

Report of Mr. J.H. REID - P.N.D., Johore, Bharu
Ex Singapore S.S. "KEMBONG" 6.30 - 7.30 night of 15th Feb. **CONFIDENTIAL**

Mr. Reid was in charge of the Lorries depot in McKenzie Road, where the Land Transport Department was. 187

The hour of Armistice was 4.30 p.m. on the 15th, when he went to see about blowing these lorries up. He met Mr. McKerron of the Manpower Office at Fullerton Buildings, who said to him "Are you an Engineer?" "Yes" "Can you drive a deisel?" "Yes" - "Then come into the Shipping Office", also in Fullerton Buildings. There he met the Dalforce people, many of whom he knew, they were in need of an Engineer for the ship and he took with him other engineers - Erven, Donkin and Wallace to the "KEMBONG"; also Dr. Webb, Mr. McKerron, himself and other R.A.S.C. and also Foster and R.C. Calthrop. Mr. McKerron told him that he had sent away Dalley and Wynne already in a police launch.

Mr. Reid spent the last night at Whiteaways Laidlaws where he helped in the basement. There were there :-

Mr. & Mrs. Summers and family.
Mr. Wright, Manager of an up-country branch.

In the next basement there were the European staff of the G.E.C. who were all well and heard of no casualties among anyone around that area.

He heard that Mr. Wooton, the Secretary of the Union Jack Club, and others there at the time, had been shot up a day or two before by drunken soldiers - British and Australian, - who had been refused admittance, with their tommy guns.

On the small launch that took them out to the "KEMBONG" they were hailed some 100 yards away from the wharf side by soldiers who called for them to come back. As the launch was completely packed they could not return, but the soldiers then fired on them with their machine guns or tommy guns and may have knocked some holes in the bottom of the boat but wounded nobody. Their launch sank just as they reached the "KEMBONG"

The Indian soldiers in Raffles Square were, he believed, belonging to the Mysore Regiment. They were no good, had discarded their equipment and were disbanded. The Gordons behaved well except for a few whom he saw in the square being rounded up by a young Officer. The Volunteers behaved very well too.

Mr. H. Butcher, the Secretary of the Association of Engineers, committed suicide by shooting himself on the 12th - the reason unknown - in John Little's on the 15th morning. He saw A.J. Downe and A. Robertson, Directors of the firm, who were intending to remain. He also saw Dr. (Datu) G.H. Carllick of Johore; he was P.M.O., Johore Bharu and had married a Chinese girl.

He saw also that Miller Mackay, a planter, who was then an intelligence officer in the shipping office, also Sandy Love and McLeod who said that they did not intend to leave. He saw about 12 women working at canteens in the Fullerton buildings fetching tea and sandwiches to the staff of Doctors and Nurses, who were attending to the many Europeans soldiers in the big dressing station or hospital that had been made there. There was a big Red Cross outside on the Square but anti-aircraft guns very close by. He heard that a bomb had injured the Dr. and Matron at the Tan Toc Seng Hospital a day or so before.

After the Alexander Hospital had been captured by the Japanese it was inspected by a Nippon General, who remarked to the patients - "war is war a dreadful business"; he said he would relieve the Hospital as much as possible from danger by ordering his men coming into Singapore to pass well to the right and left of it.

Lady Thomas was known to be ill. The Japanese had tried to shell Government House, but were unsuccessful.

In the Supreme Court on the 14th he saw "Fatty" King M.C.S. and Venables M.C.S., who was a sort of Registrar but who seemed to be very badly shaken. Bagot of the Police was at the Quay when Reid's wife & family left on the 13th acting as a guard there.

RESEARCH BUREAU

OF

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REPORT NO. 157.

L.H. REID.

CONFIDENTIAL

On the 1st December, 1941, I went and joined the Johore Volunteer Engineers, but I was informed by the Adjutant, and the Sergeant Major that I was not being called up as I was a reserve. On speaking to the Officer, he pleaded on me to go up to camp and stay the night, I agreed, and going up as advance party, I got the section but belonging to number one all in order, and after that I went over and gave Bromley a hand in the kitchen. After that I went to the store and assisted to get the advance tool party in order. Later in the afternoon I was assisting in the cookhouse and prepared the supper for the company, which had arrived in the afternoon. In the morning I helped to prepare the breakfast, and after it was all over, I went to our Officer and asked to be returned. After a talk, he informed me that I could go and see the C.O. This I did and he gave me permission to leave, but I promised to return in a few days' time. This I did and after speaking to the C.O. he allowed me to return.

