

**COMMEMORATION CEREMONIES
TO MARK THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FALL OF SINGAPORE AND ITS AFTERMATH
IN SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND SUMATRA
FEBRUARY 2017**



PATRON: HER GRACE THE DUCHESS OF NORFOLK
www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



Wreaths laid during the Commemoration Service at Kranji CWGC

**75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE
COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT KRANJI**



DETACHMENT OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY

VILMA HOWE AND OLGA HENDERSON



**COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FALL OF SINGAPORE
FEBRUARY 2017**

**REPORTS FROM CEREMONIES IN
SINGAPORE, AUSTRALIA AND SUMATRA**
Patron: Her Grace The Duchess of Norfolk
www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk



SINGAPORE

1. LUNCH AT THE SINGAPORE CRICKET CLUB
2. COMMEMORATION SERVICE AT KRANJI CWGC
3. MILITARY TOUR OF THE NORTH-EAST OF SINGAPORE
4. TOUR TO MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD AND HILL 105

AUSTRALIA

5. SERVICE IN THE CITY OF STIRLING MEMORIAL GARDENS
6. COMMEMORATION OF THE VYNER BROOKE TRAGEDY

SUMATRA

7. COMMEMORATION SERVICES IN MUNTOK
8. VISIT TO PALEMBANG, MUNTOK, BELALAU AND JAVA
9. VISIT TO BELALAU

LUNCHEON AT THE SINGAPORE CRICKET CLUB – Tuesday, 14th February 2017
Report by Liz Moggie

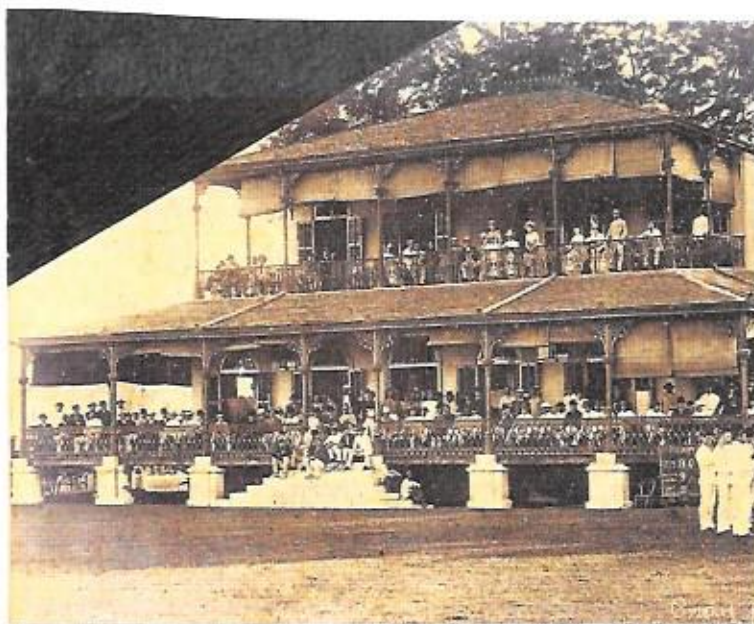
With the kind assistance of MVG members **Neill** and **Morag Aitken** we were able to hold our luncheon get together at the very pleasant and historic Singapore Cricket Club. The Club is situated at one end of the Padang and is very close to the Supreme Court Building (where **Mountbatten** took the Japanese surrender on 12th September, 1945), now the National Art Gallery, St. Andrew's Cathedral and a series of War Memorials on the Esplanade. **Neill**, an Honorary Life member of the Club, kindly hosted our group of 40 members and friends in the Victoria Room.

The Club laid on a delicious "*makan kechil*" and there was masses of food. The seating was arranged round the walls which meant that our more elderly guests were able to sit whilst the more active had plenty of space to circulate. As is usual at MVG functions, acquaintances were renewed, people who had previously communicated only via e-mail were able to meet up and faces were put to names. We were a varied group. People had travelled from the U.K., Australia, Canada, Malaysia and there were also local Singaporean residents.

We were delighted that our two Sime Road Camp child internees, **Olga Henderson** and **Vilma Howe**, were able to join us again. They had the opportunity to exchange experiences with three sisters, **Betty**, **Elsie** and **Jean Lawther**, who had come into Sime Road in early 1945 when the Japanese rounded up those Eurasian families who had previously not been interned. **Jane Nielsen**, the designer of the Sime Road Camp map, and **Jon Cooper**, the "archaeologist" of the Camp had a spirited discussion with the sisters as to which hut they had occupied. Their 93 year old brother **Reg** who accompanied them, had spent most of the war in the jungle as a member of the 7th Regiment East Coast Pahang of the MPAJA. At the age of 18 he had realized that if he did not "disappear" he would be forced into working for the Japanese.

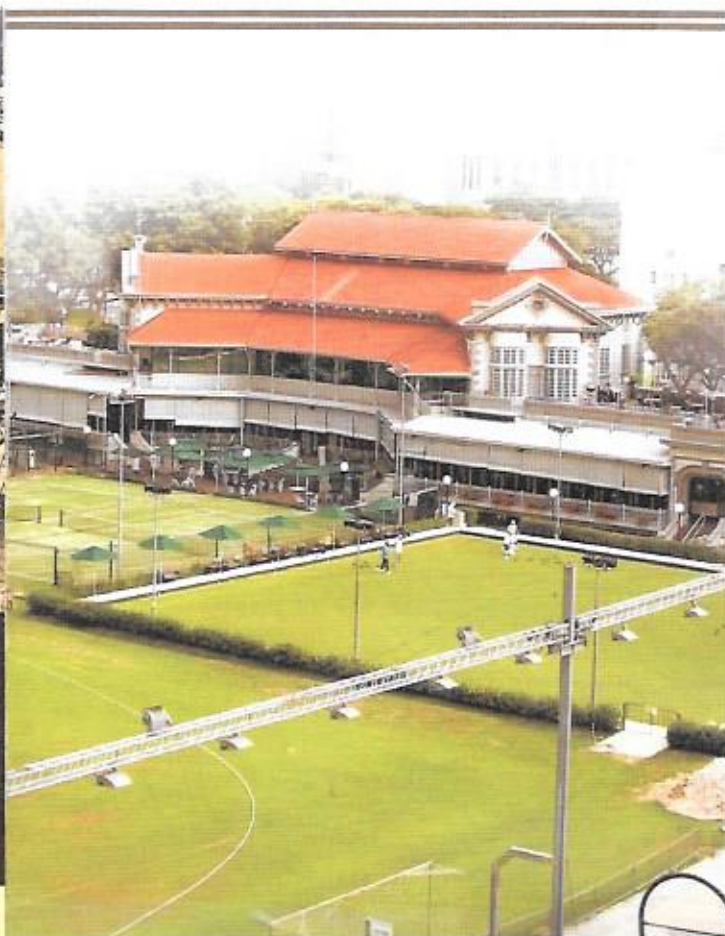
Rosemary, as MVG Secretary, took the opportunity to welcome everyone and announce the programme for the events of the next few days. Guests were then free to mingle and compare notes on the experiences and fates of their family members. Lunches held on previous tours to Singapore have always been enjoyable and this was no exception.

MVG thanks **Neill** and **Morag** for arranging for the occasion in such a pleasant and convenient location.



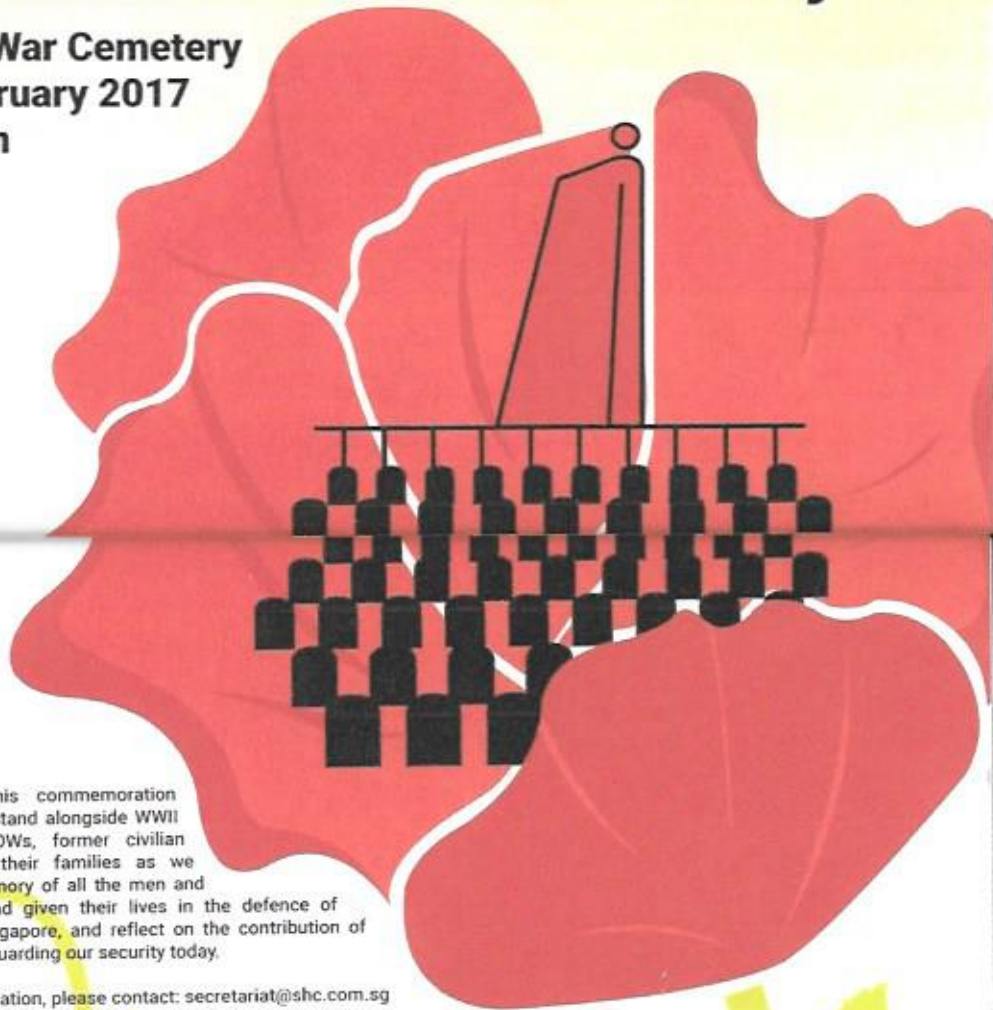
"The Esplanade and cricket have always been associated... The first recorded cricket match was played on 14 October 1852, under the title of 'A Picked Eleven against the (Singapore Cricket) Club'."

