINBINGAL – [this is in the same area as Woodstock] – [Janet Kerr] ... was well known and highly esteemed by everyone here. She is a sister of Mrs Ken Kerr and a niece to Mrs G. Ellwood and Mr and Mrs J. Ellwood sen. She trained at St. George's Hospital, Kogarah, and enlisted at the beginning of the



War. She spent many holiday periods here at the hotel with her brother. Her mother, Mrs Kerr, lives at Woodstock...". She is also commemorated on the Roll Of Honour at Woodstock, near Young in NSW where there is a beautiful memorial to her in the town's main street. The memorial was unveiled by the Governor of NSW in 1954 (monumentsaustralia.org and Land, Sydney, NSW 12.11.54). Also in Woodstock there is a memorial park and a playground – the Jenny Kerr Memorial Park – with a permanent 'sign' (installed and unveiled on ANZAC Day 2015) with a photo of Jenny Kerr, what is said to be the wreck of the 'Vyner Brooke', and the story of her war service and the massacre on Radji Beach. Also interestingly – during the late 1950s/ early 1960s there was a photo of Jenny Kerr above the door to the Matron's office at St George's Hospital because she was held in great respect and affection by the nurses of that era (ex nurse Mrs. Jan Hodgson nee McDonald). Sadly this photo appears to have been lost over the years (it could be in the nurses museum at the Hospital) and it occurs to this researcher that with the renewed interest and empathy in Australian society towards matters ANZAC, veterans and victims of the major wars that it would be timely to restore the photo of Jenny to the same place of honour?

- **KINSLEY (sometimes misspelt as KINGSLEY)** Private Cecil Gordon Kinsley, # 7654688, Royal Army ordinance Corps, 'Z' Advanced Workshop. Private Kinsley appears to have been a survivor from the sinking of another ship near Banka island – the 'SS. Siang Wo' and arrived with other soldiers at Radji Beach on the morning of Monday 16 February 1942 with five other soldiers. Kinsley (named 'Kingsley' by Eric German in his account as recorded in BUE) had been one of the wounded lying on stretchers at the top of the Beach – whom the Japanese proceeded to bayonet after they had murdered the three main groups on the Beach (BUE, p. 153). Eric German states that when he returned to the site of the killings after hiding in the jungle he found "...Two stretchers were empty. One had been the old magistrates' and the other the wounded soldier Kingsley's. What had become of Kingsley? .... Thinking perhaps Kingsley had survived the bayoneting and crawled into the jungle they searched the immediate area and called his name. No answer..." Kinsley had in fact crawled into the jungle and some hours after the massacre he heard Vivian Bullwinkel nearby and called out "... Where have you been, nurse?" (Vivian became exasperated with him later and told him off for calling him a 'nurse' – she was a 'Sister'! He told Vivian during the 12 days they hid in the jungle that he was from Yorkshire and his wife's name was 'Elsie' ("Singapore Burning" by Colin Smith, p.534). Cecil Kinsley had survived two bayonet thrusts to the lower and upper abdomen (one of which had punctured his lung) during the killings on Radji Beach, which came on top of the shrapnel wound he had presumably suffered in the sinking of the 'Siang Wo' which had sliced his left upper arm to the bone (p.535). Vivian Bullwinkel recalled that all his wounds became infected whilst they were in the jungle. After some 12 days they began to trek together to Muntok – incredibly a Japanese naval officer in an open topped tourer picked them up, gave them each a banana, and drove them to Muntok. Private Cecil Kinsley died in hospital in the POW camp there on 24 March 1942 and was buried in the cemetery there. ("Singapore Burning", p. 5353)
- **KINSELLA – Sister Kathleen 'Kit' Kinsella**, VEX 61126, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station /2/13<sup>th</sup> AGH. [Note: her name is occasionally spelt incorrectly as is the case in the book 'ORB' where she is called Katherine]. Kathleen was born on 18 March 1904, the daughter of Michael James Kinsella a van proprietor and his second wife Susan Kinsella (nee Lockens) of South. At 'Gullamore' the family ran dairy cattle and grew potatoes, peas and briefly, asparagus in Jarra (Marre Warren & district Family history Group Inc). She was the youngest of five children and attended school at Koo-Wee-Rup North (or Five Mile) before switching to Cora Lynn State School in 1912. After leaving school, Kathleen trained as a nurse and was working at the Heidelberg Military Hospital when she joined the Army on 4 August 1941. She was assigned to the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital, and senior nurse in the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station unit and arrived in Singapore on 15 September 1941. (Koo-Wee-Rup Swamp Historical Society March 2012). She was one of the older, senior, more experienced nurses enlisting and was highly regarded by her colleagues at the Hospital – she also undertook brain surgery theatre support training at the Alfred Hospital before being posted to Singapore (Marre Warren & District Family History Group Inc.).<sup>62</sup> In Malaya, a photo was taken at Tampoi in 1941 and shows Kathleen as a tall smiling woman



with her colleagues of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> CCS (AWD). As senior nurse of the 2/4<sup>th</sup> CCS Kathleen was based at Kluang, then Dengkibol, and finally Bukit Panjang in Singapore where she was responsible for a 200 bed facility. Comment on her performance include that she "... led the unit with vigour and compassion...". "... Was a natural leader with a genuine love for those she led ..." and that her leadership was "inspirational". After the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' Kathleen is mentioned by Wilma Oram (ORB, p.165 "... [Wilma] .... Regained consciousness [in the sea] and believed she had a conversation with Kit Kinsella who drifted past wearing a lifejacket. That may or may not have been so as Kit, also, was never seen again after the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke'...". She is presumed to have drowned on the 14 February 1942. It seems that after the war if she had survived, she would have been given an honour like the royal red cross for her bravery, conduct and work prior to the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke'. In her home town of Cora Lynn she is memorialised on the Cora Lynn War Memorial at 9 Mile Road and Bunyip River Road.

- **KNOWLAYNE** - Keith Owen Frank 'Kid' Knowlayne, dance agent then Manager, NS Dance Hall, Seremban. By 1940 Assistant, NS Aerated Water Company, Seremban. By 1941 Acting Assistant Dredge master, Renong. Lost at sea 15.2.42 on the Vyner Brooke (JDD): the 'Jeyes' toilet paper secret list compiled in Changi records "... KNOWLAYNE K D F NS BENGGE? [indecipher] WHTGE W Co LEFT 12/2 ..." (BPPL) indicating he must have connections to Negri Seremban and Whiteaway & Co: he is a bit of a mystery man because he appeared out of nowhere in newspapers in 1936 as the new manager at the N. S. Dance hall, Seremban, having been the former agent of 'the Royal Balinese dancers and a female East Javanese dance star named Dewi Dja who had arrived in Singapore in 1935 as the start of a world tour', reviving the popularity of the NS Dance Hall as a 'rendezvous' with large crowds turning up (SG. 14.11.36 and SG. 1.12.36): it has not been possible to find any other public records of 'Kid' Knowlayne but it appears that after his brief success in the entertainment business he had a succession of jobs culminating with either Whiteaway & Co (which sold fabrics and linen) or working on the tin dredges of Renong Tin: the official record after the war by the Colonial Office was 'Dr. Keith Owen Frank Knowlayne, Renong Tin Dredging Ltd died on or about 14.2.42 in the vicinity of the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke"' (CORD, Folio 01, Register 157, Serial 881, source C in CALFSEA): Keith Owen Frank Knowlayne died 14.2.42 in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CWGC - name added in October 2015 as part of the 'Cold Project').
- **KNUDSEN** - **Mrs. Adrienne/Adrianna Marie Knudsen** was the wife of Dr Eigel O. Knudsen, a motor engineer and works manager at Borneo Motors Singapore (SFPDA 9.8.34 and SG 18.5.35): she was the sister of Esmond Anthony Reutens and Emma Ann da Silva - nee Reutens - and Adrienne and Eigel were married on 22.4.35 in Penang at the Church of the Assumption (Gerard van Haren email 7.12.2016): she worked for the firm of Harrison, Barker & Co., accountants and auditors in Singapore: there is a lovely photo of Adrienne Knudsen at the races at Bukit Timah taken in 1936 where she is shown as an attractive, vibrant woman in her late twenties or early thirties (SG. 12.3.36): she is recorded as having been on the ship in an article in the Singapore Medical Journal "... On 10<sup>th</sup> February, I had to go into town to meet my sister - in - law Adrianna Knudsen (nee Reutens). She informed me that she had decided to evacuate. She left Singapore by the 'SS. Vyner Brooke', a fateful voyage because the vessel was bombed and straffed [sic] near Pulau Pinang (an island in the Rhio Group). A large number of passengers lost their lives including my sister - in - law. I understand from survivors that she had been wounded seriously by shrapnel and went down with the ship which carried many Australian nurses and evacuees ..." ("Before and After Syonan-Go", L.S. da Silva, Retired Senior Pathologist, Dept. of Pathology, Singapore General Hospital, Vol. 26 Singapore Medical Journal, 1.2.95): there is also another record that she was on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" which comes from a post war advertisement in the "Straits Times" by a solicitor "... The undersigned would be very grateful to any member of the public who can give any information as to the whereabouts of Mrs. Adrienne Marie Knudsen (wife of E.O. Knudsen) last seen on board "SS. Vyner Brooke" on 12 - 15 February 1942. She was employed under Messrs. Harrison Barker & Co. Signed, E.D. Tampoe-Phillips, solicitor, 21 Bonham Building, Singapore ..." (SG. 2.12.45).
- **LANGDON - WILLIAMS** - **Mrs. Darion Galloway Langdon-Williams** is identified as being a passenger on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" from Mrs. E. Cross' list of 'British Women internees in





Palembang 1942': from the 1901 Scottish census we know her maiden name and that she was born in 1899: (Miss Marion Galloway Black, daughter of the Reverend William Ritchie Black and (Mrs. E. Grace Black of Edinburgh, married Leonard Langdon - Williams at the Presbyterian Church, Singapore in 1923 (SG. 3.7.23), she was also the niece of Sir (Dr.) D.J. Galloway of Johore and the cousin of (Mrs J.G. Campbell: early newspaper reports are of (Dr & Mrs Langdon Williams playing in a mixed foursome of golf at the Keppel Golf Club in 1927 and, in addition to social /charity work, golf seems to have been a prime recreational interest of the couple: (Dr. Langdon - Williams worked as Town Planner and effectively the CEO of the Singapore Improvement Trust and was personally responsible for a lot of the slum clearance and a significant rise in accommodation standards ( see the art deco buildings in the Tiong Bahru area) for Singaporeans in the 1930s: (Mrs Langdon - Williams appears in an Annual Report of the Child Welfare Society, Singapore as a member of the 'Committee of Workers' ( this was a very successful organisation which employed nurses and coaches for the "... *uneducated masses* ..." in Singapore on the health and well being of their children - Chinese, Indian and Malay infant mortality at the time was 200-300 per 1000 compared with a European rate of 15): they lived in a house on Pulau Ubin which still stands as a heritage building and is said to have been built by Leonard Langdon - Williams: in 1937 (Dr. Langdon - Williams, as Manager of the Singapore Improvement Trust was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects: sadly Leonard died suddenly around 26.10.41 when he was found dead, fully clothed and face down in a stream off the 17<sup>th</sup> milestone of Kota Tinggi Road, Johore ( the circumstances, which were rumoured to relate to the integrity surrounding a large contract, remained unclear and were to be the subject of a Coroners enquiry - but whether this was ever completed in light of the Japanese invasion only six weeks later is unknown): that meant that with the arrival of war with the Japanese invasion only a few weeks after her husband's death and whilst possibly still in the midst of the Coroners Enquiry to determine why he died so unusually, (Marion was then relatively alone in the world and must have found it hard to take the decision to leave Singapore: it is even possible that her decision was clouded by the fact that her hugely respected uncle Sir (Dr.) David Galloway (who was by then in his mid 80s and very old for a European in Malaya at that time) had been personal physician to the Sultan of Johore (who was placed under the protection of the Japanese during the War),but had decided against evacuation - the Japanese did not intern Sir David but he died in (March 1943 in Meyer Mansions in Singapore: when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she was 43 years of age and a member of Singapore's established society. It is not known what happened to (Marion during and after the attack on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' but clearly she made it ashore on one of the life rafts ( or even amongst the group of women and children who left Radji beach before the murders by the Japanese)and subsequently endured the privations and disease of (Muntok then Palembang camps, before finally succumbing to malnutrition and disease on the second occasion they were taken back to the (Muntok camp on Banka Island. Also LANGDON-WILLIAMS (Mrs Marion Galloway (nee Black), Widow, Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 7.2.45[45] (Muntok, Sumatra, Husband was (Manager/Town Planner, No.1 Singapore Improvement Trust, He died suddenly [suicide?] 11.41(JMM): after reaching Banka Island (Marion was interned in (Muntok/Palembang and then (Muntok camp again where she died aged 46 years of age on 7.2.45(CWGC).

- **MACLEOD** - (Mrs Dorothy May MacLeod, wife of Lt Colonel D.G. MacLeod [POW Singapore, Thailand], nee Polglase [family in Malaya since 1870s]. Educated Raffles Ladies College and Bruges. Teacher at the Anglo-Chinese School, Singapore and well-known singer. Survived the Vyner Brooke sinking 15.2.42, Palembang **Sumatra internee**. Wrote a recipe book in captivity. Described as "...an attractive cheerful little woman with a lovely singing voice..." Died in captivity 1.4.45[59] (Muntok, Sumatra. Son Ian wrote the book 'I will sing to the end' [2005] (JMM): Dorothy Polglase was presumably born c 1895, but she did attend Raffles Girls School during which time she appears in newspaper reports of the school prize giving, winning prizes in Arithmetic, French and Reading (SG. 22.12.06/1.2.08, SFPDA 1.4.11) before continuing her study there as a Pupil Teacher in 1912-13 when she again won the prizes for Practical and Theoretical Teaching (SFPDA 3.5.12/25.1.13): clearly a talented young woman from an establishment family in Singapore, she was prominent though her life from the time she left school for singing as a soloist in aid of charity fund raisers, such



as for Dr Barnardo's and the Womens Christian Temperance Union ( SFPDA 21.3.18 et al): she continued this amateur career, performing at St Andrews Cathedral, the Presbyterian Church, Victoria theatre, and the Adelphi Hotel right up to the years prior to the Japanese invasion ( there is a newspaper photo in 1939 ), with her final newspaper record as the soloist at the Children's Concert at the Victoria Memorial Hall where she was encored three times for her singing of "I Go My Way Singing", "The Pixie Piper Dan", and "Philosophy" ( SFPDS 3.4.40). In 1921 she married Dr Donald Gordon Macleod (SFPDA 9.3.21): Donald Macleod was from Inverness and went to Singapore for the eastern Extension telegraph Co. in 1913 in Java and the Cocos islands. After WW1 (Indian Army) he returned to Singapore to join E. A. Brown & Co and was awarded the OBE in 1933 (SG. 21 5. 39 with photo of Lt. Col. D.G. Macleod). In her married life Dorothy attended dinners at government house and a host of charitable functions – she was clearly a refined and talented woman for whom Singapore was absolutely her home: when the time came to leave Singapore as the Japanese closed in around the CBD area Dorothy would have been no different to other women boarding the "SS. Vyner Brooke" who were also lifelong or long term residents in Singapore and who would have been torn over whether to stay or go – in particular fellow passengers Mrs. Mary Brown , Mrs.. Kathleen Waddle and probably Mrs. Marion Langdon-Williams (via the Galloway – Polglase connection). Dorothy would have known these three women through social , religious and educational networks.: When the ship sank Dorothy damaged her hands badly from 'rope burns' as she slid into the sea – this was a common injury amongst passengers of many of the evacuation ships that were sunk ( P.79 WB&W): it is not clear how she made her way to Banka Island but Dorothy was reunited with Mary Brown at the Muntok Cinema camp soon after they all were captured: despite her refined and probably physically easy life in Singapore it is impressive to note that Dorothy did not shirk her responsibilities in the Palembang camp in Irenelaan , where she is reported to have assumed more than her fair share of hard labour clearing sewerage ditches ( p. 109 WB&W): unsurprisingly Dorothy also took a lead part in the singing of hymns in the camps a fact that is well recorded in the book her son Ian compiled and, appropriately, in almost every other reference to these terrible womens internment camps in Sumatra: she eventually succumbed to the starvation, disease and harsh treatment at Muntok camp in 1945 - a talented spirited woman whose life was, like so many others, wasted by brutal, inhumane and cruel treatment by the Japanese.

- **DADDEN - Mrs Evelyn Frances Dadden (nee Ghyne)** known as "Eva" was born in Crowthorne, Berkshire - there is a lovely photo of her on the Muntok Memorial Peace Museum website (MDPD): the official post war record by the Colonial Office is 'Mrs. Evelyn Frances Dadden, widow of L.J.B. Dadden died 22.4.45 in Sumatra of Beriberi' (CORD, register M1, Folio 127, Serial No. 760): this reflected in the CWGC record of Evelyn Dadden, died 22.4.45 , aged 62, wife of Lewis John Butler Dadden, in Sumatra ( CWGC): she was the second wife of Butler Dadden, who had been widowed in 1909, but had already been married to him for about 30 years when they boarded the ship: they had a son in 1913 , Noel Charles Butler-Dadden (who died in 1964): it looks as though Butler Dadden was a Contractor in the Gaiping area for most of his life but had retired by the time the Japanese invaded and by then may have become a Missionary (Missionary role is mentioned by the MDPD):when the ship began to sink " ... *Mrs Dadden was in the water, she had all the flesh burnt off her hands as she slid down the ropes, and was in a dreadful state for weeks. Dr Dadden was badly wounded and refused to have a life jacket, so just went straight down. She died in camp early this year...*" (letter from Mrs Myrtle Ward to Mrs Marjorie Gooding dated late 1945): Mrs Dadden is mentioned (as Mrs Daddern), it appears based on records left by the Australian Army nurses, in the book "On Radji Beach" (p.175) when the account is describing the group aboard several conjoined rafts who were deciding on which of them should take turns in the sea " ... *One exception was made: an elderly civilian named Mrs Daddern was in a bad state emotionally. Her husband of many years had been injured in the sinking of the Vyner Brooke, and the couple had been together in the water for several hours with Mrs Daddern supporting her fading partner, who had died in her arms shortly before she was collected by those on the raft. It was agreed she could remain on the raft...*" : the people on these rafts were picked up the following day by two RAAF men in a launch and taken to Muntok Wharf where two nurses helped Mrs Dadden march down



the long pier under guard by Japanese soldiers (ORB, p.185); so Mrs. Madden survived the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" only to become an internee in Muntok cinema and then the awful existence in the Muntok and Palembang camps. She later experienced, probably whilst very sick, the horrendous and cruel transportation of the women internees from Muntok in 1945 by ship/cattle truck/truck to Loebek Linggau (Belalau) internment camp where she died either as they arrived or immediately after, in April 1945. Many women died during or soon after this journey. After the War the Dutch authorities reinterred the remains of Eva at the Dutch War Graves cemetery at Kalibanteng, at Semarang in Java where she remains today. There is also a memorial headstone in the All Saints Church, Taiping to both Eva and Lewis Butler Madden. The MDPD has a very empathetic page on the final years of Mrs Madden. (MDPD).

- **MADDEN – Mr Lewis John Butler Madden**, of Taiping, Perak. A founder member of Taiping Rotary Club 1936. Lost at sea 14.2.42 on the *Vyner Brooke* (JMD); the official post war record by the Colonial Office is 'Lewis John Butler Madden, Taiping, Perak died on or about 14.2.42 in the vicinity of the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CORD register M1, Folio 205, serial No. 1030, source Commander Reid RN); and the CWGC record is simply Lewis John Butler Madden, died 14.2.42, husband of Evelyn Madden, in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CWGC); the secret list compiled by Changi internees (on 18 sheets of 'Jeyes' toilet paper) records " ... MADDEN LJB RGD PLANTER – DIED LIFEBOAT WIFE P'BANG ..." (BPPL) which evidences that the internees had heard he had died in one of the lifeboats after the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke": the little known list which appears to have been compiled in Palembang camp by the internees of those who they believed had died states " ... Mr J. B. Madden, Taiping, Wounded in back & ill ...": Butler Madden appears to have been an older man, probably in his early 70s, when he boarded the ship: the earliest Singapore newspaper report is in 1896 when he attended a fancy dress ball at the Singapore town hall (SG, 4.1.1896); his first wife died in 1909 when they were living in Taiping since there is a newspaper report of the death of Violet Annie (Birdie) Madden at 'Kildare', Swettenham, Taiping, wife of L.J. Butler Madden with to quote "she had been ailing for some days past ..." (SG, 11.5.09); later that year he drove off the road 'whilst adjusting a screw' into a deep pit and smashed his car (SG, 13.12.09); in 1910 he suffered some sort of health issue and spent a month on holiday in Japan and it was around this time he is referred to in newspapers as "... the well known contractor of Taiping...": some time in 1911 he appears to have married Evelyn Frances Madden because he is reported to be returning from holiday in England with Mrs Madden (SG 7.11.11); in 1913 they had a son, Noel Charles Butler - Madden who died in 1964 (MDPD); apart from a holiday in China in 1922 he drops out of news until 1933 when Mrs Madden returns from a holiday in Europe and then in 1934 from a holiday in Yokohama: health problems returned for Butler Madden in 1936 when he was reported as being seriously ill in Taiping Hospital and late that year both Mr and Mrs Madden returned to Taiping from a holiday 'at home' (SG, 28.12.36); even during 1936 he was still active as a Contractor having built the Sitiawan 'landing ground' and the Taiping Aerodrome (SEPOA, 27.7.36); so it looks like a few years later he had retired by the time of the Japanese invasion. As someone who had spent possibly all his life, or at least half a century, in Malaya he probably found it emotionally hard to leave until the last minute and so boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" as Singapore was about to fall. It would seem that he either drowned at sea beside his wife (see Mrs Madden entry) or in a lifeboat – probably the former explanation. There is a memorial headstone to both Mr and Mrs Madden in the grounds of All Saints Church, Taiping, Perak.

- **MARIE????** – there are references to a 'Eurasian' 'hairdresser' named Marie during the voyage and also after the sinking, but no surname is known for this person: the first mention is by the ship's officer, Lt. A. J. Mann who after offering his cabin to the Australian nurses and they not taking up his offer tells of being approached on the deck by "... a very lovely looking Eurasian girl ..." who confessed to him she had nowhere to sleep on the ship. He immediately offered her the use of his cabin and relates how "... over a glass or two of Dimple Scotch..." he learned a little of her history- "... Her boyfriend had been an RNVN Lieutenant, killed when his ship was hit by a mine off the coast of Malaya. Her name was<sup>66</sup> Marie, I think, and she was very attractive in an Eastern way. I estimated she was half





*Portuguese and half Malay, but whatever it was the result was pleasing...*" (p.53 WBGW): after the sinking Marie is mentioned again because she was being refused access to a raft by a group of women – this was resolved by firm intervention by Eric German and others in a nearby (overcrowded and nearly submerged) lifeboat, to quote from BJÉ "...Screams from a nearby liferaft attracted attention of rowers. They were amazed to see a woman being pushed off a raft by other women. She swam to the boat screaming for help. Eric recognized her as a Eurasian hairdresser named Marie, who had busied herself on shipboard helping old people and the sick. The all-white occupants of the raft would spare no room for a Eurasian. "Take her back or we'll capsize you" Eric yelled. His rowing companions supported him, cursed the women for their hard-heartedness and manoeuvred the boat alongside the raft as though to carry out their threat of capsizing it. The women pulled Marie back aboard..." (BJÉ p. 143-144)

- **MCCALLUM – Miss M. A. McCallum**, to Malaya 1939. Nursing Sister, Singapore aged 30 in 1942. Palembang, Sumatra internee (JWD): Miss McCallum was appointed a nursing sister by the Colonial Office in 1939 (SG, 20.2.39): Miss McCallum appears in two lists of women interned in Palembang (and presumably Duntok and Belalau) and in the list prepared by Mrs E. Cross she appears with the cipher '6' against her name indicating that she had been aboard the "SS. Vyner Brooke". No other information has been able to be gleaned on Miss McCallum.
- **MCDONALD - Sister Gladys Myrtle McDonald**, QFX 22815, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. "... Gladys was born on 17 July 1909 in Brisbane to John and Charlotte McDonald. Her father ran a general store and fruit shop. She had black hair and an olive complexion. Her mother died in 1928, when Gladys was 19 years old. Her father appears to have died before 1941 because she has listed her cousin, (Mrs Joan Marsh, as her next of kin on her enlistment papers. Gladys trained as a nurse and worked as matron at the Texas District Hospital in Queensland, where she was remembered fondly. When the Second World War broke out she was working at the Brisbane General Hospital. On 11 July 1941 Gladys enlisted in the Citizen Military Force, transferring to the Australian Imperial Force in August 1941 when she was posted to the 13<sup>th</sup> Australian General hospital of the AANS. In September she embarked with her unit on the hospital ship 'Wanganella', arriving in Singapore two weeks later. She was variously detached for duty between the 10<sup>th</sup> AGH, the 13<sup>th</sup> AGH and the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station, caring for the wounded and ill on the Malayan Peninsula..." (Christina Zissis, Editor, Military History Section, AWD) – This article at the AWD for some reason has her enlistment number incorrectly shown as VFX 38812. Not a lot else is known of Gladys' life before enlisting except that, it seems whilst training as a nurse, she was a prime witness at a formal Hospital enquiry held in 1930 at the Hospital where she was working ( "The Evening News" Rockhampton, 2.9.30). The general medical superintendent and the Matron of the hospital were faced with allegations on their behaviour in lectures and inappropriate conversations with the nurses and Gladys showed confidence and fearlessness in giving her evidence from what is recorded in the newspapers of the time. She actually resigned from the Texas District Hospital as Matron in February 1941 "... to join the AIF nursing staff ..." (The Inverell Times" 3.2.41) so there seems to be a few months' hiatus before enlistment for some reason. Her paybook photo taken on enlistment shows a short woman with dark wavy hair, glasses and a 'no nonsense' look. After the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' – in company with Iole Harper, Derle Grenerry, Jess Dorsch, Mary Clarke and Betty Jeffrey plus four or five civilian women – Gladys was in the water hanging on to Olive Paschke's raft on which also sat Caroline Ennis with a four year old Chinese boy and a three year old English girl. Many of these nurses and the civilian women were swept away from Olive Paschke's raft by sea currents and the last anyone saw of Gladys was her sitting on the raft beside Olive Paschke – with Mary Clarke on the other side and Caroline Ennis holding the two little children (Jess Dorsch and Derle Grenerry were in the water holding onto the trailing ropes) as they were swept down the Banka Strait. It is often written in books and newspapers that they were never seen again, but new information (email November 2016, Dr Neil McGregor advising that his mother Sister Sylvia Muir who was on the ship was told this information in Singapore after her release from internment in 1945) has come to light that in fact this raft, with the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses, was located several weeks later by a ship in the Indian



Ocean. So Gladys McDonald must have lost her life in the sea or died still tied onto the raft as it was taken by the powerful sea currents that run down the east coast of Sumatra into the Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean.