After the Japs had made their sudden attack, my wife went into hospital to do nursing, and my oldest daughter, Erica, looked after her sister and brothers, while my wife and myself were away at work. About Christmas, I was informed that Mr. Neilson of the M.F.S. was looking after the Auxiliary Fire Service, and that he had not got a decent sleep for weeks, as he had to do his other work over and above. I volunteered to assist him for a time, and later on he was getting me into the Fire Service, when I got a notice calling me up. I handed the notice to Mr. Neilson, who took it up with Mr. Sritchard, the Dept. M.A.S., and he went and saw the General Adviser. The general Adviser tried to get one of the engineers to take the job on but they refused, and then I saw the General Adviser and after a talk it was decided that I should see Col. Broadbent of the M.I.S. I saw Col. Broadbent and after hearing my story he cancelled my calling up notice.

No sooner was this done, when the F.M.S. started to send me to bring convoys of lorries from all parts of Johore. With the usual regards for speed, sometime it was nearly midday before they gave the instructions to go to somewhere, perhaps about 130 miles away. Going so far often meant that if I could not get back before 7/00 p.m. I had to sleep in the jungle. Luck was with me, however, and I always managed to get back. This was going on until the 27th January, when I was called into the office to get my pay. During this time Johore Bahru had not get been bombed. On this day, however, while I was out watching the bombs, I saw them dropping a load in the district where my house was. I immediately left in one of the engineers' car, as my own one had just gone about a quarter of an hour before. Reaching my house, I found that all the houses round about had been blitzed, and that my house was standing, with only a number of shrapnel holes here and there. I called on my wife and she came out from under the bungalow, a bit shaken as she had been busy packing up when the A.R.P. warning had sounded. She was badly shaken and her legs and arms were covered with scratches where the flying bits of gravel etc., had struck her. She was not so bad otherwise. My car had the side windows smashed in and a hole through the exhaust pipe. My gardener had some toes broken.

After seeing everything I went back to the office and reported. We were informed by the acting Senior Executive Engineer that we could either stay or get into Singapore. I decided to go into Singapore where I had taken my family the previous night. I did so after having to bluff the military at the Johore end of the Causeway. I had no pass to go into Singapore and people without passes were not allowed to leave. Just before I left Johore the Johore Military Forces were being disbanded.

Next morning I reported to the Van Power Bureau, and although I informed them that I was with the A.R.P., they sent me to the Land Transport Office, where I was given the job as assistant mech. engineer in charge of over 300 lorries which were being repaired for the Army and Air Forces, at McKenzie Road.

After that I went to the Home Pipe Company, Bukit Timah Road and asked for a pipe to build an A.R.P. shelter. They sent me to the Engineer in charge of engineering stores for a permit. The Engineer in charge was Mr. Edwards and he said that he could give me a permit for the pipe but he would give me a permit to buy cement, bricks, gravel, sand and

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After assisting to pull out some of the trucks I decided I would go and see Change Alley where a stack of bombs had fallen. I saw that Change Alley was on fire and came back and went into Fullerton Building, part of which was being used as an operation theatre and hospital. I saw the man in charge of the Man Power Bureau, who instructed me to take out the S.Y. Remong, which had been released by the Fisheries Dept., to transport officers of the "Delforce", who had been released by Brig. Kowbiggins. That evening, 15th February, about 8-00 we left Singapore with about thirty or more Officers and civilians aboard. During the night about ten p.m. we ran on to a reef about five miles off Traffic light. We endeavoured to get off, but without success.

Next morning, 16th, just as it was starting to get light, four of us waded ankle deep to an island about a quarter of mile away, armed with tommy guns, etc., as we could see a plane and also some huts. When we got to the plane we saw that it was a British one, and continuing to wade ashore we were met by some Malays. We called on the others, after seeing that all was safe for us, and they came ashore, leaving enough aboard to drop an anchor aft to enable us to get off when the tide was high enough.