-- 100 Years Of Singapore by Walter Makepeace, Gilbert E. Brooke and Roland St J. Braddell. In the early days, the Padang ("field" in Malay) was also known as the Esplanade.



75th Anniversary Fall Of Singapore Commemoration Ceremony

Kranji War Cemetery
15 February 2017
4.30pm



Join us in this commemoration ceremony and stand alongside WWII veterans, ex-POWs, former civilian internees and their families as we honour the memory of all the men and women who had given their lives in the defence of Malaya and Singapore, and reflect on the contribution of those still safeguarding our security today.

For more information, please contact: secretariat@shc.com.sg

This ceremony is organised by the Commemoration Committee for the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

Ministry of Defence, Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore Civil Defence Force, Singapore Armed Forces Veterans' League, National Cadet Corps, The Singapore Scout Association, Battlebox, The Changi Museum, Australian High Commission, British High Commission, High Commission of Canada, High Commission of India, Embassy of Japan, High Commission of Malaysia and The New Zealand High Commission

Event sponsors:



ST Logistics



CWGC



Canada



The Changi Museum

**Service at Kranji War Cemetery to commemorate the
75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942**



The Remembrance service at Kranji War Cemetery to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore was held on Wednesday 15th February 2017. It was an extremely moving occasion in spectacular and very beautiful and peaceful surroundings with the names of over 24,000 men who died inscribed on the Singapore Memorial situated just behind the Cross of Sacrifice. The service was to honour the sacrifices made by Allied military personnel who fought to defend Malaya and Singapore against the Japanese in World War 2 and to foster a spirit of reconciliation among the countries that were once combatants in war.

During the hot afternoon the sky was mainly overcast and there was the occasional but, fortunately, only the faintest sprinkling of rain. The service which started at 4.30 pm was attended by a number of dignitaries including the Guest of Honour, Mr Vikram Nair of the Singapore Government, the High Commissioners of Britain, Australia, India, New Zealand, Canada, the Netherlands, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam, the Japanese Ambassador, the Commissioner of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Lt Gen Sir William Rollo KCB, CBE, military commanders including Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, Australian Vice Chief of Defence Force, BG Lim Tuang Liang, Chief of Staff, Joint Staff, Ministry of Defence, Singapore and representatives of the Embassies of the United States of America and the Republic of China.

Among the 700 people present at the ceremony were local organisations, the Singapore Scout Association and Singapore Girl Guides, a number of WW2 veteran associations such as the Malayan Volunteers Group, Australia's 2/10th Field Regiment Association, the Old Etonian Association, a representative of the 8th Australian Division and members of the Singapore Armed Forces' Veterans League together with war veterans, former civilian internees and British, Australian, New Zealand, Chinese, Malay and Indian families of those who fought in the Far East, many who were taken prisoner at the Fall of Singapore and interned in Japanese Prisoner of War Camps across South East Asia.

There was an introduction by Mr Razeen Chan, Deputy Director of the Singapore History Consultants, who was Master of Ceremony, and after a reading of Pericles' Eulogy by Cdr Andy Lamb, British Defence Attache, a speech was made by the Guest of Honour, Mr Vikram Nair, Chairman of the Singapore Government Parliamentary Committee for Defence and Foreign Affairs, who said: "While many Singaporeans have never experienced the horrors of war, they must never forget the lessons learned and the commitment and sacrifices of their forefathers in protecting the country and its way of life. This commitment to remember the horrors of war and to defend Singapore is at the core of Total Defence. It is when every Singaporean is resolved to play their part, and contribute to keeping Singapore strong on all fronts, that we can be confident of safeguarding our nation and our home against different threats and challenges that come our way."

Silent prayers were said by the religious leaders of various faiths and a bell was rung five times to mark the five years of the Pacific War, 1941-1945.

A speech was made by Lt. General Sir William Rollo, Commissioner of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission followed by his unveiling of a commemorative plaque for the 75th Anniversary. This plaque will eventually be mounted inside the Battlebox on Fort Canning Hill - the former underground command centre of Malaya Command during the war and the place where the decision to surrender was made in February, 1942



The song, *Breaths*, was sung by the Dulwich College Singapore Choir and a reading of Laurence Binyon's famous 1914 poem, *For the Fallen*, was made by the Canadian Defence Attache, Col. Jeff Drummond.

The laying of the wreaths of both official representatives and private individuals took place and was followed by the laying of *tsurus*. In a spirit of reconciliation, representatives of the Japanese community laid *tsurus*, multi-coloured strings of paper cranes, sacred birds considered in Japan to be a symbol of peace and especially made for the service by students of the Japanese School in Singapore. The cranes represent the wish to heal the wounds of war and *tsurus* were first laid at the Park of Peace in Hiroshima, each crane being a prayer for those who suffer, a prayer for peace and a prayer for love – "*I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world.....*" The Japanese Ambassador to Singapore, Mr Kenji Shinoda, said it was always painful for him and the Japanese people to look back and think about what happened in Singapore 75 years ago.

"I express my feelings of profound grief and heartfelt condolences. I believe that such feelings are shared by the overwhelming majority of Japanese," said Mr Shinoda who laid a wreath of scarlet poppies in the first group of the wreath laying part of the ceremony alongside the British High Commissioner, H.E. Scott Wightman, the Australian High Commissioner, HE Bruce Gosper and the Indian High Commissioner, HE Jawed Ashraf.

Mrs Rosemary Fell laid a wreath on behalf of the Malayan Volunteers Group, an association of the veterans and families of men of all races and creeds who fought for the volunteer reserve forces of the British Army, RAF and the Royal Navy, forces which were originally set up during peace time as a precautionary measure to protect British commercial interests in Malaya and Singapore, the Army Volunteer Reserves helping out with the occasional unrest from Chinese and Indian workers, settling local disputes and putting down any local insurgence on rubber estates which were often in remote areas and surrounded by deep impenetrable jungle and the SSNVR/RNVR mainly responsible for protecting the ports and keeping the shipping lines open into Keppel Harbour. Following the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939 men from civilian occupations, bankers, insurance brokers, civil servants, solicitors and those who worked for British trading companies and business firms in Malaya and Singapore were all enlisted into the Volunteer forces undergoing training at the same time as working at their respective jobs and firms. Planters and miners were not enlisted into the naval reserve force as they often couldn't get away for the necessary training but most of the planters and miners were already part of the British Army Volunteer Forces.

A vital part of the volunteer reserves was the Malayan Volunteer Air Force which was born out of the many flying clubs established throughout the peninsular during the 1930s at Singapore, KL, Ipoh and Penang. The SSVAF which was started in Singapore in 1936 was absorbed into the MVAF in 1939 when war broke out in Europe. The volunteer forces were largely undervalued and their expertise often

ignored until it was too late including the efforts and contribution made during the Malayan Campaign by the MAAF, many of whose pilots were considered to be too old for the RAF. The MAAF may not have been directly in the front line of air defence – such as it was – in Malaya and Singapore between 1940 and 42, yet it filled an invaluable niche in the area of reconnaissance, communication and the transportation of military personnel before and during the short Malayan Campaign, thus relieving the hard pressed Royal Air Force of these duties. MAAF pilots flew Tiger Moths, Dragon Rapides & Dragonflies - no match for the Japanese Zero fighters - but they were used for anti-aircraft height finding and searchlight practice and they often flew senior military personnel upcountry to review troops etc. including Gen. Percival himself. The very first Catalina aircraft shot down by the Japanese over the Gulf of Siam during the invasion of Northern Malaya on 7th December 1941 was actually piloted by a F/O of the MAAF, Patrick Beddel, and another famous MAAF pilot was Flt Lt Loke Yaik Foo, a wealthy Chinese businessman, who brought his own Tiger Moth with him when he joined the MAAF and in which he later escaped, island hopping across the Dutch East Indies and then on to Australia where like a number of Chinese MAAF pilots he joined the RAAF.



Mrs Rosemary Fell, Secretary of the MVA, laying a wreath at the service at Kranji War Cemetery on 15th February 2017 to commemorate the Fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942

Three survivors of World War 2 laid individual wreaths, two who are members of the Malayan Volunteers Group, Ms Olga Henderson and Mrs Vilma Howe, who were both imprisoned at Changi and Sime Road as children, and the third survivor, Chinese war veteran, Captain Ho Weng Toh, who flew some 18 bombing missions over Japanese-occupied China and who wore his pilot wings on his blazer at the ceremony



From left to right carrying their wreaths of poppies Captain Ho Weng, Mrs Vilma Howe and Ms Olga Henderson

The Last Post was followed by 2 minutes' silence and after readings of a *Tribute to Heroes* by LTA Teo Sim Joo, SCDF, and *Our Sons* by the Australian Defence Attache, Col. David Hay, the Singapore National Anthem, *Majula Singapura*, was sung and the service concluded by the Chairman of the Commemoration Committee, Mr. Jeya Ayadurai.