- **MCCLINEA – Sister Violet 'Vi' Irene McElnea, QFX 22822, AANS.** One reference shows Violet Irene McElnea, b.1904 Ingham, Queensland, AANS Nursing Sister. Survived the Vyner Brooke sinking, Palembang, Sumatra internee.(SUO); a newspaper report later in her life ( "Townsville daily Bulletin" 10.3.26) mentions her visiting her parents , (Mr and Mrs W. McElnea of Byanda – which may actually a reference to 'Byanda House' an early residence in Ingham, Queensland or an area/street of the town of Ingham at the time. The first records of Vi are in local newspapers when she passed her 'First Sectional' nurses exams whilst in Townsville and then in 1928 when ( "Townsville Daily Bulletin" 10.5.28) Nurse McElnea resigned from Townsville district Hospital. [Researcher note: there were two nurses with the surname McElnea in that area of Queensland at the time]. By 1929 she was a registered nurse in Queensland and seems to have taken and then resigned from another nursing role at Hughenden hospital ( "The Northern Miner" Charteris Gowers, 29.8.29). After that and by 1931 Vi McElnea became part of the Mother's Union District Nursing Assn in Brisbane and moved up through the position of Acting Matron in 1935 to assume the position of Matron, District Nursing Assn, Milton, Brisbane by 1936. She continued in managing this area nursing service and its 11 qualified nurses, through until she enlisted in August 1941. There is no paybook photo of her on the AWG website but there is a newspaper photo of Vi McElnea, together with sisters Short and Smith (who were later with her on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' and in the sea after the sinking) on 29.8.41 leaving Brisbane by train to join the AANS – she presents in that photo as an attractive, vibrant looking woman. The book 'ORB' records that she was one of eight McElneas from Ingham in North Queensland who enlisted in the armed forces in the Second World War It also says that theirs was one of the districts pioneering families. Also "Vi was 38 years old and a caring, compassionate nurse and mentor to many of the younger women in the AANS around her in Malaya..." (ORB, 0.140). On the day [14<sup>th</sup> February] of the bombers attacking the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' Vi McElnea celebrated her 38<sup>th</sup> birthday and a small ceremony was held below decks. Once in the water after the ship sank Vi found herself on a raft with Val Smith (with whom she had travelled on the train from Brisbane) and Davis Hannah – plus 16 others. She made it to Banka Island, was captured and imprisoned by the Japanese and suffered three and a half years of awful treatment and deprivation in the internment camps of Duntok, Palembang and Belalau. In 1943 "The Courier – Mail", Brisbane (20 12.43) reported that a letter or Red Cross card had been received from Vi McElnea (the paper said she was from Durgon) which read" ... *Rice as a staple diet has its limitations, but we find we can get used to most things. All 32 of our girls are here together. We cook and look after ourselves generally. I do not recommend sun-tops and briefs for general wear. I hope never to wear them again when the war is over. We sadly need almost everything in the clothing line. Contract bridge is our main diversion. We have camp concerts occasionally...*" Like many Red Cross cards coming out of Japanese POW and internment camps the POWs or internees chose each sentence carefully to try and convey the truth of their existence without causing the Japanese postal censors to delete their words. Vi McElnea survived the horrors and rigours of internment in Sumatra but drops out of sight after the War. We do know that she was discharged from the AANS in early April 1946 and in 1951 travelled to England to "... combine sightseeing and nursing ...". She passed away in 1984 aged 80 years of age and is memorialised on the Honour Avenue, Bicton, WA memorial.
- **MCCLURK** – this reference will be to Able Seaman Hamilton **MCCLURG** who was a crew member on the ship (see below).
- **MCGLADE – Sister Mary Eleanor 'Ellie' McGlade, NX 76275, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital Group.** 'Ellie was born on 2 July 1902 in Armidale, NSW, to Francis Aloysius and Agnes Beatrice McGlade. Armidale is a city (in fact the administrative centre of the region) in the northern tablelands of NSW. Soon after her birth her mother passed away – it appears for post natal reasons since later in life Ellie "... specialised in an area that would perhaps allow her to help young mothers in a way that her mother had not been helped ..." (ORB, p.45). Her father also passed away in 1905 And she went to live with her aunt, Mrs<sup>68</sup> Walter Scott, of Wallalong, near Dairland, who became her guardian. The AWG website



page on her life records that from her pre-school years Ellie "... attended St Ursula's Convent in Armidale as a boarder - at first sleeping in a cot beside Mother Berchman's bed - and as she grew it became a beloved childhood home. On completing her Intermediate Certificate in 1920 she had won prizes for singing, violin, piano, and Christian doctrine and had already begun to care for girls who fell ill. The School report of 1921 noted: owing to the kind solicitude of their College Infirmarian no one has a chance to get seriously ill before she is reported and nursed back to normal by the indefatigable Ellie. On leaving school McGlade visited relatives in Scotland and Ireland, returning to begin training as a nurse at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. Graduating in 1927 with certificates in general Nursing, Cooking and Dispensing she became a Mothercraft nurse in the Hunter Valley. McGlade often visited St Ursula's, and was well known there even after her departure. The 1927 School magazine remembered Ellie as a 'winsome toddler... playing about with Rex, the collie, or her family of dolls' and later 'as a girl of amiable disposition, still loved by those who surround her ... untiring and unselfish in her care of the sick...'. Ellie appears in the 1927 and 1929 NSW Register of Nurses as Mary Eleanor McGlade of Wallalong, Hinton, so it appears that after her graduation she returned to base herself in the small suburb of Wallalong in the Hunter Region of NSW. In 1930 as a young nurse Miss Ellie McGlade donated the crucifix for the new Ursuline Convent Chapel when it was being built (The Catholic Press, NSW, 13.2.30). A decade later, as a mature woman, Ellie struck good fortune (The Newcastle Sun, 22.2.40) and it is reported that a nursing sister Mrs [sic] E. McGlade "... who gave her address as Wallalong a small township north of Dorpeth, where she was at the time attending one of her many cases..." won fourth prize of 300 pounds in the State Lottery. She enlisted in January 1941 and her paybook photo in the AWD archives shows a woman with an intelligent, attractive face - with grey eyes - and as we know a strong ethic of compassion and care. Ellie was in the 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital in Malaya and Singapore and no doubt went about her nursing duties with the same caring attitude for which she was known. The fact that this intelligent, truly caring, compassionate woman was brutally and senselessly murdered by Japanese troops, with the other AANS nurses on Radji Beach on 16 February 1942, remains incomprehensible to the civilised mind. Sister Ellie McGlade is commemorated on the War Memorial on the high Street, Wallalong and also on the Roll of honour at the AWD. Her photograph is displayed at the Pool of Reflection at the AWD.

- **MITTELHEUSER/MIDDLEHAUSER - Sister Pearl 'Ditz' Beatrice Mittelheuser, QEX** 19068, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital Group. Known variously as 'Pearl', 'Ditz' or 'Ditzi' (AWD website), she was born on 28 April 1904 in Bundaberg, Queensland to what the book 'ORB' calls "... large Bundaberg family..." (ORB, p.105).[Research has failed to provide any background on her early life or pre war nursing career and we are reliant on the research from the book 'ORB' for much of the events of Pearl Mittelheuser's last days]. Insofar as her parents, ancestry.com does provide the information that her father was Johannes Henry Mittelheuser (died 1964) and her mother was Margaret Elizabeth Mittelheuser, plus the fact that she had one sister Laura Ethel Mittelheuser (died in 2007 aged 95 years) - this is supported by a post war newspaper item which adds "... Mrs. A. Pattison of Bourke has received word from her daughter (Mrs. J.K. Mittelheuser of Kingsford) stating that Sister Pearl Mittelheuser who survived the frightful shooting atrocities at Sumatra by the Japs had died from starvation and lack of medical treatment. Sister Mittelheuser was the daughter of Mrs. J. Mittelheuser and sister-in-law of Mrs. J. K. Mittelheuser...." (Western Herald, Bourke, NSW, 21.9.45). Pearl enlisted in the AANS and her paybook photo shows a short ( 5' 3") woman with a pleasant, hair pulled back to a bun and glasses - making her look a little studious. After the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' Pearl "... reached a partially submerged lifeboat ... probably one of those which had dropped into the water from the port side of the 'Vyner Brooke' ...". She later pulled Sylvia Muir onto the submerged craft and they were joined by many other nurses, Mrs Bull and her little daughter and others (ORB, p.171). She reached Muntok after being picked up by a passing RAAF launch and was imprisoned by the Japanese. Once again from 'ORB' we learn that Pearl was a committed Christian and was elected 'Captain' of one of the overcrowded houses in Irenelaan internment camp in Palembang. She was one of those short stature nurses identified by<sup>69</sup> the Japanese officers in their futile attempt to coerce some of the nurses to work in their 'comfort' club (ORB, p. 242). Pearl endured the harsh deprivation, neglect, malnutrition and





suffering in the Japanese internment camps in Duntok, Palembang, Duntok again, and then Belalau (Loebok – Linggau in Sumatra) until right up to the end of the War. Finally, after the Japanese had surrendered to the Allies (but the Japanese callously did not disclose this fact to the internees at the horrific Belalau internment camp and in fact hid the very existence of this camp from the arriving Allied troops who were searching for the women they knew must be in that internment camp) Pearl simply faded away, sick and wasted, curled up in a foetal position. Her best friend Sylvia Muir was with her when she died, but Sylvia was so dehydrated she was unable to cry. In a good example of the sick psychopathic behaviour of most Japanese running these internment camps, the very next day Captain Seki – the Commandant of Belalau internment camp – called all the prisoners together and told them the war was over and they could now be friends! The War had ended three days before Pearl had died!!! Today Pearl is buried in the Jakarta War cemetery, Indonesia. Probably the best epitaph recorded for Pearl Dittelheuser was the statement by other nurses at Belalau that “... another of the best loved nurses, Pearl Dittelheuser, died...” (ORB, p.278). Pearl is memorialised at the War Nurses pavilion, cnr. Bourbong & Takalvan Street, Bundaberg where clones from an aged rosemary bush believed to have been planted by Pearl’s family are growing. Other clones of this plant are also in the care of the Bundaberg Regional Council Parks & Gardens. The rosemary tribute will continue to be a part of the annual service organised by the Bundaberg Ex- Servicewomen’s Assn. Pearl Dittelheuser’s name is also located at 96 in the Commemorative Area of the Australian War Memorial.

- **DORETON** - Miss Dorothy Emily Doreton, Headmistress, Methodist Anglo- Chinese Primary School for Boys, Westlands Ave, Penang. Aged 43 in 1942. Survived the sinking of the Vyner Brooke. “... Whilst in Palembang Women’s camp in the Xmas of 1943 she made toys out of sample cloth books from the local Indian merchant. She made rag dolls and toy animals etc. She was a school teacher and got other people to help her...” Sumatra internee. Repatriated on ‘Antenor’ from Singapore, arriving Liverpool 27.10.45. Died 1984 South Glamorgan (SUD); simply listed as D.E. Doreton she appears on the list of women internees in Palembang camp as having been on the “SS. Vyner Brooke” by Mrs E. Cross: the first reference to Dorothy Doreton is in 1930 when she appears as the Ipoh delegate at the Malayan YWCA Conference in Kuala Lumpur (SEPCDA 16.12.3) where she appears to have been working as a Methodist missionary: in 1931 she was again the Ipoh delegate: in 1932 she played hockey for the Ipoh YWCA (SG, 21.9.32) and later that year is listed as the Ipoh delegate again at the YWCA conference: in 1933 she was on the Kinta Committee of the Perak Badminton Association (SG, 7.2.33) and in June of that year returned to the UK on ‘home leave’ on the ‘SS. Naldera’ (SEPCDA, 78.6.33); she returned to Malaya from England in 1934 to take up work as a missionary for the Methodist mission in Penang (SEPCDA 13.3.34) and at some stage thereafter became the Headmistress of the Primary School of the Anglo –Chinese School for Boys, Westlands Avenue, Penang ( Methodist Malaya Conference records 1937-1939, source is images.library.yale.edu): it is interesting to note that on the “SS. Vyner Brooke’ were several Anglican Missionaries together with at least one other headmistresses of a school plus others with involvement in schools and social work: it is not known how she reached Banka Island after the sinking but she then endured the horror of Duntok, Palembang and Belalau internment camps and survived: in 1977 she was the author of the book “ An Irishman In Malaya: the biography of John Lowe Woods ” ( he was an advocate and solicitor in Ipoh, Federated Malay States at the time Dorothy was working as a missionary in that town. A handsome man who had presumably impressed Dorothy with his work in fundraising for the establishment of a home for destitute and abandoned boys in Ipoh in 1933 when the Depression years had forced families to abandon their children): as recorded by Jonathan Moffatt in the Sumatra internees database, above, she died in South Glamorgan in 1984.
- **MUIR – Sister Sylvia Jessie Dimmi Muir**, QFX 22816, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Sylvia was born on 24 August 1915 in the small country town on Longreach, in central west Queensland (about 700 km west of Rockhampton). She was the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. R. F. Muir of that town – from contemporary newspaper items her father seemed to be involved in grazing and horse feed businesses. She received her nursing training at the [Brisbane] general hospital and was, at the time of her enlistment, nursing at Ingham <sup>70</sup>



("The Telegraph", Brisbane, 29.5.41). She enlisted on 29.5.41 and there is a photo in the AWC archives of Sylvia – showing an attractive young woman with a face that conveys the impression the person is someone used to presenting herself in theatrics or entertainment. When the 'Vyner Brooke' was attacked by bombers, Sylvia was quite close to the blast of one of the bombs ( an elderly Englishman sitting next to her was concussed and may have suffered the 'bomb blast' effects which often show no sign of external injury. ORB, p.153). Once in the sea Sylvia was grabbed by a panicking Chinese man and could only break his grip with the assistance of fellow nurse Joyce Tweddell (ORB, p.170). She then swam to the partially submerged lifeboat which her friend Pearl Dittelheuser had already reached. They were joined by Mrs Bull and daughter, Sisters Clancy, Hughes, Rayment, Gardam and Ashton plus a few other civilians and crew.. This group were eventually picked up by a passing RAAF launch with two young airmen steering it and then taken to Muntok pier where they were captured by the Japanese and interned in Muntok cinema.. Sylvia then suffered the next three and a half years in the harsh and severely deprived conditions of Muntok, Palembang and Belalau internment camps. The book 'ORB' tells us that she was a 'committed Christian' in the camps and showed a talent for flower arranging, plus her "... background in amateur theatrics ..." (ORB, p.246) came to the fore again. In April 1943 her mother, Mrs. R.F. Muir of Rome Street, Brisbane received news that her daughter was a POW in Malaya ("The Telegraph", Brisbane, 5.4.43) Like other survivors of the camps Sylvia was repatriated first to Singapore for some recuperation and then to Australia on the hospital ship 'Danunda'. She was discharged from the AANS in May 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant and on December that year she married Cpl. Colin McGregor, AIF ( and also an ex POW) whom she had met in 1941 when he was admitted to her hospital in Malaya. Sylvia and Colin moved to a dairy farm in Bega, NSW.. After Colin's sudden and unexpected death she later returned to Brisbane. In the AWC there is a recording of an interview with Sylvia on her experiences (AWC, ref SO2889) Sylvia McGregor passed away in 1999 – the same year as her comrade Iole Harper

- **MURRAY-** Mrs D.D. Murray aged 31 in 1942. Survived the sinking of the Vyner Brooke. Palembang. Sumatra internee (SUD)?-this may be a duplication/error with Mrs. Ena Murray below.
- **MURRAY -** "Mrs E.J. Murray, husband in Changi" is listed amongst the women internees in Palembang who had been on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" by Mrs E. Cross: she is also mentioned as being on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" by Shelagh Brown in her diary: Ena Murray was the wife of Kenneth Scott Murray and she would have been about 33 years of age when she boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke": Kenneth Murray was interned in Changi prison and then Sime Road camp, he was listed with the occupation General Merchant, Import & Export and that his NOK was "Mrs E. J. Murray, c/o Shanks & Co., Barrhead, Scotland": Ena's father James Hope, and mother Margaret had also been interned in Changi and sadly James Hope died in Changi on the first day of internment ( 17.2.42) aged 65 years: in the Sumatra List on the website of the Malayan Volunteers Group she is listed as " ... **Mrs Ena Jessie Murray**, b.1909. Wife of Kenneth Scott Murray 'Ken' Building Dept. William Jacks & Co. Ltd. He was a Changi internee. Daughter Sally was evacuated [sic, Sally was the daughter of Norah]: Ena was the sister of Nora Chambers [see above in this memorial document]. Palembang. Sumatra internee. During the three plus years of internment Ena 'adopted' and '... proved totally devoted ...' to little June Bourhill whose mother had been killed during the bombing of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" or in the sea after. This included making at least one highly dangerous black-market sortie through the barbed wire fence surrounding the Palembang camp in search of food for June and also Ena's sister Nora who was ill with malaria (P.128, WBGW): in Muntok camp in October 1944 when volunteers were needed to clean and empty overflowing latrines, she and Nora Chambers plus Audrey Owens are recorded in Phyllis Brigg's diary as "...these splendid people who did this filthy and nauseating task..." Repatriated from Singapore with husband Kenneth on the 'Cilicia', arriving Liverpool 27.11.45. Returned to Singapore 1946. Ena died 1995. Her photo is on ancestry.com and there is one of her in WBGW p. 50-51: Ena and Kenneth, later in life, moved to the island of Jersey where her sister Norah and husband John were living ( WBGW)



- **DUSTILL** – It seems that Marjorie B. N. Dustill, who appears to have been born c. 1908, must have arrived in Singapore in the early or mid 1930s to work in nursing because the first newspaper report is in 1939 when she left on the 'Ranchi' for Europe, which may have been her first home leave since this was usually only granted at after at least three years service in Malaya and Singapore (SG, 15.6.39); there is a post war newspaper article in which she is mentioned under the heading "Gracing of the Missing Continues" and reports that Marjorie B.N. Dustill, nursing sister Johore, who was last seen in the sea after the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke"; then the official record of **Marjorie Beatrice Naomi Dustill**, SRN, SCN, aged 34 years, civilian, died 14.2.42 in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", daughter of Grace Dustill, High Street, Over, Cambridgeshire, England. Reported lost at sea off Singapore (CWGC); other records show DUSTILL Ms Marjorie B.N. SRN from Over, Cambs. Colonial Service Nursing Sister, Johore. Lost at sea either 14.2.42 or 17.2.42. [According to Straits Times and Colonial Office Deaths Register on *Vyner Brooke* 15.2.42].(JMD); Miss Marjorie B. N. Dustill, Malayan Nursing Service, died on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", source C, in C. ALFSEA (CORD Reg.01.Folio 196, Serial 1001); Marjorie Dustill is also remembered by the Royal British Legion with a record which adds to that of the CWGC with " ... Reported lost at sea off Singapore, ship not known. Grace grew up in Over and was the daughter of Horace and Grace Dustill who kept the Golden Lion in the High Street. She had trained as a nurse and taken up employment in the East to be a Sister. She was caught up in the evacuation of Singapore and was on a ship that was torpedoed and she was presumed drowned See Over, St Mary.... (Royal British Legion Roll of Honour website and also the Over St Mary Church website where Marjorie Dustill is remembered on a plaque in the church with other people who lost their lives during the Second World War); so it appears that Marjorie survived the bombing of the ship but (as most nurses on the ship had been instructed to do so) did not attempt to board a lifeboat and was last seen swimming for her life in the sea after the sinking.
- **NEUBRONNER**- **Mrs Olga Mary Neubronner**, CDB SRN Wife of G.V. Colonial Service Nursing Sister – Senior Superintendent, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Singapore. Survived the sinking of the Vyner Brooke. She was ill when brought into Muntok having had a miscarriage when her ship went down (according to the diary of Phyllis Briggs Olga had been on the "Kuala" but this may be an error). In October 1942 she was sent with Turner, Macalister and Cooper to work in a native hospital and did so until April 1943 when the Kempetai, for no apparent reason, put the four British sisters in small cells in the local gaol where they suffered great hardship. While in prison Olga started to write poems. After about six months they returned to Palembang camp but Olga never really recovered. Palembang, Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 22.3.45 [39] Muntok (SUM); Olga Mary Gunner, daughter of Mrs. Isabelle B. Gunner of Winchmore Hill, London had married Guy Neubronner in 1939 at St Andrews Cathedral, Singapore (in the photo in SFPDA 27.4.39 she is a very attractive young woman); her husband was **NEUBRONNER G.V. [Guy Vivian]** ED b.1897 KL. WW1 Lt on the Western Front. Incorporated Accountant: Assistant Evatt & Co. NGS Building, Singapore. Lt ISSVF 2 i/c Intelligence Platoon POW Singapore to Thailand. Wife Olga [+ Sumatra]. He remarried 1948 Eleanor Mary Hitchon at Singapore. Post-war Captain SVF. Left for the UK. Wife 'Nell' died 10.54 at Reigate. A member of BAC till 1973. Died 21.3.74 Reigate, Surrey. (JMD); from newspaper reports he had attended school in Singapore ( he was a prolific supporter of Old Rafflesians), a UDCA cricketer and a very active hockey player in the 1920s and 1930s; in the book " On Radji Beach" which seems to largely reflect the experiences of the Australian Army nurses, there is an account of Olga after the sinking being on one of the conjoined rafts with 23 women and nurses (p.175) and being allowed to stay out of the water like most because she was seven months pregnant. The book later recounts how that group were picked up by an old motor launch which took them to Muntok wharf and helped all the passengers disembark, it states " ... The ongoing trauma proved too much for Olga Neubronner who, calling for assistance, collapsed in agony at the end of the jetty. In labour and pain, Olga delivered a stillborn baby surrounded by the nurses who could only hug her and clean her up ..." (p.180-181 ORB); Olga Neubronner appears in the 'List of British Internees in Palembang' compiled by Mrs. E. Cross :an account of her life, but with a different explanation for the still birth of Olga's





baby appears in the Neubronner family website" Neubronner in the far East" (Neubronner.com), where are also displayed some of Olga's poignant poems revealing a woman with obvious education and emotional depth, and the relevant section is quoted here exactly as it presents in the website:

"... As testified by her brother EN Gunner, Olga Mary Gunner was born in Enfield, (Middlesex, London on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1905. She was educated at a private school and on graduation became a governess until 1931 when she decided on a nursing profession. She was trained at the University College Hospital and graduated in 1935. She also became a certified Midwife. In 1936, she joined the Colonial Service as a Nursing Sister and was posted to Malaya where she rose to be Sister-in-Charge of the Changi Colonial Hospital in Singapore. There she met and married a lawyer, Guy Vyvian Neubronner in 1939 and subsequently left the service. The couple returned to Olga's home in England for their honeymoon but were soon to return to Singapore when war was declared. Guy was an officer in the Straits Settlement Volunteer Force and promptly rejoined his unit while Olga joined St. Johns Ambulance Brigade as Senior Superintendent apparently, when the Vyner Brooke sank, Olga and others drifted on a raft for some 40 hours. They missed the beach where the massacre occurred as did several other rafts. It was on the raft that Olga gave birth to her only child, a son. Sadly, the baby survived for only a few hours. Having eventually landed on another part of Banka, Olga and another English nurse were found wandering in the jungle by some locals. They were taken to a convent or a mission where they spent some time and were apparently well looked after. They were working there as nurses when the Japanese discovered them. They were taken to a POW camp in Muntok in the NE of Banka just across from the main island of Sumatra. There Olga was reunited with the surviving nurses from the Vyner Brooke. Thus began her internment. Over the next three years she was to suffer dismal conditions and treatment. Later in 1942, the internees were moved to Palembang and back again to Muntok in late 1944.

<p>to her</p> <p>some of</p> <p>nor Margaret</p> <p>malnutrition on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of</p> <p>terrible journey to</p> <p>who returned to</p> <p>the children might live. They</p>	<p>During her ordeal, Olga found time to compose over 20 poems which give a moving insight feelings and experiences. In fact</p> <p>respected</p> <p>Olga's poems to music</p> <p>were to survive their imprisonment.</p> <p>March 1945 while (Margaret died a little later on</p> <p>another</p> <p>another camp at Lubuk Linggau. The rescued nurses</p> <p>who returned to Singapore told EN that</p> <p>gave much of</p> <p>Olga and Margaret gave their lives so</p> <p>that</p> <p>their meagre rations to the little ones".</p>
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- **NEUSS - Lt. Kathleen 'Kath' Margaret Neuss**, #NFX 70527, was born in 1911 the daughter of John Henry Neuss and Mary Catherine Neuss (sadly she died in 1942, the same year as Kath) of Inverell, and was described as a brown eyed, darkhaired woman: she had attended Inverell High School in northern NSW during 1927-28 before training as a private nurse in Inverell. Kath Neuss enlisted with the 12<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital and served in Malaya and Singapore. At the time of boarding the "SS. Vyner Brooke" she was aged either 30 or 31 ( ORB 127) and, along with Winnie May Davis and Pat Gunther, was ordered amongst the various duties of the Australian Army nurses on board to be responsible for the forward part of the ship (ORB, p.148). When the ship was bombed she "... received a nasty shrapnel wound from the bomb that hit aft. Struck in the left hip, she struggled to walk and had to be helped onto the deck by Wilma and Dona..." (ORB, p.154); when time came for evacuating the ship and the second lifeboat was being filled with the elderly, mothers and children and the more seriously wounded nurses Kath Neuss had to be practically carried all the way into the lifeboat ( ORB, p.159). Presumably landing on Radji Beach in the lifeboat, Kath Neuss was definitely murdered by the Japanese on the beach<sup>3</sup> along with the other Australian Army Nurses - whether she was amongst those told to walk into the water and killed or whether she was amongst the wounded on stretchers



brutally bayoneted to death is unclear. She is remembered on the Inverell Roll of Honour and a tree is planted at the RSL branch in Inverell in her memory.

