

SELAMAT PAGI
THE BANGKA ISLAND & SUMATRA
NEWSLETTER

<https://muntokpeacemuseum.org>

EDITION 1

FEBRUARY 2024



The Muntok Peace Museum, Bangka Island.



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*If there be righteousness in the heart, there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character, there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
When there is order in the nation, there will be peace in the world.*

It is now 82 years since the tragedy of the small boats carrying thousands of evacuees from war-torn Singapore unfolded in and around Bangka Island, as they were bombed and sunk by the Japanese Air Force and Navy resulting in the deaths of over 5,000 men, women and children.

As the story about the massacre of 21 Australian Army Nurses and British Servicemen on Radji Beach became better known, together with that of the internment of civilian men, women and children, relatives have sought to remember their suffering through the establishment of the Muntok Peace Museum and by holding an annual service on the beach where the massacre took place.

We have **Dr. Judy Balcombe** to thank for raising the funds to build the Peace Museum together with donations from civilian internees' families' **Mr. Vivian Bowden's** son, **Ivor Bowden**, the MVG and BACSA, and for their support for the local Muntok community. We thank **Arlene Bennett** who has been tireless in her work with **Judy** to help raise money for the Muntok Red Cross. We are also grateful to **Mr. Fakhrizal** and his staff at the Timah Tinwinning Museum for their support in looking after the Peace Museum during the year. Other prison camps in Sumatra were established on the west coast at Padang and Bankinang where over 2,000 civilians were interned. **Judy** has researched the nursing and medical staff in these camps as well as those in Muntok, Palembang and Belalau. Her list, which excludes the Australian Army Nurses, is given below. Included in this list are 10 Q As (Queen Alexandra's Nurses).

The Australian, **Dr. [Miss] Marjorie Lyon OBE** tells the story of what happened in the camps in western Sumatra in her diaries entitled, *"These Are My War Time Diaries. Sumatra 1942-1945."* It is a wonderfully comprehensive diary kept by **Dr. Lyon** on a daily basis. The book has been edited by her younger brother, **John Lyon**. The following three extraordinary tributes were paid to **Marjorie Lyon** after the war for her outstanding contribution to the health and welfare of those in Padang Camp.

Lady Louise Mountbatten:

"I saw ... an outstanding woman doctor, **Dr. Lyon** of Australia, whose work with the civilian internees' camp in Sumatra will make history and who succeeded in commanding and controlling the Japanese and seeing that they carried out *her* orders."

Sir Albert Coates, Australian Surgeon and Soldier:

"It was **Captain Bill Reynolds** in the *Krait* ... with severely wounded. Among them were the two women doctors I had last seen in Singapore ... **Dr. Crowe** was seriously wounded. But for the constant attention by **Dr. Lyon** she would never have survived."

Dr. Elsie Crowe, English Surgeon:

"I shall never forget all she did for me during more than 3½ years of internment. I've never known so utterly honest a person – integrity and Marjorie are synonymous to me – I'm proud to have been her friend." As well as this diary, **Judy's** book, *"The Evacuation of Singapore to the Prison Camps of Sumatra,"* details the background to the Japanese invasion of Malaya and subsequent Fall of Singapore; the bombing and sinking of over 100 small boats, as they tried to escape the Island carrying thousands of evacuees, leading to their capture and the massacre of the Australian Army Nurses; and an insight into life and death in the Japanese Prison Camps via conversations with former internees and wartime inhabitants of Muntok.

All royalties from the sale of this book will be donated to the Muntok Red Cross in memory of the prisoners. **Please buy the book and encourage your friends to do so as well.** We all know how much **Judy** has done for the Muntok community, and continues to do for them.

The statue of **Vivian Bullwinkel** which was unveiled outside the Australian College of Nursing last year, was the first woman to be recognised there. At the base of the statue are stars representing the constellations seen at that time – one star for each murdered nurse. On 16th February this year, College of Nursing Scholarships are being presented at Duntroon Military College in Canberra in memory of **Vivian Bullwinkel** and the 21 murdered Australian Army Nurses. This is in addition to scholarships already awarded annually in their memory by the Australian Nurses' Memorial Centre in Melbourne. These scholarships were started after the war by **Vivian Bullwinkel** and **Betty Jeffrey**. Some families of these nurses have been in touch through the Muntok Nurses and Internees Facebook site. **Michael Noyce** – nephew of **Sister Kathleen Neuss** - and the family of **Nurse Rosetta Wight** will be at the Memorial Service in Muntok this year. Also attending are the Deputy Australian Ambassador, Defence Attache and other staff from the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, together with the Dutch Defence Attache. The New Zealand Embassy and UK Defence Attache are unable to attend this year.

In March, **Judy** is meeting with **Heather Morris**, author of the novel "*Sisters in Arms*," and hoping that she will be able to influence her to make changes to the narrative in the next edition. **Heather Morris** has been in the USA where she met the granddaughter of **Mrs Hinch**, the British Camp Leader in Muntok.

In a lovely message from **Mr. Dery Aryandi** of the Muntok Red Cross, he writes:

"The Muntok Red Cross will help clean up the Monument at Radji Beach. We are very happy for you to come back to Muntok. I want to convey a message of Peace. We are brothers."

BOOKS PUBLISHED IN AUSTRALIA

"Back to Bangka. Searching for the Truth about a Wartime Massacre." By Georgina Banks. Published by Penguin Random House Books. ISBN 978-176-134-113-7

Georgina Banks is the great niece of Australian Army Nurse **Sister Dorothy 'Bud' Elmes**, who was aboard the *Vyner Brooke* when it was sunk off Bangka Island.

"The War Nurses." By Anthea Hodgson. Published by Penguin Books Australia.

Anthea Hodgson is the great niece of **Sister Minnie Hodgson**.

"Sister in Captivity." By Colin Burgess. Published by Simon and Schuster.

This is the biography of **Sister Betty Jeffrey**.

"Sister Viv." By Grantlee Kieza. Published by Harper Collins.