After the service there was a reception under a covered marquee at the entrance to the cemetery where refreshing cold drinks and a buffet of small eats, *machan ketchil*, were served and guests had the opportunity to exchange their interesting and individual stories, memories and past experiences until the coach arrived to take the MVG members back to Fort Canning Lodge following what had been a most memorable afternoon in a beautiful and peaceful corner of Singapore, north of the island near the Straits of Johore.... only a short distance from Sarimbun Beach, where the Japanese troops first landed on Singapore on 8th February 1942Kranji War Cemetery, once the site of a Japanese Prisoner of War camp, but now the quiet resting place of so many who died 75 years ago.

MILITARY TOUR OF THE NORTH EAST OF SINGAPORE

After the moving ceremony at the Kranji War Memorial on Wednesday 15 February, the following day was booked for a full-day tour. As usual, the coach was departing from the YWCA at Fort Canning and involved a fairly early start. Nevertheless, the 35 or so MVG members on the trip had recovered from the previous day's exertions and were looking forward to this trip.

The first place to be visited was in the north of the island and so the coach was heading northwards along a relatively uncrowded motorway, while in the other direction the traffic was quite congested in parts as people were driving into the main area of Singapore. It was not too long before we arrived in the Woodlands area, not far from the Causeway linking Malaysia and Singapore.

Causeway

The Causeway had been a key link between Malaya and Singapore in 1941/42. Opened in 1924, it included a road and two railway tracks. At the time of the Japanese invasion of Malaya in December 1941, the Causeway had been an important part of the defences of Singapore. But as the Japanese advanced, the link was blown up on 31 January 1942 with the intention of hindering the Japanese in their attempt to invade Singapore. In the event, this was only of limited value and when the Causeway was abandoned in early February the Japanese repaired the breach and were able to use the Causeway to bring into Singapore both troops and equipment.

Nowadays, the Causeway is a very important economic link and we were able to observe all the vehicles, including many goods vehicles and coaches, queuing to enter Singapore. But the most noticeable feature was the large number of motorcyclists travelling from Malaysia into Singapore. As we approached the Woodlands area, we had already seen many motorcyclists and many more were observed crossing the Causeway. As our guide **Sharul** explained, a large number travel each day into Singapore for work, and many get up very early in the morning to ensure that they get to their place of work in Singapore on time. Arrangements at the border are such that they do not take long to get through the control point.

On the previous visit to Singapore in September 2015 when we had visited the north of the island, it had not been possible to see across to Malaysia as a result of the extensive haze. Fortunately the haze is not a problem in February and visibility was good so we were able to see clearly across the Strait of Johor into Johor Bahru. Singapore is noted for its cleanliness with very little litter, so it was slightly disappointing to see in the water evidence of pollution with items such as paper and plastic bottles.

Although there was a lot of road traffic across the Causeway, there is now no direct rail link between Singapore and Malaysia. However, the railway to Kuala Lumpur runs from just north of the Causeway and a number of the party were travelling to Kuala Lumpur at the end of the week, some by train and some by aircraft, so there was discussion about the best way of travelling. In the longer term though, as **Sharul** mentioned, there are plans for a high-speed rail link between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, scheduled to open at the end of 2026. This would revolutionise travel between the two countries, with trains running at maximum

speeds in excess of 300 km/h over 350 km of track and cutting the journey time between Singapore (Jurong East) and Kuala Lumpur to just 90 minutes. A new bridge is planned to carry the line over the Strait of Johor.

Singapore Naval Base

After Woodlands the next stop on our tour was the site of the Singapore Naval Base in Sembawang. The Naval Base was a key part of the arrangements in the defence of British interests in the Far East (the Singapore Strategy). Costing £60 million and officially opened on 14 February 1938, the Base featured a number of docks, with over 5,000 ft of deep-water quays and the 1,000-ft King George VI graving dock, which could accommodate the largest ships in the world. The Base also housed an armaments depot, workshops and storehouses. Although there would be no major fleet based there, the intention was that it could accommodate the fleet when called on to defend Singapore. Indeed, at the time the presence of the Base led to Singapore being considered “the impregnable fortress”.

I was particularly looking forward to visiting the Naval Base as my father had worked there between October 1941 and January 1942. On a previous visit I had seen where he, my mother and my three sisters had been living in January 1942 in a house very close to the Naval Base, and I had been driven up to the entrance to the Naval Base itself, but had not been able to proceed further as the Base is not open to the public. Our guide **Sharul** was also eagerly anticipating visiting the Naval Base as during his career as a tour guide this was the first opportunity he had had to see inside the Base.

Rosemary Fell had arranged with the appropriate authorities that we could go into the Naval Base, subject to the necessary security arrangements which meant that we all had had to provide relevant passport details. So, with anticipation we entered the site of the Naval Base and were welcomed by **Commander Paul Gray**, Commanding Officer of the New Zealand Defence Support Unit (South East Asia). We followed him upstairs into a room where he gave us a brief explanation of the current military arrangements. These involve five countries: Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

Commander Gray also mentioned briefly the Naval Base’s history and what had happened in the Second World War. Far from being the impregnable fortress, the first time that the strategy was tested by the Japanese it proved unsuccessful. With the Japanese threat in 1941, Singapore was sent “Force Z”, which arrived in Singapore on 2 December 1941 and comprised the modern battleship *HMS Prince of Wales*, the battle cruiser *HMS Repulse* and four destroyers. It was also due to include a new aircraft carrier, *HMS Indomitable*, but this had run aground and been damaged while undergoing trials in the Caribbean in early November and so was unavailable to provide air cover, while many of the existing military aircraft in Singapore were outdated and in poor condition. Force Z left Singapore on 8 December to attack Japanese landing forces that were suspected of landing on the coast of Thailand and Malaya, but it lacked air cover which did not help when Force Z was spotted by the Japanese. As a result, in what is considered one of Britain’s greatest naval disasters, both *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse* were sunk by Japanese aircraft off the coast of Kuantan in Malaya on 10 December, with the loss of 840 sailors of the total crew of over 2,900 in the two ships.

With Japanese action intensifying in Malaya and Singapore, towards the end of January 1942 the decision was taken to evacuate the Naval Base. **Commander Gray** said that, following the British surrender on 15 February 1942, the Japanese occupied the Base and eventually brought the dockyard back into action. For the next three years Sembawang was used to service and repair Japanese naval vessels. After the War the Base was rebuilt and became the Royal Navy's Far East headquarters. Later on the British withdrew from Singapore and today the Base is partly a commercial shipyard and also a naval facility for foreign vessels that visit Singapore for diplomatic visits, military exercises and repairs.

After this we went back downstairs to see the memorial to the sailors of *HMS Prince of Wales* and *HMS Repulse* who lost their lives in that action – the memorial is situated close to where Force Z had left the Base on 8 December. Part of the inscription reads “In everlasting memory of their valiant sacrifice, given freely and against impossible odds so that we may now live in freedom. Erected by their proud successors in the Royal Navy serving in Singapore, supported by their Allied colleagues and friends in Sembawang”. The memorial was unveiled on 11 September 2005 as part of the commemorations to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of SE Asia by Allied forces. While it is an impressive memorial, the question arises as to why this memorial is situated in an area to which the public do not normally have access. I did ask **Sharul** if he knew the answer to this, but he did not know, although I was later advised that the location was chosen so that it remained under the control of the appropriate authorities.

After thanking **Commander Gray** we reboarded the coach and, following his suggestion, the coach drove past a house in nearby King's Avenue where the Japanese had ordered PoWs to build a red bridge in the garden. This is still standing and we were able to take some suitable photos of the bridge from the coach.

Seletar Airfield

We then headed for our next main site, the Seletar Airfield. Near to the entrance to the Airfield we were joined by **Jeya Ayadurai**, Head of Singapore History Consultants and Director of the Changi Museum, and who had been Chairman of the Commemoration Committee for the previous day's ceremony at Kranji for the 75th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. He told us about the history of the Airfield and its involvement in the Second World War. The Airfield was built in the late 1920s and officially opened on 1 January 1930. It was the main base for the RAF in the Far East and until 1937 also operated as a civilian airport. As well as handling aircraft, it also had facilities for seaplanes. In 1941/42 Seletar was the RAF headquarters in Singapore, while the equivalent headquarters for the Royal Navy were at Sembawang and for the Army at Fort Canning. Another airfield, the Sembawang Airfield, was built in 1935 to enhance Singapore's defences and a further airfield, Tengah Airfield, was constructed in 1939.

Jeya told us that the authorities had asked for 566 aircraft to be stationed at these air bases, but by 1941/42 there were just 181 aircraft and a number of these were old aircraft and in poor condition. Seletar had three squadrons comprising Vildebeeste biplanes and Catalina flying boats, while Sembawang was home to Brewster Buffalo fighters and Hudson bomber

squadrons. Not surprisingly the Japanese targeted these airfields and in January 1942 Seletar was hit by five heavy bombing raids, while Sembawang Airfield was also heavily damaged by Japanese bombing. The RAF aircraft also proved inferior to those of the Japanese. By 5 February 1942 the RAF had pulled out of Seletar.

During the Japanese occupation Seletar became a camp for PoWs of the Indian Army. After the end of the War Seletar was returned to the British and again served as the main RAF base in the Far East. With the British military withdrawal from Singapore, the air base was officially handed over to the Singapore Government in 1971. It is now used mainly as a training base for various aviation training schools.

At the site a cairn has been constructed using material from an old RAF station at Seletar and was unveiled by members of the RAF Seletar Association on 31 March 2013. It commemorates the period from 1926 to 1971 when the site was used by the RAF and "is also dedicated to the many thousands of British, colonial and Commonwealth civilians who built, managed and maintained the facility during that period".