During the morning we had to keep under shelter as the Jap planes were passing and repassing all day long. Sometimes we were hid by the smoke of the numbers of fires in Singapore and the other small islands about four in the afternoon, we succeeded in getting away, but not until we had many narrow escapes of going on to other reefs. During that night we passed a Jap gunboat about a hundred yards away but it did not interfere with us. Next day we reached Bangkok, 17th, where we took Takau Bahru about ninety miles away. During our journey up the river we went aground again and it was only after being towed astern by a couple of police launches that we were able to get off. When we arrived at Takau Bahru, we were sent by bus to a place about 170 miles away along a road, that I would not dare to travel over ten miles an hour. We arrived at a place called Waya Roomok about midnight and slept in the train until the morning, when we left at 6-00 a.m. to a place called Padang, where we arrived at midday. That night 19/2/42 we slept in a school. Next day we left Padang aboard the H.M.S. "SPRING".

On 22/2/42 we arrived at Tjilitchap, in Java, where we were transferred to S.S. "KORAL", where we remained until the 24/2/42. On the 24th we were transferred to the S.S. "ZANZIBAR" and stayed there until 26th when we were again shifted to the S.S. "FRASER HOBSON". On the 27th we sailed for Fremantle and arrived there on the 9th March. During the time I was in the Dutch Ports I wired to all my in-laws regarding my wife and family, but they did not know where they were.

After reaching Perth I started making enquiries regarding my family, and from one thing and another I found the captain of the water-boat also the chief engineer, and they informed me that they had taken the women and children to the S.S. "WYER ROCKS". I went and asked the Naval people about the S.S. "W.B." and they promised me that if they heard anything about it they would let me know. About six days afterwards I was informed by the Navy that the "W.B." had been sunk and that the story would appear in the papers. I called that night and saw the editor who gave me the proofs to read. I saw that the "W.B." had been sunk on the 15th Feb. off Banks Island. After a couple of days I saw the Navy people again and they informed me that the man who had written the story was in hospital, Lieut. Mann. I went and saw him and he could give me no more news than what he had written. After a terrible time in Perth I came away to Sydney, hoping to meet someone who could give me some more information. So far I have received none.

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COPY.

The Crown Agents For the Colonies,
LONDON.

411 Kent Street,
Sydney. 15th April, 1943.

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Sir,

I have the honour to inquire if you can give me any information regarding my wife and five children, who sailed from Singapore on the 13th February, 1942.

From information which I received in Perth, I understand that they were aboard the S.S. Vyner Brooke, which was sunk by enemy bombers near Banka Straits, on February, 14th.

My wife was Dutch and her maiden name Kobus.

*(Note kind wife of J.A. Williams)
Que (6)*

My children were named as follows:-

Erica Mary Hamilton	13½ years	26/4/'28.
Jane Winifred Young	12 "	9/6/'29.
James William John	10 "	23/10/'30.
Dirk Aert Gerard	8 "	5/3/'35.
Roy Alexander Hamilton	4 "	1/12/

Aboard the tender which took my wife and family out to the S.S. Vyner Brooke, were three Officers from Johore and their names are as follows :-

Mr. Robert Eves	Mechanical Engineer, Johore.
" Brooke	Registrar of Vehicles, Johore.
Mr. & Mrs. Fairlie	Head Office Engineer, I.T.D. Johore.

I also think that Mrs. Farrell, wife of the Chief Electrical Engineer, Johore, was aboard.

From information received from the Capt. of the Water Boat, which took out the passengers to the ship lying outside the harbour, I was informed that the men were taken to the S.S. Giah Bee, and the women and children to the S.S. Vyner Brooke. If any of the people I have mentioned have arrived in England I would be very grateful, if you could get in touch with them and inquire about my wife and family.

I have been working with the Public Works Department since 1927 and on instructions of the Man Power Bureau, I left Singapore as an engineer, in the M.V. Kempong, about 8 p.m. on February 15th. This vessel was released by the Fisheries Department to transport officers of "DalForce", who had been released ex-Malaya by Brig. Newbiggin.

I have applied to the Local Malayan Records Office, Hunter Street, for permission, either to work as a marine fitter, or advice on what I should do until they get instructions from you.