- **ORAM - Sister Wilma Elizabeth Forster Oram**, VFX 5878, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital (attached to 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station). Wilma Oram was born on 17 August 1916 at Glenorchy, a town in the Wimmera district of western Victoria ("The Australian Women's Register"). The earliest newspaper record is of Wilma winning second prize in the Drawing Book competition at the Durtoa Show at Lake Darma ("The Horsham Times", 28.10.24). She started training as a nurse at Warrnambool Base Hospital – apparently a reserved young woman – and became great friends with Dona Wilton (ORB, p.45). In 1937 she graduated as a nurse (angellpro.com) and the following year moved to Melbourne. In May 1940 Wilma and her friend Dona decided to volunteer and a year later they were both called up for service. Wilma appears to have been a very social person and letter writer home of her experiences in Malaya – in October 1941 she and Dona both attended a Ball given by the most prestigious Sultan of Johore. In the book 'ORB' (p.152 and p.170) there is a good detailed explanation of Wilma's experiences during the bombing of the 'Vyner Brooke' and the aftermath once the ship sank. During the bombing Wilma attended to an elderly Englishman who had been fatally wounded by shrapnel and he died whilst she cared for him. Her own legs were badly gashed by flying glass during the bombing, but she and Dona (both injured) still helped Kathy Neuss up onto the deck of the ship and into a lifeboat. She and Dona then jumped into the sea and Wilma received a blow to the head from a liferaft falling from the ship – it knocked her out and tragically Dona Wilton was killed by another falling liferaft. When Wilma regained consciousness she believed she saw and conversed with fellow nurse Kit Kinsella who was drifting past in a lifejacket – this was to be the last time anyone saw Kit Kinsella. Wilma found a liferaft and was soon joined by Mrs Dorothy Gibson – that night the two of them were sitting quietly on their liferaft drifting at sea when they were almost run down by the Japanese invasion fleet attacking Bank Island. At daybreak they paddled ashore to a beach and were promptly captured and taken to the Muntok Customs house for internment. Wilma was the one who looked after Vivian Bullwinkel when she too was brought into internment after her weeks of ordeal – it seems that the shock of the death of her friend Dona was a motivating factor for Wilma to make a special effort with Vivian Bullwinkel who was delirious when interned for the first time. Wilma then began three and a half years of harsh and deprived internment – at one point she was punished for not bowing to a Japanese sergeant major and was, with Vivian Bullwinkel, made to stand bareheaded in the hot tropical sun for an hour. By the end of the war Wilma was wasted and sick in the awful Belalau internment camp. After repatriation to Australia on the hospital ship 'Danunda' with the other surviving nurses, Wilma continued nursing for some years. In 1946 she married Alan Young (who had been a POW of the Germans) and they settled on a dairy farm at Cardinia in south Gippsland, Victoria. They raised four sons. After the death of her husband in 1991 Wilma became very involved in local and State RSL activities. A biography was written about Wilma Oram/Young "A Woman's War: The exceptional life of Wilma Oram Young" by Barbara Angell. Wilma passed away on 28.5.2001.
- **OXLEY - Sister Christian Sarah Mary 'Chris' Oxley**, QFX 19073, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Chris Oxley was born on 7 June 1912 in Charters Towers, Queensland (ORB, 168). Research has not determined the names of her parents. The earliest reference to her is in a local newspaper ("Gowansville Daily Bulletin", 25.11.22) when 'Chrissie Oxley' attended the 'Children's Dazzle Ball' wearing "... white voile, prettily inserted Val and lace, mauve sash ...". Some years later ("Freemans Journal", Sydney, 19.12.29) a teenage 'Chrissie Oxley' won a prize for needlework whilst at St Ursula's College, Armidale, NSW [this was the Ursuline Convent in Armidale, NSW, and in 1976 this college amalgamated with De La Salle College to form O'Connor Catholic High School]. This period of her life must have strongly influenced Chris Oxley – in the book 'ORB' it is stated that she was probably the most deeply religious of all the 'Vyner Brooke' nurses. In 1931 the "Glen Innes Examiner", NSW (8.9.31) recorded that "Nurse Chris. Oxley" of the local District Hospital [Glen Innes District Hospital] is holidaying in Brisbane. In 1934, aged 22 years, Chris appears on the electoral roll in Richmond, NSW and then in 1936 on the roll in Lilley, Queensland. During this time she passed the 'Midwifery Branch' exams of the Nurses Registration Board whilst working at



Women's Hospital [presumably the Crown Street Womens Hospital], Sydney ("Sydney Morning Herald", 19.6.36). In 1939 Chris Oxley assisted at a Bridge benefit event raising funds for the Queensland Bush Nursing Assn ("The Courier-Mail", Brisbane, 1.12.39). It is not known when Chris enlisted in the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGFH but she duly went to Malaya and Singapore and eventually boarded the 'Vyner Brooke' with the other nurses. After the ship sank and the nurses were all struggling in the water, her strong religious beliefs obviously came into play because as described by 'ORB' (p. 168) "... a practising and devout Catholic... [Chris] was praying quite loudly...", another nurse told her to shut up and grab an oar and get the raft away from the debris, bodies and chaos left by the foundering ship - "...then you can pray...". Chris reached Banka Island and began three and a half years of harsh internment and awful deprivation. At the final camp, Belalau, which was the worst of all camps the book 'ORB' tells us (p.281) that Chris, facing almost certain death from starvation in August 1945 gave her dental plate/bridge which had a little gold in it to a Javanese guard to sell for money she could use for food. Two days later the Japanese Commandant of Belalau camp, Seki, announced the end of the War - luckily the guard had not yet managed to sell the important dental fitting and returned it - the Japanese then produced all the food they had hidden from the internees. Nevertheless Chris Oxley was in a serious way and had to spend time recuperating in hospital in Singapore on her way home - a photo in the "Sydney morning Herald" (17.9.45) showed a pre-war photo of her as an attractive dark haired woman in her AANS uniform and then a few weeks later the 'Glen Innes Examiner' (9.10.45) has a photo of her lying in a hospital bed in Singapore identified as "... Sister C.S.O. 'Chris' Oxley who trained at Glen Innes District Hospital, talking by radio to her home in Clayfield, Brisbane ...". Chris was discharged from the AANS in early 1946 and the following year was awarded "Mentioned in Despatches" for "Services rendered whilst in Japanese hands". The next time Chris Oxley appears in the newspapers is in 1952 when she announced her engagement to James Bennion 'Ben' Price and partied at the Surfers paradise Hotel ("South Coast Bulletin", 13.5.52) - they were married in April 1952 - and the trail of her life was lost by the researcher of this document. In 1994 Mrs Christian S.O. Oxley Price died on 16 April and was buried at Allambe Memorial Park Cemetery, Carrara, Queensland.

- **PAPINEAU/POPINEAU (SIC)** - PAPINEAU E.N. a miner, Renong Tin. Aged 22 in 1942. Left Singapore on the Vyner Brooke [sunk], Palembang Sumatra internee. : The "Jeyes" list records "... PAPINEAU E. RENONG TIN GUTHRIE P'BANG..." (SUD); this was **Émile 'Sonny' Michael Papineau**, born 1920 in Renong, he survived the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and was then interned in Muntok and Palembang; he is shown on the list of British men interned in Palembang as 'E.O. Papineau'; he attended St. Joseph's Institution and in 1934 is recorded as winning the high jump at the school sports; family knowledge is a little vague on his movements but it appears that after the war he spent time in the UK, and possibly Thailand before spending time in Penang and then moving to Australia in 1955 (shipping records show him arriving in Fremantle from Priok on 11.2.55); from 1977-1980 he lived in Applecross, Western Australia (ancestry.com); he had at least one child, a daughter (Doreen?) in Australia and possibly a son named Michael as well?
- **PARFITT/PARFAIT** - PARFITT Mrs Helen from Croydon. Wife of Edmund Tom Parfitt. Wounded in Vyner Brooke sinking. Died 20.2.42 [40] Banka Island - buried there. (JOD); the official record is Mrs Helen Parfitt, wife of Edmund Tom Parfitt, and of 'Emoh Ruu', Gelok Gadung Road, Klang, died on 20.2.42 from wounds incurred in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CWGC); Mrs Parfait (sic) is mentioned in the diary of Shelagh Brown when the ship was underway on 13 February 1942 after leaving Singapore "... Given half tin of Asp. Saus & pot at night. Best meal so far! Shared it with Ina (Durray, her sister Mrs Chambers and husband, and Mrs Parfait (sic). ..." (SD p.136); CQMS Edmund Tom Parfitt, # 13690, 2<sup>nd</sup> Selangor Battalion, FDSVF was born in 1901 in Frome Wiltshire, and was a rubber technician. He was captured and became a POW on the Burma railway (John Brown database of Malayan Volunteers and ancestry.com).
- **PASCHKE** - **Datron Olive Dorothy Paschke**, VFX 38812, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Olive Paschke was born on 19 July 1905 at Dimboola, Victoria, third daughter of Australian born parents Heinrich Wilhelm Paschke, a long established stock - and station agent and his wife Ottilie Emma Paschke (nee Krieg). Educated at Dimboola High School (where she





was a pupil teacher in 1921), Dorothy helped on her parents farm, attended the Presbyterian Church and played tennis and golf. In Melbourne in 1930 she began training at the Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital for Women and Children and its allied institutions, gaining her nursing certificate in 1934 ("The Argus" 1.12.33 recorded her passing her Nurses Board Exam). She also qualified for certificates in midwifery and infectious diseases. Returning to Dimboola, Miss Paschke was matron of Airlie Private Hospital for four years before again returning to Melbourne as assistant - matron of the Jessie McPherson Community hospital. She joined the Army Nursing Service on 23 July 1940 as a Staff nurse. In January 1941 she was promoted to matron and posted to the 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian general hospital. The following month the unit travelled by ship to Singapore and thence by train to Malacca in Malaya. Paschke was popular with her staff, patients and medical officers. She led by example, often working long hours beside her nurses. In November 1941 she learned she had been selected for promotion to principal matron. "The Australian Womens Weekly" (28.5.41) had a photo and message 'home' amongst other service personnel from Olive to a friend at the Jessie McPherson Hospital - which gives some idea of the positive public and professional profile she had at the time given that another person on the page was General Gordon Bennett. On 1.1.42 she was awarded the Royal Red Cross ("The Horsham Times" 20.1.42). During and after the bombing and sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' Olive was the epitome of calmness and authority and earned further admiration from the nurses who already had huge respect for her leadership. She was a non swimmer but nevertheless she lowered herself into the sea and made her way towards a group of rafts tied together, apparently very pleased with herself for having survived in the sea for an hour with no ability to swim. She joined Caroline Ennis, Merle Grenerry, Gladys McDonald, Jess Dorsch and Mary Clarke on and around the raft and they were soon joined also by Betty Jeffrey and Iole Harper. Caroline Ennis was soon holding two small survivors of the sinking - a small four year old Chinese boy (grabbed by Iole as he had floated past in a life jacket) and a three year old English girl. The raft was swirled around by very strong sea currents and later Iole and Betty were swept away leaving the others to the mercy of the currents. To quote the most poignant paragraph from the book 'ORB' (p. 187) "... As the raft was swept away from the swimmers and from the nearest land, Betty and Iole called out, but there was nothing either group could do about their situation. Betty and Iole watched the raft grow smaller, with Mary Clarke and Gladys McDonald sitting either side of Olive Paschke, and Jess Dorsch and Merle Grenerry in the water alongside hanging on to the trailing ropes. And there, back to back with her matron, sat Caroline Ennis, cradling two small children in her lap. The raft and its occupants were never seen again..." Olive Paschke was 37 years old when she lost her life. To date all literature on the subject has the raft never seen again, however new information (ref. email November 2016, Dr Neil McGregor advising that his mother Sister Sylvia Muir who was on the 'Vyner Brooke' was told this in Singapore after release from internment in 1945) has come to light that in fact this raft with the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses was located several weeks later by a ship in the Indian Ocean. So Merle Grenerry must have lost her life in the sea or still on the raft as it was taken by the powerful sea current that ran down the east coast of Sumatra into the Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean. Olive Paschke must surely be an icon in the history of Australia's Service Nurses and richly deserved the awarding in 1951 of the Florence Nightingale award posthumously in 1951 by the International Red Cross Committee in recognition of her work and leadership during the battle for Malaya and Singapore ("The Mercury" Hobart, 24.5.51). In her home town of Dimboola, Vic, which must have been so close to her heart, she is memorialised at the Dimboola Memorial Secondary College (established uniquely in the state of Victoria as the only war memorial school after the First World War) by a sundial erected in 1949 in her memory and also the event each year when a student of that college gives a speech on her life. The College does not merely pay lip service to the concept of Remembrance but it is clearly imbued in its culture. Specifically insofar as Olive Paschke the sundial is featured prominently on its website with a most appropriate explanation - in fact some of the words used are the best epitaph this researcher has read on the life of Olive Paschke viz. "....  
*As she grew to womanhood she began to display those qualities and gifts which distinguished her in later life. She possessed enthusiasm, energy, keenness, and efficiency.*"<sup>76</sup>



*Beauty and charm of manner were hers. Moreover she was very fond of sport, excelling at tennis and golf. She endeared herself to a wide circle of Wimmera people ...".* Learning more about Olive Paschke during this research makes one contemplate all she would have achieved if her life had been allowed to run its full natural course.

- **PEARSON** – a handwritten list held in the UK National Archives file on the ship "HMS Giang Bee" (which was sunk not far from the attack on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and many of its survivors also interned in Palembang) and which appears to have been compiled in Palembang internment camp in an effort to record those who died in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", or at sea afterwards, or in the atrocity on Radji beach, includes " ... **Mrs. Pearson (Siamese)**... ". Given that she was Siamese it is very unlikely that she would have been killed by the Japanese on Radji Beach. Records on people living in Malaya and Singapore prior to the war indicate only two men having the name Pearson with either strong fluency in the Siamese language or links to women of Siamese nationality. Firstly Mr C. W. 'Bill' Pearson who had fluency in Siamese and a housekeeper from Siam see [PEARSON C.W. [Cyril William] 'Bill' b.1914 Brighton. Educated at Park St Elementary School, Brighton. Go Canada at the age 14 – worked as a farmhand. In 1934 joined the British Army: Sapper 1870646 Royal Engineers in Aden then Singapore. Malayan Representative & Service Engineer, Western Electrical Company, Ipoh 1938-1939 then Dredging Engineer, Anglo-Oriental Mining Ltd, Penawar, Perak. Sgt HQ Company IFOSVF then CSO. Volunteered for Special Ops 12.41. Selected by Colonel Warren RQ for promotion to 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt IFOSVF attached to 3 Indian Corps. 'Stay Behind' Party no.2. Left KL 4.1.42. Captured [wounded] with Elkan 9 miles north of Temerloh, Pahang 17.3.42. 3 other members of the party, Darby, Stubington and Rand killed. POW Pudu Gaol KL to Singapore to Thailand with U Party 28.10.42. Thai speaker. Arrested by the Kempetai at Kanchanaburi early 1945 over out of camp contacts with Seri Thai [Free Thai Movement]. Tortured by the K'buri Kempetai. Sentenced to 6 months hard labour and sent to a Japanese military prison in Bangkok. Captain, Special Forces 1945 attached to HQ 114 Indian Infantry Brigade, 7<sup>th</sup> Indian Division as a Thai interpreter. Mentioned in Despatches. Not repatriated to the UK till 4.46 [by air]. Married Carmel Johnson 1946 Leeds. Returned to Malaya 1947 with AODL: at Penawar then Kramat. Go Leeds, Yorkshire 1950. Army service as Lt, General List 1.3.54. Served in Egypt's Canal Zone 1954-1955 then Cyprus 1955-1959 [Nicosia & Famagusta]. Go New Zealand 1960-1993 then settled in St Albans. Go Yorkshire 2014. Died 21.10.2015 [101] Leeds. Times obituary 6.11.2015. Children: Dary Cerise, David & Christina (JDD)]; or secondly, Mr J. P Pearson who was also very fluent in Siamese prior to the war and in the POW camps [PEARSON J.P. [John Peter] 'Percy' b.1916 London. Assistant, Borneo Company Co. Ltd, Mercantile Bank Co. Ltd, Raffles Place, Singapore Pte 13846 FOSVF. Armoured Cars [Ipoh] POW Singapore to Thailand with D Battalion 12.10.42 – Thai speaker. Mentioned in Despatches re. Battle of Kampar. Returned post-war to Borneo Co. Malaya. 1<sup>st</sup> Chairman, Singapore Inchcape Bhd. Former county cricketer. Wife Nancy. John died 1.12.2005 (Dalta (JDD))] – the view of the researcher is that either of these men may have taken the Siamese woman into his care and arranged passage out of Singapore – something a lone Siamese woman would never have been able to arrange given the tightly controlled and heavily racially biased process for issuing the highly sought after and rationed 'exit passes' on ships from Singapore during that last few weeks before the Surrender. However this leaves the actual identity of 'Mrs. Pearson' a mystery with no official death record at either the CORD or CWGC; despite being on the Palembang camp list of those who were believed to have died as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" the matter of whether Mrs Pearson lost her life or survived after the sinking is further put into question because of a statement by the ship's radio officer, Lt. A.J. Mann (see the Angelpo.co. website and no doubt also in his personal papers at the IWM), where he recounts that after drifting at sea for some time he managed to catch hold of a raft from the ship on which were "a stoker, a Siamese woman and two children by the name of Betty and David ...". This reference to a Siamese woman must surely point to Mrs Pearson having survived the sinking of the ship – **it remains to be seen from further research and enquiry as to whether she survived the raft and then lifeboat journey** (they were picked up by four Australian Naval ratings in a lifeboat from the



"HMS Siang Wo" who, after exiting Dann at a beach, continued on their attempt to reach Batavia many hundreds of miles away).

- **PRATT** - PRATT W.H. [William Hay] of W.H. Pratt Ltd, Seremban NS [1933 & 1935 Directories]. Daughter Elsie. Wife Catherine Hay Pratt [died 23.6.57 Brighton]. He was reported killed by the Japanese 14.2.42 Banka Island. The Colonial Office Deaths Register places him on the Vyner Brooke (JDD): this accords somewhat with the official record of his death, which makes no reference to his death being related to the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" but refers just to the Banka Straits " ... **William Hay Pratt**, engineer, Seremban, died on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits, source C - in - CALFSEA (CORD Register DI, Folio 195, Serial 199): the earliest record on William Pratt is in the Malayan newspapers where there is a poignant death notice for Muriel Mary Pratt, aged six and a half years, older daughter of Mr. & Mrs. W. H. Pratt (SFPDA 28.11.21): the next reference is in 1932 when it was announced that William Hay Pratt of Seremban, an engineer, has been granted leave to file a specification of an invention for " ... an improved machine for the preparation of sheet rubber ..." (SG, 5.3.32): there is a record of a " ... Mr. J. Pratt, Seremban, last seen on the ship with both legs shot off.." but that initial is of course different: it would seem that after analysing the occupations of the men on board the ship it is also reasonable to keep in mind that William Pratt could be " ... the grossly fat English civil engineer whose most recent job had been camouflaging Malayan airports ..." next to whom fellow passenger Eric German went to sleep on the deck of the SS. Vyner Brooke " as the ship left Singapore (BJE p.141): *[note: the researcher uses these verbatim quotes with the comment that they are definitely not meant to insult the memory of this person if it is indeed William Pratt, but are included in the event that his physical description aligns with another historical record - as yet to be found - that will confirm the identity of the man killed on Radji Beach]*: the next reference to the 'fat civil engineer' is when Eric German is swimming to a submerged lifeboat and finds this same man screaming for help, he pushes him into the lifeboat and tells him to look after 'Discha' Warman the four year old boy (BJE p.143), the engineer does not prove helpful in any way as the survivors try and row the semi submerged lifeboat, but they do in fact reach Radji Beach: tragically it may very well have been that William Pratt was in the second group of men, which included First Officer Sedgeman and Eric German, who were taken around the promontory and executed because, after Eric German recovers at the edge of the sea and runs for his life into the jungle, he recalled that " ... he sprang, hurling his body sideways and whirling to scan the beach. It was empty but for the dead. In the instant that his eyes flicked over their still forms one body especially stamped itself on Eric's consciousness. The corpse of the fat civil engineer was sitting upright, its sightless eyes looking out over the Straits..." (BJE p.151): so sadly it seems that William Pratt survived the sinking possibly only to be brutally murdered at the hands of the Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach.: post war the authorities were still inconclusive as to the fate of William Hay Pratt and he is listed in a newspaper article "Gracing of the Dissing Continues" in 1946 (SG, 29.5.46): later as his personal affairs were being sorted out along with thousands of other people killed during the War he is listed as being the owner of securities worth \$5000 in a loan maturing 1939/59 (SG, 19.4.47): in 1957 his wife Catherine Hay died in Brighton, England and the notice records her husband as W. Hay Pratt (possibly this is how he was known) and also just one child, William J. Pratt (SG, 26.5.57): there is another record of the death of Catherine Hay Pratt, as beloved mother of William J. Pratt and wife of the late William Hay Pratt of Seremban at Brighton, England (SG, 28.6.57 and SG 22.6.57). But as mentioned earlier there is the following record.....
- **PRATT** - "Mr J. Pratt, Seremban, Seen on ship, both legs shot off" (List of those assumed to have died compiled in Palembang camp):
- **PRICE/PRICE** - ~~see Watters-Pryce~~. Also there is a 'Mrs Price' listed by Dr Goldberg - Curth as having been on the ship and who died at what she called 'Luebok - Lingoe' camp, but given that there are a number of misspelt surnames in Dr Goldberg - Curth's statement in the NAA it would seem that this refers to Mrs Grace 'Anna' Watters-Pryce who died shortly after arriving in the awful deprivation of the Belalau (Loebok- Linggau) camp.





- RAYMONT – Sister Wilhelmina ‘Dina’/‘Willie’/‘Ray’ Rosalie Raymont**, GEX 6012, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station, AANS. [Note: the spelling of her first name by the AWC in matters regarding her biography is incorrectly shown as ‘Wilhemina’ – but in two of the photographs on the AWC website and in a 1936 newspaper item on her result in the Nurses Exam and also in 1945 newspaper report of her mother being advised of her death her name is spelt ‘Wilhelmina’ with an extra letter l]. ‘Dina’ (or it appears ‘Willie’ to her family) was born in Adelaide, South Australia on 7 December 1911 to William Ernest Raymont (employed in the Locomotive Branch of the south Australian Railways) and Laura Rosalie Raymont, who appear to have been living at Percy Street, Semaphore, Adelaide at the time. The very early years of her life were marked by tragedy with one of her four sisters, Peggy, dying in 1915 and then her father dying aged 41 years in 1916 (he was a Private in the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Australian Expeditionary Force, and this may have been a result of wounds serving whilst overseas?). Dina also had one brother. Dina passed her Nurses Exams whilst at Adelaide hospital in 1936 (“News”, Adelaide, 13.11.36), but was nursing in Hobart, Tasmania when she enlisted. Her photo in the AWC archives website shows a lovely looking woman with most sweet smile. After the sinking of the ‘SS. Vyner Brooke’ Dina was one of the nurses who reached the upturned lifeboat with a large group of nurses, Mrs Bull and daughter etc. She later abandoned this submerged craft for a group of life rafts tied together. They were picked up by an RAAF launch and taken to Muntok pier where they were imprisoned by the Japanese. During the next three years of harsh internment and deprivation Dina maintained a positive attitude, organising ‘sing-along’s’ in Palembang camp and joining in the camp concerts and in an impromptu ‘fashion show’ in the Irenelaan camp she was selected as ‘1943’ wearing a top and shorts. Late in 1944 she was cruelly ‘punished’ by the Japanese by being made to stand hatless in front of the guard post at Irenelaan for several hours during the middle of the tropical day until she collapsed – she thereafter apparently struggled with manual labour. (ORB, p. 260). Also recorded in ORB, p. 263 is that same year “... an increasingly frail Dina Raymont sewed little handkerchiefs from scraps of material and traded these to Dutch civilians for food ...”. On 8 February 1945 Betty Jeffrey recorded in her diary “... Our own Ray, Sister Raymont, dies today after 36 hours of being desperately ill. Ray had an attack of malaria, suddenly became unconscious and didn’t recover ... Val Smith has lost her best friend. Our girls gave ray a military funeral, all wearing their uniforms ...”. Tall, fair, but increasingly frail after her punishment at Irenelaan. Dina Raymont had been hospitalised several times in both Irenelaan and Muntok. Pages 266-268 in ‘ORB’ have a very moving description of her funeral. It was not until the release of the AANS nurses that “The Advertiser”, Adelaide was able to report (18.10.45) “... Mrs. L.R. Raymont of Parr Street [actually 11 Parr Street] Largs Bay has been advised that her fourth daughter, Lt. Sister Wilhelmina 9 Willie) Raymont died of illness while a POW on February 8 ...”. So died a lovely young woman – a victim of Japanese cruelty, deprivation and starvation. Dina Raymont is buried in Jakarta War cemetery, (grave 5.F.5), Indonesia.
- REIGH (REITH?)** - interestingly probably for reason of an error the CWGC also have a ‘D. Reigh, civilian, as dying on the “SS. Vyner Brooke” on 14.2.42’ (CWGC); this probably refers to Lt. David Reith, RNR who was a member of the crew of the ship – SEE BELOW
- **ROSSIE** - (Ms Alice Rossie, QE Nursing Sister, in Malaya since 1935. Singapore General Hospital. Aged 38 in 1942. Initially interned at Muntok where she assisted in surgery for the amputation of an RAF officers foot. Palembang, later at Leoboelinggau camp, Sumatra internee. Repatriated to the UK on the ‘Sobieski’ 10.45. Returned to nursing in Malaya till 1950. Linked to Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore. Died November 1969 in Aberdeen.(SUD): Miss Rossie was born circa 1904 and was the daughter of William Robert Clouston Rossie and Mary Linklater, one of their four children in Stromness: after their capture at Muntok on Banka Island by the Japanese on 21 February 1942 Alice and another nurse by the name of Phyllis Briggs assisted a surgeon, also imprisoned, in the most primitive of conditions to amputate a mans foot (Phyllis Briggs’s diary) she later was interned at Palembang and the final awful camp at Loebek Linggau: when she returned to Singapore after the war she worked at Singapore General Hospital and is mentioned as a guest at a garden party at Government house in 1947 (SS. 14.6.47): in 1948 she was



- **RUSSELL – Sister Lavinia Russell**, NEX 70571, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Lavinia Russell was the daughter of David and Lavinia C. Russell (nee Adams). She was born on 21 December 1909 at Rockdale (St George's district), NSW, at one stage living at 79 The Avenue, Hurstville. She had a brother Robert born in 1904 but who died a year later at Broken Hill and Mary born in 1906 at Broken Hill. Lavinia attended school at St Mary's Star of the Sea convent, Hurstville and St Vincent's College at Potts point. She trained as a nurse at St Vincent's Hospital, Crown Street Women's Hospital and the Cresillian Mothercraft training School at Vacluse. In 1934 she passed her Nurses Registration Exams 'Midwifery Branch' whilst at the Crown Street Womens Hospital ("Sydney Morning Herald, 9.3.34). Lavinia enlisted with the AANS on 6.1.41 and her paybook photo shows a serious looking young woman with short, wavy dark hair. Just prior to the bombers attacking the 'Vyner Brooke' on 14 February 1942, Lavinia is reported to have taken cover with Mary Clarke, Gladys Hughes and Veronica Clancy and a number of civilians in the main bathroom behind the saloon of the ship ( ORB, p.148) After the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' there were no further sightings of Lavinia – meaning that she had either been killed late in the bombing and strafing of the ship , in the chaotic abandon ship with falling liferaft and debris or had been swept away by the strong sea currents in the region. On the 20 August 1942 the AIF casualty lists recorded her as 'Missing abroad' and it was not until 1944 that her mother received a letter from the Army stating that her younger daughter 'previously reported missing' was now "Missing Believed Killed" on or about 11 February 1942 ("Daily Examiner", Grafton, NSW, 4.8.44). In 1998 the Hurstville Council responded to a request from the Fund Committee of the Australian Service nurses National memorial for support of a memorial to be built in Anzac Parade Canberra with a donation of \$2000 in regard to Lavinia Russell. The Memorial in Canberra was officially dedicated in October 1999. Hurstville council also made a donation of \$3,500 to the Mortdale RSL Sub-Branch, who had requested this amount to cover the cost of a mosaic inlay in memory of Australian Service Nurses in the Mortdale Memorial Park (28.4.88)
- **SALMON – Sister Florence Aubin Salmon**, NEX 70991, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Florence Salmon was the daughter of John Henry Salmon and Florence Alexandria Salmon (nee Aubin) and appears to have been born c. 1916. Sadly, despite the historic profile of the Radji Beach war crime, not much is known about her life and she appears to hardly be mentioned by her colleagues. Her pay book photo in the AWCH shows a smiling woman with the description '... dark hair, hazel eyes ...'. The internet records at the AWCH have virtually nothing on Florence Salmon. She passed her Nurses Registration Board exam, notably at the same time as Winnie Davis, whilst at the War Memorial Hospital, Waverly (SDH newspaper 26.6.38). Florence was murdered by Japanese troops with her nursing colleagues on Radji Beach. According to newspaper records a memorial service was held at the War Memorial Hospital, Waverly, on 28 October 1945 in memory of Florence and also Winnie Davis ( SDH 29.10.45) – although shamefully for the journalist involved they state even at that early stage of her memory that " ...Sister Salmon was shot by the Japanese after years of imprisonment ... " [sic] and at that Hospital there is a 'Window of Memory' dedicated to nurses – three stained glass panels honour " ... the memory of Winnie Davis and Florence Salmon graduates of the hospital... ". Her name is also recorded at '96' in the Commemorative Area of the AWCH. Her family suffered unbelievable loss and pain as a result of the War – her parents also lost her older brother Leonard Salmon, 2/12<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, in another Japanese war crime when he was killed in the sinking of the 'Australian Hospital Ship Centaur' which was sunk off the coast of Australia by a Japanese submarine on 14 May 1943 – of the 332 medical personnel on board that clearly marked hospital ship, 268 were killed in the sinking (centaurassociation.files.wordpress.com)
- **SEDDON – Corporal Robert Henry Seddon**, PLJ X 17171, Royal Marines, was born on 28.8.18 at Goxhill, North Lincolnshire. He was not a passenger on the 'SS Vyner Brooke' but had been a Royal Marine on the 'HMS Repulse' and then a survivor from the sinking of the tug 'Jen Ping' which had evacuated servicemen from Singapore and was sunk in the vicinity of Banka Island. He recorded that there were 60 -70 personnel on board this tug when it was sunk by shellfire from a Japanese cruiser at 1700hrs the previous day – and he believed he was the only survivor. Whilst swimming in a life jacket to shore on 16 February 1942 he <sup>80</sup> witnessed the atrocities taking place on Radji Beach and recorded in his affidavit



(Australian National Archives, Melbourne) that he saw men and women being shot down and bayoneted "...a few did attempt to rush into the water but they were shot and killed before they were able to swim out of range ...". He continues that he was washed ashore soon after and posed for dead – the same Japanese patrol who carried out the killings on Radji Beach searched and kicked him a few times but must have believed he was dead and left him there. After spending the night in the jungle by the beach, the next morning he walked along the beach and says "... I searched around and found the bodies of 15 New Zealand and Australian Nursing Sisters, 15 British service personnel and 5 merchant seamen (presumably members of the crew). I walked further along the beach and found 2 more lifeboats grounded and nearby the bodies of 7 R.N. personnel. The latter included two officers and the whole party appeared to have been shot and bayoneted ...". Robert Seddon spent the war as a POW in Palembang and survived to return to the UK. He was the husband of Davis Seddon and they had three children. He died on 16 6 2003 and is buried at St Nicholas Churchyard, Haxey, Lincolnshire.