This about **Sister Vivian Bullwinkel**.

"Sisters Under the Rising Sun." By Heather Morris. Published by Echo Publishing.

This is an historical novel based on the WW11 experiences of **Sister Nesta James** and **Mrs. Norah Chambers**.

"These are my War Time Diaries. Sumatra 1942-1945." By Dr. [Miss] Marjorie Lyon. Edited by John Lyon. Published by Scotts. ISBN 978-0-646-86308-5

As mentioned above, these are the extensive diaries kept by **Dr. Lyon** during her captivity. Evacuated from Singapore on the ill-fated "*Kuala*", she was rescued from Pom Pong Island by **Bill Reynolds** on the former Japanese fishing boat, later named "*Krait*", and landed on Sumatra via the Indragiri River. Arriving too late in Padang to be rescued by the Allies, she became a prisoner of the Japanese on 17th March 1942.

PUBLISHED BY PEN AND SWORD IN THE UK

"The Evacuation of Singapore to the Prison Camps of Sumatra. Eyewitness Accounts of Tragedy and Suffering during WW11." By Judy Balcombe. Published by Pen and Sword Military. ISBN 978-1-39906-715-7

This book describes the events prior to, during and after the Fall of Singapore and the ways in which former prisoners are remembered on Bangka Island today. Many families did not know what happened to their relatives until contacting the author through the Muntok Peace Museum website. The Peace Museum was established by the prisoners' families in 2015, and they are remembered annually during Memorial Services held on 16th February and attended by family members and representatives from the Australia, New Zealand, British and Dutch Embassies.

All royalties from this book will be donated to the Muntok Red Cross in memory of the prisoners.

Please buy a copy for yourselves and your friends to help with Judy's generous donation.

Summary of Program on 16 February 2024 – 82-Anniversary Commemoration Services

9-45am - Service at Muntok Peace Museum –

To remember the civilian internees

- *The Captives Hymn* read by Arlene Bennett, former President of the Nurses Memorial Centre Melbourne
- Address by Judy Balcombe whose Grandfather Colin Campbell died at Muntok, and author of recently released book *'The Evacuation from Singapore to the Prison Camps of Sumatra'*
- Prayer for those affected by War read by BRIG Matt Campbell
- Roll of Honour - Judy Balcombe, Felicity Lane (Embassy), Judy Deveraux, Arlene Bennett, Graham Lawson, Valeria Noyce
 - Wreath laying

10-50am - Depart for Tanjung Kalion and Muntok Lighthouse

11-20am – Vivian Bowden Memorial at Muntok Lighthouse

To remember Vivian Bowden, Head of Mission Singapore, who died at Muntok on 17 February 1942

- The story of Vivian Bowden – Steve Scott Deputy Ambassador Australian Embassy Jakarta
- A Prayer to remember the civilian men, women and children who died while escaping from Singapore in 1942 – read by BRIG Matt Campbell
- *"Home"*, A Poem by Vivian Bowden, written in 1900 as a schoolboy in Japan, read by Tom Pearce,
- Wreath laying

11-30am – Service at the Vyner Brooke Nurses Memorial at Muntok Lighthouse

To remember the Australian Army Service Nurses who died in the Bangka Straits, Muntok and Sumatra

- Opening Address by Matt Anderson PSM Director Australian War Memorial Canberra, read by Steve Scott
- Introduction to the Dedication Service of the Nurses Memorial in 1993, read by Michael Noyce
- Reading by Rodney Pierce, great nephew of Sister Rosetta Wight (as read by Sister Vivian Bullwinkel)
- Reading by Graham Lawson, Friends of Bangka Island (as read by Sister Trotter in 1993)
- Address by Arlene Bennett, former President of the Nurses Memorial Centre Melbourne
- Peace and Reconciliation by Yuki Tanaka, Japanese academic and historian, read by Felicity Lane
- Federation and Muntok; The Wrecks at Tanjung Kalion (Muntok Lighthouse) by Judy Balcombe
 - Prayer for Peace by SQNLDR Jude Chew (as read by Sister Pat Gunther in 1993)
- The Lord's Prayer lead by Valeria Noyce
 - Wreath laying

**12noon - Picnic lunch around Muntok Lighthouse and the beach,
with local people and others 12-45pm – Depart for Radji Beach**

2pm - Service on Radji Beach Headland Memorial

To remember those who died on Radji Beach

- *The Radji Beach Plaque* - Dedication Prayer in 2017 by Chaplain Troy White, read by Michael Noyce
- *The Heroes* - a Tribute to the Merchant Navy - read by CPO Heath Jones RAN

- *Bangka Strait* - a poem by Keith Shegogg, read by Felicity Lane
- Poem by Indonesian National Nurses' Association in 2017 - read by Arlene Bennett
- United Kingdom, New Zealand and Radji Beach – BRIG Matt Campbell
- Some words from Department of Veterans Affairs, custodians of the Memorial - Tom Pearce
- 2020 Radji Beach Oration – Steve Scott Deputy Ambassador, Australian Embassy Jakarta
- Roll of Honour - Arlene Bennett, Rodney Pierce, Judy Devereux, Judy Balcombe
- The Ode by BRIG Matt Campbell
- The Last Post, Rouse
- For the Fallen, by SQNLDR Jude Chew
- National Anthems of Indonesia, Great Britain, New Zealand and Australia,
- Wreath laying

2-30pm - The 'Walk for Humanity'; on the beach to the water's edge

- Read in English by Michael Noyce
- Read in Indonesian by Felicity Lane

3pm - Depart for Pesanggrahan Menumbing – optional for

Friends of Bangka Island

7pm – Dinner at Yasmin Hotel hosted by Friends of Bangka

island



Plaque in Kampong Menjelang

ADDRESS AT BANGKA ISLAND MEMORIAL SERVICE

By Judy Balcombe

I would like to talk a little about the civilians who suffered the effects of the Second World War near and on Bangka Island and about this Museum.