After reboarding the coach, we then headed to **Jeya's** home in nearby Maida Vale where he very kindly invited us in to see inside his house and around the garden. This made for a welcome break and also gave us an opportunity to see a current black and white house and its garden – at the front of the garden is one of Singapore's "Heritage Trees". He then accompanied us on a short drive around the area, and he mentioned that there were long-term plans to redevelop the area for leisure and related activities. We drove to Park Lane where a couple of old black and white houses have already been transformed into up-market restaurants and **Jeya** indicated another house, 1 Park Lane, which was looking rather rundown but was awaiting redevelopment. Our next stop was for lunch, but **Jeya** said that, owing to a prior commitment, he regretted that he was unable to join us. We then thanked him very much for his contribution before he left the coach.

Seletar Country Club

Lunch was taken at the nearby Seletar Country Club, which has been in existence since around 1930. We had a nice leisurely lunch of pasta, fish, chips and watermelon in a relaxed environment where we were able to look out over the large golf course and extensive grounds of the Club. At the end of the meal **Liz Moggie** made an impromptu speech in which she thanked **Rosemary Fell** for the vast amount of work she had undertaken in organising the arrangements for the activities during the week and ensuring that everything went smoothly (despite the fact that some of the arrangements had required a lot of planning and had also been subject to change, sometimes at the last minute). **Liz** also thanked **Rosemary** more generally for all the work she has done for the MVG over the years, including the immense effort that she puts in on organising and editing the magazine *Apa Khabar*. During the speech **Rosemary's** husband **Donald** had been keeping a low profile, but **Liz** then turned to thank **Donald** for his important contribution and support. After the speech MVG members then expressed their appreciation in the usual way for all that both **Rosemary** and **Donald** had done.

Grave of Lim Bo Seng

On leaving the Country Club the coach headed for the MacRitchie Reservoir and our final destination of the tour. This involved a relatively short walk to the grave of Lim Bo Seng (1909–44), one of Singapore’s most famous national heroes. On 1 February 1942 he and other Chinese community leaders left Singapore for India where they recruited and trained many secret agents, mainly Malayan Chinese, for covert operations, known as “Force 136”. The first Force 136 agents were deployed in May 1943 in Operation Gustavus to establish an espionage network in Malaya and Singapore, and Lim Bo Seng led the Gustavus V operation in October 1943. However, he was betrayed and was captured by the Japanese on 25 March 1944 and was taken to the Kempeitai headquarters for interrogation. Despite intensive interrogation and being severely tortured by the Kempeitai, Lim refused to divulge any information. But he fell ill with dysentery and died in captivity at Batu Gajah Prison in Perak on 29 June 1944. After the War his remains were returned to Singapore and a funeral service was held on 13 January 1946 at City Hall and his remains were then taken to the MacRitchie Reservoir where he was buried with full military honours. We saw the site of the grave, together with the nearby plaques which describe Force 136, Lim Bo Seng’s life and his wartime contribution – on 29 June 1954, the tenth anniversary of his death, a memorial to Lim Bo Seng was unveiled in Esplanade Park as an octagonal pagoda in the centre of a large landscaped area. The visit to his grave was a suitable conclusion to what proved to be a long, but very interesting, tour.

Henry Langley
26 March 2017



Lunch at Seletar Country Club



Entrance to Seletar Air Base



Lim Bo Seng's Grave

A Walk with Jon Cooper to Mt. Pleasant Road and to Hill 105 via Caldecott POW Camp.

I was interested in joining Jon Cooper's tour as our first stop was to be on Mount Pleasant Road, where my father, George Booker, writes that he was on the 15th of February, 1942 – the day of the Surrender of Singapore. He was there with the Royal Norfolks, but it was the 4th Suffolks who were the main defenders of the front line here against the advancing 11th Regiment Divisions of the Japanese.

Mount Pleasant Road is a residential area lined with beautiful two storey "Black and White" houses. We were allowed to visit house number 159, a private home, where the owners kindly had provided drinks and small eats for us. In the garden of this house Jon Cooper had done a considerable amount of excavations in 2015 and found not only spent ammunition, buckles, badges and coins, but also the place where an officer, Capt. R. Watson, had been buried in the last days of the battle. Jon took us down to where an ammunition dump had been and immediately found four or five used bullet shells lying half buried in the soil as he talked to us - much to our amazement.

From this garden we walked over the road to house number 160, where we could see across the valley to Bukit Brown, the grounds of the Chinese Cemetery which is where, on the 14th and 15th of February 1942, the Japanese advanced and lay hidden behind the tombstones. From the high position of the terrace in front of house 160, one could see that the British soldiers had had a good firing position across the valley. The main problem for the soldiers during this time was lack of sleep and low rations, so it was hard keeping up the defence. Jon told us the story of Sgt. Harry Slater who, on the 14th (?) of February together with the help of two men, managed to pull a 2 pounder antitank gun up Mt. Pleasant Road and from just below the brow of the hill had fired 12 rounds of explosives at house number 160, which by then was occupied by the Japanese, and had managed to send them on a hasty retreat. He was awarded the DCM for his actions. We all had a look from the position in the road from where Slater had fired at house number 160 and could see how clever he had been.

From there we walked down Mount Pleasant Road to where the Thomson Road POW camp had been on what were at that time the Singapore Polo Club grounds. The club still exists today. The camp consisted only of wooden huts to accommodate the men. From the camp here the POWs were marched across Thomson Road each morning to Balistier Road to dismantle cars and other vehicles that had been

damaged by the bombing in Singapore. Both my father and Ian Stitt's father, who was with us, had been in this camp.

We then walked north along Thomson Road to Andrew Road where our coach was waiting to take us up Caldecott Hill which was lying in front of us. The POWs were mostly Australians in Caldecott POW Camp; they were housed in private houses along Andrew Road, Joan Road and Olive Road, many of which can still be seen today. The men here were under the command of "Black Jack" Galleghan. At the top of the hill the old hospital building was pointed out to us and also the Media Corps Singapore Broadcasting Station buildings. The station, known then as the British Malaya Broadcasting Corporation, was first built here in the 1930's. It was from here that Percival on the 1st. of February 1942 broadcasted a message to the now frightened island of Singapore that "Today we stand beleaguered in our island fortress, our task is to hold this fortress until help can come, as assuredly it will come."

From Caldecott Hill we were driven to the east end of the Pierce and MacRitchie Reservoirs, where we parked off Lornie Road and walked to the cool shade of the Mushroom Cafe. It was past midday and hot for most of us, so it was good to get out of the sun for a while. Here, as monkeys swung around on the rafters above us, Jon told us about the significance of the reservoir and especially the Pumping Stations, just next to the cafe, which had been a main target of the Japanese, as it was here they could control the water supplies of Singapore. We then ventured out in to the bright sun again and walked along the reservoir and up a hill and through some quite difficult jungle (for the less agile MVG members) to Hill 105 which is where the retreating Cambridgeshires had dug positions to defend the Upper Thomson Road against the oncoming Japanese forces. As we stood there high up on top of the hill we had a wonderful view looking north and east over Singapore; but it was also easy to see what an important strategic role it had played in the defence of Singapore.

As we walked down the hill and back to the coach in the baking sun, one wondered how on earth the young British soldiers had managed to survive under such harsh conditions in World War Two. How very different from the cool green fields of England. After saying goodbye and thank you to Jon we ourselves climb in to our lovely air-conditioned bus and were driven back to the YWCA hotel for a nice cup of tea, tired but wiser.

Jane Nielsen



159, Mount Pleasant Road



View from Hill 105

75th FALL of SINGAPORE COMMEMORATION.

Malayan Volunteers Group, with the assistance of the **Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc** held their annual **Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service** on Saturday the 12th February 2017, at the City of Stirling Memorial Garden enjoyed by a moderately large attendance. Despite early morning being overcast, the day warmed up and produced a bright sunny day for the occasion

The Deputy Warden announced all the wreath layers. Wreaths were placed at the base of the Malayan Volunteers Group Twin Plaque's set in the City of Stirling Memorial wall. At the forefront of 'wreath placement' were the "**Honour Wreaths**", laid by those with a strong family connection to the Fall of Singapore. Those who had relatives killed in action, captured as a POW or interned as a civilian, had died during or survived the three and a half year incarceration, or, having experienced the incarceration were able to be present *in person*, as in the case of two of the men present.

Given that this is the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, the age of many siblings understandably exceed these years. There were no less than 17 octogenarian (or close to) family members in attendance:

Mr Bob Paterson was interned as a boy. *Here today*. With his mother, **Mrs Jean Paterson** and grandmother, **Mrs Edith Bedell**, they had escaped Singapore only to end up in the hands of the Japanese, captured in Java and interned in Muntok, Banka Island. His grandmother died during captivity.



His grandfather, **Dr Arthur Bedell**, had remained in Singapore and was interned. However, being a Doctor, he had a bit more freedom than other internees. His mother's brother, **Flying Officer Pat Bedell**, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, had the dubious distinction of being named the first known casualty of the war in the Pacific. He was the pilot who was flying his Catalina, with full crew, down the East Coast of Malaya when they came across the Japanese fleet on the 7th December 1941, were spotted and shot down by Japanese planes. His name is remembered on the Kranji Memorial Wall in Singapore.

His father, **James Paterson**, with his Uncle **Duncan Paterson**, were captured in Singapore after the surrender. **James** was transported to Siam to work on the Siam Burma railway The camp he was in was near to the actual Bridge over the River Kwai. The area was regularly attacked by allied bombers. He, and several others were killed by "Friendly fire", the result of an allied bomber dropping his bomb load short. James' remains are in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Kanchanaburi, Thailand.

Duncan spent the war years incarcerated in Changi as 2 i/c the Rubber Factory, and released after the Japanese surrender. **7 family members**, with **3 deaths**, but all **4 Internees** fortunately returning after the war.