- **SCHUMAN - Lt. Marjorie 'Shuie' Schuman**, 2/10th Australian General Hospital, was born in 1911, the second daughter of George and Eleanor Mary Schuman (nee Gale) (a post war reference says their address was Manly, Queenscliff). She had one sister named Dorothy and a brother named George Stanley Schuman. She attended school in the small country town of Inverell in northern NSW between 1923-27 and the "Gingha Advocate and North-Western Journal" of 3.2.22 records that she passed her Qualifying Certificate Exam in the Gingha district whilst at Chellas (a tiny school four miles east of Gingha) and "The Inverell Times" (6.10.25) reports her in a hockey team, aged 14 years, playing in a fundraising effort for the Inverell District Hospital. No records have been found on her nursing career. She joined up on 16.12.40 - a paybook photo taken on 15.1.41 shows an attractive young woman with a slim intelligent face - and soon left in January 1941 as a nursing Sister with the 10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital for Malaya and Singapore, serving also in the 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station. At the time of the bombing of the 'Vyner Brooke' she appears to have lost her life in the actual bombing of the ship, or in the process of jumping into the sea because she was not seen by any other passengers in a lifeboat, on a liferaft or drifting at sea (ORB p.166). "The Telegraph" Brisbane newspaper of 17.9.45 recorded her name in a list of 'Vyner Brooke' nurses "... believed drowned ...". In 1954 ("The Inverell Times" 26.3.54) reported the unveiling of an impressive memorial to Marjorie and two other ex pupils of the little school at Chellas Public School in the presence of Marjorie's family (research is being carried out to ascertain what happened to this memorial since the closure of the Chellas School in 1957). Marjorie is also memorialised in Honour Avenue, Bicton, WA., on the 8<sup>th</sup> Division's War memorial at Gunnedah in NSW and on the War memorial at Manly, Sydney. Her name is also recorded at '96' in the Commemoration Area of the AWM. The book 'ORB' sums her up as "... friend and confidante of Buddy Elmes and general character from northern NSW ..." (ORB, p.166).
- **SHELLEY - Mrs Alice Shelly**: according to the Colonial Office Record of Deaths **Mrs Alice Jane Shelley** of Singapore was presumed killed on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" Source C-In-C. ALFSEA (CORD. Reg. D1, Folio 276, Serial 1276): family knowledge is that Alice Sims was born in Bangkok and married George Edward Shelley although it is unclear whether she became widowed or divorced: early newspaper records indicate that George Edward Shelley travelled to Singapore on the 'Hecuba' from Bangkok in 1881 (SG, 21.7.81) and the next reference is in 1911 when a Mrs Alice Shelley of Selegie Road, Singapore reported to the police the loss of a chair and eight dollars (SG.7.3.11): then in 1934 there is a report of Mrs. Alice Shelley and her children attending the funeral of Miss Salome Fox (SG, 25.4.34) with the final record in 1939 when Mr & Mrs. George Shelley were at the funeral of Mrs Josephine Louise Olivero (SG, 15 8.39): there is a newspaper advertisement in 1952 stating "...Please say a prayer for Alice Jane Shelley and those drowned at sea 12.2.42" (SG, 12.2.52): Alice Shelley was on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" with her daughter Laura Angus (nee Shelley) who also lost her life and her granddaughter Lucille Angus who survived only to be interned in Duntok and then Palembang, before being returned to Singapore for internment.
- **SHORT - Sister Eileen 'Shorty' Mary Short**, QFX 22911, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital.<sup>81</sup> Whilst not certain it looks very likely that Eileen Short was born circa 1905-08 in Dungog.





NSW, the daughter of George Bernard Short ( died 12.2.47 in Brisbane) and Prudence Amelia Short ( nee Smith and died 27.7.64 at Atherton, Qld) – it looks like her parents moved from NSW to Queensland after her birth.. According to the book 'ORB' (p. 194) Eileen Short was born and raised on a Queensland cattle station. There are many newspaper references to young women with the name 'Eileen Short' in Queensland during the 1909-1925 period, passing music exams and attending social events but there seem to have been at least two young women with this name so it is not until 1933 that we have a definitive reference to 'Eileen M. Short' passing the Midwifery exams for the Nurses Registration Board whilst she was working at the Womens Hospital ( presumably the Crown Street Womens Hospital) in Sydney, NSW that we have knowledge of her life ( "Sydney Morning Herald", 9.6.33). Her obituary notice when she died in 1976 ( 230battalion.org.au) does fill out the picture in that she trained at Kingaroy Hospital before moving on to the Womens Hospital. Eileen then was Sister in Charge at the Maitland NSW Hospital and some time after that gained the role of Matron at Isisford Hospital - Isisford is a very small town (its population has never exceeded 300 people) situated in the center of Queensland, some 1220 km north-west of Brisbane. In 1941 Eileen wrote to the Isisford Hospital Committee "… expressing appreciation [for their] … action in granting leave of absence for the duration of the war …" ("The Longreach Leader", 25.10.41). Events must have overtaken the speed of meeting minutes being issued and newspapers reporting such news because two months previously there was a photo of Eileen ( together with Vi McElnea and Val Smith) waving out of a train carriage window at Brisbane on the occasion of leaving to join the AANS ( "The Courier-Mail" Brisbane, 29.8.41) – according to her obituary notice in the 230 Battalion newsletter she had enlisted on 1.8.41! Eileen is shown as a smiling, very slim faced woman. After her service in Malaya and Singapore with the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGF, Eileen boarded the 'Vyner Brooke' with her friends and comrades and suffered the sinking and time in the sea. She made it to Banka Island on the raft with Sister Ashton, Greer, Hempstead and Clancy and was imprisoned in the Customs House building at Duntok. Apart from the fact that she was the "… best woodcutter in the camp at Palembang…" (ORB, p. 250) – no doubt a skill learned from her upbringing on a cattle station in Queensland - little is known of her experiences during the three and a half years of incredibly harsh, deprived and malnourished internment in Duntok, Palembang and Belalau camps. There is a photo of Eileen in the AWD Archives that shows her lying in a hospital bed in Singapore after her release from the truly awful Belalau camp – she has become a tiny, emaciated figure. She was discharged from the AANS in early April 1944 and was apparently matron at Richmond Hospital in Queensland, and also Augathella Hospital, but then appears to have returned to her role as matron of Isisford Hospital (230battalion.org.au and "Morning Bulletin", Rockhampton, 2.5.47). The newsletter of the 230 Battalion, 'Dakan', #233, March 1977 tells us that Eileen died at Dalby General Hospital [Dalby is about 200 km west of Brisbane] on Anzac Day 1976 at the age of 71 years – "… Members of the Dalby RSL formed a guard of Honour outside St Marks Lutheran Church and the pall bearers were ex-prisoners of war …". A fitting tribute to all that Eileen had endured and survived was to have the respect of her fellow POWs.

- **SIMMONS/SIMMONDS** – '… Miss Simmons, Matron, St Andrews Hospital, Singapore …' who appears to have died in the sinking or aftermath ( list prepared in Palembang camp of those missing or known to have died in the sinking): the St Andrew's Medical Mission Hospital, Singapore was established in 1913 via the St Andrews Medical Mission which had been inaugurated by the then Anglican Bishop of Singapore and his wife, who was a Doctor, managed the Hospital in its early years.- with ongoing funding and overview from the Anglican 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel'; a missionary of that Society was Miss Gladys Olga Sprenger, another passenger on the "SS. Vyner Brooke", and who would have been well known to fellow Anglican Missionary, Miss Evelyn Simmonds; it is speculated (prior to any concrete link being proven) that **Miss Evelyn Simmonds** was in fact the 'Miss Simmons' listed above: post war two Anglican priests writing about the church in Singapore, stated that both Miss Olga Sprenger and Miss Evelyn Simmonds had been lost in the evacuation of Singapore and their fate was unknown ("The War and After: John Hayter and Jack Benitt: anglicanhistory.org/asia); *NOTE – 12. 5. 16 SFCPOGG said they<sup>82</sup> will look into files but no response by 14.3.17.*



- **SIMONS – Sister Jessie Elizabeth Simons**, GEX 6023, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Jessie was born in Launceston, Tasmania on 23 August 1911, one of nine children of Jabez Peter Simons and May Ann (Duir Simon (nee Lees) then of 43 Canning Street (Jenny Gill's paper on the memoirs of Jessie Simons, Launceston Historical Society papers & proceedings 2010). A very young Jessie won first prize in Needlework at the St. Patrick's River Show Sports event in 1924 ("Daily Telegraph", Launceston, 2.4.24) and the following year passed her piano elementary in the London College of Music exams ("Sydney Morning Herald", 15.7.25). She was educated in Launceston and did her general nursing training at the Launceston general hospital, gaining certificates in child welfare and midwifery. In 1933 she passed the Nurses Registration Board exams (General Nurses) ("The Mercury", Hobart, 27.5.33). In 1941 Jessie enlisted in the AANS and arrived in Malaya in September 1941. During the attack on the 'Vyner Brooke' Jessie was "... struck in the forearm by a bomb splinter, but it was not a serious wound and the splinter would remain in her arm for the rest of her life ..." (ORB, p.154). Jessie was responsible for ensuring that the main saloon of the ship was cleared, which she did so after the bombing stopped. The ship was listing badly and when the time came to abandon ship Jessie slid down a rope into the sea – losing most of the skin off the palms of her hands (ORB, p.162). She finally found a group of nurses gathered around a floating canvas stretcher and liferaft and found both Winnie May Davis and Pat Gunther already there. They were joined by three badly injured crew members from the ship (one was called Stan – he was badly burned and had been on the 'Prince of Wales', he slipped off the raft that night and drowned. Researcher note: research suggest that this was probably either Stanley Williams or Stanley Alderson from the 'Prince of Wales'). They were also joined by Mrs Brown and her daughter Shelagh. This group drifted through the night at sea, ending up amongst the Japanese invasion fleet attacking Banka Island and were towed to a beach on Banka Island where they were left under guard. The next morning they were taken to Muntok and interned. So Jessie began three and a half years of harsh, malnourished and deprived internment in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau camps. She survived all these trials and was repatriated to Australia via Singapore In April 1946 Captain Jessie Simons was discharged from the AANS and returned to work for the Launceston General Hospital. The following year she was awarded "Mentioned in Despatches" for "Services rendered whilst in Japanese hands" ("The Argus" Melbourne, 7.3.47). She later retired to look after her elderly parents and in 1954 wrote "While History passes" (later published as "In Japanese Hands"). In 1970 she married Hayman Hookway and moved live on a dairy farm run by her husband near the little village of Boat Harbour on Tasmania's North West coast. There was an obituary in northern Tasmania newspaper, "The Examiner", on 24 December 2004 for her, aged 93 years, but no date of death was given so it is assumed that Jessie Simons passed away that month of 2004.
- **SINGLETON – Sister Irene 'Rene' Ada Singleton**, VEX 48842, 2/1<sup>0th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Irene Singleton was born in Caulfield in 1906. Her family moved to a prosperous dairy farm named 'Ravenswood' near Daffra and Riverslea in the Gippsland region of Victoria. Irene and her two brothers Kenneth and Douglas were raised solely by their father Robert Douglas Singleton since her mother appears to have passed away early in her life. In contrast to some of the AANS nurses on the 'Vyner Brooke' who had been orphans or were from more constrained family circumstance, Irene enjoyed a stimulating upbringing and an active social life. The earliest record of Irene is as a regular letter writer (aged 8 years) to "The Australasian" and its "The Young Folk" column where she asked for suggestions on books to read (17.6.16) and (aged 16 years) when she won a prize of five shillings in a short story competition. Throughout the 1920s Irene appears winning prizes in a flower show ("The Daffra spectator" 25.10.20) and also winning prizes for variously making a 'sponge sandwich cake' and another year for her essay writing at the Daffra Agricultural Show. By the end of that decade as a young woman in her early twenties Irene is reported at parties in Gippsland, the Daffra Tennis Ball and also at her sister Valerie's wedding ("Gippsland Times" 16.10.39). In 1932 she began her training as a nurse at Melbourne Hospital This did not mean the end of her social life and she appears in newspaper articles as a dancer (a pupil of Miss Rose Massey's dance school) at the Royal Australian Historical Society's Ball at 'David Jones' in Sydney and also attending the annual fundraising debutantes (but as a debutante) Ball for the Water Children's Hospital



in Brisbane. In 1936 she passed her Nurses Board Exams whilst at Royal Melbourne Hospital ( "The Age" (Melbourne, 2.4.36) and later that year is reported holidaying with her brother Douglas in Brisbane ( attending a Ball whilst there , dressed in '... flame satin and shirred shoulder') and continuing with him on a motor tour of Queensland and NSW. Irene must have moved from the Royal Melbourne Hospital to The Military Hospital because she is said to be working there when she enlisted in 1940. Her pay book photo shows a slim dark haired young woman of average height and a confident smile. A 1945 newspaper report says that Irene left on the 'Queen Mary' in February 1941 for Malaya. We do not know what happened to Irene after the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' but she of course must have reached Banka Island and been interned. During the next three years she must have maintained an strong spirit in the camps – we do know that, along with Dot Freeman, she set the so called 'bakeries' to use every scrap of rice around and again with Dot she volunteered to move out of the appallingly overcrowded house in Irenelaan camp to make way for others - living in a 'lean to' at the back of the house for the remainder of their time at that camp in Palembang. In the book 'ORB' it states that Irene "... had a great sense of humour as well as a profound sense of the ridiculous, and could always be relied upon to raise the spirits of those around her ..." (ORB, p.99). In 1942 there appeared in "The Gippsland Times" (23.7.42) the report that Irene's loved brother Douglas was Killed In Action in the Middle East and it noted that nothing had been heard from Irene since the Fall of Singapore. Her life came to an end in early 1945 whilst at Muntok internment camp "... in January 1945 she had been admitted to the camp hospital with advanced beri beri, the dry type that literally consumes the flesh from within as the body seeks sustenance ... [she] went steadily downhill and, from mid-February, slipped in and out of consciousness not really knowing where she was. She died on 20 February ... Rene died not knowing that her two brothers, the lights of her life, had both predeceased her, killed a few days apart in fighting in North Africa almost two years previously ..." (ORB, p.268) Irene Singleton is now buried in Jakarta War Cemetery in Indonesia. In late 1945 Dr. R. G. Singleton of 'Ravenswood', Daffra was officially informed that Irene had died of illness in Sumatra on 24 February [sic] whilst a POW. The newspaper report also mentions the deaths of Kenneth and Douglas and continues "... In private life as well as her professional life, she was bright and cheerful and had a host of friends who looked forward to her return ..." ( "Gippsland times" 24.9.45) [ we can only imagine what Dr Singleton must have felt with the loss of three of his four children during the war]. In 1947 the small town of Daffra made a huge effort to memorialise the life and death of Irene Singleton and a memorial tablet to her was unveiled by the Patron – In – chief of the AANS at the memorial hall in Daffra ( the memorial hall of the Daffra (Mechanics Institute). A large crowd attended with many dignitaries and her father and there were sentries from each of the Armed forces of Australia. ("Gippsland Times" 28.7.47). This memorial tablet is now apparently in the 'Daffra library' and a road in Daffra has been named Singleton Road after her.

- **SDIGH – Sister Valerie 'Val' Elizabeth Smith**, QEX 22819, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. From later newspaper records it is calculated that Val Smith was born circa 1912-15, probably in Herberton (a small town in the Atherton Tablelands inland from Cairns, Queensland) since she is said to have lived in that locality for many years. Later her family moved to a nearby farming area known as Upper Barron. No public records have been found by research as to her family except that she had a sister, Lt. Lily Smith – who died in Brisbane in 1945 from sickness contracted whilst on active service ("Cairns Post" 13.11.45). Several newspaper references on Val Smith during her childhood in Herberton reveal an ability to grow vegetables with a prize for the best bunch of 'eschalots' (presumably shallots) at the Herberton (Dining, Pastoral and Agricultural Assn Show in 1919 ("Cairns Post" 29.4.19) and then in 1922 appearing at the Herberton Children's Ball dressed as 'Penfolds Wine' ("The Northern Herald" 14.6.22). In 1922 she passed her University Junior Exams whilst at Herberton ("Cairns Post", 23.12.27) and the following year (presumably around sixteen years of age she appeared a few times in local newspapers as the organist at the Herberton Methodist Church, at fund raising bazaars for the Church, in fancy dress ( as 'Mystery') at the Herberton Shire Hall and several other social events. Insofar as her nursing career it is said that she trained at Cairns District Hospital but no references have been found on this period of her life. Val enlisted in the AANS and there is a 1941 photo





("The Courier", Brisbane, 29.8.41) of her (together with Sisters McElnea and Eileen Short) leaving Brisbane after enlisting - little did they know at the time of that happy photograph they would all end up on the 'Vyner Brooke', struggle through the sea to Banka Island and would all survive internment camps and the War! After the sinking of the ship Val drifted up to Davis Hannah's liferaft which had some 16 survivors clinging to it (ORB, p. 173) and would later recall spending sixteen hours in the sea ("Cairns Post", 13.11.45). Val endured three and a half years of some of the worst internment of any Japanese POWs and survived Muntok, Palembang, Muntok again and then the truly awful Belalau camp. She contracted malaria many times ("Cairns Post", 13.11.45) and lost her best friend in camp, Sister Raymont who died in February 1945 (ORB, p. 257). Confirming her Methodist upbringing Val stepped forward at Sister Raymont's burial and read from the Bible, passages from Revelations 5 and 7: *"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat ..."* (ORB, p. 267) - apt verses given the punishment meted out so cruelly (and totally mistakenly) to both these nurses by their Japanese captors by making them stand hatless in the searing tropical sun for hours in the middle of the day. Val survived internment - one of her 'jobs' being to repair the sandals (referred to as 'trompers') during those harsh years - and was repatriated via Singapore and then on the 'Manunda' home to Australia and then to Upper Barron, which was probably on a farm. She was discharged in April 1946 and then in April 1947 due recognition was given to her in the form of being 'Mentioned in despatches' for "Services rendered whilst a POW in Japanese hands..." (AWM and the "Examiner", Launceston, 1.4.47). This was the start of a most dedicated and intellectually upward phase of Val's nursing career. Later in 1947 "Miss Valerie Smith of Upper Barron, Atherton" was awarded the Australian Red Cross Society (Queensland division) scholarship to do post graduate work and study in England - sponsored by the Florence Nightingale Foundation ("Queensland times", 19.6.47) and the newspaper report goes on to say that for some time she had been on the staff of the School Health Services within the Department of Homes and Health Services at Ipswich. She returned from England in 1949 and began teaching anatomy and physiology at the Brisbane General Hospital ("Townsville Daily Bulletin", 17.3.49). By 1952 when the same newspaper described her as aged 37 years of Bramston Terrace, Herston another paper ("Sunday Mail", Brisbane, 10.8.52) recorded another achievement when Val gained the "... Distinction of being one of Australia's two representatives chosen by the World Health organisation to attend a nursing seminar in Taiwan..." It also mentioned that by then she was Sister Tutor in Queensland's Maternal and Child Welfare Service. In 1954 she was Principal Tutor, Brisbane General Hospital ("The Advertiser" Adelaide, 20.5.54). Sadly, research to follow the remainder of Val Smith's life has been unsuccessful in producing further information. Nevertheless from what we know of her life and achievements, Val Smith was a fine example of a professional nurse for whom adversity only seemed to inspire her to achieve greater things.

- **SPRENGER/SPRINGER - Miss Gladys Olga Sprenger.** SPG (Missionary/Teacher, Pudu English School KL. Lost at sea following the sinking of the Vyner Brooke 15.2.42 (JMD): Miss Sprenger is also commemorated on the CWGC website as a civilian who died in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" on 14.2.42(CWGC): it appears that Olga Sprenger was the daughter of Oliver Sprenger and Charlotte Ivson Sprenger of Surrey, England: she is first recorded as arriving in Singapore on the P.O. "Cartage" (SG, 17.3.34) and in 1935 appears in several newspaper reports on events in Kuala Lumpur - firstly as the headmistress of St Marys Girls School, Kuala Lumpur at a prize giving (SG, 24.6.35) and then at a Selangor Badminton Association party held in honour of Miss J. Foss (Miss Foss was later interned in Changi during the War), and then at ceremony for the unveiling of the Savage-Bailey Memorial in KL (SG, 7.8.35); in 1938 she travelled back to Singapore from Southampton on the 'Dempo' (SG, 14.10.38); there is no other record of her during the intervening years up until the Japanese invasion, but then she appears in a most poignant newspaper advertisement in Singapore, just two weeks before Singapore fell asking for a "... European lady willing to look after 11 year old English girl on the voyage to England. (Miss O. Sprenger, CEDZ School, Sophia Road" (SG, 26.1.42) which, we must assume, is where she had transferred to as a missionary during the years prior to the war or had sought accommodation or employment after the evacuation of Kuala Lumpur. CEDZ School was



initially named the Chinese Girls School in Singapore, a school specifically established for those abandoned or enslaved Chinese girls who were being sold as servants, it later became known as the Church Of England Zenanah Missionary school and is now St Margaret's Secondary School: it is clear that Olga Sprenger was working as a missionary by the time of the Japanese invasion because she is mentioned a post war publication by the Anglican church "The War and After: Singapore" by John Hayter and Jack Benitt, priests of the diocese, "... Several of the women missionaries left only a few days before the surrender, amongst them Evelyn Simmonds and Olga Sprenger, of whom nothing has been heard since they left Singapore ..." (anglicanhistory.org/asia): the list compiled by the internees in Palembang camp of those they believed had died states "... Miss Olga Sprenger, Pudu English School, KL, believed drowned ...": this is backed up by the official Colonial Office Death Record "... Miss Gladys Olga Sprenger, Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, Malaya, died on or about 14.2.42 in the vicinity of the Banka Straits following the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" - no source for this information is recorded. (CORD, Register D1, folio 280, Serial 1305). *NOTE - 12.5.16 SFGPOGG said archivist will look into files.*

- **STANGER** - Mrs N. Stanger appears as a survivor from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" on the list of Palembang internees prepared by Mrs. E. Cross: according to four different passenger lists for her travels back to England she was born somewhere between 1900 -1902: another source records **Mrs Norah Albertha Stanger**, housewife aged 42 in 1942. Working at Fort Canning February 1942. Evacuated 12.2.42 and became a Sumatra internee. She returned to Malaya in 1948. Her husband was William Richard James Stanger, b.1899 Hythe, Kent. WWI Service from 1915. Armourer Staff Sgt Malay Regiment from 1936. to Lt FDSVF attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Malay Regiment POW Singapore to Thailand 5.11.42. Ended the war at Nakorn Nyok. Wife Norah Albertha interned in Sumatra. Returned to Malaya 1947 (JDD): there is a newspaper record of Sgt. And Mrs Stanger plus two children departing Singapore for Europe in 1934 on the 'SS. Ranpura' (SFPDA 16.2.34): shipping records give the names of the children as Bessie (b. 1924) and William (B. 1928) and list Mrs. Stanger as 'Nora' (ancestry.com): a further trip back to England was made from Yokohama in 1939 with the children on the 'Rawalpindi' - possibly to deliver the children to boarding school? : she was repatriated on the 'Ranchi' from madras in 1945 arriving Southampton on 24.11.45: she took another trip in 1950 on the 'Corfu' and she must still have had significant energy at age early 50s because, in 1954, Mrs Stanger opened a boarding and day school for children of 4 - 10 years of age at Port Dickson (SG, 3.12.54): nothing further on her life is known.
- **STANLEY** - a handwritten list which appears to have been compiled in Palembang internment Camp shows "... William Stanley, Victoria House, Victoria Street, London, Seen in Water ...". This may in fact refer to William Stanley Harding who died in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke".
- **STEVENS** - **Mrs Stevens**, Note - she is said to be sister in law of Ernest Watson, the Judicial Commissioner and lawyer also on the ship: Mrs Edith Christie Stevens, widow of Dr William Robert Stevens (who died in 1930) of 27 Gambun Rd. Ipoh, Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 1945[65] (Duntok (JDD): born c.1880-1 : she appears in local newspapers at a number of dog shows in Ipoh and Singapore during the 1930s: also a dog breeder of 'Gambun' kennels, 27 Gambun Road, Ipoh (SG, 8.12.35): she also must have been close to or a friend of ship's passenger Mrs. Myrtle Ward since they showed dogs in the cocker Spaniel class in Ipoh and Myrtle seemed to breed the same dogs: "... Mrs Stevens died in (Day this year [1945] after being in hospital (so called) for almost a year ..." (letter from Mrs Myrtle Ward to Mrs Darjorie Gooding, widow of Stanley Gooding, dated late 1945): she died at Loebok Linggau camp on 22.6.45 and after the war was reinterred (with the name Edith Christie Stevens - Corbett) in the Dutch cemetery, Kalibanteng at Semarang (Block/Row/grave number VIII-145): there was also a Dr Stevens on board but this does not appear to have been her husband: also Mrs Susie Stevens (below)
- **STEVENS - Dr Stevens?** In a letter dated 1945 from a survivor, Mrs Myrtle Ward, to the widow of Stanley Gooding who drowned after the sinking it is stated "... Dr Stevens and Ernest Watson were on the ship, and Mrs Eva Madden of Gaiping ... Ernest was wounded in the bombing... They got ashore in a lifeboat ...". If this is correct - and Mrs Ward did not just make a typographical mistake between the words 'Dr' and 'Mrs' in her letter - then it<sup>86</sup> poses a bit of a mystery. There is no record of a Dr Stevens being interned in the records of



Palembang Camp so it must be assumed that this 'Dr Stevens' died in the massacre on Radji Beach since it is implied he was in the lifeboat with Ernest Watson ( more research may clarify this assumption). By a process of elimination of other men with this surname known to have lived in Malaya and Singapore prior to the War, this is not the husband of Mrs Edith Christie Stevens (above) because her husband had died in 1930; nor is it George Christie Stevens of Kinta mines who evacuated to England with his wife (Sybil Petheridge) or Dr K.B.H Stevens of Dunlop's who died as a POW in Siam. This leaves just two other men noted in the secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper record compiled in Changi - a 'STEVENS G NEI?' and "STEVENS J. AODL AVOU?"