Muntok had a Dutch administration in 1942 and an airfield. The Imperial Japanese Army wished to use it as a refuelling site for the planes en route to Palembang n Sumatra. Muntok town was bombed by Japanese planes on February 10 – people were killed and houses burnt down. Many people fled to live in the shelter of Batu Balai, a large cave, until they were ordered back to work by the Japanese who had taken the island. The people of Muntok experienced hardships and food shortages throughout the War.

The evacuees from Singapore left urgently in the few days before the 15th of February in a flotilla of over 100 large and small boats. These vessels unknowingly sailed into the path of the Japanese Army and Navy and most were bombed and sunk. It is estimated that over 5000 people lost their lives. For many years after, the coastline of Bangka Island was littered with human bones.

The civilians who survived the bombing of these ships were placed into a series of harsh prison camps, together with 32 Australian Army Nurses from the *SS Vyner Brooke*. There was also a contingent of British Army Nurses from the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps, who had been bombed while on the *Kuala*. The prisoners were later joined by a large number of Dutch people who had been taken from their homes.

This museum remembers all of these people.

I would like to describe some of the exhibits in the Muntok Peace Museum. The Museum aims to tell the story of the War years and hopes to show that war is harmful to humans.



On the rear wall is a 1943 map with pins marking Muntok, Palembang in Sumatra where the prisoners spent the War years.

Each move brought reduced food rations and increased sickness and death. The prisoners at Belalau, the last camp, felt this isolated jungle area had been chosen deliberately so they would never be found.

Near the entry of the Museum, we see photos of evacuees who travelled down the Malay peninsula to Singapore in February 1942, hoping to board ships and escape to safety. However, this was not to be, as most vessels were bombed and sunk.



There is a sketch, “*Horror off Bangka*” showing victims from a bombed ship clinging to a piece of wood, drawn in prison camp by New Zealand Navy Lieutenant William Bourke.



Next we see a list of the sad fates of some of the many boats carrying the evacuees.

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There are postcards of paintings by Russian artist Vladimir Tretchikoff. Tretchikoff was evacuated from Singapore on the *SS Giang Bee*, one of the larger boats sunk, with only 70 people reaching Bangka Island. He had volunteered to shovel coal in the engine room, which he described as entering into the depths of Hell.

We see his painting of *The Lost Orchid* - a delicate flower, lost from a dress, discarded with paper streamers and a cigarette on a flight of steps— surely reminiscent of party-goers fleeing a dance hall to rush to the Singapore docks.



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In one cabinet, is a painting of the *Tanjong Pinang* which rescued many people from the bombed *Kuala* and other boats near Pom Pong Island, only to be itself bombed and sunk, with further great loss of life. This was painted by David Wingate in memory of his grandmother Penelope Landon, who died in the bombing of the *Tanjong Pinang*, aged 50. Her picture hangs on the photo wall.

British Army Nurse Margot Turner, later Brigadier Dame Margot Turner, was one of the few people from this double catastrophe to reach Bangka Island, the only survivor on her raft. She recalled how, one by one, the victims with her, including children, became dehydrated and died and how she had rolled their bodies into the sea.



A mannequin wears Australian Army Nurse's uniform from the period, with regulation grey dress and red cape. 12 of the Nurses died in the bombing, 21 were massacred on Radji Beach, with Sister Vivian Bullwinkel the sole Nurse survivor. 32 Australian Army Nurses entered the prison camps but 4 later died in Muntok Camp and 4 at Belalau, leaving only 24 who finally returned home.

Next is a photograph of Stoker Ernest Lloyd and his wife. He was one of the two male survivors of the Radji Beach massacre. Ernest and American civilian Eric Germann were wounded in the massacre but survived and both lived through the War. Ernest Lloyd, Eric Germann and Vivian Bullwinkel were able to provide details of this terrible tragedy to authorities.



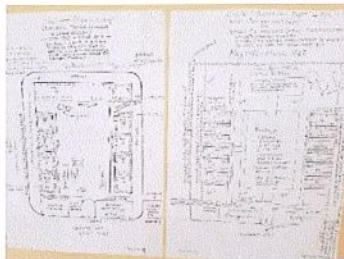


Further pictures by Lieutenant William Bourke show the hardships of life in a Japanese prison camp. In these detailed paintings, we see men running to catch rats to eat for dinner and small groups squatting in a crowded compound over smoking cooking fires.

Another of his pictures, stretching over two pages, shows a line of gaunt, ragged men carrying their worldly possessions in small bundles, staggering as they are moved to yet another, and worse, prison camp.



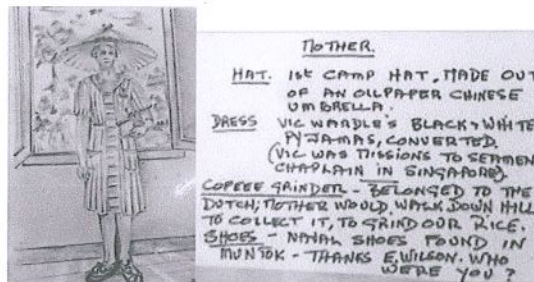
There is a line drawing of the layout of the Muntok Jail and adjacent coolie lines was drawn from memory by former Dutch child internee Theo Rottier. and The Jail was built to house 250 people but during the War, nearly 1000 men and boys over 10 years old were crammed inside.



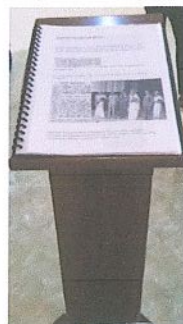
Internee Margaret Dryburgh made many drawings in the Camps which are an invaluable record of the hardships of Prison Camp life. She gave some as gifts to fellow prisoners, for birthdays or simply 'to lift them when they were down'. She drew detailed of the primitive huts and the attempts at a vegetable garden in Palembang Barracks Camp, never harvested, as the prisoners were moved on before the garden flourished. We see the rough communal kitchen at Palembang, where huge rice pots burnt the cooks as the boiling rice splashed, a 'bedroom' and the rudimentary Muntok 'hospital' hut, which had no medicines or facilities.