Hoping that you can get me some information regarding my wife and children.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant/

MALAYAN RESEARCH BUREAU
A.C. Dolbe

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MALAYAN RESEARCH BUREAU. 376
REPORT NO. 64.
Sydney, N.S. W. 1943

NOTE: J. A. REID (Additional). *see also (16) (63)*

The motor vessel "KEMBONG" (Fisheries Dept.) left Singapore at 8.30 p.m. on the 15th February, 1942. On board were:

Dr. Wedd (attached R.A.A.F.).
S. Brydon (Engineer).
Wallace (Mining Engineer)
Captain Whittaker (from the Naval Base).
Sgt. Macdonald, R.A.F. (with a badly wounded arm).
P. McKerron.

They reached Sumatra via Bengkalis Island and proceeded up-stream to Pekan Baru. From there to Port de Kock, and so to Padang.

Reid says that the water boat which left on the afternoon of the 12th, taking his family away from the quay, had on board:

R. Eves (Mechanical Engineer) (from Johore).
Brooks (Registrar of Vehicles, Johore).
Mr. & Mrs. Fairlie, (P.W.D., Johore).
Mrs. Turrel (wife of an Engineer).

The following were seen leaving Tjilatjap on the S.S. "Wu Chang" on the 27th February, 1942. (She proceeded to Colombo and arrived there safely). :-

W. A. Kirk (P.W.D.).
P. McNee (P.W.D.).

The following Dalforce officers:

Jock Hunter.
✓ Ian McKenzie (Sednek Mohore). *see (24)*
Wyatt Smith.
Macdonald (Pontian, Johore).
G. Marshall (of the Forests).
Jock Forwyth (Planter).
Fitzgerald (Forests).
Nobby Clark (well known Rugby Player).
Corbin (Forests).

Colonel Walden.
Harrison.
Haseler.
Paddy Laing.
White.
McLeod of Guthries.
Major Young (Ghurka)
Duncan (Singapore Municipal Engineer.).

R.C. Dolbey

MALAYAN RESEARCH BUREAU.

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COPY.

J.A.H. REID'S REPORT.

(Report No. 11).

CONFIDENTIAL.

8/- Macchi, ...
169-173 Castlereagh Street,
Sydney 4th July, 1942.

Malayan Records Office,
61 Hunter Street,
SYDNEY.

and 163

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Sir,

I have the honour to inform you of my arrival here in Sydney from Melbourne from Singapore, also statement of my official leaving etc. On or about the 27th January, I was informed by the Senior Executive Engineer, Mr. Morgan, that I either could go into Singapore or stay in Johore, and he gave me the salary as already stated in my previous letter. Next day I went into Singapore and reported to the Man Power Bureau and they sent me to the Land Transport Office where I was appointed Assistant Mec. Engineer in charge of repairing lorries and some cars for the Military and Air Force. I stayed there until the 14th February and had to come into Singapore town owing to the closeness of the enemy. (I was at McKenzie Road next to tramway offices).

I was staying a Payer Lober Cres. next to an ammunition dump and on several occasions my family had to clear out owing to the dump expected to be blown up by the Royal Engineers. On the 12th Feb., the officer in charge said that he was waiting instructions to blow up the dump and therefore I would have to move. We decided to move into Singapore town and when we got there I saw a notice saying there was room for some women and children sailing out of Singapore that night. I went to Mr. Birse who was still in the Bank, and got a chit to say that the Johore Government would pay for the passages of my wife and family. With this chit I went to the Supreme Court and got permission for my wife and family to leave. Prior to this I had been trying to get them away but owing to lack of money it was hopeless. Late in the afternoon of the 12th Feb., I saw my family aboard the water boat which was acting as a tender for passengers going out to the ships out in the roads. Aboard this water boat were three Johore officers, Mr. R. Eves, Mec. Engineer, Mr. Brooks, Registrar of Vehicles and Mr. and Mrs. Fairlie of the P.W.D. Johore. I think that Mrs. Turrel, wife of the Electrical Engineer was aboard this tender. I tried from Mr. Bagot and a few others the name of the ship which my family was travelling on, but could not get any information. It was not until I arrived in Perth that I met Mr. Purvis of the water boat that I was informed that the men were taken to the S.S. Giang Bee and the women and children to the S.S. Vyner Brooke. The Vyner Brooke was sunk off Banka Straits on the 14th Feb.