- **STEVENS - Mrs Susie Stevens** (listed as 'Siamese') and her baby (Christie) were noted on the List of Women internees in Palembang Camp prepared by Mrs E. Cross; Mrs Susie Stevens & son Christie survived the Vyner Brooke sinking and became Palembang, Sumatra internees. Released - she a Siamese national (JMD); she may have been a daughter -in-law of Mrs Edith Stevens above: there was certainly some family connection since Mrs Edith Stevens had a son (second son) named George Christie Stevens who was married in 1928 - but he was engaged to a Sybil Petheridge..
- **STEVENS - Christie - a baby:** Master Christie Stevens who was released from Palembang camp with his mother.
- **STEWART - Sister Esther Sarah Jean 'Stewie' Stewart**, NX 70936, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Jean was born on 15 October 1904 to Charles Lloyd Stewart and Sarah May Jean Stewart and some sources says came from Coolangatta. One summary of her life is that "....She was born in Brisbane but moved to Darlinghurst once she got older. She was a devout Presbyterian and trained as a nurse before enlisting in World War 2. Unfortunately she did not have any close relatives as her next of kin was a solicitor whom she had no relation with named Andrew Quir....(My assumption is that Jean had nothing holding her back from going on an adventure like travelling to Asia to work. She had no partner, no immediate family, she seemed like a very independent woman who was determined to make a change in her life and use her skills as a trained nurse to help injured soldiers..." ("Soldiers Story/Eulogy prepared by Alex White). Jean actually enlisted at Victoria Barracks, Sydney on 16 February 1942 and her pay book photo shows a cheery, smiling, open faced woman with light brown hair and hazel eyes (AWM). There is also a photo on ancestry.com of Jean as a younger woman, perhaps about 20 years of age, showing a sweet faced young woman. Jean Stewart was one of that group of fine, compassionate and noble women murdered by Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach on 16 February 1942 after the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke'. Soon after the surviving nurses were repatriated to Australia there appeared in the "Sydney Morning Herald" on 6.10.45 the insertion in their "Roll of Honour" column "... STEWART - A tribute of love to NX 70936 Sister Jean Stewart, dear friend of Mrs. Cathro (Urana), Mrs Cheek, and Mrs Edwards (Newcastle)..." which suggests that if Jean was short on family she certainly had good friends. Also interestingly, in contrast to the above summary of her life indicating that Jean was some sort of orphan, there appear in several newspapers after the War evidence of clear actions by Jean's mother to ensure her daughter was remembered and which give us a clear picture of the progression of Jean's life. Firstly ('The Courier - Mail' Brisbane, 29.1.46) the article "... Mother perpetuates memory of Heroic Army nurse Shot by Japs' ... Coolangatta and Tweed heads are perpetuating the memory of Patron Esther Stewart, of Brisbane whose last words when she and 20 other Army Nursing sisters were being slaughtered by Japanese machine guns on the beach at Banka Island, off Sumatra, four years ago were : **"Girls take it, don't squeal!"** ... Her mother, Mrs Jean Stewart of Dixon Street, Coolangatta, has presented a memorial electric clock to the local sub-branch of the Returned Soldier's league. At the unveiling service the President (Mr. A. Thomas) said that the only survivor of the massacre( Sister Vivien Bullwinkel)of adelaide0 had told Mrs Stewart of her daughter's last words as she and other nurses were being shot down.....The late Patron Stewart was born at New farm , Brisbane and was educated at the New Farm and Roma Schools. She entered the nursing profession at Goowoomba, and subsequently trained at the Diamantina Hospital Brisbane and the Royal Prince Alfred and crown Street Women's Hospital, Sydney. She enlisted at Bathurst when 40 and was at Singapore prior to its fall.....". The next record is soon after in the 'Tweed Daily' (20.2.46) in their "Roll Of





Honour" classified listings *"STEWART - In loving memory of NX 70956[sic on service number] Sister Esther Sarah Jean Stewart, only child of (Mrs Jean Stewart (nee Mann), who was murdered by the Japanese at Banka Island, February 1942. "Lest We Forget". If I could have my dearest wish, And all earth's treasures too: And pick from Heaven what I may, Dear Jean, I would ask for you.... (Dany a lonely heartache, many a silent tear, But always a beautiful memory. Of a daughter I loved so dear. I keep forever in my heart - Mother".*

Finally there is a report in the "Tweed Daily" (Durwillumbah, NSW 21.48) of the Coolangatta War memorial being built in front of the Council Chambers - the memorial to stand 11 feet high in the form of a cross and containing two drinking fountains and to be lit by electricity. Jean 'Stewie' Stewart( or as it appears 'Esther' to her mother) is also memorialised on the memorial to ANZ nurses who gave their lives in the Second World War at Kapunda memorial Gardens, Dutton park, South Australia: the 'Memorial garden for Nurses' at Augusta, WA. and the Kranji War Memorial in Singapore ( panel reference - Column 142)

- **STRANGE** - (Mrs Daphne Geraldine Strange, to Malaya 1940. Colonial Service Nursing Sister, General Hospital JB. Lost at sea 15.2.42 following sinking of the Vyner Brooke (JDD); also the official records that **Miss Daphne Geraldine Strange**, Malayan Nursing Service died on or about 14.2. 42 near the Banka Straits as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CORD Register D1, Serial 207, 1038 plus 13 on file of Miss M.B.N. Dustill) and the subsequent other official record of Daphne Geraldine Strange, civilian died on 14.2.42 as a result of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" (CWGC); there is also a report of Daphne Geraldine Strange of the Malayan Nursing Service (Johore) who was seen in the sea after the sinking of the "Vyner Brooke" (SG, 29.5.46 "Gracing of the Missing Continues") : she is also one of six nurses memorialised in the South Window of the church of St. Bartholomew the Lesser, London at St Bartholomew's Hospital these being nurses of St. Barts who lost their lives in World War Two: on 28.8.46 in the 'Straits Times' there is a report of Probate issued for Daphne Strange of Playfoot (Marfield near Tonbridge, spinster, to Frederick Griffith St Clair Strange, physician and surgeon to the amount of SG 608
- **SUER - Sister Ada" Dickey" Corbett Syer**, WFX 11105, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital [Note: the AWG incorrectly spells her middle name as 'Corbitt']. Ada Syer was born in Prahan, Victoria on 15 November 1910 to Francis Lionel Syer and Annie Corbett Syer (nee Smith). It looks like the family moved soon after her birth to the Dornington peninsula south of Melbourne (at the time of his death in 1948, as a result of a motor accident, Dr F.L. Smith's address was given as Marina Avenue, Dornington). Little is known of her early life except from electoral records which show her living in Melbourne aged 20 years in 1931 and then in Batman( north Melbourne) as a young woman during 1934-37. Soon after that she moved to Western Australia because a post war newspaper article ("The Daily News", Perth, 17.9.450 tells us that she was born in Victoria but enlisted in Western Australia, specifically "... Ada Syer who enlisted from Devonleigh Hospital[ it was a very small private hospital in a house at 9 Anstey Street, Cottesloe, at the time which included a nurses quarters, midwifery section and an operating theatre] - where she had been nursing for three years and had been living with her uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs W.G. Sutton, 18 Central Avenue, Claremont....Sister Syer's parents live in Dornington, Victoria..."Another newspaper, the "Standard" Frankton, Vic. ( 1.11.45), tells us that she enlisted in July 1941. Ada's story then continues from interviews contained in oral recordings at the AWG (there are three separate interviews, but the information here is sourced from AWG ID # SO 4057). Ada tells us that on the day of the evacuation from Singapore she went to Keppel harbour [part of the Singapore docks] and with the other nurses she boarded a launch which took them out to the 'Vyner Brooke'. Amongst her recollections is the important historical insight that "... a lot of infants needed feeding..." which is another confirmation that there was a sizeable group of small children on board - indicating that many of these babies and small children died in the sinking and at sea. She talks of the attack on the ship "...after lunch on Saturday - 2.00pm I think ..." and the ship zigzagging to evade the bombs before the lounge receiving a direct hit, one bomb going straight down the funnel and another hitting the bridge of the ship. She also says that the ship went down in 15 minutes and that the bombers came back and machine gunned the ship and survivors. She talks of there only being one lifeboat (?) and also the fact that before it sank she and other nurses went through every compartment and cupboard in the ship looking for people. Once in the sea she describes the



"... fairly swift current ..." and that "... the sea became choppy and rough ...". In the last known sighting of fellow passenger Sister Louvinia Bates, Ada recalls that on the night of the sinking, whilst she was swimming and holding onto debris, she heard Louvinia Bates call out and when Ada replied, Louvinia called back that her name was 'Bates' – but she was never seen again. Continuing her story of her time drifting at sea that night Ada recalls "... a woman, a Lancashire woman, had worked in munitions ... Margaret Guilfoyle from Lancashire ..." drifted up to her and then a man who said most incongruously "... how do you do .... My name is Zimmerman and I am just passing through ...". [Herbert Zimmerman reached Banka Island but died in internment – 'Margaret Guilfoyle from Lancashire' has never been identified]. Ada then came upon eight nurses holding onto a log of wood and they all tried to reach the lights [in fact the bonfire] they saw on the beach – where "... the girls ..." in the lifeboat had landed – but currents pushed them away and took them around the headland with a lighthouse into a much calmer harbour where a "Jap" landing craft went past – the Japanese invasion fleet was landing on Banka Island – they finally made it to Banka Island and then went into the jungle. Ada was captured by the Japanese with the other nurses and interned in Muntok cinema – she recalls it was whilst there that a Japanese soldier told Sister Hannah that "... we have just buried 25 women wearing that uniform ..." in a reference to the massacre on Radji Beach. (End of Tape 2 at the IWD). Ada survived internment in Muntok, Palembang, Muntok again and then finally the horrendous conditions of Belalau camp. Returning to Australia (via Singapore) after the war she was interviewed by many newspapers (see Grove newspaper archives) and then in 1947 she was a bridesmaid to the wedding of her brother Francis V. Syer to fellow nursing survivor Flo Trotter ("The Courier – Mail", Brisbane, 15.11.47). Soon after this happy event her father was killed in a motor accident in 1948 and then in the following year, when Ada is recorded on electoral rolls as living in Flinders, Victoria, her beloved mother also died. At this point in her life Ada seems to have wanted to get out of the mainstream of society, because she headed out to Broken Hill Hospital – in the isolated mining city in the far west of outback NSW – for work and whilst there in 1951 she passed her midwifery exams ("Barrier Miner", Broken Hill, 7.8.51); then by 1954 she was "... working as a nurse, 1000 miles west of Brisbane ... in conjunction with the Flying Doctor Service between Jundah and Windorah ..." ("The Courier – Mail", Brisbane 16.7.54) – this was contained in an article about Ada attending a debutantes part in London and then soon after Ada was reported being presented to the Queen as an Australian representative, presumably at a garden party. By 1958 she was living in Ryan a town near Mt Isa in the very isolated part of north western Queensland. This was followed by some twenty years of moving location every few years from Ryan to the Riverina area of South western NSW; to Moreton, Queensland; back to the Riverina; then Bradfield, NSW and Geelong Vic. It is not known whether she continued her nursing career at this – she would have reached retirement age by the early 1970s. The book 'ORB' tells us that Ada passed away in 1991.

- **GAIT – Sister Mona Gait**, MNX 76281, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Mona was the daughter of Robert Gait of Newcastle, NSW (AWD) and was born in about 1915. The photo of her in her Paybook records is of a happy, smiling young woman. Sadly little is known of the life of Mona Gait but 'ORB' (p.310) records that she trained at Royal Canberra Hospital and then was a theatre Sister at the Canberra community Hospital, Acton. She was murdered by Japanese troops with the other Australian Army nurses at Radji Beach on 16.2.42. In 1945 there is the newspaper record ("The Cessnock Eagle and South Maitland Recorder" 11.10.45) that because Sister Gait had received her training at the Cessnock Hospital the Board approved "... a memorial bed and plaque to be installed in the new maternity ward as a mark of remembrance ...". Mona is also remembered through the RSL Gait/Hayman Fund – income from the funds investments is donated to the University of Canberra to purchase books for its nurses Library. There is also the Mona Gait and Mary Hayman Plaque in Royal Canberra Hospital.
- **TEBBUTT – Major William Alston Tebbutt**, NX 70344, 8<sup>th</sup> Division HQ, AIF, was born in 1898. He was a Clerk at the start of the First World War and on 2.9.14 enlisted as a Private in the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, AIF, in which he served in the Trench Mortar Battery at Gallipoli; he was hospitalised to Malta for about nine months, promoted to Corporal and then sent<sup>89</sup> to France for Intelligence duties. In 1917 he was promoted to Lieutenant in the School of Instructors and in October 1917 his record shows him 'Missing Believed Wounded'. By the



time of World War Two he was a solicitor in Sydney and was called up in September 1940 and appointed Captain, in May 1941 he was appointed as Intelligence Officer with the AIF in Malaya and in November 1941 just prior to the Japanese invasion promoted to Major. He was married to Gwendoline Mary Tebbutt and lived at 14 Gladstone Road, Lindfield. During the bombing attack on the 'SS Vyner Brooke' he assisted in the lowering of the lifeboats – during which he noted that only two lifeboats remained undamaged – and also helped passengers climb down the rope ladders to the lifeboats. He later jumped into the sea and " ... swam about generally in the afternoon and nearing darkness , was near to this liferaft, to which were clinging large numbers of nurses and some civilians ... there was no room to cling a hand for support ..." – so he decided to make for shore which he reached some time before nightfall. He records he was captured by the Japanese after spending two weeks in the jungle on Banka island and taken to the Winning Labour Assembly Station. He was a POW until November 1945 when he returned to Australia on the 'Duntroon'. He compiled a very detailed five page report "Evacuation from Singapore and massacre of Australian Nursing Sisters and Others" ( this is now held in the Australian National Archives in Melbourne) whilst in Changi POW camp – its detailed and logical composition makes it a most valuable record (apparently he had interviewed others in Sumatran POW camps but had to destroy these reports for fear of being found by Japanese guards) and a reflection of his education and abilities honed from years as an intelligence Officer (NAA. B3856, 144/1/346).

- **GAU/GHAY** – Mrs Gay , died 21.11.44, is recorded in the List of British women internees at Palembang camp by Mrs. E. Cross: she is also listed by Dr Goldberg in her post war report as " ... Mrs Ghay, British married to Chinese ..." in her list of those survivors from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" who died at 'Dundok' (sic) (Goldberg NAA 472); in 1968 an Indonesian religious minister visited the derelict cemetery containing the graves of Duntok internees who had not been reinterred by the Dutch War Cemeteries group and noted down what was decipherable on the crosses above the graves. For Mrs Gay he recorded " ... **Mrs Nellie Ellen Gay**, 61 Rockshore Road, Singapore. Aged 40" (Duntok Peace Museum records): there is no 'Rockshore road' in Singapore, so it seems in fact that it is meant to be Rochor Road in central Singapore and Mrs Gay would have lived there with her husband, Dr Gay, before the evacuation in either one of the shop houses or one of the few multi level building scattered along the road: a clue to her husband appears to be in the record in the Malayan Volunteers Group website "... GAU Mrs Nellie Ellen 'Soo Wong' from London. Lived at 61 Rockshore Rd, Singapore. Wife of Dr Gay. Palembang Women's Camp 1942, Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 21.11.44 [40] (Sumatra): this record suggests that Dr Gay was in fact Dr. Gay Soo Woon who graduated as a medical doctor in Singapore during the 1920s and featured as a sportsman in athletics and other sports in Singapore newspapers: in the early 1930s he struck financial problems and was declared bankrupt , but was discharged in 1935 ( SFPDA 21.9.35); it is not clear when Nellie and Doctor Gay were married or what happened to Dr Gay because his last record in newspapers was in 1939: so the origin of Nellie Ellen and her maiden name remains unknown, but tragically she died in the horrendous circumstances of Duntok internment camp in 1944 when so many lost their lives as a result of starvation, disease, lack of medicine and brutal treatment by the Japanese.
- **GAU/GHAY** – in 'ORB' there are a couple of references , presumably drawn from the memoirs and reports of the Australian nurses by the author, of a Chinese doctor on Radji Beach – is this Dr Gay the husband of Nellie Ellen Gay of Rockshore ( Rochor Road??) or is it a Dr Chan.
- **GRENNERY** – Sister Annie Merle Grenerry, SFX 13419, 2/13 Australian General Hospital. Merle Grenerry was born on 31 March 1909, the eldest child of Edward Joseph Grenerry and Ann Vincent Grenerry – she had two sisters and two brothers. Her father worked in the Moonta mines in the district of South Australia named after these mines. Moonta, which is on the Yorke Peninsula to the west of Adelaide, was 'Australia's Little Cornwall' and many of the miners were Cornish. Merle was educated at Moonta Mines District High School and Moonta Technical School and by 1928 she was training as a nurse at Hutt Street Private Hospital, Adelaide. By 1933 she was working at the Queen Victoria Hospital<sup>90</sup> in Adelaide (in the Midwifery section) and passed her midwifery exam in May 1934 whilst at





the 'Queens Home'. As a triple certificated sister she was a very highly qualified nurse for her time! Shortly after during 1934 she is recorded as working at the Northfield Infectious Diseases hospital, Adelaide and in 1935 she was appointed Matron at the Moonta Jubilee hospital which was no doubt a source of great pride for her family there. Various records have her moving about in several different roles over the next five years – at Meningie hospital, Moorook Hospital as Bush district Nurse based at Gumbly Bay on the Eyre Peninsula and at Poochera Hospital in 1940. By the time she enlisted in 1941 she would have been one of the most experienced nurses in her relatively young age group in the AANS going to Malaya. She enlisted at the Wayville recruiting center in Adelaide on 7.2.41, posted to the AANS and within six weeks was in Singapore, arriving April 1941 (Flo Casson also volunteered at Wayville five weeks later but for some strange reason her Army service number is SFX 13418 – one digit earlier in the sequence?). After the sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' Merle reached the raft with Matron Paschke, Iole Harper, Gladys McDonald, Jess Dorsch, Mary Clarke and Betty Jeffrey. After Betty and Iole and few other nurses separated from the raft by sea currents Merle was last seen by Betty and Iole being swept away down the Banka Straits holding onto the trailing ropes of the raft along with Jess Dorsch, whilst Olive Paschke, Mary Clarke, Gladys McDonald sat together with Caroline Ennis cradling a small Chinese boy aged four years and a small English girl aged three years. This group on the raft were never seen alive again. To date all literature on the subject has the raft never seen again, however new information (ref. email November 2016, Dr Neil McGregor advising that his mother Sister Sylvia Muir who was on the 'Vyner Brooke' was told this in Singapore after release from internment in 1945) has come to light that in fact this raft with the remains of Sister McDonald and two other nurses was located several weeks later by a ship in the Indian Ocean. So Merle Grenerry must have lost her life in the sea or still on the raft as it was taken by the powerful sea current that run down the east coast of Sumatra into the Sunda Straits and out into the Indian Ocean. Merle's name is included on both the Moonta and Gumbly Bay Honour rolls and a photo graph of her is displayed in the Gumbly Bay RSL. The RSL have ensured that her memory is refreshed each year with the awarding of the Annie Merle Grenerry RSL Memorial medal for 'A' grade netball ("A Nurses Story" by Geoff Stewart and "Yorke Peninsular Country times" 3.5.16). In 2003 a street in Port Hughes, near Moonta in SA, was renamed Grenerry Place to recognise that family's contribution to the area as well as Merle Grenerry's sacrifice. She is remembered on the family memorial at Moonta cemetery with the caption "... presumed to have lost her life at the fall of Singapore ...".

- **GROTTOR – Sister Florence 'Flo' Elizabeth Trotter**, QFX 19077, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. To quote ORB she was "... a devout Christian, she was a Queenslander and one of a group of nurses from the Brisbane General Hospital who enlisted together in 1940 ..." (ORB, p.170). Florence Elizabeth Trotter was born in Sydney on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1915 (obituary notice "The Australian", 19.8.2002), the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.C. Trotter of Stanley Terrace, Garinga, Queensland. Early newspaper records show her passing the State scholarship examination in 1930 ("The Telegraph" 24.1.30) and the University junior Public Examination two years later. In 1932 Flo also completed her two year course of training at Renwick Hospital, Sydney ("The Manning River Times & Advocate", 10.12.32). Between 1938-40 she was very active socially in attending Balls and also organising these fundraising events for organisations such as the 'Nurses Assn & Hospitals' and the 'General Hospital Nurses AIF fund' in Brisbane. Writing home to her mother from Malaya ("Sunday Mail", Brisbane, 11.1.42), just before the Japanese invaded Singapore, Flo explained to her mother her experience with Xmas parties during which the nurses had to wear tin helmets, and her ongoing fundraising involvement - (plus a tour of a tin mine at Kuala Lipis). After the bombing and sinking of the 'Vyner Brooke' Flo was part of the group of nurses who, holding on to a plank of wood in the sea, once again showed a real attitude and began singing "We Are Off to See the Wizard [of Oz]". She made it to Banka Island safely and then endured and survived three and a half years of deprivation, neglect and starvation in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau internment camps. Ironically in 1943 there appeared a newspaper report in Australia stating that Florence and four other Queensland nurses were "... safe and well in Singapore ..." when in fact they were enduring the harsh conditions<sup>91</sup> of internment in Palembang, Sumatra! During internment there she, along with Betty



Jeffrey, set herself up as a hairdresser later saying that she "... trimmed and set hair for them ..." – being the wealthy Dutch internees in the camp. Flo survived the camps and was repatriated firstly to Singapore in a very emaciated condition and then home on the 'Danunda'. After her discharge from the AANS, Flo was awarded 'Mentioned in Despatches', and then joined the leading Brisbane department store 'Allen & Stark Ltd' as one of Australia's first industrial nurses ("The Courier Mail", 15.8.47). In 1947 she married the brother of her friend, and fellow 'Vyner Brooke' survivor, 'Dickey' Syer whose name was Frank Syer (Ada "Dickey" Syer was one of her bridesmaids) and they went on to have two daughters. She continued her nursing career in increasingly senior positions until she retired in 1976. In 1999 the Flo Syer (Grotter) Ward was opened at the Repatriation/Greenslopes Private Hospital in Brisbane. Aged 86 years she passed away on 31 July 2002 – her death being the subject of a public statement by the Minister of Veterans Affairs and an obituary in the nationally distributed "The Australian" newspaper 19.8.2002.

- **TUNBRIDGE – Mrs Phyllis H. Tunbridge**, wife of CSM Godfrey C. Tunbridge RASC, then POW Singapore. Aged 36 in 1942. Palembang Women's Camp, a Sumatra **internee**. Repatriated to India then on Britannic from Bombay, arriving Liverpool 12.4.46. Son Kerry. Family to Australia 1958 (JMD); Phyllis Tunbridge was the wife of Godfrey Cyril 'George' Tunbridge and she had worked in British Army Intelligence at Fort Canning prior to the Surrender of Singapore; George became a POW in Changi and then Japan; her account of her personal experience during the sinking is well told in the book "A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke" (pp.61-64) and derives from conversations with Phyllis late in life by her son Kerry Tunbridge; her landing on the beach at Duntok is also explained on p.188 of "On Radji Beach": during the last few days before the Surrender of Singapore, she had joined with a group of other servicemen's wives who were late in evacuating from Singapore and boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke". When the ship began to sink she jumped overboard and swam to the nearest raft which was already overcrowded. Along with other competent swimmers she held onto a rope and tried to tow the raft towards land which could be seen in the distance. Realising that they were fighting a losing battle with the strong currents Phyllis and Sister Nesta James struck out on their own towards the shore to get help. After many hours swimming against the tide they reached shore in the early hours of the morning after the sinking and made for Duntok lighthouse. Where they encountered a Malay family and almost immediately a Japanese patrol with fixed bayonets that entered the room at the lighthouse. After keeping them under guard all night the Japanese patrol suddenly departed early morning and Phyllis and Nesta also hurried off to search for other survivors and came across others on the nearby beach. Once again the survivors were captured by the Japanese and this time taken to Duntok to begin three and a half years of internment. Phyllis aligned herself with the Australian Army Nurses in the internment camps and a group of these women became lifelong friends. Kerry Tunbridge has said that his mother was a competent seamstress and was able to supplement her food ration by earning money from the local Dutch internees who, as in other Dutch East Indies camps, entered internment with vastly more money and possessions than the British internees. Phyllis died in 2003 aged 97 years of age – George died aged 98 years despite both having endured some of the worst conditions of imprisonment of any prisoners during World War Two (emails from Kerry Tunbridge 2016).