Miss Margaret Dryburgh was a Presbyterian missionary who wrote *The Captives' Hymn*, which was sung in camp each Sunday. A copy of her poem 'The Burial Place' hangs on the wall with a painting of a quiet tropical scene. This poem tells of the beauty of the clearing where the women dug graves by hand to bury their friends - a peaceful, sacred place, with sunlight and flowers.



Prisoners' families have sent items and photos of their relatives with brief biographies. There is a sketch of Mrs Mary Brown, wife of E.A. Brown, choirmaster of Singapore's St Andrew's Cathedral, wearing the dress she made from Reverend Vic Wardle's striped pyjamas and a sun hat she created from a broken umbrella. She is wearing a large pair of men's shoes left behind in the Muntok jail in February 1942 by a sailor. Many people had cast off their shoes in the water following the bombing of their ships and thereafter, went barefoot.



Anthony Pratt gave copies of letters written to his Mother by friends who had known his Father in the prison camps. Poignantly, they describe Donald Pratt's humour and good nature, particularly in relation to the Camp concerts held in Palembang. These letters also tell of Donald Pratt's physical decline after he was forced to labour in the Palembang oilfields and his early death, aged 34.

The Camp diary of Gordon Reis has been copied and enlarged in 3 volumes and given to the Muntok Peace Museum by Reis' grandson, David Man. This diary tells of Gordon Reis' '*Slow Death by Starvation*' and is a detailed account of his deterioration. Reis carefully describes his symptoms and records his decreasing weight, until he can write no more.

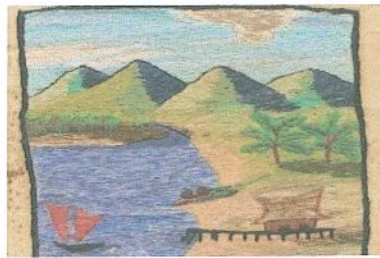
A photo of Kenneth Dohoo has been sent by his family for the photo wall. In the words of internee William McDougall, who wrote 2 books about the camps after the War, Kenneth Dohoo was 'uncomplaining, cheerful, tolerant and cultured, a genuine gentleman, heart and soul', who tragically died from malnutrition and malaria aged 38.

Next we see a photo of Dr Albert Stanley McKern, an Australian doctor and obstetrician, who worked in Penang. As he was dying from amoebic dysentery in Belalau camp, Dr McKern made his will. He asked that when his family were grown and independent, all his assets should be sold and the proceeds given to obstetric research. In due course, this occurred and the sum of \$12,000,000 was then shared between his universities of Sydney, Yale and Edinburgh, to help improve pregnancy and childbirth care. He is fondly remembered to this day in Penang, where some people say they have seen his ghost walking on the beach at night.

Among these drawings of rough huts, cramped conditions and women emptying latrine buckets is a display of music, with an explanation in English and Bahasa Indonesia. In the bamboo huts of Palembang prison camp, two women prisoners, Margaret Dryburgh and Norah Chambers, both skilled musicians, created a vocal orchestra. They wrote numerous classical scores from memory and harmonised them into parts. There were no instruments, so women learnt to hum the notes. 30 women of different nationalities and languages then sang together without words. Gatherings were prohibited, so the women practiced in small groups before several concerts were held outside at night. At first the Japanese guards were furious but then they too listened quietly to the wonderful music. The singers and audience said the concerts helped them to endure the horror and degradation of the camps and gave them courage to survive.

In 2013, a concert was held in Chichester, UK, with music from the original vocal orchestra scores. Ticket sales helped the school here next to the Peace

Museum, on the site of the Women's camp, and built a memorial grave for the many prisoners who died in Muntok and still remain here without individual graves.



On a wall divider, we see pictures of items made by the Women prisoners – an embroidery made from threads pulled from clothes, an apron put together from scraps cut from the Women's dresses as a gift for Miss Margaret Dryburgh, a mahjong set carved from scraps of wood, an embroidered nursery rhyme book made for 2-year-old Robbie Patterson at Christmas 1942 and a rag doll made by Mrs Mary Brown for her unborn grandchild. Mrs Brown died in Camp and so never met the baby, but the doll was taken home to Ireland after the War and was treasured. Her grand-daughter and the doll both came to the Chichester concert in 2013.



There is also a photo of Bully, a small Japanese soldier doll in uniform, made by Australian Army Nurse Betty Jeffrey and given to Vivian Bullwinkel. The original doll is now in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.



Neal Hobbs' 21st birthday card made in Belalau Camp and wishing him a long and happy life was signed by all the men in his hut, including the staff of murdered Australian diplomat Mr Vivian Bowden.

A shelf holds a solar topee, the tropical white hat once worn by Europeans, a Japanese army helmet and the split-toe rubber shoes worn by Japanese soldiers. A wooden carved head of an old and very thin man represents the hunger experienced by the prisoners. Food rations were very low – a small half coconut shell demonstrates the meagre amount of rice provided to the prisoners for meals. There was almost no meat, fish or eggs for protein, no fat but just a small amount of green vegetable, often kangkong, a type of water weed. Prisoners resorted to eating rats, snails, and snake – anything they could find.

Inadequate nutrition, dirty and poor water supplies, overcrowding and lack of medical care caused patients to develop beri-beri and pellagra deficiency diseases, affecting breathing, eyesight and the ability to walk. These, together with infectious diarrhoea of dysentery, Malaria and Bangka Island fever, tuberculosis and the effects of starvation and general debility led to serious sickness and death of hundreds of prisoners. The Nurses and internees tried to care for one another, but with no medicines, there was little help for these otherwise preventable and treatable conditions. But the dying received care and kindness from the friends who nursed them and no one ever died alone.