Pte Hugh Sorley, had been deployed to Singapore with the 2nd / 2nd Pioneer Battalion. He was first a POW in Java at various camps, mainly Tamahi and Bandoeng Camps. In 1943 he was transported through Singapore (Changi Prison) en route to Thailand, where he was held in Tarfau and Hintok River Camp. He was repatriated from Thailand to Singapore by air, and the final return section to Australia by ship, late 1945. *Here today*

Lt Richard Peall, Federated Malay States Volunteer Force, fought in retreat from Kuala Lumpur down the Malayan Peninsula to Singapore. Early morning on **15th February 1942**, the very last day of fighting, he was wounded in the arm but continued to lead his platoon, B Company, 2nd Battalion FMSVF, to the very end. Lt Richard Peall, has no known grave, nor do his men. There were no known survivors among them.

Mrs Elizabeth Adamson, now commemorates her father's life at the City of Stirling Memorial Garden, and also at Kranji War Memorial, Singapore, where his name is listed on the Kranji Commemoration wall.

Pte Arthur Alfred Adams, a Perth butcher as a civilian, enlisted 6th December 1940, and was deployed to Singapore in January 1942 with the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion. Arthur was killed in action on the 11th February 1942 at Ulu Pandan during one of his regiment's fiercest skirmishes before the capitulation of Singapore. His regiment sustained heavy casualties on the 11th and 12th February 1942.



Mrs Bernice Thomas, his step sister, and her husband were in attendance.

Pte Kevin George Moir, a teamster as a civilian, enlisted on 13 August 1940, and was deployed to Singapore in January 1942 with 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion. He was wounded in action, receiving a gunshot wound to the arm at Hill 200, Ulu Pandan on the 12th February 1942.

He was captured after the surrender of Singapore, spent internment in Changi Prison, followed by transfer to Thailand, moving between various camps, ending at the Hintok River Camp, where he contracted cholera and died on the 7th August 1943. He is now buried at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery. His family are here in numbers.

Pte John Arthur Cotton, enlisted on the 3rd July 1940, and Pte Roy Cotton, his brother, enlisted on the 29th August 1940. The brothers found themselves eventually posted to the 2/19th Battalion AIF, embarking for Malaya on the 2nd February, disembarking in Singapore on the 18th February 1941. Under command of Lt Col Anderson VC, the 2/19th Battalion were heavily involved with the defence of the Muar front, in advance of their Singapore experience. **Mrs Dorothy Sargent**, present at the Commemoration, graciously presented a copy of a letter the family received in December 1991, finally explaining what happened to her siblings. I quote part :



"Your brothers were in C Company, as was Dad's brother Tom (McGrath), a stretcher bearer. The reason why my Dad remembers your brothers and what happened to them so clearly is because they all came from Whitton (NSW).

After the battle of Muar orders were given to all soldiers to escape – unfortunately they had to leave the wounded behind, there was no way they could take them with them, your brother Arthur decided to stay with the wounded, Uncle Tom (remember he was a stretcher bearer) tried to persuade him to leave with them, but he wouldn't. The wounded were in trucks, cars and laying on the ground, there were so many, - the Japanese shot and killed all the wounded, and burnt everything, none of them survived. Roy was on Singapore Island when the Japs invaded. He was killed there. You may be interested to know the 2/19th Battalion had the most casualties of any Battalion in any theatre of fighting in the 2nd World War."



Pte John Arthur Cotton was among those massacred by the Japanese Imperial Guards, the day following the **Parit Sulong** battle, on the 22nd January 1942, having decided to remain with the wounded. **Pte Roy Cotton** was killed in action on the 11th February 1942, during the final push by the Japanese for victory in Singapore.

James Ralph Windsor Collett of Collett & Whittle, Accountants in Kuala Lumpur, was interned in both Changi and Sime Road jails, and Marquerite Collett, his wife, was drowned after the loss of the "Tanjong Pinang" during her escape from the Japanese, having first survived the sinking of the "KUALA". **James Collett** survived his time as an internee, and was awarded the **MBE** in January 1946 for "Services during internment", being responsible for something either brave, or, immensely helpful to his interned associates. His daughter **Mrs Patricia Steddings** intended to be present, but was unable to attend at the last moment. A wreath was placed on Mrs Steddings behalf.

The **Official Address** was delivered by **Mr Bill Adamson, President, Malaya Borneo Veterans WA Inc**, stepping in for the Hon Dr M. D. Nahan.



Mr Adamson gave a short impression of his experiences during their retreat down the Peninsula of Malaya to Singapore, and eventual escape to Britain by way of South Africa. He was 6 and attending Boarding School in the Cameron Highlands when the Japanese Forces attacked Malaya. He and his sister (9) were first evacuated from Tanglin School on the 10th December 1941. They were to witness actions of war quickly, a Japanese Air attack directed at the Tapah hospital at the foot of the Cameron Highlands, air raids being a regular occurrence thereafter. A short family period at the family bungalow in Tapah, with the company of many families resting off after escaping from Penang. Monsoon rain had slowed the highway. The family was first ordered to evacuate ahead of the Japanese force's speedy infiltration of the Malay Peninsula on the 16th December, leaving 17th December morning as a Batang Padang contingent, however all were required to return before nightfall, the result of misunderstanding between military and civilian authorities, and Japanese air attacks. The family were again ordered to depart on the 19th December. The convoy was slow for the traffic crammed both sides of the road, making it hard for military vehicles travelling North, amazingly clearing on occasions when Japanese fighters attacked. Final crossing of the Causeway, less a few members of the convoy, was on the 22nd December 1941, which came under increasing bombardment. My mother had sought passage on the earliest vessel possible, finally obtaining passage on board the **Marnix Van Sint Aldegonde**, ship 54 from quay No 6 at 11.00 hrs on New Year's morning 1942, sailing by way of Batavia to South Africa, arriving Durban 18th January with 900+ passengers. The evacuation voyage was completed with the family boarding the "Oronsay" in Cape Town, sailing again in convoy, this time for Liverpool, arriving at the end of March 1942.



Twenty six Wreaths were placed around the MVG Commemoration plaques, including seven Honour Wreaths laid by 2 former internees, and family members who had lost family killed or incarcerated by the Japanese Invading Force in Singapore, Borneo and Java, between February 1942 and August 1945.

Mrs Elizabeth Adamson, Secretary, Malayan Volunteers Group, presented the Memorial Address for 2017.



Here is a story that is not well known, covering the very period we are keen to remember today. It is extracts of writing by **Veterinary Surgeon, Bill Lancaster**, with kind permission from his elder daughter, Elizabeth. Quote:

"I was to join Bill Wallace, the Veterinary Officer, Perak, and help him uplift Bali cattle in various estates, and move them further south in lorries the department had hired, to deny them to the advancing Japs...

The retreat was turning into a rout. All the roads were crammed with traffic moving south, with occasional military trucks and troops trying to get through to the north. And through it all, Wallace and I and some Asian members of staff continued to move these bloody cattle. If an air raid suddenly demanded braking quickly, one felt the cattle in the truck crash against the back of the cab...

Our next move was to Johore, a transit camp for many of the cattle from the north, before moving them again finally to Singapore. We were spending 10-12 hours a day shifting these cattle in the sheer hell of roads jam-crammed with vehicles, army trucks, troops, refugees, with the Jap planes coming over, usually in flights of 27, and dropping their bombs at will. There was only one way to Singapore- over the causeway at Johore Bahru – and this was carrying these waves of humanity.

It was probably about the 26th or 27th January that we moved across to Singapore to live, though we continued to fetch cattle in from Johore, and were, in fact one of the last departments to cross the causeway before it closed.

Early on the 31st January (a Saturday) , the last of the allied forces crossed the causeway, the Gordons, the other British and Indian units, and the Australian Brigade, piped across by the last two surviving Argyll pipers. Then the Argylls themselves, led by the same pipers playing "Hielan Laddie" and "A Hundred Pipers" with Argyll's CO, Lt Col. Ian Stewart, the last man over."

My mother and I were extremely lucky to have missed all that confusion with the evacuaton, as we had been in Perth visiting my maternal grandparents since July 1941, and were told to 'stay put' by my father, who was in the Malayan Volunteers back in KL , and realised things were getting 'difficult'. He was finally involved in the withdrawal south, from KL, Port Dickson for a short period, through Malacca, and finally on to Singapore. He was killed in action on the 15th February 1942, the very day we are remembering 'today'.

There are two cast bronze plaques here in Stirling, the first one acknowledges the service in the Malayan Volunteers of Australian men who were living and working in Malaya at the time and who were of military age. Their service as Australians has never been recognized, as nationalities were not mentioned. The second plaque is in recognition and thanks to the people of Perth and WA who showed great kindness and generosity to the refugees who arrived with just what they could carry.

The Malay motto for The Malayan Volunteers group is "Andai Nya Kita Terlupa", or "Never let us forget", or as we say in Australia, "Lest we forget".

Colonel Geoff Simpson OAM, RFD Rtd concluded the service, extending an inviting for all in attendance to congregate and partake of the food and soft drink available to the rear of the Memorial.



130 Squadron, Republic of Singapore Air Force, meet and greet following the Fall of Singapore Commemoration Service.

75th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION SERVICE OF THE VYNER BROOKE CEREMONY

Report by Robert Gray

The 75th Anniversary Service was a very special occasion. This was due, not least, to the fact that the Governor of Western Australia, **Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson**, agreed to be guest speaker. Her presence strongly affirmed that the valour of the Australian and British armed forces, Malayan Volunteer Forces, and the stoic civilians of Malaya and Singapore, continues to be remembered and honoured. The service was held at Point Walter Reserve, Perth, Western Australia, on Sunday 12th February 2017.