On the 15th and 14th I tried to get in touch with the Land Transport Office but was unable to get in touch with anyone as all appeared to have gone. On the afternoon of the 15th Feb., as I was up at the Man Power Bureau, Mr. McKerron informed me that I was to take out some Officers of The Dalforce and a few civilians. This was sanctioned by the Government and Military. About 8/00 PM we left Singapore

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reinforcement. I got this permit but could not get a lorry, as for some time before this the Government had been taking all lorries for military work. Fortunately for me, I got a lorry from the Land Transport Office where I was starting work. In the evenings, my family and myself got started digging the hole for the shelter. Sometimes we worked during the moonlight nights until midnight. During the day I started work at 8/00 a.m. and worked until well after 5/30 p.m.

Owing to being constantly employed I could not get any news of how the fighting was. After a few days digging, I decided to get the material and getting a lorry I filled it myself with all the material I needed. Coolies wanted \$3-00 per day.

On or about the 9th February the Mech. Engineer in charge told me that he was beating it and that I could do as I liked. I assisted him in getting his luggage down to the pier where he got a sampan to take him out to a ship lying outside. After he had gone I carried on at McKenzie Road until the 14th.

Between 7th and 12th February we had been warned at our house in Fayer Labor that an ammunition dump which was about a hundred yards away was going to be blown up by the Royal Engineers, on many occasions. Each time we had been warned we went into Singapore town, but nothing happened we came back. Well on the 12th we were again informed about the dump was to be blown up, and getting a few things together we left for the town, intending to get a house or flat there. I left the family at the car park at Clifford Pier, and when I passed the P. & O. Office, I saw a notice saying that there was still room for women and children leaving Singapore. Previous to this when I had tried to get my family away, I was unable to do so owing to the lack of money. When I saw this notice I went and saw Mr. Birse, who, after a lot of talking, gave me a chit to the effect that the Johore Government would pay for the passages of my wife and children, and that afterwards if there was anything to pay it would be deducted from my salary. Armed with this chit I saw the Justice in the Supreme Court Building and got permission for the family to leave. I got the family aboard the water boat which was taking them out to some ship lying outside the harbour. That was the last I saw or heard of them until I reached Perth. After seeing my family away at Telok Ayer Pasin, I went to the Singapore Cricket Club but when I arrived there, I found that it had been converted into a hospital for the Forces. Luckily for me one of the Sergeants was a friend of my brother-in-law, who was a staff serg. in the R.A.M.C., and he called me in until 10/00 p.m. At ten I had to move, so I went out and slept in the car outside. During the night and morning I was wakened on several occasions by the bursting of bombs and shells. I was so miserable that I did not care and went to sleep again. Next morning, about 8-30 a.m. I went to the Singapore Gold Storage and had a glass of milk and a half loaf of bread. Later on I decided to go out to my house at Fayer Labor, and see if it was still standing or not. On arriving there the house was still there and also the ammunition dump, I decided to have some coffee. I had no sooner had the coffee made when I heard the sound of machine gun fire, and on going out to see what it was, I was informed that it was a band of Japs and that they were firing on the lorries which were removing the ammunition. The officer in charge told me to come into his camp and I rushed back for my rifle, and then went into the camp. We were there about half an hour, when the officer decided to blow up the ammunition, and he told me to come with him. As my car was all ready, I went back and went away in it. I had to take the road towards Katong and go along Matherson Road until I came out at St. Andrews School. I then went to my job in McKenzie Road, and worked the afternoon there until I was told that some Jap snipers were just round the corner in the Governor's ground. I beat it into Singapore, and that night I slept on the floor of the Supreme Court, where many Europeans and local people were sleeping. Next day, Saturday, 14th Feb. I went along to the S.S. and had some milk but could not get any bread. After that I roamed all round the town and later on in the afternoon got in touch with the manager of Whiteaways who invited me to stay at his place, i.e. under the shop. I slept there the night and in the morning went about the town. During the afternoon the Japs had started a fire just round the corner where I was and I went round to give a hand. Hundreds of motor cars, lorries and ammunition trucks were on fire.

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