The men carried the bodies of their friends a mile to the local town cemetery, where they said prayers and placed leaves on the coffins. The women buried their friends under trees at the edge of the camp – after the War, Dutch authorities moved the women's bodies into the town cemetery. In the early 1960's all Dutch military and civilian graves were moved to large War cemeteries in Java. The British authorities arranged for the Dutch to move British and Australian military graves but the British and Australian and New Zealand civilian graves were largely left behind in Muntok. A visiting religious

minister took photos of the abandoned graves in 1968 and we see his photos here. The graves were then built over by houses and a petrol station.



During the building of the petrol station in 1981, 25 bodies were found and reburied in Muntok's Catholic cemetery. It is believed from the old cemetery plan that these were some of the British and Australian women from the women's camp.

In 2015, two plaques were placed on this memorial grave in the Catholic cemetery, with the names of all the people who died in Muntok and who we believe still remain buried there. A replica of the plaques stands near the entrance to the Peace Museum. The plaque contains words from Yeats' poem :

"Tread softly, for you tread on my dreams."



The dreams and hopes of many prisoners and their families were lost but these people are now remembered here and we thank the people of Muntok very much for helping us to preserve their memories.

We are very grateful to have the warmth and friendship of our new Muntok family.

Thank you

NURSING AND MEDICAL STAFF IN SUMATRAN PRISON CAMPS

(not including Australian Army Nurses)

Edith Florence BEDELL, Nurse

Frank BELL, Nursing orderly (Padang Men's Camp)

Catherine BOUDVILLE, Singapore General Hospital (Padang Camp)

Phyllis BRIGGS, Nurse

Rachel BROOKS, Nurse

Edith CASTLE, Colonial Nursing Sister

Mary CHARMAN, QA Nursing Sister (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Harley CLARK, Dentist (Men's Camp)

Marjorie HINDAUGH COCKE, St. John's Ambulance Volunteer

Marjorie COOKE, Nurse

Mary COOPER, QA Nursing Sister

Jessie COUPLAND, Nurse, Malayan Nursing Service

Elsie CROWE, Gynaecologist (Padang Internee)

Naomi DAVIES, QA Nursing Sister (Padang Camp)

Joy DEXTER, Health Visitor, Women and Children's Clinic

Ruth DICKSON, QA Nursing Sister

M. DLISH, Nurse

Ethel EVELING, 12th Indian General Hospital (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Heather FISHER, Australian Nurse, Malayan Nursing Service (Padang Camp)

Phyllis FONSECA, Combined Singapore General Hospital (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Dr. Annamaria GOLDBERG-CURTH(?), Paediatric Neurologist

Louisa HARLEY, QA Nursing Sister (Padang Camp)

Hilda HOBBS, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Kathleen HOMER, Nurse

Mary JENKIN, Medical Auxiliary Service

Kathleen JENKINS, QA Nursing Sister (Padang Camp)

Marjorie JENNINGS, Nurse

K.E. KONG, Nurse

Beatrice LAZAR, Indian General Hospital, Singapore (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Dr. LENTZE (former director Pangkalpinang Hospital) (Men's Camp)

Doreen LEWIS, Indian General Hospital, Singapore (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Dr. Marjorie LYON, Doctor (Padang Camp)

Janet MacALISTER, Nurse

Brenda MacDUFF, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Helen, MacKENZIE, Nurse

Freda MacKINNON, Assistant Matron, Penang General Hospital

Lydia MacLEAN, QA Nursing Service (Padang Camp)

Marjory MALMANCHE, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Mary McCALLUM, Nurse

Jean McDOWELL, Doctor

Rennie McFIE, Nurse

Dr. Albert McKERN, Doctor (Men's Camp)

Nell McMILLAN, Nurse (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Laura MEPHAM, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Olga NEUBRONNER, Colonial Service Nursing Sister, St. John's Ambulance, Singapore

Sally OLDHAM, Nurse

Joan POWELL, Nurse

Violet PULFORD, Nurse

Alice ROSSIE, Nurse

Ruth RUSSELL ROBERTS, MAS Ambulance Driver

Hyda SCOTT-EAMES, MAS Nurse

Agnes SERVICE, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Constance SMITH, Doctor, Women and Children's Welfare Officer)

Jean SMITH, Nurse (Padang Camp)

Netta SMITH, Nurse

Violet SPEDDING, QA Matron (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Hugh STUBBS, Doctor (Men's Camp)

Dr. TAY (Men's Camp). C.P. (Phyllis) THANE, VAD Nurse. Margaret THOMPSON, Doctor

Margot TURNER, QA Nursing Sister. Mabel WAUGH, Matron, Kuala Lipis (Padang Camp).

Dr. George WEST, Doctor (Men's Camp).

Kathleen WOODMAN, QA Nursing Sister (Padang and Bankinang Camps)

Also 40 Catholic Nuns and a large number of Catholic Brothers who cared for dysentery patients in the Men's Camp (11 Brothers died doing this work).

SIANG WO and OTHER WRECKS

With thanks to Judy Balcombe

Last 16th February, we scattered the ashes of our friend **Lieutenant Commander Bruce Bird**, former Australian Naval Defence Attache to Singapore, at this site, as was his wish. **Bruce** had a strong interest in the Naval history of this area and it is very appropriate that he was laid to rest here.

The large wreck that we see here is believed to be that of the *Siang Wo* which was damaged by Japanese aircraft and beached near Muntok Harbour on 13th February 1942, just prior to the Japanese invasion of Bangka Island.

This wreck of the *Siang Wo* was documented by a post-war investigator in 1945 and commented on by **Vivian Bullwinkel** on her visit to Bangka Island in 1992, to choose a site for the nurses' Memorial. Malayan Volunteers Group historian **Michael Pether** has spent many decades meticulously researching the fate of over 100 boats carrying evacuees from Singapore and service men en route to fight in Java. Most of them came under Japanese attack and were sunk.