- **TWEDDELL – Sister Joyce 'Gweedie' Tweddell**, QFX 19070, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Joyce was the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Tweddell of Moreton Street, Norton/Norman park, Brisbane ("The Telegraph, Brisbane, 22.3.43). There is a good biography of Joyce in the 'Australian Womens register' and some of the following information is drawn from that source. She attended Petrie Terrace State School and Brisbane State High School, after school she worked and completed courses at Nunns & Grivett's Secretarial School before turning 18 years and thus became eligible to enter nursing. She loved to go bushwalking and made the three day trip on horseback to O'Reilly's Guest lodge many times. Training as a nurse in Brisbane she graduated from general training in April 1939 and joined the staff of Brisbane General Hospital (now Royal Brisbane Hospital). She also completed a Therapy Radiography course, which was unusual at the time because it was necessary to have studied physics and chemistry at school, and although this was a rare achievement for a female at the time, Joyce had done so. She



received her results for this course after she returned from the war. Her mother received her qualifications while Joyce was interned. She enlisted in the AANS on 17 January 1941 and was attached to the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AGF. There is a photo in "The Telegraph" 19.2.41 of 15 AANS nurses leaving Brisbane – many of these women were later to be on the 'Vyner Brooke' when it sank. According to 'ORB' Joyce entered the sea from the sinking 'Vyner Brooke' still wearing her tin helmet and she swam over to join the group of nurses holding onto a plank of wood who became famous for breaking into a version of the 'Wizard of Oz' song to lift their spirits. During this period in the sea Joyce went to the assistance of Sylvia Muir who was in danger of being dragged under by a panicking Chinese woman. Joyce was washed onto a beach on Banka Island on the following (Sunday) morning with the group of nurses who then headed towards the town of Duntok, only to be promptly captured by Japanese soldiers and interned in the town's old cinema. She endured three and a half years of extremely harsh and deprived internment in the Duntok, Palembang and Belalau camps – surviving but only just – on repatriation to Singapore at the temporary Hospital at St Patrick's School, Katong, it was considered that Joyce was only hours away from death from malnutrition and disease – malaria, beriberi, and chronic amoebic dysentery etc (ORB, p.290) After some recuperation in Singapore Joyce returned to Australia on the Hospital ship 'Manunda' arriving on 27 October 1945. She was admitted to the Margetate Convalescent Home on her return to Brisbane. She was discharged from the AANS in June 1946 and was employed by the royal Brisbane Hospital as second in charge of the radiography unit, and remained in that unit until her retirement as Queensland's Chief Radiographer. Joyce retired from nursing in 1979 and took to travelling in earnest, usually with Flo Syer (nee Trotter). She never married. In 1993 Joyce and six of the surviving POW nurses returned to dedicate a memorial on Radji Beach at Banka Island. The Royal Brisbane Hospital honoured Joyce by naming one of their new buildings after her – the Joyce Tweddell Building houses the Infectious diseases unit, Cancer Care unit, Radiation Oncology unit and the Bone Marrow transplant unit. Joyce died in Caloundra in November 1995 aged 79 years – she had (early 1970s) refused a nomination for the DBE as she believed all surviving POWs deserved one!

- **WADDLE – Mrs Kathleen Elise Waddle**, BA, born 17 January 1900. Educated Eggar's Grammar School, Alton, Hants, East London College, London University; Maria Grey Training College, London University. Go Malaya 1926 (Blue Funnel 'Sarpedon' 30.1.26) as European (Distress SS, Principal, Raffles Girls School, Singapore 1937-1942. Lost at sea 14.2.42 on the *Vyner Brooke* (JDD and Michael Freeman): Kathleen Elise Berry was born on 17 February 1900 in Shepherds Bush as the first of nine children to Frank and Emily Berry. Clearly a woman with intellect and drive she graduated from East London College, a School of the University of London, with a BA degree in Geography and Latin and then trained as a teacher at the Maria Gray Training College, Bishopsgate. At age 26 years, after qualifying as a teacher, Kathleen travelled to Singapore to take up a teaching position of European (Distress at Raffles Girls School. She also joined the choir at St Andrew's Cathedral and as a result met the Cathedral Organist Robert Waddle. On 14 February 1931 (note – the same day as the 'Vyner Brooke' was attacked 11 years later) she married electrical engineer Robert Alfred Waddle at St Andrews Cathedral, Singapore (SEPOA 16.2.31), and the reception was held by Miss Buckle, Headmistress of Raffles Girls School at the School. She then **Mrs Kathleen Elise Waddle** was a focussed and hard working teaching professional, with a full time job in an era when this nature of employment was a rarity for women in Singapore. Family film shows her confidently driving the family car at a time when women driving was a less common event. On 25 April 1937 Kathleen Waddle had a daughter, Jennifer Dorothy, delivered at Singapore General Hospital (SEPOA 26.4.37). Her daughter Jennifer recalls her mother as someone who was obliged to spend long hours involved with the School when she became Principal of Raffles Primary Girls School in about 1938 (the two previous Principals or headmistresses appear to have been Miss Buckle until 1923 and then Miss Richardson until 1937). However Kathleen always made time to read to her daughter at bedtime and take her to 'Robinsons' on a Saturday morning to hire jigsaw puzzles and buy many 'Dinky Toys' (daughter Mrs. Jennifer Freeman, New Zealand, February 2016) – not dissimilar to the modern professional woman<sup>93</sup>: contemporary photos (and family film) show her as a diminutive, dark haired and slightly





built woman (SG, 2.8.36): *Her husband was WADDLE RA [Robert Alfred] 'Bobby' b.1904. To Singapore 1926. Engineer, Electrical Dept, Singapore. Municipality. Late **Changi internee**. Organist St Andrew's Cathedral for 30 years. Wife Joan: daughters Jennifer & Sally. Jennifer evacuated on Narkunda, arriving Fremantle WA 24.1.42. Returned to Singapore post-war: City Electrical Engineer 1951-1958. Retired to the UJ 1958. Died 6.5.69 Williton, Somerset [he had married Joan (Dary Lloyds of the British Far East Broadcasting Service 11.47 Singapore)].* by the time of the Japanese invasion in December 1941 Kathleen Waddle had become a relatively long term resident of Singapore, part of the establishment, living at 583 Upper Serangoon Road and occupied a position of responsibility for a large school, so a quick departure with her daughter to safety would have been almost unthinkable. Her mother Emily Berry had come out from England in about 1939 to visit the family and, with the declaration of War in Europe had either decided to stay or was stuck in Singapore with limited travel options home. It is not surprising that by this time Kathleen had become socially well established and acquainted with the Singapore social icon, Mrs Dary Brown and her daughter Shelagh, with whom she later boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke". In January 1942 Mr & Mrs Waddle organised for Kathleen's mother, Mrs Emily Berry, and Jennifer to get a pass on the converted troop ship 'Narkunda' (which had arrived on 13 January with reinforcements from Durban) and the ship left about 24 January 1942 for Fremantle. At this stage most people in positions of authority were not even contemplating leaving Singapore. Jennifer and her grandmother duly departed on 16 January 1942 (naval-history.com) or a day or two earlier according to some passengers, and arrived in Fremantle, WA, a matter of days later. On 12 February Kathleen Waddle boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" when it became apparent all was lost in Singapore: passenger Shelagh Brown told Kathleen's family that she last saw her on the deck of the ship at the time it was bombed: another source "RN casualties" (ADSD 358/2875) records "... (Mrs Waddel [sic], Upper Serangoon Road, Singapore, drowned when leaving 'Vyner Brooke'; another record - the original handwritten casualty lists compiled in Changi POW camp state "... Waddle (Wardle?) Dr/Upper Serangoon Road, S'pore. Drowned leaving Vyner Brooke. At Sea..."; this may have answered the fate of Kathleen Waddle but there also exists, in a handwritten list of people who died in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and the aftermath (the list appears to have been compiled in Palembang Camp during 1942-43), another record showing at the top of the list "... WADDLE MRS. RAFFLES GIRLS SCHOOL, S'PORE. LAST SEEN IN LIFEBOAT, WOUNDED, HEAD & HAND ..."; this raises the strong and awful probability that Kathleen Waddle was amongst the wounded who landed in the first lifeboat on Radji Beach with First Officer Sedgeman and Irene Drummond and died on 15 February 1942 at the hands of the Japanese troops, either as one of the (up to five) women 'stretcher cases' lying in the shade of the trees at the top of the beach, or (less likely because it seems to have been that wounded soldiers were placed in that hut) amongst the half dozen to badly wounded lying in the 'fishermen's hut' at the top of the beach which is also mentioned (ORB p.217) as being at the top of the beach: the official record in the Colonial Office Record of Deaths records "... (Mrs Kathleen E. Waddle, Principal Raffles Girls School, died on or about 14.2.42 in the Banka Straits following the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke". Source C - in - CALFSEA. (CORD. Reg. 01, Folio 140, Serial 822); she is also memorialised by the CWGC as having died on 14 February - it is not known if these organisations were aware of the misfiled List (in the file of "HMS. Giang Bee" documents at the National Archives) mentioned above and compiled in Palembang camp.

- **WALLER** - a list compiled in Palembang Internment Camp of those who appear to have died (see above Introduction for copy of document) in the sinking of the ship or events afterwards shows "... (Mr. & Mrs. Waller, P & T Dept., Singapore"; no person with the name Waller has been found in pre war newspapers, directories (1935-40) etc. as having been employed specifically by the 'P & T Dept, Singapore' - which this researcher takes to mean the 'Post & Telegraph Department, Singapore', which was a significant entity in pre War years and also operated until the actual fall of Singapore with additional roles for wartime. Miscellaneous records do show a Mr Keith Inet Waller of AO (Malaya) Ltd, Tanjong Gualang, Perak marrying a Miss Dorah Leila Hoeden of Penang in 1940 (SEPDA 25.6.40) and then after the retreat from Malaya to Singapore a newspaper advertisement in January 1942 "Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Mrs Keith Waller of Perak who left



recently for Singapore to get in touch with (Mrs. C. Westerhout, 148 (Michael's Road, Singapore ...." (SFPDA 14.1.42); but there is no link to the "SS. Vyner Brooke", Banka Island, as internees or death records for this couple and the 'P. & T.' link does not appear to exist. One other reasonable possibility for the identity of this couple arises from the document compiled on 18 sheets of 'Jeyes' toilet paper by the internees in Changi during 1942-43 on thousands of European men and what the internees knew of their fate. In this microscopically written, intriguing and very credible and accurate document there is the listing of "WALLER & LEWIS - POSTAL CENSOR - LEFT W WIFE 11/2 (EMP STAR?) ...". The Changi internees were very clear on his unusual name and occupation, but seem unsure as to whether this man and his wife actually left on the "SS. Empire Star" which departed Singapore in the last chaotic convoy on 11 February 1942, at a very similar time to the "SS. Vyner Brooke". The next link to the couple listed in the possible death list from the "SS. Vyner Brooke" is that the researcher believes that the wartime role of Postal Censor was under the control of the 'Post & Telegraph Department' in Singapore. Historical references show that one 'E. Lewis Waller' was a somewhat well known stage and film actor from the UK who got into financial trouble (bankruptcy) and looks to have had a failed marriage to an English actress well before the war. His name later pops up in Singapore newspapers during the 193-40 period as a producer for plays in Singapore - placing him in that city after the war in Europe began - so it is not a long coincidence to see him taking employment as Postal Censor as the war began in the Far East and travel became very difficult to return to the UK. With evidence that many men wanting to escape from Singapore during the final few days overcame the restrictions against men (and the prioritisation of women and children) boarding ships by offering their services as stokers and engineers in the engine rooms of the little merchant ship which had lost their local Chinese and Malay crews, it is relevant to note that the " 'Who's Who' in the Theatre " [Google Books] gives a few details of Edmund Lewis Waller including that in younger days he was an engineer (JOD). There are no records of E. Lewis Waller in records available on the internet for the years following 1941 - but one possible contradiction to the identity proposed here is that on the ancestry.com website someone has posted a photo of Edmund Lewis Waller and gives his year of death as 1951. Against this there is a Probate entry for an Edmund Waller who died in 1941. Anyone with knowledge that E. Lewis Waller survived the fall of Singapore and lived until 1951 would be very welcome to contact this researcher and correct the entry!

- **WARD - Mrs Dyrle Ward:** her husband was "Leonard George William Ward, B.Sc. he was born in 1903 in London. Educated University College, Nottingham. To Malaya 1928 as Assistant Electrical Engineer FMS KL. By 1940 Executive Electrical Engineer, Electrical Dept FMS KL. Lt FMSVF Light Battery POW Singapore to Thailand. Died in captivity 31.7.43[40] Thailand. Grave at Chungkai. Mentioned in Despatches. Wife (Dyrle [later a teacher in SA], she died in August 1962 at Westville, Natal SA. She was a survivor of the Vyner Brooke sinking 15.2.42. Interned in Sumatra and repatriated to West Bridgford UK (JODD)": the first mention of Mrs Ward in Malayan newspapers is her arrival (or possibly return from 'home leave') in 1933 with Leonard on the 'Ranpuna' (SG. 13.6.33); during 1933-34 she is also recorded as successfully breeding and showing dogs at the Central & South Perak Dog Show (her dog 'Violet of Gambun' came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the Black Cocker Spaniel section after two dogs shown by her sister-in law and fellow passenger Mrs E. C. Stevens) and the Perak and North Malaya Dog show in Ipoh (the best Red and Golden Cocker Spaniel was hers by the name of "Brynegold Robinhurst" (Mrs. Stevens' dogs were prolific winners at this show) and Dyrle also had a Cocker Spaniel puppy for sale at \$1,000 !!!!; by 1936 she seems to be more focussed on lawn tennis and was in the semi - finals of the womens doubles in the Perak LGA championships then later that year she appears in the singles championships for the Malayan LGA; in 1937 Dr & Mrs. Ward are on the 'Rajputna' from Singapore to Europe: no doubt she had strength and athletic ability which is why she sounded confident of her own ability and survival in the sea after the sinking of the "SS"<sup>95</sup> Vyner Brooke" in the letter mentioned below: almost all that is known of Dyrle Ward's



experiences during and after the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" are derived from two letters which she wrote to Mrs (Darjorie Gooding and her daughter Pat Gooding in late 1945, Darjorie was the widow of Stanley Gooding and the Gooding and the Ward families had been close friends prior to the war. In the letter dated late 1945 Myrtle recounts that she had been in the Malayan Auxiliary Service (first aid) in Singapore but by 10 February 1942 *"... it was impossible to get petrol, even to get to the First aid post ..."* she says that she had been living in a house at Fort Canning, but had moved with eight others to *"... Jimmy Strachan's flat"* and slept on a settee in the passage way. Others slept on the dining table and on the floor. On Wednesday 11 February the MAS people told her to *"... get out if she could ..."* and she tried but only received the same answer of *"... no ships, no information ..."* that had frustrated so many civilians attempting to leave Singapore in February 1942. On Thursday at about 2.30 pm she heard quite casually that a ship was leaving and went to get her exit permit - Stanley Gooding decided at about then to also leave. She boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and when it was bombed and machine gunned she recalls *"... We had previously been warned that anyone who could swim would have to, if anything happened, as there was not enough room in the 6 boats for everybody. I went down a rope and waited in the water"* [researchers note - she was waiting for Stanley Gooding whom she supported in the sea because he was unable to swim and clearly ill or wounded from the bombing because he slipped into unconsciousness after a few minutes in the water and died several hours later]; Myrtle continues in her letter *"... We were wrecked about 10 miles off the island of Banka and there are some very strong currents there and we were swept about a good deal. I hoped that the two lifeboats that reached the shore would come out again to look for survivors, but they didn't. When it began to get dark I was still about 5 miles out and I had to let Stanley go. I managed to get in at about 3 o/c the next morning and spent the night on the beach. Just as it got light two raft-loads of Australian nursing sisters came in. Later we found that the Nips had landed during the night, so in the afternoon we decided to give ourselves up, as we heard there were gunning parties of Japs wandering about. Dr Stevens and Ernest Watson were on the ship and Mrs Eva Madden of Gaiping. I believe you knew her. Ernest was wounded in the bombing. They got ashore in a lifeboat. A party went inland to get help. The Japs found the rest on the beach - bayoneted the stretcher cases - Dr Watson was among these - and the Japs made the rest who could walk go back into the sea and shot them as they went. One man and a girl fell when they heard the shots and shammed dead and eventually came into camp..."* Myrtle was interned in Muntok and Palembang camps for the remainder of the War. (Copies of letters supplied by Ronanyne Grant, UK, February 2016); after the War she migrated to Natal in South Africa, worked as a teacher and died there in August 1962.

- **WARMAN - Dr Discha Warman**, appears to have been a White Russian, born c.1908-12, who had come from Russia to Singapore via periods of working in Shanghai and Ipoh during the 1930s: the Warman family had probably left Shanghai in 1940 when the Japanese had surrounded that city and European residents had been forced to evacuate to Hong Kong on at least one occasion, and moved to Ipoh where he had clearly established a good reputation as a ladies hairdresser (SG. 17.1.42 and St. 22.142, then 29.1.42), before once again being forced to evacuate his family ahead of invading Japanese. In Singapore (where he probably arrived after the evacuation of Ipoh in December 1941), Discha began working as a skilled ladies hairdresser at the Heeran Beauty Salon, 240 Orchard Road, Singapore. Interestingly this was the building that the Armstrong family who were also passengers on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" lived in prior to the evacuation and it raises the question as to whether the two families had got to know each other before deciding to simultaneously escape from Singapore: the book 'ORB' presents the family story differently (it is not clear what sources the author has used for the Warman story).





possibly the memoirs of the Australian Army nurses), that the Warmans were Polish Jews who had fled to Russia ahead of the advancing German Army and then decided to "... continue east through the Urals, across Siberia to Manchuria and then south to Shanghai..." (pp.3-4), the book continues with an account of the fate of (Dr. (Discha Warman "... When the first bomb hit, little Discha Warman's father just snapped, ran out onto the deck and jumped overboard. He disappeared below the waves and was not seen again..." (p.152); this account is similar to that in 'WB&W' (p.56) which appears to be based on the recollections of passenger Eric German and slightly amplifies the circumstances in which (Discha Warman died "... when the bombs started falling his father jumped overboard in terror and at once began to drown because he couldn't swim. His wife screamed for assistance and a British soldier jumped in after him, but when the soldier reached the frantic man he was locked in a strangling embrace. Both disappeared ..." - this also aligns with Eric German's recollections in "By Eastern Windows" (p.142); the researcher can only reflect on the fact that (Discha Warman, if Jewish, had possibly experienced terror at the hands of the German authorities, then certainly the fear inspired under bombing by the Japanese in Shanghai, possibly again in Ipoh and then certainly in Singapore for two months - today we would factor in the effects of PTSD to understand behaviour when contemplating the way (Discha Warman reacted when the ship was bombed.

- **WARMAN – Drs Civiah (Civah?) Warman** had experienced the same insecurity, displacement, fear and shock as her husband over a long time in the same cities and circumstances, and it is not surprising that she is said to have collapsed on the deck of the ship when her the bombs struck and her husband leaped overboard to his death in front of her (WB&W, p.56); in addition it appears that she was unable to speak English so it would have been even more stressful when orders and instructions were being given in English there are two conflicting stories in published books on the death of (Mrs Warman – firstly and it appears with little credibility is that (Mrs Warman died somewhere between her husband leaping into the sea and the final check of the ship for living passengers who could be moved into the sea, one of the nurses (unnamed) appears to have given foundation for this account in ORB (p.157) "... There were also a number of bodies and one of the nurses recognised one as being Mrs Warman ...". the basis for such an error in identity appears to arise from there being several White Russian women on board as described by Ralph Armstrong in ASCO&VB (p. 37) "... I then looked over and saw that one of the ladies we had been talking to had been hit by shrapnel, and was lying in a crumpled heap – dead. She was a White Russian, I think ...". This White Russian person's death does not align with the facts of (Dr & (Mrs Warman being on the ships outside deck and the events surrounding (Dr Warman's death; so the more accurate report involving (Mrs Warman is that of Eric German, with (Mrs Warman collapsing on to the deck and thereafter either swimming in the sea to either a lifeboat or life raft. Eric German's chapter in the book 'BYE' (p.146) records that on the beach the first night amongst some 70 survivors was "... (Mrs Warmen [sic] was among them, reunited with her son (Discha, ...". This means that (Mrs Warman and (Discha were in the group led by (Dr Dominguez and accompanied by the two ex 'HMS Prince of Wales' sailors Wallace Cate and George Noble (both from St John's, Newfoundland when they left the beach - an hour or so prior to the arrival of the Japanese troops intent on murder and leaving no witnesses. German later recounts how the women held in the first internment camp (the Duntok Cinema) were soon shifted into (Duntok Prison and "... There (Discha Warmen's [sic] mother died of pneumonia, leaving her little son an orphan ...". This account is repeated by Lavinia Warner & John Sandilands in WB&W (pp. 77-78) with the slight clarification that the women internees were relocated from the (Duntok Cinema to the coolie 'barracks' next to the (Duntok Prison and it was there that (Mrs Warman passed away: in fact in an unidentified (as to author although it is



signed at the top by a 'W. Chivers') but very credible list in the files of the UK Archives of "British Women and Children in Palembang" it is recorded that there was a " (Mrs. Warman ( died at Duntok 9/3/42)" followed by the listing of "Warman (Discha"(sic): also another record states " ... *Mrs. M. Warman, died of abscess of lung on 8<sup>th</sup> March 1942 at Duntok, Bangka island ...* " ( Civilian casualty list in UK Archives).

- **WARMAN – Master Isidore Warman**, mistakenly called 'Discha' by the internees because as his mother passed away she called out " ... *Discha, Discha ...*" and the nurses at the time believed she was calling out for her infant son (conversation with Discha Warman 2016); he was born in Shanghai on 5 February 1939 when his parents were living there ( Iz Warman email 28.11.16); three year old Isidore had been on the deck of the ship when the bombing started and his father leaped overboard and then, with his mother distraught on the deck, surrounding passengers are said to have thrust the little boy into the arms of American Eric German (who had just clambered back onto the ship from the sea after assisting with the launch of the first lifeboat to get away,) later recounted to William MacDougall whilst in interment camp that he told the child " ... *Don't be afraid. We're just going to jump into the water for a nice, cold swim ...* " (BJE p.143) - the story continues that " ... *Calmly Discha put his arms around Eric's neck. Eric held his hand over the child's mouth and nose and jumped. Discha was quiet and smiling when they bobbed to the surface and they laughed. Eric swam to the nearly submerged lifeboat and placed the child inside ...*" [this was the lifeboat with First Officer Bill 'Ginger' Sedgeman in command]; the lifeboat was barely afloat, crowded and ringed with people clinging to the looped handlines on the sides. On board were Sedgeman and Germann and Matron Irene Drummond. Three life rafts drifted near and were attached for towing purpose " ... *everyone except rowers then was transferred to the rafts and the long pull began to Bangka island, just visible in the distance ...*" (BJE p.144). So little Isidore was in the first lifeboat away and reached Radji Beach where there were already a sizeable group of survivors. He would have been alone with the lifeboat survivors through that Saturday until reunited with his mother some time on the Sunday (BJE p.146). About 9.00am on Monday morning (16th February 1942) it was decided that the civilian women and children, led by an elderly Australian miner (probably John Gallagher Dominguez) and two "HMS Prince of Wales" sailors (Wallace Cake and George Noble who were both from Newfoundland and who both survived the war) whose arm wounds prevented them from being stretcher bearers, should head off to Duntok. As described in ORB (p.209) " ... *after walking for 20 minutes, a number of children were footsore and tired, so the group sat down to rest a few minutes in a jungle clearing. As they were resting, Bill Sedgeman led a party of armed Japanese soldiers, accompanied by an officer, past them. Although both groups looked at each other, no words were exchanged ...*" So Iz Warman (Discha) survived the terrible events on Radji Beach by one hour! Isidore would be firstly taken with his mother and the other women to the Duntok Cinema where the Europeans were being held and then after a few days to the coolie 'barracks' beside the Duntok prison where his mother died from an abscess of the lung or pneumonia. The next three and a half years were spent under the care of a British nurse in Duntok, Palembang and Loebok Linggau internment camps – it is a matter of wonder and a tribute to the women caring for him that Isidore survived these terrible camps when so many adults died. An email from Iz Warman ( 28 .11.16) clarified to the researcher that he is vague on the events before the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" and , understandably for a small boy who experienced the most extreme trauma in his early and formative years , he has " ... *no memory before the age of ten. So all I know is from books and all the people involved ...*". Iz explains that from the time of entering internment " ... *till August, 1945 I was taken care of* <sup>98</sup> *by Mary Jenkin. After she passed way* [researcher note: Mary Jenkin, BSc, from Singapore and possibly also on the "SS. Vyner Brooke", whose husband Charles an agent for P. & O. had died in



*(Duntok ion 17.11.43, was aged about 50 and died in Belalau on 16.8.45. She is described in internment as a " ... very brave woman.-quiet and unable to cry..." I was in the care of Gladys Cullen [researcher note: (Miss Sarah Gladys Cullen, a Presbyterian missionary). Those two woman and (Danie Colley [note: (Mrs (Danie Freda Colley, a school teacher who had been on the (Data Hari], my teacher during internment, were three of fifteen interned together. Five survived. I am forever indebted to them. After liberation, Gladys took me with her to England. After about six months, I moved in with a childless couple who lived across the street whom I liked very much. We lived in a small town called Bebington near Liverpool. Bessie and Jack Bedson sent me to a private school and took wonderful care of me. After about a year and a half, they started adoption proceedings but somehow my uncle and aunt, still living in Shanghai learned that I was still alive. They sent passage and I boarded a ship back to Shanghai. In (March 1949 the five of us, including two cousins arrived in San Francisco where we settled. (My uncle and aunt became (Dom and Pop and cousins became my brother and sister. Brother Jack and sister Sheila are still alive and live in New York and California.....". Goday Iz Warman lives happily in Florida, USA and reports there are lots of children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren!*

- **WATSON** – a handwritten list which appears to have been compiled in Palembang internment camp during 1942-43 shows "... **Drs. Watson**, Kuala Lumpur ...". It is possible that this is a confusion with (Mrs Stevens, who was the sister in law of Ernest Watson: but it is also possible that if Ernest Charles Watson (below) was married that it was his wife. Other than that there were several other (Mrs Watson mentioned in (Malayan newspapers that have not been accounted for – (Mrs. J. G. Watson of Kepong and VP of the Kuala Lumpur Guiding Assn. ( 1934); (Mrs. R. G. Watson of Kuala Lumpur (1937); and (Mrs C. G. Watson wife of (Dr Watson of Islay, Kerr & co., (1939)
- **WATSON – Dr Ernest Charles Watson** : the summary in Jonathan (Doffatt's '(Malayans' database is "...**WATSON E.C.** [Ernest Charles] A Judicial Commissioner in Perak till 1927 then Barrister, Advocate & Solicitor, Adams & Allan, Penang then Watson & Co. 33 Station Rd, Ipoh. Dead on the beach on Banka Island following the sinking of the Vyner Brooke 15.2.42..." (JDM); the earliest record of Ernest Watson, who had been born in 1874 and educated at Shrewsbury, is his arrival in (Malaya in 1920 from the Gold Coast in Africa (where he had spent most of his career) and culminated in his position as a Puisine Judge in that country. He arrived in (Malaya in 1920 to take up the role of Judicial Commissioner at Kuala Lumpur ( SG. 26.6.20 and SG. 4.8.20); he made frequent appearances as a judge in Ipoh and Penang during the early 1920's and also at Appeal Court sittings; in 1924 he is reported as on leave from a position as Judicial Commissioner, Perak; by 1926, and at the age of 56 years when most '(Malayans' of the time were preparing for retirement he said he would be resigning to take up practice at the Bar ( SEPDA. 9.9.26); admitted to the Bar in 1927, he loses public profile apart from annual holidays to China and Japan during the mid /late 1930s with his wife ( (Malaya Tribune 29.1.37 reports him on the German liner 'Potsdam' visiting Shanghai where they had friends) when he was in his 60's and the fact that in 1941 he was Chairman of the Perak Golf Club; by the time he boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" in February 1942 Ernest Watson was 68 years of age and one of the oldest passengers on the ship; the secret record compiled in Changi civilian internment camp on sheets of 'Jeyes' toilet paper states, "... **WATSON E C IPOH GOLF LEFT WITH SISTER IN LAW MRS A STEVENS** ...", which is correct because there were two (Mrs Stevens also as passengers on the ship (BPPL); we must also assume that (Mrs E C Watson was not on board because there is no reference to her; from reading survivor accounts in '(ORB' and '(BJE" it appears that Ernest Watson was wounded in the bombing and machine gunning of the ships and was then loaded into the first lifeboat to get away; this is specifically confirmed in a post War ( 1945) letter from (Mrs Myrtle Ward, to the widow of Stanley Gooding who drowned after the sinking, which states "... (Dr Stevens and Ernest Watson, were on the ship, and (Mrs Eva (Madden of (Taiping ... Ernest was wounded in the bombing... They got ashore in a lifeboat ..."; so he landed on Radji Beach with others and





then became a 'stretcher case' – one of about six lying under the trees at the edge of the jungle. After the first group of men had been taken by the Japanese soldiers away and executed, the Japanese Officer and two soldiers reappeared and ordered the remaining ten men (including First Officer Sedgeman and the US civilian Eric Germann) to march towards a promontory on the beach. Quoting from 'BJE', which appears to be the only clear account of what happened to Ernest Watson, William McDougall has written that according to the recollection of Eric German (p.147) "... Germann and Sedgeman were ordered to lift the old magistrate, who had been sitting up in his stretcher, and carry him between them. Slowly the doomed prisoners walked towards the promontory....they had difficulty getting him over the pile of rocks and driftwood and the officer motioned them to leave the magistrate. They placed him so he was sitting leaning against a log and shook hands with the old man. "Goodbye", they told Watson and climbed down the rocks to the beach....". Eric Germann survived the massacre on the beach that followed and on the following day, after hiding in the jungle severely wounded, he returned to the scene of the atrocity on Radji Beach to find "On the pile of rocks and driftwood, still leaning against the log where he had been placed, was the old magistrate. His skull had been bashed in. Flies buzzed around the mess that had been his head ... The stretchers also were where they were left and in them the patients lay staring sightlessly at the sky. Two stretchers were empty. One had been the old magistrate's and the other the wounded soldier Kingsley ..." (BJE pp. 140-153): this is confirmed in the little known list compiled in Palembang camp by the internees of those who they believed had died, it states "... Judge E. C. Watson, Ipoh, left on the beach. Dead. ...". [The researcher of this memorial document makes no apology for including this brutal description of the scene on Radji Beach that day – this is the reality of what happened to everyone on the beach and it should not be sanitised because it is my view that to do so would disrespect the ordeal those people endured.] What finally happened to Ernest Watson's body is unknown. It goes down in history as one of hundreds of thousands of totally unwarranted Japanese atrocities against an unarmed, defenceless civilian. There is, unusually for a relatively prominent man in Malaya, no CWGC or Colonial Office Record of Death for Ernest Charles Watson – a stalwart member of the Colonial Judiciary whose life was savagely taken in a psychopathic manner from him on a beautiful lonely beach in the tropics.