The annual commemoration particularly focuses on the tragic fate of 65 Australian Army Nurses, who were amongst an estimated 250 souls on the *SS Vyner Brooke* when she was attacked and sunk by Japanese warplanes near Bangka Island on 14th February 1942. Twelve of the nurses died at sea and a further 21 nurses, who made it to shore and surrendered on Bangka Island, were massacred by a squad of Japanese soldiers. Thirty two nurses, who drifted ashore and surrendered at other points on the Bangka coast, were to spend three and a half years in appalling POW camps, where a further eight nurses died of disease and deprivation.

The day before this year's commemoration, the Applecross Returned and Services League (RSL) organised a much appreciated afternoon tea for relatives and friends of the *Vyner Brooke* nurses, so that they could meet and share the stories of their relatives. Some relatives had travelled from across Australia to be present at the service.

Many relatives and friends of the army nurses commented afterwards that they found the service very appropriate and moving. For many in the congregation, highlights of the service included the participation of the pipes and drums of the Presbyterian Ladies College and the 70 strong "Born to Sing" community choir, which sang an a'capella version of 'Largo' from Dvorak's New World Symphony (which was in the repertoire of the choir in the women's POW camp). Other poignant parts of the service included the address by the Governor of WA, the reading of vignettes of the *Vyner Brooke* story by two girls from nearby Santa Maria College, and a display (created by Santa Maria College students) of story boards with biographies and memorabilia relating to the Army Nurses.

Representatives of the Malayan Volunteers Group attending the service included Australian Secretary, **Elizabeth Adamson** and her husband **Bill Adamson** (Bill also represented the Malayan Borneo Veterans Association of WA) and **Robert and Glenice Gray**. A magnificent MVG wreath of knitted red poppies was laid at the memorial by **Emily Malone**, great niece of **Sister Betty Jeffrey**.

L to R Bill Adamson, Glenice Gray, Jane Malone, Elizabeth Adamson, Emily Malone & Sarah Renshaw



The Killings on Radji Beach

Mari kita Jaga bersama tugu ini untuk menghormati mereka yg gugur di pantai ini pada tanggal 16 februari 1942

This beach is Hallowed ground.

On 16 February 1942 approximately 50 people, mainly survivors of the sinking of the SS. Vyner Brooke, were cruelly executed here by Japanese soldiers. Those killed included civilians, sailors, military personnel and 21 Australian Army Nurses. An unknown number of those killed were buried on the beach in places not recorded.

On this beach on the morning of 16 February 1942 were about 80 survivors of the sinking by the Japanese in the Straits of Sumatra of several vessels carrying evacuees from Singapore and allied military personnel en route to Batavia. Many were wounded and were in the care of 22 Australian nurses who had themselves survived the sinking of the SS Vyner Brooke on 14 February.

It was decided to surrender to the Japanese. A small group led by Sub-Lieutenant William Sedgeman, Royal Naval Reserve left the beach to walk to Muntok to surrender on behalf of the group. While away, at the suggestion of Matron Irene Drummond, a group of civilian women and children, two sailors and at least one civilian man also left to walk to Muntok. Sedgeman was brought back to the beach by Japanese soldiers. The men were separated and taken in 2 groups by the soldiers to behind the southern headland where they were killed by shooting and bayoneting. The soldiers then ordered the 22 Australian Army Nurses and a civilian woman Mrs Betteridge to walk into the sea whereupon they were machine gunned and bayoneted. Other wounded, including up to seven women and men, on stretchers at the top of the beach who were unable to walk were then also killed. Sister Vivian Bullwinkel was the only survivor of the Nurses. Two men, Stoker Ernest Lloyd Royal Navy and Eric German a civilian were shot but survived.

The Australian Army Nurses shot and killed on this beach were

Matron Irene Drummond	Sister Elaine Balfour-Ogilvy	Sister Alma Beard
Sister Ada Joyce Bridge	Sister Flo Casson	Sister Mary (Beth) Cuthbertson
Sister Dorothy Elmes	Sister Lorna Fairweather	Sister Peggy Everett Farmaner
Sister Clarice Isobel Halligan	Sister Nancy Harris	Sister Minnie Ivy Hodgson
Sister Ellen (Nell) Keats	Sister Janet (Jenny) Kerr	Sister Mary (Ellie) McGlade
Sister Kathleen (Kath) Neuss	Sister Florence Salmon	Sister Esther Sara Jean Stewart
Sister Mona Tait	Sister Rosetta Joan Wight	Sister Bessie Wilmott

Others believed to have been killed included

- Sub-Lt William Sedgeman, Royal Naval Reserve (First Officer SS Vyner Brooke)
- Sub-Lt (E) James Miller, Royal Naval Reserve (Engineer Officer of the SS Vyner Brooke)
- Able Seaman Hamilton McClurg, Royal Navy
- An injured Nurse
- Mr and Mrs T. D. Betteridge
- Kathleen Elsie Waddle, Principal, Raffles Girls School, Singapore
- Two further injured civilian women
- Mr Ernest Charles Watson (Puisine Judge, Malaya)
- A teenage English boy
- And others whose identities may never be known, including Allied Naval and Military personnel.

*In the earth beneath the stars
I would be free
(Harold Carberry)*



SS Vyner Brooke

This plaque was dedicated on 16 February 2017, the 75th Anniversary of the killings on Radji Beach.

Plaque to be placed on the headland at Radji Beach

February 16 2017 was the 75th anniversary of the massacre of 21 Australian Army Nurses, 2 groups of men and wounded stretcher cases by Japanese soldiers on Radji beach near Muntok, Bangka Island, Indonesia. Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel, British seaman Eric Lloyd and American brewer Eric German were all wounded but survived and were able to describe these terrible events.

The Australian Army Nurses who were killed on Radji Beach had served in Singapore and Malaya, caring for wounded servicemen. They had been ordered to leave on board the SS Vyner Brooke 3 days before the Fall of Singapore. The Vyner Brooke, together with over 40 other vessels, was bombed and sunk by Japanese planes and warships off the shores of Bangka Island. It is estimated that 4,000 to 5,000 people from these boats were killed.

Survivors who were not bombed or drowned swam or floated in the sea for up to 3 days until some reached land. On Radji Beach, up to 70 men were taken around a headland by Japanese soldiers and were shot and bayoneted. The Australian Army Nurses, who had been caring for the wounded stretched cases, were marched into the sea and machine-gunned. All of the Nurses were killed except Vivian Bullwinkel who was shot in the side but survived. Her uniform, complete with bullet hole, is on display in the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. The stretcher cases, including women, were also killed.



Radji Beach, Muntok, Bangka Island, Indonesia

On February 16 2017, family members of 5 of these Nurses, the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Australian and British Defence Attaches, current Australian Army Nurses, the Australian Army Chaplain, families of civilians who died in Muntok prison camps and local officials gathered in Muntok for

Memorial Services. The granddaughters of seaman Ernest Lloyd who survived the shooting had travelled from England to attend.

A formal service was held upstairs in the Timah Tinwinning Building Museum. A eulogy and prayers were read, a bell was tolled for each Australian Army Nurse killed and wreaths were laid. Next, we visited the Nurses' Memorial at the Muntok Tanjong Kelian lighthouse for further wreath laying. This site is maintained by the Australian Office of War Graves.



Nurses' Memorial, Muntok

A brief service in memory of the civilians who died in Muntok prison camps was held at Kampong Menjelang, the area of the former Women's prison camp. After a short address, wreaths were laid by the Australian and British defence attaches and by families.

In the afternoon, all gathered on Radji beach for an address by Michael Noyce, the nephew of Australian Army Nurse Kathleen Neuss. He described the events of 75 years ago, and indicated the likely landmarks of the massacre. Army chaplains led prayers - especially moving were those for the people killed on Radji Beach whose names will never be known.

Wreaths were placed in the water by the families of Australian Army Nurses Kathleen Noyce, Elaine Balfour-Ogilvy, Clarice Halligan, Dorothy Elmes and Matron Irene Drummond. "*Chin up, girls. I'm proud of you all and I love you all,*" Matron Irene Drummond had called out as she walked with her Nurses into the sea to their deaths. Current-serving Australian Army Nurses moved us all as they held hands and walked towards the water as their fallen colleagues had done.



Australian Army Nurses remember their slain colleagues

Indonesian Nurses and doctors held a small service and threw petals into the water in memory of the fallen Nurses.



Indonesian Nurses and doctors scattering petals in the water

A memorial plaque will be installed on the rock at the headland around which the men were taken to be killed. A sentence in Indonesian informs the reader that this is hallowed ground and asks people to please respect the plaque and the area.

The fate of the bodies of the murdered Australian Army Nurses, men and stretcher cases is not known. It is possible that their remains were buried or

washed out to sea. But they will never be forgotten by their families and friends in Australia, Britain and in Indonesia.

The people of Muntok have a strong understanding of and respect for their history. The Timah Tinwinning Museum, with the Vivian Bullwinkel Galleri, and the Muntok Peace Museum have excellent displays regarding the War.

The Muntok History Volunteers laboured for some months to prepare for our visit, grading the rough road to Radji Beach, clearing the beach and areas around memorials and assisting with flood relief. The bridge linking Muntok and Pangkalpinang was washed away by floods and the Volunteers erected a temporary bridge to ensure supplies could reach the inhabitants and that we could arrive in Muntok safely. Convoys of vehicles transported us on the 6-hour round trip from Pangkalpinang when the ferry from Palembang was cancelled.

It is planned to help a Nurse from Muntok to undertake further studies in Australia. In addition, it is hoped that Australian Army Nurses will volunteer to work in Muntok. In this way, the Muntok community can be helped and the memory of the Nurses killed in 1942 be honoured.

A cultural evening was held for us in Muntok and we were presented with a poem specially written by a local poet. It describes the emotions of Vivian Bullwinkel when remembering her colleagues and contains the words:

"Remember although you died from the world,

You are alive in my mind...