I am quoting from **Michael Pether's** *Siang Wo* document. His lists of ships can be read in full on the Muntok Peace Museum website: <http://muntokpeacemuseum.org>

"It appears that 231 people boarded the *Siang Wo*, including 2 Commanders, many Naval Ratings from the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales* and civilians, many from the Malayan Broadcasting Corporation. The group included 17 or 19 women. 2 of the women, a **Miss E. Tasker**, an obstetric nurse, and a **Miss or Mrs Margaret Robinson**, were able to escape from Muntok on a yacht after the beaching of the *Siang Wo*. They kept diaries and write letters that enable us to know the events surrounding the *Siang Wo*. Also on board the *Siang Wo* was the grandson of **Alfred Deakin**, Australia's second Prime Minister. He was **Rohan Deakin Rivett**, who carefully documented his experiences. **Rivett** tells us that the remaining passengers from the *Siang Wo*, including 15 women, sought refuge in the Dutch hotel in Muntok. On hearing that the Japanese were landing in great numbers from landing crafts on 14th February, **Rivett** sought permission from **Lieutenant Commander Horace Vickers** of the *Siang Wo* to try to escape the island.

Rivett and 6 others walked in the thick jungle near Muntok for 6 days, evading Japanese soldiers. They then found a small sailing boat and sailed for a further 3 weeks, attempting to reach Australia. However, they were captured and sent first to prison camps in Java and then to Changi, from where **Rivett** was sent to the Thailand-Burma Railway.

Rivett was able to broadcast to his family from prison camp on 1st July, 1942. He later wrote the book, "**Behind Bamboo**", which describes his wartime experiences in great detail.

At this Memorial Service, we remember the Australian Army Nurses, Civilians and Servicemen killed on Radji Beach and **Mr. Vivian Bowden**, Australia's Official Representative to Singapore, who was executed by 2 guards after speaking out in defence of British soldier **Frank Brewer**.

Tragically, there were other people killed in locations nearby."

Michael Pether has provided the following information on people also known to have been murdered near Muntok. These include:

Lieutenant Commander Horace Vickers from the *Siang Wo*, identified by a sailor, found mutilated and dead in a coconut plantation.

Supply Assistant, **James Scott Butler**, from the *Siang Wo*, missing.

Sergeant Kerton, from the *Siang Wo*, missing.

Lieutenant Basil Shaw, Captain of the *Tanjong Pinang* RNZNVR, murdered.

Able Seaman Oswald Young (from the *Repulse*) found murdered.

5 British Other Ranks, possibly from the *Li Wo* – found murdered.

(We also remember **Captain Thomas Wilkinson** from the *Li Wo* which was sunk in this area and who was given a posthumous Victoria Cross.)

Lieutenant Anthony Ruthven Clarke RNZNVR and **Acting Commander Robert George Fenton-Livingstone** RN, were never seen again after escape from Muntok Camp on 21st February 1942 – presumed killed.

The military prisoners who were captured were taken from Muntok to the harsh prison camps in Palembang in Sumatra. Men in these camps later sent on to Changi said that Changi was a 'holiday camp' by comparison.

As we know, one half of the male civilian prisoners here and in Sumatra died, as did one third of the women. One of the women who died in Belalau camp may have been **Mrs. D.L. Fein**, wife of the Dutch Consul to Singapore, who was a passenger on the *Siang Wo*.

There are far too many people to name but I will mention Australian **Mrs. Mary Austen**, a critically ill stretcher case, who died in the hold of the barge carrying prisoners from Muntok to Belalau camp in March 1945 and who was buried at sea, in these waters before us here.

The plaque to all who suffered and died which we placed in the **Vivian Bullwinkel Galleri** at the Timah Museum, has some words from **Rupert Brooke's** World War 1 poem, *The Dead*:

The Dead

*These hearts were woven of human joys and cares,
Washed marvellously with sorry, swift to mirth.
The Years had given them kindness. Dawn was theirs,
And sunset, and the colours of the earth.
These had seen movement, and heard music; known
Slumber and waking; loved; gone proudly friended;
Felt the quick stir of wonder; sat alone;
Touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended.*

Their lives did end here but their stories have not ended, as long as we remember them and speak their names.

May they rest in peace.

THE FRANK BREWER ORAL HISTORY TAPES

With thanks to the Imperial War Museum for permission to use these tapes

Amended Biographical Details:

BREWER, Frank CMG; OBE. MCS 1937. Assistant Protector of Chinese, Penang. 3/SSVF [Penang & Province Wellesley] 101 STS Singapore then Dalforce. 2nd Lieut General List. Left Singapore 15/2/42 with Lt. Col. John Dalley on *Mary Rose*. POW Muntok then Palembang from 17/2/42. Repatriated from Singapore on *Sobieski* to Liverpool arriving 23/10/45. Returned to Singapore 1946 as a witness at the War Crimes trials. Post-war Secretary of Chinese Affairs and Deputy Chief Secretary FOM 1955-1957. Secretary of Defence FOM 1957-1959. Died 21/12/1987 aged 72. Papers at IWM Ref: 67/182/1. Interviews at IWM & National Archives of Singapore.

I was a member of the Malayan Civil Service and had gone out to Malaya in 1937. At one stage, I think sometime in 1940, after I had been to China studying Chinese and qualifying, I came back to duties in Penang and, as everyone really did, joined the Volunteer Force, which was for all local people, British, Malays, Chinese, and Eurasian in various companies and Battalion up in Penang. So I was in that, in and out of it because one moved jobs and it was required that you must be in your civil job and not in the Forces, so to speak. Then when the Japanese were about to attack we were mobilised and I went into my Machine Gun unit.

When the war started Penang was passed down the mainland by the Japanese and the Volunteers – particularly the European element were moved/evacuated to Singapore. The rest were offered the facility of staying behind with their families or going with the British element. In Singapore one stayed around for some time doing odd duties while the Battalion was being reformed. In the meantime, my own Civil Office had enquired if I would be willing to join a Special Force being set up for training Chinese in guerrilla warfare and taking them up and putting them behind the lines. I volunteered to do this.