- **WATTERS/WATTERS - PRYCE** - (Mrs Grace 'Anna' Watters- Pryce, daughter of (Mrs Resie Armstrong. Survived Vyner Brooke sinking with baby son (Marc. **Sumatra internees**. Marc survived. Died in captivity 13.4.45 [28] Belalau, Sumatra.(SU(M); her wedding to Corporal Austin Watters – Pryce, RAF, is reported in the SFPDA of 22.4.41 with an excellent photo of the happy couple; her story is also told in Ralph Armstrong's book "A Short Cruise on the Vyner Brooke"; Grace was a vivacious and fun loving young woman ( p. 28 ASCOVVB) and, together with her little boy 'Marc', she lived with her parents and family in the Heeren Building on the corner of Orchard Road and Cairnhill Road in Singapore and the book states " Gracie's husband was a cheerful young Irishman serving with the Royal Air Force ..." ( p.13) and apparently called 'Paddy': Paddy apparently was promoted to Flight Sergeant in early January 1942, was being given flying lessons because the Air force was running out of pilots in Singapore and was to be transferred to Palembang; she and her little son managed to remain with her family members after the sinking and subsequent internments in Muntok, Palembang, Muntok and Belalau: she died in the terrible Belalau internment camp, aged 28 years of age and her grave sadly became abandoned after the War – SEE ARMSTRONGS OF SRI LANKA
- **WATTERS-PRYCE** – Sivo (Marc Anthony Dorian Lloyd Anatole Raoul Watters - Pryce, also known as Marc, son of (Mrs Grace Anna Watters- Pryce and Austin Waters-Pryce was born 31.3.38 in Singapore (above) : Sivo/Marc was three years old when he boarded the "SS. Vyner Brooke" with his mother ,aunt, grandmother and teenage uncle Ralph Armstrong; his family managed to keep him with them in the water after the sinking and they all clambered aboard one small raft together with June Bourhill and a White Russian woman [this researcher wonders if this was in fact the mother of Discha Warman who could speak no English?]. he experienced four days on that raft without food or water , blistered by the sun, weak and disorientated they landed at a mangrove covered beach on an island 100 between Sumatra and Banka Island where the family came across two local fishermen who ( for the price of Grace's wedding ring ) led them around the coast closer to habitation .



After three more days at the fishermen's huts they were taken (once again for the price of a gold ring) to Banka Island and the village of Kobe. Later taken to Pangkalpinang they received medical treatment for some weeks before being taken to Muntok and internment. Marc experienced internment with his family firstly in Muntok, then Palembang, Muntok again and finally the truly awful camp at Belalau: during this time he had, as a boy of only six to seven years of age experienced terrible privations of Sumatran internment camps the death of firstly his grandmother Mrs Theresa Armstrong and then his aunt Dixie at Muntok during their 'second' internment there and finally his mother Gracie soon after reaching Belalau: he was then cared for by an Australian, Mrs D. Blake, until the end of the War: his young uncle Ralph Armstrong found him again at the Belalau women's camp after the Japanese surrender in August 1945: after a little delay they managed to leave via the town of Loebock Linggau some seventeen kilometres away in September 1945, flying to Singapore to be reunited with Marc's grandfather Mr H. W. Armstrong who had been hidden by a Chinese family in Singapore during the War (ASCOVB) it seems that Marc travelled to the United Kingdom some time after the war and reunited with his father Austin Watters-Pryce: in 1974 he married Valerie Thomas in Lancashire with his father in attendance: he still lives in England

- **WIGHT - Sister Rosetta Joan Wight**, VFX 61329, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Rosetta Wight was born on 3 December 1908 the daughter of Mr & Mrs L.R. Wight of Fish Creek, Victoria - a small rural town (these days a population of about 8000 south east of Melbourne in Gippsland. Nothing is known of her early life or schooling, but there is a record in "The Argus" (Melbourne newspaper) on 30.3.35 that Rosetta J. Wight passed her Nurses Board exams whilst at Bendigo Hospital in central Victoria. Rosetta later enlisted with the AANS on 8.8.41 and her paybook photo shows a cheery faced country girl. There is also another photo in the AWM of Rosetta with other 2/13<sup>th</sup> AGH nurses at a concert party at St Patricks School in Singapore plus another photo (1941-42) in front of an Orchard House in Malaya (could be Singapore) with two other AANS nurses. There is little else of her life recorded until the attack on the 'Vyner Brooke' and there is a long account of her suffering during the last two days of her life which is quoted here because it is appropriate to understand what was inflicted on this dedicated nurse whose sole purpose in life was to care for others. In the book 'ORB' page 153 immediately after the bombs hit the ship it states "... the worst of the injuries appear to those suffered by Sister Rosetta Wight, who was one of the older nurses, and Clare Halligan. The two nurses had been in the rear of the saloon near the passageway to the cabins when the bomb landed behind them. Both had been facing towards the front of the boat and suffered deep shrapnel wounds to the back of their thighs and buttocks, wounds that penetrated to the bone ..." - unable to move they were half carried to the upper deck by fellow nurses and were loaded into the second lifeboat with the frail elderly and mothers with children. Tragically this lifeboat overturned as it landed in the sea and all aboard had to hold onto the upturned craft until around 2200hrs on that (Saturday) night when it was washed ashore at least a couple of kilometres from where the first lifeboat had rowed ashore at Radji Beach and where its occupants had lit a beacon bonfire. Bivian Bullwinkel and Jimmy Miller walked from the second lifeboat to the bonfire location to get help for the injured (this request got minimal support from those at the bonfire, only in the form of Eric German and a young English teenager). Rosetta was one of the more seriously hurt and like Flo Casson was unable to walk because the shrapnel injuries had probably caused nerve damage, even fractures (ORB, p.200). In agony Rosetta and Flo were half carried, half dragged by a small rescue party led by Jimmy Miller and it took over two hours to cover the couple of kilometres to reach the bonfire location this time it had taken Vivian and Jimmy about half an hour the first time. Rosetta appears to have been placed on the high side of the beach in the shade of the coconut trees on the edge of the jungle that night, during the following day and night and then until the morning of 16 February when the Japanese soldiers arrived to carry out the atrocity against those left on the beach. When the Japanese ordered the nurses into a line facing the sea Rosetta and other wounded nurse were helped by their friends and supported towards the right hand end of the line near Irene Drummond who had been supervising their care - this group of noble caring women fell together under the impact of the Japanese machine gun bullets and the life of this open faced country girl from Gippsland was taken at Radji



Beach.. Rosetta Wight is commemorated 9 along with 28 other 'Royal Australian Army Nursing Service' personnel) on the Bendigo Base Hospital Honour Roll located at Pall Mall, soldiers Memorial institute, Bendigo, 3350.

- **WILTON – Sister Dona Margaret Wilton**, VEX 61225, 2/13<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital. Dona was born on 8 August 1914 at Hamilton Hospital to Frederick (a blacksmith) and Christina (a nurse) Wilton. She had a brother Tom and an older sister Amy. They lived at Willaura, Vic, and in 1924 the family moved to Naringal where Dona attended Naringal State School. In 1928 she went to live with an aunt in Brighton and attended Mordialloc and Carrum High school for a year before returning to the family farm and working as a sewing mistress at Naringal State School until 1933. That year she joined her sister and began training for three years at Warrnambool Hospital before also obtaining her Midwifery certificate. There she met Wilma Oram and they became good friends. For a while she was head sister at Daylesford. In 1939 she joined the 13<sup>th</sup> AGH, AANS and persuaded Wilma to do the same - in 1941 they both boarded the 'Wanganella' for Singapore (angellpro.com); whilst in service overseas Dona wrote to her family and friends (apparently the letters are optimistic and funny) from Johore and Singapore after the Japanese invasion and some of these letters were hand delivered by soldiers evacuated from Singapore (AWO archives); after the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' had been bombed and was sinking Dona was climbing down to a lifeboat full of women and children (it was the one with Jean Ashton in it) but the ship began listing or turning over very fast so she and Wilma Oram jumped into the sea. Dona told her friend Wilma that she could not swim and was encouraged to dog paddle away from the ship - but it came down on her and she was not seen again. Dona is memorialised in the Dona Wilton Memorial stained glass window at Warrnambool which records she "... trained at Warrnambool Base Hospital 1934-37" - a tribute from Past Grantees Assn. unveiled by Mrs Wilma Young (nee Oram) ex AANS 28.3.51. She is also memorialised (along with Marjorie Schuman and Annie Grenerry) on a plaque in Honour Avenue, Point Walter road (at the lake near the tennis courts), Bicton, WA.
- **WILMOTT – Sister Bessie Wilmott**, WEX 3439, 2/4<sup>th</sup> Casualty Clearing Station, AANS. [NB: the book 'ORB' incorrectly calls her 'Peggy Wilmot' and the Bicton memorial in WA also appears to have the surname spelt incorrectly as 'Wilmot']. Bessie Wilmott was born on 24.5.13 at Claremont, Western Australia and (according to [heritage@southperth.wa.gov.au](mailto:heritage@southperth.wa.gov.au)) she grew up in Gardner Street, Como, and in 1927 she appears playing 'one of Cinderella's sisters' in a play at the Anglican Hall, Como, WA (Sunday times, Perth 2.10.27). She trained as a nurse at Royal Perth Hospital there is also a group photo of her as a trainee nurse at the Metropolitan Infectious Diseases Hospital in 1939/40. Sadly, in 1939, Bessie's brother Richard Wilmott (aged 22 years) - was drowned at Albany and that death notice gives us the names of her mother, Lilian Wilmott of Gardner Street, Como and another brother by the name of John Wilmott ("The West Australian", Perth, 5.12.39). In 1941 she appears also as one of a large group of men and women from the 2/4<sup>th</sup> CCS in Hobart, Tasmania (AWO Archives). Bessie was one of the Australian Army nurses brutally murdered by Japanese troops on Radji Beach, Banka Island on 16.2.42. Bessie is memorialised on plaque Number M270 in Honour Avenue (Point Walter Road at the Lake near the tennis court), Bicton, WA.
- **WOODBRIIDGE – Sister Beryl 'Woodie' Woodbridge**, VX 53060, 2/10<sup>th</sup> Australian Hospital Group, was born in Melbourne on 11.2.05 and at 37 years of age when on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" was "... one of the older nurses. A Delburnian she was both pretty and petite ...". Research has not disclosed the names of her parents from any register but there is a record in the "St. George Call", Kogarah, NSW, dated 18.12.31 where a Miss Beryl Woodbridge was bridesmaid to her sister Phyllis Madeline Woodbridge and if this is the same person then her mother was Mrs. Donnelly at the time. The record shows that (ORB, p. 169) "... after leaving the sinking 'Vyner Brooke' she joined Jenny Greer, Joyce Tweedie, Flo Trotter and Jessie Blanche on a plank and this group started singing a rousing 'We're Off to See the Wizard'. They drifted away from the main group of survivors and this group of women floated at sea through that (Saturday) night, currents taking them close to the ill fated group at Radji beach. ... before finally washing up on another beach on Banka island on Sunday morning. This small group were soon captured by a Japanese soldier and taken for internment at the Duntok cinema ..." (ORB, p.182). Woodie endured and survived the





rigours of internment at Duntok, Palembang and Belalau during which time she occasionally made rag dolls for the children in the camps. Her suffering is evident in the look of emaciation she displays in a photo taken in Singapore after her release in 1945 (AWO Archives). Mention of her in several books states that she was never married - interestingly she made the comment to 'The Age' newspaper 9 30.9.81 to the effect that "... *You can't help what the War did to you. I am glad to be alive, to be living as I am. Perhaps if we had stayed in Australia we would have been married, we would have had a married life, but it is your own choice .... It is noted by the newspaper in that article that unmarried nurses did not receive the home loans grant ...*" She was welcomed home in 1946 - with a group of other 'Vyner Brooke' nurses - at the 'CWO Younger Set Ball' at Earl Court, St Kilda ('Advocate' Melbourne 16.1.46) Woodie was discharged as Lieutenant in 1946 and maintained strong contact with her nursing friends. 'The Age' (26.4.55) reported that in 1955 she marched to the Shrine on Anzac Day with Vivian Bullwinkel, and Betty Jeffrey - all wearing their nurses uniforms and at the head of the contingent with the other Army Nurses. Sadly her health began to fail and she died on 29.9.86, being buried at Box Hill cemetery, Box Hill, Vic., aged 81 years. Her memorials are at the Nurses memorial on Honour Avenue (Point Walter road) at the Lake near the tennis court at Bicton, WA - on the same plaque as Vivian Bullwinkel, Jean Ashton and Davis Hannah. She also appears on "The Australian ex-POW memorial" at Ballarat, Vic. History does of course roll on for all of us and it is interesting that - as this memorial document is being compiled in December 2016 there appears on the internet an advertisement for the sale (Downies, Australia) of Woodie's war medals plus miniatures and her uniform (plus the uniform of her brother) for a price of somewhere between AUD 5400 - AUD 9000. What she and the other starving nurses in Belalau camp - where a few grains of rice were the difference between life and death - would have thought and said of that is anybody's guess!!

- **ZIMMERMANN - ZIMMERMANN H.** [Herbert] Accountant, Singapore Harbour Board. The "Jeyes" list records "... Zimmerman H SHB -X S DAMGISON LEFT FOR JAVA? ...?" Palembang (Den's Camp Sumatra internee. Died in captivity 11.6.44 [43] Duntok of beriberi. Wife Sonia.(SUD): (Dr. Zimmermann was on the 'VB' and died in 'Duntok' (Goldberg): according to the website "The Zimmermann Family of Singapore" compiled by William R. McKinnon, **Herbert Zimmermann** was born in 1901 to Carl Zimmermann and Charlotte Schoer, he married Sonia Damant ( who had been born in Manchuria and who later died in Australia) and they had a son Oscar Charles Zimmermann ( who had been born in Shanghai and who, from at least 1958 until his death lived in NSW and Victoria. Oscar died at Dilsons Point, Sydney, Australia in 2001). Post War Sonia married a Fergus Duncan in Singapore in 1947 and they later emigrated to Australia :the earliest newspaper record of Herbert is when he came First in a 150 yards handicap race at Raffles School and also 2<sup>nd</sup> in a wheelbarrow race( SEPDA 7.6.15): then in 1919 he was playing football for the Boys Scouts Association , against the Manchester Regiment, at the SCC in a charity fundraising match( SEPDA 26.7.19):the following year he played football for Bousteads & barkers combined team against the SCC ( SG. 16.6.20) and then again on 4.12.20 against the HKSB: finally in 1923 he was playing for the UDCA (SG. 13.10.21): he must have then become married because in 1923 there is a report of Mr and Mrs H. Zimmerman arriving from Java on the 'Delchior Greup' : little is known as the circumstances of Herbert being on the ships but there is an amusing anecdote recalled by one of the Australian nurse ( Ada Syer) that whilst the survivors were drifting through the sea during the night after the sinking she came into contact with a small group who formally introduced themselves and actually said "... how do you do ..." and one of the men in the group said "... my name is Zimmerman and I am just passing through ..." ( AWO oral recording # So 4057 by Captain Ada Syer) the CWGC records that (Dr. Herbert Zimmermann, husband of Sonia Zimmermann, died in Sumatra on 11.6.44 (CWGC)



- **ABDULLAH** – from Malacca. There is no record of him as a POW in Palembang.
- **ADAM** – **Able Seaman Bin Haji Ahmad**, # (DN 673 (Malay Section), died 13.2.42, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 97, column 1 (CWGC and Plymouth Naval Memorial). This is possibly Telegraphist Abdulla bin Ahmad who was from Kedah and was apparently last seen at Muntok.
- **AWANG** – **Able Seaman Awang Adam Bin Awang Nong**, # (DN 1175, died 13.2.42, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 97, Column 1 (Plymouth Naval Memorial).
- **BORTON** – Lt Richard Edward Borton, RNR, who had been commissioned as Temporary Lieutenant in the RNR on 3.3.41 (under the G. 124 Agreement) was the Captain of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" at the time of the sinking and employed by Sarawak Steamship Co Ltd: he was born on 4 July 1889 (according to his (DI.9 (Jap) post war questionnaire): he had married Jeannie Dorothy Gray, daughter of the late (Dr. W.G. Gray of England and Mrs Gray of Singapore at the Roman Catholic Church, Miri, Sarawak in September 1927 (SG. 19.9.27) and they had four children – one daughter was born at the General Hospital, Singapore in 1934 (SG.13.11.34) and this was probably Phyllis (married name Wilson and who, according to the Angelpro website, appears to live in Melbourne, Australia) and another daughter Una. In 1947 he was awarded the OBE for work evacuating servicemen and civilians from Singapore in 1942 (Grove, The SMH, 6.2.47) specifically for "... coolness and courage in defending his ship ..." (Morning Tribune 20.2.47). After the sinking he spent 18 hours in the water before landing at Muntok Lighthouse on 15 February 1942 and being taken prisoner by the Japanese at Muntok – it is a surprise he was not executed as so many other ship's officers, ratings and servicemen who landed around that area. He was a POW in Muntok for two months before being transferred to Palembang where he stayed until March 1945 when he was again shipped to Changi POW camp in Singapore (DI9 Questionnaire). In his (DI9 questionnaire he stated his address as Selby Avenue, Leeds, Yorkshire.
- **BROOKS** – **Able Seaman William Ritchie Lamond Brooks**, RNR, P/ESD/X 1773, died on 14.2.42 on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke', "Missing Presumed Killed", memorialised on the Portsmouth Naval Column panel 71, Col.2(CWGC): the City of Dundee Roll of Honour records that William Brooks lived at 23 Hepburn Street, Dundee, his age and next of Kin are unknown (source Peoples Journal 15.12.45): the 'X' at the end of his service number means that he enlisted after a new pay code of the early 1930s: he is also recorded in the file ADD 358/2875 "RN Casualties" as Missing Believed Killed as AB Brookes, RNR..
- **CAKE** – (from his handwritten (DI9 "Liberation" questionnaire courtesy Jonathan (Doffatt) "... AB. Wallace Vivien Cake, DAX/DJX211 542, R.N. Vyner Brooke, born 18.11.18, enlisted 11.7.40, captured Banka Island 16.2.42, address W.V. Cake, 74 Brazil Sq., St. Johns, Newfoundland, POW – (Dulo School 31.8.42 (Col. (Dorgan): Chung Wa, 31.8.42 (Cmdr. Reid): Sungi Ron, 18.3.44 (Cmdr. Reid): Wallace 'Wally' Cake was born in Lamaline, Newfoundland in 1918, the son of Frederick John Cake and Jemima (nee Bonnell), his wife was Ruth. He achieved Grade 11 at school and intended to become a teacher, even enrolling at Memorial University, but changed his mind and joined the wholesalers Steers Ltd. When he decided to enlist his employer thought so highly of him that he said there would be a job for him on his return. Wally enlisted in the Royal Navy at Devonport, to become a crew member of "HMS. Prince of Wales". He was one of the survivors of the sinking of that battleship who, along with his 'buddy' L/S George Noble (also from Newfoundland) were subsequently attached to the Royal Navy Shore Base in Singapore named "HMS. Sultan". Many such men were then allocated to crew the assortment of merchant ships left in Singapore harbour just prior to the surrender and which ships, like the "SS. Vyner Brooke", were ordered to take on board civilian evacuees on 12 February 1942 and clear the harbour. Wallace Cake (identified with his correct service number) appears in the report by Major Gebbutt as being on Radji Beach, again with his 'buddy' George Noble, so it is possible that he was one of the crew who had manned lifeboat, but in any event he was either clinging to a raft or on a life boat after the sinking and made it to shore in this manner. Gebbutt states " ... some person in authority suggested that the civilian women and children ( about 15) should move up a track as they would be slow, and time would be saved. Two slightly wounded ratings from the VYNER BROOKE (L. Sea, Noble G. d/J 146909 and A. B. cake W. D/JX 211542, both ex PRINCE OF WALES) were detailed to escort this party. The nurses



were apparently invited to accompany it, but decided to remain....It is noted that this party consisted only of exhausted looking women and children and the two ratings, exhibiting wounds and blood..." (Tebbutt); this event is also covered in the book BUE p.146, "... About nine o'clock it was decided that the civilian women and children, led by an elderly Australian miner and two soldiers whose arm wounds prevented them from being stretcher bearers, should start along the trail..."; the book ORB (p. 209) also mentions the departure of the civilian group with Cake and Noble and indicates that it was just prior to 0930 hrs "... the civilian women and children set off soon afterwards, led by a middle aged man who appeared to have assumed command of the group, and accompanied by a couple of the walking wounded. Both were sailors and both had survived the sinkings of the 'Prince of Wales' and the 'Vyner Brooke': Wally Cake spent the rest of the War in POW camps in Sumatra (Duntok and Palembang); so Wallace returned to Newfoundland after the war where his mother and wife had placed flowers on the church altar every week because they were certain that he was alive all through the war. Wally took the ferry from Halifax to St. John's as his way of coming home and then boarded a train with some 1500 soldiers - he being the only sailor on board- to be met by his wife who had simply been told that there was one sailor on the train, to which she had replied "... it is Wally...". Wally returned to work at his old firm of Steers Ltd for many years, before becoming a well known furniture sales man on Newfoundland (information from telephone conversation with son George Cake, September 2016). Later in his life his son George Cake placed a note on the 'Force Z' (Prince of Wales) website that Wallace was in hospital. Wallace Vivian Cake passed away in St. John's on 11 September 2002 and is buried at Mount Pleasant cemetery. His was certainly a life that included some extraordinary and horrific challenges, but with the reward of a safe return to the peace of his home in Newfoundland.