Rest in peace, my friends

And take my hand to join me in heaven."

Everyone who attended the memorial services in Muntok will remember the Australian Army Nurses, the men and women who died on Radji Beach and all victims who suffered and died during the War.

The grass will write their names, though their graves are forgotten,

The wind will sing their praise forever,

The myrtle will bloom where they sleep. (Harold Vinal)

VISIT TO SUMATRA AND JAVA

After spending 5 days in Singapore attending MVG events to commemorate the Fall of Singapore, on 18th February the 3 seasoned Sumatra travellers, Rosemary Fell, Liz Moggie and myself set off on another adventure, the purpose of which was to follow in some of the footsteps of shipwreck survivors of the Vyner Brooke, who were captured by the Japanese and imprisoned in Muntok on Bangka Island, Palembang and Belalau.

Arriving at Palembang airport we were delighted to be met by Safriil, one of our drivers from our last Sumatran trip, this time accompanied by his brother Doni, and to see the familiar trusty minibus. It seemed a long drive into the town and our hotel, but this was mainly due to very heavy traffic, not helped by half the road being taken up by the construction of an overhead railway, being built from the airport. This railway will be needed next year when South Sumatra hosts the Asian games. We arrived at the hotel in time to pick up old friends and fellow travellers, Edda de Silva, Pim and Heesook Lemstra and Darwin Arriega, organiser of our trip, who had arrived earlier from Kuala Lumpur.

Next stop was the Charitas Catholic Hospital, which is the oldest in Palembang - it was founded in 1926 by the nuns of the Franciscan Order of Charity of Roosendaal, the Netherlands. There is a huge new modern hospital, bearing the Charitas name, behind the old building which originally had just 14 beds. During the first part of their internment, male and female prisoners were able to be treated there, in separate wards, for diseases such as dysentery, which otherwise could have been fatal. Quite often the nuns arranged for husbands and wives to be admitted at the same time so each would know the other was alive. The nun in charge, Mother Alacoque, managed to pass messages between them by hiding small folded notes under her voluminous skirt. The nuns also smuggled letters and medicines back into the camps. Unfortunately the Japanese discovered these goings-on and closed the hospital in 1943. Mother Alacoque was interrogated and tortured by the Kempeitai (fortunately she survived the war) and the doctors were beheaded. The remaining nuns were interned in Palembang women's camp and continued to care for their fellow internees.

When we arrived we were warmly greeted by Sister Paulina and Dr Paulus, a surgeon at the hospital, and led to a sitting area where we were plied with tea and delicious tapioca cakes. More and more nuns appeared from other parts of the hospital to greet us. After our refreshments we were shown the small museum the sisters had lovingly created showing the history of their order and the hospital. In pride of place was the King's Service Medal from King George VI recognising the kindness and courage the nuns had shown during the war. We walked round the hospital, through some beautiful gardens, to the original part, where we could see the plaque presented by the MVG in 2012 in the hall.

We all noticed that the hospital is beautifully maintained and, maybe it was due to the kindness and hospitality of our hosts, we all appreciated how the Charitas must have represented a wonderful oasis of calm and care away from the horrors of camp life.

The following morning saw us setting off bright and early for Bangka Island. The road to the dock for the car ferry on the Musi River was not long, but it took 2 hours for our driver to negotiate his way between the crater-like potholes in the road created by the heavy lorries also trundling their way to and from the dock. Once on board the ferry we sat for a while on the top deck but, due to an upsetting incident involving a machete-wielding cook, a chicken and a dustbin, not to mention the heat, we soon headed downstairs to the crowded lower deck. The voyage up the Musi and then across the Bangka Strait took 4 hours, so we were very relieved when we saw the tin-dredgers just a little way off shore, the lighthouse on our port side and we were finally able to dock and set foot on dry land. It had seemed a very long time since breakfast at 6 a.m., so our first stop was at a restaurant, way off the beaten track which, thanks to Darwin and his GPS, our drivers found very easily. While enjoying our rather late lunch, we were very surprised to be visited by Mr Fakhrizal, the director of the Tinwinning Museum, Agung Purnama, also from the museum and Dian from the tourist association. They had heard from Judy Balcombe that we would be arriving. They discussed with us plans to visit the Museum that afternoon and various arrangements for the following day.

Bangka is one of the world's principal tin-producing centres, the production of which is an Indonesian government monopoly and the Timah Tinwinning Museum displays all aspects of the tin mining industry in the area. However, they also have a room dedicated to WWII so we spent the rest of the afternoon in there, watching a very interesting film on Vivienne Bulwinkle, before the museum closed at 4 o'clock. As we were leaving we were each presented with a book on Muntok Women's Camp. Before retiring to our hotel we made a visit to the harbour area where we could see the footings of the original pier, the customs house and a rather derelict, long building which was used as stabling for horses during the time of the Napoleonic Wars, when the French ruled the Dutch East Indies between 1806 and 1811. We peeped through some rusting corrugated iron and saw a fisherman asleep on a shelf, the harbour, with all the fishing boats, being on the other side of the building.

We seemed to have a full itinerary the following day, beginning with the return visit to the museum to have a look around the tin mining exhibits, which were all quite fascinating, after which we crossed over the road to visit the house used by Captain Seki, the commandant of the women's prison camp in Muntok. The Dutch built house, now a homestay, doesn't look as if it has altered much since the war, especially as the owner collects retro artefacts. We all admired the television and telephones. High ceilings and air vents keep it nice and cool, which was quite a relief to us as there was high humidity outside.

Next on our agenda was a visit to Radji beach. Our mini-bus was not suitable to drive along the rough road, especially after a period of heavy rain, so transport had been arranged for us in 4x4s and a Willys Jeep. Our drivers, Safril and Doni came with us, enjoying being driven for a change.

Radji Beach is where an atrocity took place on February 13th 1942 - a group of 22 Australian nurses and a large number of men, patients, soldiers, sailors and civilians, washed ashore after the Vyner Brooke was sunk. Japanese soldiers arrived and took the men around a corner to a cove where they shot and bayoneted them. On their return they ordered the nurses to walk into the sea and shot them in the back. Vivienne Bulwinkle was the only nurse to survive the attack, as the bullet passed right through her hip, and she was able to testify at the Japanese War Crimes Tribunal in Tokyo in 1946.

We found it difficult to imagine such a horrific event happening in such a beautiful place as it seems so peaceful, but the local inhabitants were very wary of it for many years, especially as pieces of bone would wash ashore from time to time. No-one would eat fish from the area.

After lunch we visited the Men's prison. Some of us had been present when a plaque, honouring the memory of the men who had been interned there, was presented by the MVG in February 2012. We were invited into the Prison Governor's office so that we could introduce ourselves and explain our interest in visiting. He was very happy to show us into the prison, but only as far as we weren't actually 'inside'. He explained that their aim is very much for rehabilitation rather than punishment and we could see some of the prisoners building a Mosque in the prison yard. He also told us that the crimes that brought the men there varied from petty theft to murder.

From here we proceeded to Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's prison camp. Since our visit 5 years ago, when we presented a plaque, a new well has been sunk and the road leading to the Kampong has been vastly improved. There are many families living here and again we were surrounded by the villagers and children, most of whom wanted selfies with us on their smartphones.

A concert featuring the music of the original Palembang Camp Women's Vocal Orchestra was sponsored by MVG and held in Chichester in 2013. Funds from this concert have bought equipment for the school at the Kampong.

We also visited the new Muntok Peace Memorial Museum, built on land donated by the people of Kampong Menjelang. The building work was undertaken with donations from former internees, their families, Australian Nurses' families, the MVG and BACSA, the British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia. It opened in September 2015 and houses many items made by the internees, letters, drawings by Margaret Dryburgh and diaries. The building has no electricity so this might be a project for the future.

On our way back to our hotel we stopped at the Catholic graveyard to see the recently restored mass grave of the 25 people moved from the original Muntok cemetery. A plaque listing the names of all those who had died in the Muntok camps has been added to the grave as a 'headstone'. Some of the funds raised by the Chichester concert went towards this. We also visited the memorial to the nurses killed at Radji beach. It was while we were here that Rosemary Fell thanked Mr. Fakhrizal, who had accompanied us all day, together with Agung and Dian. They had made all the arrangements for our transport to the beach and for our other visits, for which we were very grateful. Rosemary presented him a donation from us all for the Tinwinning museum.

The following day we travelled back to Palembang by cargo boat, bearing very much in mind the appalling conditions the POWs endured. Their journey lasted more than twelve hours with the hospital staff and the patients forced onto the deck, without any covering from the sun at all, and the remainder of the people in the hold, which was even worse. There was severe overcrowding and there were no sanitary arrangements at all. At that time everyone was suffering severely from diarrhoea. A handful of cold rice and sips of cold tea were all their sustenance. They were to make the journey several times and each time it was worse as they became more and more ill, with many dying on each voyage.

We were lucky as we could sit in the comfort of our air-conditioned mini-van on the open vehicle deck, or climb up to the upper deck and visit the 'bridge' at the invitation of the captain, who looked about 12. While

the rest of the crew played cards, he showed us all the hi-tech equipment on the ex-Singapore ferry and we could see we were travelling at a speed of 3.5 knots against the current. Our hearts sank as that meant the crossing would take 6 hours. After another 2-hour pot-hole drive back to the hotel we were desperately ready for dinner and bed. It's funny how doing nothing makes one so tired! However, something that perked us up was meeting our friend Frans Duiniveld who was joining us for the rest of our trip.

We were up early the next morning ready for a train ride to our next destination, Lubuk Linggau. We were very surprised that the station was so modern and high-tech, and to board an air-conditioned train with comfortable seats and a buffet with waiters to carry one's coffee, as we had expected something much more basic. Although the journey was 8 hours, it passed quite quickly as we found plenty to chat about and there was so much beautiful scenery to see out of the window. We were also amused to see the pop-up markets at the stations whenever the train stopped. The vendors were selling food, drinks, trinkets and souvenirs but would immediately pack up their wares as soon as the train started moving again.