This was Force 101 which was the predecessor of Force 136. **Spencer Chapman** was the Commanding Officer at the time I joined although he was up country and never came back as he stayed behind the lines as shown in his book, *“The Jungle is Neutral.”*

It took me some weeks to get out of the Volunteers into this unit so I was then commissioned into the British Army General List and my duties were essentially at that time to learn and train Chinese guerrillas. The majority of these, I should say, were Communists as the Communist party which had been outlawed well before the war had been demanding through Chinese citizens of note, to cooperate in the war against the Japanese. Many of them who had been in prison were released and there was a tremendous wave of enthusiasm with hundreds of them coming forward to be trained. We trained them in parties of 30, I think. Initially we have them training for 10 days – all Special Arms training, explosives and jungle type things. As the campaign moved so fast down the peninsular, the time for training got down to 3 or 4 days and it was pretty strenuous business. Literally, one worked all day with practical demonstrations and theory. They were very good. They took enormous numbers of notes for the theory, rehearsed the next day and when they left they burnt their notes and away they went, and I was involved in that till early January. Only once did I go up with a party and they weren't of that persuasion – they were Chinese Nationalists [KMT] trying to set up something similar but it didn't quite succeed.

We got on very well indeed. They were all good comrades. They insisted that they should not be under our control in operations. We could only train them. We could liaise to help get them up behind the lines but thereafter it was their business. They chose their own hideout places. Relations with them were very good and improved as we went along. I had great admiration for them too.

When the Causeway was blown Incidentally, I came back over that late at night having taken the last party up. When we got back, because it took so long to prepare the demolitions, the blowing was about 4 hours overdue then Force 101 broke up. The Regulars, the original officers and NCOs were to go elsewhere, to another country,

to operate, and those of us who were local were to go back, either to the Volunteers or to some other units, and as I had this rather special training by now and knowledge of things Chinese, I was handed over to another unit called **Dalforce**. The name comes from **Dalley – Colonel Dalley**, who had been the Head of the equivalent of the Special Branch of the Police Force. He had already been organising what he called the Guides up country and assisting the British Forces and indeed doing other work. He got back to Singapore and collected together a number of his fellow officers and had the authority to form another unit of Chinese this time commanded by British Officers. They were to be put on the fringe of the mangrove swamps, literally the mangrove swamps facing Johore, the mainland, and they were to be the eyes and ears of the regular forces who were set back in more habitable land.

Again we had to do a rush job to produce companies of these in double quick time. Literally 7 days, 5 days, that sort of thing. These poor chaps were only given a few shotguns – literally bird shotguns; one automatic weapon per section or platoon and a few hand grenades. They just had to go and live in the swamp, listen and watch, and should the Japanese arrive send a message back, or if they hadn't time, start firing.

The Japanese, in fact, landed exactly on one of our Company positions and only 5 ever came back out of that lot. The Battle of Singapore was pretty short lived and it was obvious that we had to call back our outlying companies who would just be cut up and disband them. It was no good leaving them around in uniform for the Japanese to deal with in their well known ways. So they were disbanded. And among them was one big unit of Force 101 people who hadn't been able to get up country. So we disbanded them. And that was the end of my association with the fighting in Singapore.

Colonel Dalley sought advice from Army HQ at Fort Canning as to what he should do with his remaining people, quite a number of officers and other people by now, volunteers from the local community, businessmen, lawyers ... The order was that most of them should return to Volunteer Battalions in the front line while a smaller number like myself and **Dalley** should go and do something else: it was suggested that we should join the Military Police as rather a large number of troops were swanning round the town of Singapore. This didn't suit us.

So **Dalley** went back and explained that this was a waste of good material. We were aware that the overall officer in charge of behind lines operations, **Colonel Warren RM**, had gone over to Sumatra to try to organise some new behind the lines units either for operations over there or to try to get back by boat to link with those we'd already put up country in Malaya.

It seemed sense to take our small group – 5 people: **Colonel Dalley**; **Captain Hawkins** [Malayan Civil Service and World War 1 experience]; **Captain Donald Farquharson** [planter]; **Captain Herring** [planter]; **Lt. Eno** [a planter who had come over from Sumatra to join Force 101 but never got up country]; and myself That we should go over to Sumatra, try to link up with **Warren** and offer our services. I had the technical know how for special guerrilla mechanisms and they had specialist local knowledge – all very well versed in local languages and knew the country. So we could be useful. So it was agreed that we should go. That was on the Saturday night before the Fall of Singapore on the Sunday morning.

My instructions were to try and find a launch and use my Chinese connections to get a launch, but unfortunately we couldn't find any oil – there had been such a lot of faithful destruction going on so we couldn't get any in time.

When I reported back, **Colonel Dalley** had been back to Fort Canning and they said, *“Well, there are two launches going out – Harbour Master's launches taking out specialists and a few civilians who we think ought not to be in Singapore and you have our authorisation to join them. Go and see the man in charge, **Captain Muloch RN**”*

He had been called back as External Defences Officer, Singapore. An interesting character. A Midshipman on the expedition to the South Pole to relieve **Scott** so a man of considerable age when we met him. He was to be the Navy Commander of this little flotilla – 2 Harbour master launches to take us away. We went down after dark to the jetty. One of the launches, the **OSPREY** was tied up – we boarded that along with a large number of other people, military and civilian. The other launch, the **MARY ROSE** was out in the water and was taking people from boat as well. In the meantime, we had to get some drinking water. This took a very long time. There was only a very thin pipe to pipe in water from the topside. We were stuck there for several hours while, unfortunately, some of the Runaways were standing round accusing us of escaping, defecting ... they were Deserters. Plenty of those about. They threatened us with their tommy guns and even chucked grenades at us which fortunately exploded in the water and did no harm. There was a Military Police Captain who had been told to make sure we got on board and see us off, and he put up a very good show outfacing these people.