- **CLEMENT** - Able Seaman William John Clement, D/JX 168866, aged 22 years, son of Matthew and Gertrude Mary Clement of Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, died 14.2.42, Plymouth Naval Column panel 64, col.2 (CWGC); the D/JX of his service number means that he enlisted and trained at Devonport and was a seaman on the lower pay scale.. (DPK, Also listed as '...dying of wounds ... probably buried at sea ...' in the sinking of the "Vyner Brooke" in the Changi BRE records (Casualty List); also in the file ADD 358/2875 "RN Casualties" as AB W Clements [H.O] as Died of Wounds.
- **HUSAIN** - Able Seaman Husain Bin Mahmud, # DN 655 (Malay Section), (DPK, died 13.2.42, Plymouth Naval Memorial, Panel 97, Column 1.
- **KEENAN** -the official record is Able Seaman Robert Letford Keenan, RNVR, P/ESD/X 1423.(DPK, and it appears that he was born in 1919 (so was 23 years of age), son of Terrance Keenan and of Margaret L. Keenan of Edinburgh (Portsmouth Naval Memorial) and is apparently also memorialised at the Garrison Church Graveyard, Portsmouth (Necropole website); there is no record of him on the CWGC website; but he is recorded in the file ADD 358/2875 "RN Casualties" as "...AB Keenan, RNVR, Edinburgh, Div GSD/K - Danae till 1.42...", so he appears to have earlier been a crewmember on the 'HMS Danae'.
- **'LEN'** - the account (provided by Dr Neil McGregor) of the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" written by Sister Sylvia Jessie Dimmie McGregor (nee Muir), [Private Record PR 84/357] mentions that that when she was in the sea and the ship had disappeared a lifeboat floated past and there were people sitting around its edges. She then mentions "... 'Len', a British sailor with the British battleship 'HMS Repulse', very irate with the Japs: this was the third time he had been sunk by them in a fortnight. He hadn't a lifejacket so I swam to a body and took the jacket from it and gave it to Len ...". From this record it is unclear whether Sylvia and 'Len' continued on the same raft or 'Len' was on the submerged lifeboat so it is equally unclear whether he reached Radji Beach or - as did Sylvia - was picked up with the nurses by the RAAF launch with two airmen and delivered to Duntok? AN inspection of the (force.z website) listing of crew members of the 'HMS Repulse' shows 19 men with the name Leonard as a first or middle name so further research will be carried out to identify whether 'Len' survived or lost his life.
- **LI** - Li Wong Chuan, aged 44 years, Cassab, Naval Auxiliary Personnel, (DPK, also that he died on 14.2.42, husband of Uah, Singapore. (Liverpool Naval Memorial). A 'Cassab' is a sailor on a ship who was responsible for deck stores - often a 'jack of all trades' on the ship.<sup>105</sup>





- **LLOYD** – Stoker Ernest Lloyd, C/KX 86448, had been on the "HMS Prince of Wales" before it was sunk and was according to Gebbutt a rating on the "SS. Vyner Brooke". He was amongst the naval and army ratings that were lined up on Radji beach to be executed by the Japanese patrol. He was on the end of the line and when the man next to him (stated by Lloyd to be 'Jock' (McGlurk) said, whispering out of the side of his mouth, "Here's where we get it in the back", Lloyd replied "Well, I'm going to give it a go", both men plus a third man, ran into the sea and managed to swim about 30 yards in the sea before Lloyd saw his companion (McGlurk) (actually this seems to have been A/S Hamilton (McClurg) killed by a bullet. According to 'ORB' a bullet creased Lloyd's scalp and another passed through his leg and lodged in his shoulder (Eric Germann believed that three bullets hit Lloyd, p.154 'BUE'). His head wound caused Lloyd to become unconscious and he drifted away regaining consciousness and swimming out to sea before ending up at the other end of the beach. He remained free for ten days, with the help of local Chinese, before being again captured and taken to the Muntok Labour Station (Gebbutt, pp. 3 and 4). He survived being a POW and the war and met up again with Eric Germann (the first time had been in Muntok prison in 1942 when they had both congratulated each other on miraculous escapes) in the Airport canteen in Singapore on 19 September 1945 (p. 328, 'BUE') his address (courtesy Jonathan Doffatt and possibly from the DI9 questionnaire) was wife at 2 Carys road, Coeburg West, Maitlands, Cape Province – suggesting either that he was a South African or his wife had evacuated there.
- **DA'ANOR** – Able Seaman Da'Anor Bin Dahat, # DI 1016 (Malay section). DPK, also that he died on 14.2.42 (Plymouth Naval Memorial)
- **DANN** – Lt. Arthur J. (Dann, RNVR, had been appointed from Epy. Sub Lt (in 'The London Gazette' 24.8.41) to Temporary Lt. and according to 'The London Gazette' became a full Lt on 31.1.42: his personal papers are held in the Imperial War Museum, London (Docs. 23736): he appears to have been fulfilling the role of radio officer " ... another local Lt. A. J. (Dann was the ship's officer ... " (ORB p.126): he is also mentioned later in the voyage " ... ship's radio officer, Lt. (Dann, offered his cabin to one of the older pairs of married evacuees from Singapore [this could have been anyone including the Watsons, the Dominguez's or the (Daddens) – they were very grateful to Nurse (Davis Hannah (who had declined use of the cabin) ... " (ORB p. 137): whilst the personal papers in the IWM would have his full story these have not been accessible to this researcher, but a summary is that he slid into the sea from the listing ship at the same time as Captain Borton: then drifted at sea holding onto a piece of mast and then a hatch cover. He drifted towards a raft on which were a Malay stoker from the shops crew, a Siamese woman, and two British children perhaps called Betty (11 years) and David (9 years), so he joined them on the raft and they continued to drift along the coast of Bank Island in strong currents. They tried to enter the coast of Banka Island through streams, but the mangroves were quite thick, on one attempt they were astonished to come across a Staff Sergeant Knight, RASC, a survivor of another ship sinking who also joined them. Some time later they all came across a lifeboat under sail with four Australian naval ratings from the 'HMS Siang Wo', which had been beached, and who was making for Batavia some 300 miles away. The ratings would not allow the men from the raft into the lifeboat but did permit the woman and children (even though it was a 25 foot lifeboat). Eventually they were allowed into the lifeboat but the three men were put ashore at a clear beach which appears to have been on Sumatra. (Dann and his two fellow travellers found a ten foot sampan and then set off again – on 20 February they reached a river mouth on the Sumatran coast where they came across another lifeboat with three men on board – this time they were allowed to board. By 24 February this lifeboat reached a place named Dogala where a prau agreed to take them south – two days later they transferred again to a much larger boat on which were a party of Dutch soldiers and this boat reached Java on 27 February. (Dann was then driven to Gijilatjap on the south coast and on 2 March he boarded the 'SS. Verspyk' for Fremantle: the file 'RN Casualties' in the UK archives (ADM 358/2875) shows that at some stage the authorities had recorded as Believed Killed a " ... Lt. V. (Dann, (RNVR) ... "
- **MCCLURG** – Able Seaman Hamilton McClurg, D/JX 204773, crew of "HMS Prince of Wales" then, after that battleship was sunk by the Japanese, attached to shore base "HMS Sultan" in Singapore before being allocated to "SS. Vyner Brooke": the official record is Able Seaman

Hamilton McClurg, D/JX 204773, died on 14.2.42, aged 40 years, Royal Navy "HMS. Sultan", son of Hamilton & Agnes McClurg of Glasgow, husband of Ellen M. McClurg of Glasgow (CWGC): except that it is very probable that Hamilton McClurg - coming from Glasgow it would not be surprising if he was called 'Jock' - was one of the naval ratings in the second party murdered by the Japanese on Sunday 15 February 1942 at Radji Beach on Banka Island. According to survivor Stoker Ernest Lloyd, when they were marched along the beach to a small bay out of sight of the remaining nurses and wounded and told to blindfold themselves " ... *The man next to me, who was a seaman I had known in Singapore - I think his name was Jock McClurk - said 'This is where you get it Ernie, right in the back' I said 'Not for me, Jock' and we both dived into the sea, with one other man, as the Japs opened fire with a machine-gun. They mowed down the others first and then turned the gun on the three of us. I was a powerful swimmer and was going well. Jock cried out, 'I'm hit, Ernie,' and both he and the other man sank out of sight....* " (p. 143 'SD'); file ADM 358/2875 "RN Casualties" has "AB Hamilton McClurg, ex - "Prince of Wales" as "Believed Killed in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke".

- DILLER** - Temp. Sub Lt. James 'Jimmy' William Diller, Royal Naval Reserve: he was born in Oamaru, New Zealand in 1912 to James Diller (1870-1951) and Elizabeth Diller (nee Wisden) (1875-1957) who both died at Gisborne, on the East Cape of New Zealand: the file "RN Casualties" (ADM 358/2875) shows Sub-Lt [E] J. Diller, RNR, as Believed Killed: **Temporary Sub-Lieutenant (E) James William Diller** was commissioned to this temporary rank on 2 September 1904 (London Gazette 1940). Some aspects of Jimmy Diller's career at sea are a little vague - 'ORB', p. 2 states he was a regular officer of the Royal Navy who had survived the loss of his ship, then on p.120 it states he was a New Zealander: p.125 says he was '... on attachment to the Royal Navy ...' and 'made redundant by the sinking of the capital ships ...' (presumably this means the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse" but his name does not appear on the crew lists - albeit the website does say the lists are incomplete - for these ships on the 'Force Z' website). It has not been possible to substantiate Jimmy's career details - although in the secret 'Jeyes' toilet paper lists compiled by the civilian internees of Changi prison during 1942 there is the record " ... DILLER J. W. 2<sup>nd</sup> ENG VYNER BROOKE - X CFW [or CPW?CEW?] - KILLED? ... " this may be a clue to his previous ship or employment. However as Second Officer on the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' Jimmy did brief the ANS nurses when they boarded on the usage, pitfalls and dangers of the lifejackets and lifeboats. After the ship was hit by bombs and sank Jimmy reached a partially submerged and upturned lifeboat with some 12 nurses clinging to it, along with Mrs Bull and daughter (this was the lifeboat to which Rosetta Wight, Flo Casson and Clare Halligan were clinging to whilst severely injured) (ORB, p.163). Sea currents took this lifeboat and its clinging 'occupants' toward land all afternoon and that night washed them all ashore at about 2200 hours on Saturday night. Jimmy helped Clare Halligan and Rosetta Wight up the beach and then he set off with Vivian Bullwinkel to the bonfire they had seen on Radji Beach some two kilometres away - returning that night with Eric German and a young English teenager to help the nurses and other wounded across the same distance to the bonfire (ORB, p.176); the next day Jimmy was one of the officers organising the some 70 - 80 people on Radji Beach and finding freshwater supplies. Tragically Jimmy Diller and Temp. Lt. Bill Sedgeman plus other unidentified naval and army officers and NCOs formed the first group the Japanese troops ordered at bayonet point along Radji Beach, around the small headland and onto a beach beyond where they were ordered by the Japanese to walk to the water before they were murdered by bayonet, rifle and sword (ORB, p.212). It would seem that Jimmy Diller's parents received only scanty details of his death because on their grave headstone in the Taharuru Cemetery, in Nelson Road, Gisborne, New Zealand is also engraved " ... in memory of Sub. Lt. James Diller, R.N.R., missing on Banka Island on 14 February 1942... ". Jimmy Diller, from all that we know, acquitted himself with authority, dignity and courage in the aftermath of the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke' and the events leading up to the massacre on Radji beach on 16 February 1942.
- NOBLE** - (from his DI9 questionnaire courtesy Jonathan Doffatt) " L/S George Noble, ex 'Prince of Wales', D/JX 146969, wife at 2 Norwich lane, Bolton, Lancs.". George Noble was from Newfoundland ( born in October 1904 to Lemuel James Noble and Matilda<sup>107</sup> (Margaret Osbourne) and was a great 'buddy' of fellow survivor 'Wally' Cake ( also from



Newfoundland) who had also been on the "Prince of Wales" when it was sunk off Malaya, they were both then assigned to shore base Singapore "HMS. Sultan" and then the "SS. Vyner Brooke". He survived the sinking and was with the survivors on Radji beach before, as a walking wounded (he was injured by shrapnel in his arms and legs and had severe concussion so was very groggy – in fact at the end of the War he could relate very little about the events according to his signed affidavit in the War Crimes files on the Radji Beach killings held in the NAA, (Melbourne) and unable to carry a stretcher with other wounded to Muntok, being assigned to accompany the women and children into Muntok. He was then captured and became a POW, presumably accompanying Wally Cake to the POW camps of Sumatra. Along with Wally he survived these and returned to Newfoundland with his wife after the war (some of this came from a telephone conversation with George Cake, September 2016). George Noble died at the Salvation Army Home in St John's, Newfoundland in 1988.

- **O'BRIEN** – the CWGC record is "... 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineering Officer Dennis James O'Brien, aged 54 years, Naval Auxiliary Personnel (Merchant Navy), died on 14.2.42 as a result of the sinking of the 'SS. Vyner Brooke', son of Dennis Stephen and Elizabeth Jane O'Brien, commemorated on the Liverpool Naval Memorial column, panel 23, Col.2 ..."; this means he was in the service of the Royal Navy under the G.124 agreement and a recruit from the merchant navy. The Liverpool Naval memorial is also known as the "Memorial to the Missing of the NAP of the Second World War" i.e. men from the British Merchant Navy. The G.124 Agreement was for merchant seamen to serve alongside RN in Naval uniform as members of NAP and subject to Navy discipline; there is also a record in the file "RN Casualties" that *W. O'Bryan, 3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer Vyner Brooke, probably drowned on way to shore* (ADM 358/2875) also a record of "3<sup>rd</sup> Engineer, D.J. O'Brien": the circumstances of his death are not certain and he may have even reached Radji Beach to be killed there?
- **PHIAW** – Fireman **Phiaw Chew Geck**, aged 40 years, died on 14.2.42, husband of Phen Gee of Hainan Island, China (CWGC): he is also recorded on the Liverpool Naval Memorial, Panel 23, Col. 2.
- **REITH** – Described as an "elderly reservist ..." (p.126 ORB); CWGC shows 'Lieutenant (E) **David Reith**, RNVR and RNR aged 67, died 14.2.42 in the sinking of the "SS. Vyner Brooke", son of William and Christina (Malcolm Reith, Panel 2, Column 2, Liverpool naval Memorial (CWGC): *interestingly probably by reason of an error the CWGC also have a 'D. Reigh, civilian, as dying on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" on 14.2.42'* (CWGC): the file "RN Casualties" has as Believed Killed a Lt. D. Reith, RNR: (ADM 358/2875): it would appear that David Reith was born in the 1870s in Aberdeen, Scotland and served as a Ships Engineer: the Crew lists at Royal Museums Greenwich has a David Reith born Aberdeen, aged 22, as a 2nd Engineer on the 'Crown of Toledo' and then for several years as 2<sup>nd</sup> engineer aboard the 'Everlida' – his age is given as variously 22, 31, and 33 years during this time: he appears to have later either been based or then retired in Singapore with return trips to the UK in 1929 and 1935 (SFPDA 20.3.35 when he left on the 'Aenas'): in 1934 he attended the funeral of a ships engineer, George Batt, of similar age who had been Asst Superintendent of the Straits Steamship Co Ltd (SG. 3.9.34): no doubt with the threat from the Japanese he joined the Naval Reserve: on the "SS. Vyner Brooke" given that the first bomb to hit the ship went straight down the funnel and exploded in the engine room, killing or badly injuring all the engine room crew (ORB p. 151) it seems that David Reith lost his life in the early stages of the attack on the ship. In fact this is stated in ORB (p. 165) "... Crew members were killed in the engine room by the bomb that dropped down the funnel. The elderly reservist Lieutenant Reith and at least three Malay volunteer sailors among them ...";
- **SEDGEMAN** – First Officer **William Sydney Sedgeman**, RN. Born in either 1911 or 1915: he was gazetted on 20.20.39 as Tpy. Lt. RNR: also SEDGEMAN W.S. [William Sydney] 'Bill' b.1911 Dyfed, Wales. From Fishguard, Pembrokeshire. To Singapore 1938. Chief Officer *Vyner Brooke*. Killed 14.2.42 Banka Island [murdered] (JMD): in the Notice of his Estate in 1948 it is recorded that he is '...late of Shirley, Victoria Avenue, Fishguard, Co. of Pembrokeshire... "Public Trustee (SG. 26.6.48): the record at the CWGC is Sub-Lieutenant William Sydney Sedgeman, RNR, aged 27 years, died 14.2.42 in the sinking of "HMS Vyner Brooke", son of E.A. Sedgeman of Shirley House, Victoria Avenue, Fishguard, Pembrokeshire (CWGC): the





file "RN Casualties" shows Sub-Lt. W. Sedgeman, as Believed Killed [recovered] which suggests without further research that his remains may have been recovered??:

- STAPLES** - according to the website *naval-history.net* and its *Day By Day* (14.2.42) diary. Tempy. Lt. Edward 'Ted' Lawrence John Staples, RNZNVR, survived the sinking with Captain Borton. In contrast the *DI9 Questionnaire* completed by Staples after the War makes no reference to having been on the "SS Vyner Brooke" and was in fact a Lt on *DD31* being captured in Java on 9 March 1942. There is a record (17.1.45, *Hutt News*, New Zealand) that his father (Dr. A. J. Staples of 7 Harborview, Lower Hutt received a POW card from War Camp No.3, Thailand to say Ted was safe: in peacetime Lt Staples was apparently well known in Rugby Football circles in Lower Hutt, NZ., and had had been commissioned in the Royal Navy in 1940 before seeing service in the waters around Singapore. After the War he was repatriated to the UK by RAPWI and on his return to New Zealand worked as Senior Technical Officer, Chemistry Section, Wallaceville Animal Testing Station, Upper Hutt, NZ. His gravestone in Waikanae cemetery, New Zealand shows his date of death as 4.11.2001 and that he was the husband of the late Edna Grace Handley Staples and the loved father of Ted and Lawrence Staples. A telephone conversation with Lawrence Staples and his wife Brenda ( 25.7.16) revealed that Ted never (understandably) talked much about his wartime experiences but kept in touch for decades with the POWs he had been close to in Burma. The family have drawn much of their knowledge of his escape from Singapore from the references to Ted ( he is unnamed in the book) in Rohan Rivett's "Behind Bamboo" being the story of the survivors of the "SS. Siang Wo" which had been attacked and then run aground at Duntok.
- TYRWHITT** - "Tyrwhitt, (Extra 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer of Vyner Brooke), believed to have been shot [the word 'ashore' has been deleted] on Banka Is. N. coast ..." (Civilian Casualty List file in UK Archives): it is notable that, officially, there were only two men with the very rare British surname Tyrwhitt killed in the Second World War and one was a Lt Commander of a British destroyer sunk by a German U Boat in March 1942: the other man to appear in the CWGC records as having died during the War is in fact "...**Captain Cuthbert Tyrwhitt**, # 50924, died 15.2.42, Worcestershire Regiment, aged 29, son of Thomas and Dorothy (Marsden) Tyrwhitt, husband of Delia Scott Tyrwhitt of Greenwich, Connecticut, USA, Column 67 Singapore Memorial..." (CWGC) and the researcher judges that there is a very high probability (but admittedly it is not definite) that these are the same people: from one of England's oldest distinguished families, Cuthbert Tyrwhitt, who appears to have been born around 1913, was an Officer in the Worcestershire Regiment being listed in the 'Gazette' on 29.1.32 and until 21.11.39 as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant (plus at times as a temporary Captain and Warrant Officer): he was also related - some sort of cousin - to the famous Sir Reginald Yorke Tyrwhitt, Admiral of the British Fleet between the world wars and in the late 1930s also based in China: it also appears that (at around age 22 years) Cuthbert was in Shanghai with his Regiment and met Delia Scott whom he married. At some stage later and prior to the Japanese war they moved to Singapore and there is a statement in the book 'Intelligence and the War against Japan' by Richard J. Aldrich that this move occurred in 1939 "... In December 1939 [Intelligence in] London despatched a single officer, Captain Tyrwhitt, to join FECB specifically to create a card index of security material from 'U' sources (meaning intercepted from consular and attaché traffic) at Singapore and Hong Kong: in other words a list of Japanese agents ...". This record reveals that, in addition to his role as an officer in the Worcestershire regiment, he was also a member of the Far East Combined Bureau, the covert body which controlled the gathering of information for British Intelligence in the region (some of the FECB files, including a 'Blacklist of enemy agents' are in UK Archives WO 208/2049). The FECB watched Japanese residents in Singapore and Hong Kong and tried to keep up with the major Japanese secret service effort in the Far East. Post war letters available on-line and held in the Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University ( " Ida Pruitt and Marjorie King papers, 3.59 Delia Tyrwhitt") Harvard University Library (on line), written between Delia and her friend Ida Pruitt, evidence that the marriage had broken down whilst they were in Singapore together during 1940-41 and Delia actually refers to having a "...fairly violent affair ..." with another unidentified military man (apparently a colourful personality and a British (Darine who<sup>109</sup> was part of the group organising the official escape route from Singapore to Sumatra and



who survived the Burma railway camps). Cuthbert had a sibling Jacqueline (see book authored by Ellen Shoshkes on Jacqueline) who seemed to revel in international political and social change movements (at one time involved with the fascist movement) and she enjoyed mixing in upper class circles – Delia projects the same motivations and somewhat similar interests in her correspondence. So importantly, for interpreting the possible movements and motivations of Cuthbert Gyrwhitt as the Japanese later advanced down the Malayan Peninsula and then actually advanced across Singapore island itself in the second week of February 1942, it is necessary to remember Cuthbert Gyrwhitt was a spy in British Intelligence and a person who would have been incredibly valuable to the Japanese for interrogation and torture if they ever captured him. Apart from the CWGC record (which uses a date of death attributed also to many men for whom there is no known grave) there are more than the usual scenarios for the death of a man supposedly killed in central Singapore at British High Command. Apart from the two already mentioned above there is firstly from the 'Jeyes' toilet paper list secretly compiled by the internees in Changi Prison containing a highly accurate record of the fate of several thousand men from Singapore and Malaya after the Japanese invasion, "... Gyrwhitt C. Capt. - Red Army - POW - son of Admiral ..." - which is interesting because it suggests a source of someone who knew something about Cuthbert's past life (but not entirely accurately) and also suggests that Cuthbert was still alive as a POW but only after escaping, since if he was in Singapore the internees would not have bothered to record him as a POW (as was the normal practice for this document). The next wartime record is even more intriguing (and makes the researcher conjecture whether it was in fact a red herring for security purposes?) – this time from the records of the Bureau of Record and Enquiry, a military unit under Captain David Nelson working in Changi (Military) POW camp in an official capacity for the Allied hierarchy with the objective of tracking and recording the movements and fates of tens of thousands of allied servicemen in the far East after the Surrender to the Japanese - this states "... Gyrwhitt? Capt. HQDC, F.E.C.B., shot at Fort Canning, buried in Fort Canning cemetery ...". It is interesting that this usually very accurate and essentially military source in Japanese occupied Singapore chooses not to associate him with the Worcestershire Regiment and, somewhat surprisingly given the secretive nature of the FECB, almost publically states that he was a member of a covert Intelligence agency! It also uses phraseology that could mean anything - including that he might have shot himself/or he was shot by the Japanese at Fort Canning/or that he was shot by his own army at Fort Canning and finally raises the question that, if he was actually buried in Fort Canning, why was he not disinterred after the War and reinterred in Kranji like other soldiers? Was all this simply a wartime cover story for an Intelligence Officer who simply had to be made to disappear because he would have been rich pickings under torture by the Japanese! It is hard to accept that FECB hierarchy, after having evacuated 98 percent of their personnel to Java on 8 January 1942 ahead of the advancing Japanese, would not have ordered their last remaining one or two personnel in Singapore to escape by whatever means possible once the Japanese had landed on Singapore Island. Any FECB agent would have been captured, interrogated, tortured and probably shot as a spy in the same manner in which the Japanese treated the SOE agents they captured in Southern Siam. The chaotic 'last convoy' of 11-13 February 1942 out of Singapore would have been ideal for a high risk individual such as Cuthbert Gyrwhitt to use as a means of escape and perhaps being classified as an "... extra 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer ..." was a suitable cover. Other accounts of Cuthbert's death range from what his family were told i.e. that he was "... gunned down in the streets of Singapore ..." to author Justin Corfeld's statement that he was "... probably killed by artillery fire on 15 February 1942 ...". [Until the exact circumstances of either the identity of the Gyrwhitt on Banka Island or Cuthbert's death are resolved the researcher of this document intends to leave this entry for future consideration.]

- **WHITE** – Lt Cdr James Cusack Stacey White: whilst some sources seem unclear if he was a member of the official crew in fact the report by the Captain of the "SS. Vyner Brooke" is unequivocal that he was an officer of the ship and took part in organising the abandon ship phase: in 'ORB' (p. 201) there is a reference to another person in a lifeboat landing on Radji Beach [although the author does not make it explicit as to whether or not this is a lifeboat from the 'SS. Vyner Brooke'] "... A Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Commander J.C.S. White, was also in the group; originally on another vessel, he had been picked up as he drifted on a life raft ..."; Commander White's wife and two children were living at the Grand Hotel, Nuwara Eliya,



Ceylon: a Lt Cdr J.C.S. White attended the funeral of Mr Leonard Langdon – Williams on 27 October 1941 and Mrs Langdon was a passenger on the "Vyner Brooke"

- = 23 crew identified against Barton's report there were seven officers and 45 ratings ( leaves 29 Ratings to identify – these seem likely to be split between Malay crew from the RDNVR, men in the RDNVR and Royal Navy ratings from the "HMS Prince of Wales " and the "HMS Repulse". All the officers from the ship seem to have been identified in this document.)

Unidentified people on board:

- **A Siamese lady and two British children**, a girl aged 11 years and her brother aged 9 years on a raft , who Lt A. J. Dann thought were called Betty and David ( Angelpro.com) – **this is probably either Mrs Pearson or Mrs. Susie Stevens shown in the list above** – the children are almost certain to be the son and daughter of Mrs Bull . They miraculously survived the raft floating down the Banka Straits and – possibly after being picked up by survivors of the sinking of the 'Siang Wo' 9 Australian soldiers0 landed in Java and were interned there for the rest of the War.
- **A British crew member named 'Len' (referred to in Sister Sylvia Dair's statement) from the "HMS Repulse"** - research on the identity of this person continues. There were 20 men on the "HMS Repulse" with the Christian name 'Leonard' so it will take time.
- **British crew member called 'Stan'** – on page 174 of 'ORB' there is a report by Australian nurses Jessie Simons, Winnie May Davis and Pat Gunther that they attached to a raft containing badly injured crew members from the "Vyner Brooke": a British crew member called 'Stan', who spent a lot of time talking about the fact that he had been sunk four times during the War ( including twice in European waters) plus a Eurasian radioman on the "Vyner Brooke" crew member and another badly burnt seaman who had been one of the gun crew of the four inch gun on the "Vyner Brooke". 'Stan' had been on the "HMS Prince of Wales" which cuts down the possibilities for his identity. **Two very possible identities are Stanley Williams, Royal Marine, PLU/X100178 who died on 16.2.42, but for whom the researcher can find no other information (CWGC), or Able Seaman Stanley Alderson, D/SSX17215, aged 22 years and husband of Rosina Alderson of Plymouth, he died on 31.3.42 and had been attached to the shore base "HMS Sultan" in Singapore after the sinking of the "HMS Prince of Wales" (CWGC and Plymouth Naval memorial).** During the first night on the raft the badly burned sailor slipped off the raft into the sea without uttering a word. Both the Eurasian radio operator and the seaman called 'Stan' reached Muntok on Banka Island with the nurses.
- **Guilfoyle/Guilfoyle** - someone by this name (or a phonetic similarity) stating that she was " ... (Margaret Guilfoyle from Lancashire and worked in munitions ... " ( Ada Syer Interview AWO) was reported drifting in the sea by Sister Ada Syer. There is no record of a survivor of this name.
- **A mother with four small children** – during the bombing of the ship Sister Betty Jeffrey was lying on the floor and always seemed to have a small child's foot under her stomach she recollects " ... *her mother had four small children with her and she calmly prayed aloud – the Lord's Prayer. Poor soul, if anyone needed help, she did...*" (ORB, p.150). Mrs Bull had three children with her – this may have been the family , but there were many more children on this ship so it seems likely that this was another family - the reciting of the 'Lord's Prayer' it tends to indicate either a British or Eurasian family in that era.
- **"white Russian woman killed during 2.00 pm bombing ..."** ( p.37 ASCOGBVB)
- **"... a young White Russian lady also on the raft..."** (P.39 ASCOGBVB) – probably Mrs Warman.