We didn't forget the plight of the women in whose footsteps we were following though. Their journey along this line was not nearly so pleasant. Terribly cramped in trucks, unable to move from their upright sitting positions, the heat was unbearable, the sanitary conditions foul and, as they were not allowed to have the shutters open more than a few inches, the stench was ghastly. Their agony was prolonged as the train did not move at night, the time the mosquitos were most active, so they were all horribly bitten. Needless to say, more of the very ill died and had to stay in the trucks with the living until they arrived at their destination.

When we arrived at Lubuk Linggau, our drivers were there waiting with our mini-bus, having just arrived by road. We were very pleased they had arrived safe and sound as their journey had taken much longer than ours, on a difficult road; they must have been exhausted. We had dinner in our hotel that evening as monsoon-type rain fell heavily and noisily on the roof of the restaurant, we all had to raise our voices to be heard.

Our first port of call the following morning was a nursery where Rosemary and Liz bought a flame red Ixora to plant in memory of Margaret Dryburgh at the Belalau rubber plantation. This was at the request of Meg Parkes, but was something we were more than happy to do. The next problem was to find the plantation. Even with navigational aids we got a little lost and had to turn round several times before eventually arriving at the right place. We walked a little distance from the road and found the path into the plantation completely overgrown by jungle so we couldn't progress further. However there was a house nearby and the owners came out and, after we explained what we were up to, went and found a hoe and dug a hole for our plant, promising to water and tend it. We had a little ceremony with Rosemary giving a eulogy for Margaret Dryburgh and she and Liz planting the Ixora.

Margaret Dryburgh was a missionary in Singapore before becoming a POW. In the camps she kept up morale by arranging church services as well as a glee club, hymn singing, writing classes and poetry sessions. With Norah Chambers she wrote the music, from memory, for the Vocal Orchestra. Today, her memory lives on through the song she wrote in camp, The Captives' Hymn. Tragically, she died not long after arriving at Belalau. In the film Paradise Road, her character was played by Pauline Collins.

Our journey continued across Sumatra, over the Bukit Barisan mountain range from east to west. We passed through areas of obvious prosperity due to the fertility of the land, ideal for the cultivation of fruit and vegetables of all kinds, which we could see growing in abundance on every hillside. The scenery was stunning as the road wound its way up and down the mountains, the surface varying in condition from excellent to very poor. At last we arrived in Bengkulu and found our hotel was just across the road from the beach, so a walk along the seafront was a welcome antidote to confinement in the vehicle. This was our last day in Sumatra as we were flying to Java at lunchtime the following day.

In the morning we had a last look around Bengkulu, visiting the Marlborough Fort, a fortress built by the British East India Company in the early 18th century. It has been under various occupation; British, French, Dutch, Japanese and Indonesian, but in 1977 was handed over to the Department of Education and Culture to be restored and converted into a heritage site. We also visited the English Cemetery. Since our last visit 3 years ago another house has been built in the grounds.

On our way to the airport, we also stopped to have a look at the Mosque designed by Soekarno and built in Dutch style. We were sad to say goodbye to Safril and Doni - they had driven us so well and safely and been so kind, always anticipating our needs.

After a flight to Jakarta and a long drive we were very happy to arrive at the luxurious Borobodur hotel, rather more up-market than we were used to, so we felt rather scruffy as we stood in reception waiting to be checked-in. This lovely hotel was built on the site of the Bicycle Camp, one of the largest prison camps in

Java where Allied POWs were interned. It was so named because it had been the barracks of a Dutch cycle battalion.

While in Jakarta we visited All Saints Anglican Church, because we wanted to see the two painted glass windows, removed from St George's Chapel, Tandjong Priok transit camp, now housed there. These windows display the national flags and emblems of the four main groups in the camp: British, Australian, Dutch and American. In 1997, it was discovered, by looking at photos of these windows with a magnifying glass, that the head of the lion rampant on the British Service badge was actually the face of Sir Winston Churchill, smoking a cigar! This was a huge joke and morale booster for the men in the camp, but very dangerous - if the Japanese had noticed, heads would have rolled. Other diversions that day included a walk around the old part of Jakarta, with plenty of street artists and colourful bicycles one could hire to ride around the main square, with a matching coloured hat. The museum we visited housed beautiful antique furniture and told the history of Jakarta (Batavia).

The following day our next destination was Bandung. On our way we stopped at Bogor and walked around the lovely Botanical gardens, which houses a memorial to the wife of Raffles. We drove on up through the mountains with heavy traffic and ribbon development all the way. After a while we could see we were in a tea-growing area as we were quite high up. Rain started up again so we took the opportunity to stop for lunch and watched the rain falling like sheets off the roof. Luckily it stopped before we left the restaurant and we were treated to a beautiful view of the tea terraces.

In Bandung, we visited the immaculate Dutch cemetery. Research indicated that people from Muntok had been reinterred here but we could find no record of the various names we knew in the record books on display. We tried walking around and searching but the cemetery is enormous and it was very hot. We found an area with graves marked 'unknown' and we wondered if these could be the graves we were seeking. Later that day we visited the Villa Isola, an art-deco building, resembling a wedding cake, originally built for a Dutch media tycoon, Dominique Willem Berretty, but now housing the headmastership office of the University of Education, Indonesia.

Our day ended with a bit of retail therapy as we explored some clothing stores, but as the rain and a massive thunder storm started, we thought it better to retreat to our hotel for our last evening together. We had a marvellous trip, thanks to the organisational skills of Liz Moggie and Darwin Arriega. Darwin was responsible for arranging everything and taking us to some fabulous restaurants. He and Frans Duiniveld looked after us so well, we felt very spoilt.

It was with sadness that we all parted the next morning and went on our separate ways as we flew out of Bandung.

MUSEUM AT CHARITAS HOSPITAL, PALEMBANG



VISIT TO BELALAU CAMP SITE

Report by Liz Moggie

[As reported in A.K. No: 49, the camps sites where the civilian men, women and children, including the Australian Army Nurses, were finally incarcerated by the Japanese, were hidden deep in rubber estates near the town of Lubok Linggau at Belalau. These camps were among the worst of all the camps found in Sumatra, and their existence had been kept from Major Jacobs and his team so that the Japanese could provide the much needed extra food for the internees to ward off starvation. It was in this camp that Margaret Dryburgh, Missionary and Musician who started the Womens' Vocal Orchestra with Norah Chambers, died.]

On Wednesday 22nd February, we set out from our Hotel Burza (+62 733 3280088) in Lubok Linggau at 8.30am and back tracked along the main road to a plant nursery. The day before we had observed that there were no cut flowers in the markets we passed so we decided to buy a small flowering shrub in honour of **Margaret Dryburgh** and the other women internees. We chose a reddish/orange *Ixora* which is a hardy plant and has a good chance of survival. We then set out on the main road in the direction of Petanang. When we arrived in this general area (**Frans** was using his GPS together with a very old map which showed the location of the Camp) we turned off right at the very large Petanang Sports Complex and drove along a well maintained surfaced small road. Rubber was growing on both sides of the road, and we surmised this was a commercial estate as there was hardly any housing. We got to Kantor Lurah Belalau 1 and asked for directions from a very pleasant young headman at the Kantor (office). It had only taken about half an hour.

He told us we needed to go back to Kantor Lurah Belalau 11 and see **Bapak Sepono**, the headman there, an older man who knew the history of the area. When we arrived at the Kantor it was closed but the neighbour across the road told us that **Pak Sepono's** house was three along from his. We arrived at the pleasant compound only to be told by his wife that we had missed him as he had gone into Lubok Linggau for the day. His wife said she was not from the area but that **Pak Sepono** would definitely know about why we had come. The adult son was very helpful but he too did not know anything. However, he told us that nuns from Lubok Linggau had come before with the same intention as us so we knew we were in the right area. The son showed us the remains of some foundation stones which he said dated from Dutch times and pointed out the foundation stone base wall of his house which he said also went back to Dutch times. He showed us the direction of an overgrown path which led down to the river from which they used to collect water, though they no longer had to do this. We inspected the surrounds of a neighbouring house (one away) which was from the Dutch era – this was a pleasant, wooden structure built on a rubble wall foundation with a verandah running round the 2 front sides.

These houses appeared to be built on a raised site (probably a hill) above the nearby stream and were probably the houses of the Dutch estate managers. We surmised that these houses were probably occupied by the Japanese and recalled reading that the women prisoners were required to carry water from the river up to the Japanese houses.

We realised that without **Pak Sepono's** assistance we were unlikely to get any closer to the actual Camp Site. As the family (**Pak Sepono's** wife, their son and his wife and 2 small daughters) was very pleasant and helpful we decided, with their permission, to plant our shrub in their garden. The son quickly found a changkul, dug a hole and planted the *Ixora*. **Rosemary** and I symbolically held the changkul and scraped a bit of earth around it. We explained in Bahasa Indonesian why we had come and the significance of the planting. The men and women internees, including **Margaret Dryburgh** and the Australian nurses were very much in our minds.

The air-conditioned 2nd class train journey to Lubok Linggau is very comfortable, but takes about 8 hours. It is advisable to have some booked transport from the station to the Hotel, and then to Belalau, with a local guide or someone who can speak the language, but there were no signs of any security problems. Trains also run through the night. The Charitas nuns at Lubok Linggau may also be able to provide more information about the camp location, as two of their Sisters died there.

PLANTING THE IXORA BUSH



**SEMBAWANG NAVAL BASE
WITH COMMANDER GRAY**



**SPENT BULLETS FOUND AT
159, MOUNT PLEASANT ROAD**