We moved off at midnight, not very far and dropped anchor while the **MARY ROSE** caught up. Then a horrid thing happened. The anchor fouled the chains of a buoy and we couldn't free the thing. One very heavy chap kept diving down to free this thing – great effort but no good at all. There was no option but we all had to go on the **MARY ROSE**. There must have been about 150 people who got onto this quite small launch – all packed on deck and we set off.

[To be continued.]

ANNUAL BANGKA ISLAND MEMORIAL SERVICE

Report by Judy Balcombe

The annual Bangka Island Memorial Service took place in Muntok on 16th February. In attendance were **Mr. Steve Scott**, Deputy Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, **Mr. Tom Pearce**, Australian Consul General and 6 further Australian Embassy staff, **Colonel Norbert Moerkens**, Dutch Defence Attache to Indonesia, family members of Australian Army Nurses, **Kathleen Neuss** and **Rosetta Wight** from the *SS Vyner Brooke* who were both killed on Radji Beach, family members of civilian internees, **Judy Balcombe** and **Arlene Bennett** from Friends of Bangka Island, the Muntok Peace Museum and the History and Heritage Committee of the Australian Nurses' Memorial Centre, **Mr. Fakhrizal Abubakar**, Director of the Timah Museum and curator of the Muntok Peace Museum, a member of the Sydney Maritime Museum and others interested in military history, Veterans' Affairs employees who care for the Nurses' Memorial at the Tanjong Kelian Lighthouse, Indonesian nurses and doctors, members of the Muntok Red Cross and many other Indonesian friends. Apologies were received from the New Zealand Embassy who were engaged in a diplomatic mission in Papua and from the UK Embassy who were unable to attend this year.

A Gala Welcome Dinner was held by the Regent of West Bangka Island on Friday, 15th February, which was attended by the Governor of Bangka Island. Speeches were made and there was ceremonial dancing, which we were invited to join.

The Memorial Service on Friday, 16th February, was conducted in 4 parts, firstly at the Muntok Peace Museum, which tells the story of the Fall of Singapore, the bombing of over 100 ships carrying evacuees and the harsh 3 and a half years of internment of those who reached shore and Dutch civilian prisoners. One half of male prisoners and one third of women died in the camps of Muntok, Palembang and Belalau. There were also child deaths in camp. The suffering of the people of Muntok during the War was also described. Prayers were offered for all civilians who lost their lives in the War here and for all those who suffer in wars today. From here, the group travelled to the new memorial to **Mr. Vivian Bowden**, Australia's Official Representative to Singapore (Ambassador) who was executed in Muntok on 17th February, 1942, after speaking out in support of British soldier **Frank Brewer**. The Australian Embassy paid tribute to **Mr. Bowden**. **Judy Balcombe** spoke on the wreck of the *Siang Wo*, which carried Australian journalist **Rowan Rivett**, grandson of Australian former Prime Minister **Alfred Deakin**. The names of British servicemen killed on shore away from Radji Beach were given and **Captain Thomas Wilkinson** from the *Li Wo*, who received a posthumous Victoria Cross for action in these waters was remembered.

The Service then moved to the Australian Army Nurses' Memorial adjacent to that of **Mr. Bowden**. This Memorial is situated under the lighthouse which was the beacon to the many bombed victims in the water and was the site chosen by **Vivian Bullwinkel** in 1992. The Memorial has the names of all 65 Australian Army Nurses from the *SS Vyner Brooke*, the 12 who died during or after the bombing, the 21 killed in the massacre on Radji Beach, the 8 who died in prison camp and the 24 who finally returned home. Further speeches were made, the poem presented by Indonesian nurses in 2017 describing **Vivian Bullwinkel's** lasting grief was read and wreaths were laid. The Deputy Australian Ambassador spoke about the *Vyner Brooke* nurses and all who suffered in this area. During this visit, he had learned that his own grandfather, **Bernard Scott**, had left Singapore on the *Mata Hari* which had been captured and brought to Muntok Harbour. **Bernard Scott**, former Penang Harbour Master, had spent time in Muntok Jail with other prisoners before being transferred to military prison camps in Palembang and then to Changi. This knowledge brought a very personal connection between the Australian Embassy and this year's Muntok Memorial Service.

Heavy rain postponed our drive to the beach and we proceeded to Menumbing Hill, where **Sukarno** had been exiled before becoming President of Indonesia. As we drove up though rain, mist and thick jungle, we reflected on the near impossibility of escape such as that effected by **Rowan Rivett** and his small group, which he described in detail in his book, "*Behind Bamboo*," and others who escaped from Muntok Camp. Descending from Menumbing, the sky had cleared so the Service moved to the headland overlooking the beach, with Sumatra a short distance across the Bangka Strait. We transferred to 4-wheel drives for the rough and muddy drive, thinking of the women, children, elderly man and 2 wounded soldiers who, directed by **Matron Irene Drummond**, had left Radji Beach to walk along such a track to Muntok and had thus escaped the massacre. The Indonesian, Australian, New Zealand, Dutch and British National Anthems were played and sung. The Australians present sang 'God Save The King' on behalf of the many British who suffered and died in this area. This now hallowed ground was once a graveyard of many thousands of people from over 100 bombed boats. The Radji Beach Address, prayers, tributes and wreath laying followed on the headland.

Participants proceeded down the steps, newly repaired by the Australian Embassy, onto the beach for the Radji Beach Ode and 'The Walk for Humanity', where all present hold hands and walk into the water as the Nurses did before they were shot, vowing to work towards a more peaceful world. Flowers were scattered into the water.

Members of The Indonesian Nurses and Doctors Association were present and had prepared a large banner depicting Vivian Bullwinkel. They presented us with a plaque commemorating the 50th Anniversary of their organisation.

Friends of Bangka Island hosted a Thank You dinner in the evening fore the Embassies, Indonesian officials, the Red Cross and other local friends. We said goodbye but will meet again next year.

Memorial Service at Muntok Peace Museum



Australian Army Nurses' Memorial at Tanjong Kelian Lighthouse

