

The following is a letter sent by Judy Balcombe to Members of the Malayan Volunteers' Group and Friends:

I would like to let you know about a planned Museum to be built in Muntok, Banka Island in memory of the War years, the captives held there and in Palembang and Belalau Camps and others who suffered and died in the region.

Many hundreds of people died in these Camps, from Malaria, dysentery, beriberi and starvation. The death rate was exceptionally high – 50% of the male and 30% of the female internees died.

Before reaching land, a further 4000 to 5000 people are believed to have died as 44 boats fleeing Singapore were bombed and sunk in the Banka Straits by Japanese planes and warships.

Two groups of men were bayoneted to death by Japanese soldiers on Radji Beach on 14 February 1942. A group of 21 Australian Nurses and one civilian woman was next shot and killed. Vivian Bullwinkel was the surviving Nurse from this group. She and her remaining colleagues endured internment, caring for the women and children in their Camps, with inadequate medicines and facilities.

A further eight Australian Nurses died during internment, as did British Nurse Olga Neubronner. Dame Margot Turner of the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service survived internment on Banka Island and Sumatra after 2 shipwrecks and a prolonged period of imprisonment in Palembang Jail with Olga Neubronner and 2 other Nurses.

My Grandfather, Colin Campbell, a rubber planter from Perak had left Singapore on the Giang Bee, which was bombed and sunk in the Banka Straits. On reaching land, he became a civilian internee of the Japanese and died in Muntok Men's Camp on 2 August 1944.

In 1998, I began helping my elderly Uncle who was trying to find what had become of his Father's grave. We had a photo of my Grandfather's grave, taken when the Dutch had tidied the Muntok Cemetery in 1948.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at that time stated that the graves from Muntok had been relocated to Bandung in Java in 1961. In contrast to this, the Netherlands War Graves Foundation wrote to me that only the Dutch and the British military graves had been moved to Jakarta – the British civilians had not been moved.

An Indonesian religious minister from Palembang had visited Muntok in 1968 and had photographed the many remaining graves in the Town Cemetery and had recorded the names still visible on the wooden crosses.



The abandoned British civilian graves, Muntok Town Cemetery, 1968

The NWGF visited Muntok in 1986 and concluded that the former Muntok cemetery now lies under houses and a petrol station.

The CWGC has now amended their website to indicate that the British civilians who died in Muntok were not moved to Java (excepting a very small number of Police or St John's Ambulance officers whose graves were moved to Jakarta War Cemetery.)

I contacted BACSA (British Association of Cemeteries in South Asia) in 2010 and learnt that Mr Anthony Pratt, whose Father had died in Muntok Men's Camp, was seeking his Father's grave.

In Australia, I had been able to contact and meet former internees Mr Des Woodford in Perth and Mr Neal Hobbs and Mr Ralph Armstrong in Brisbane. They shared their memories of their internment but did not know what had happened to the Muntok graves. Neal Hobbs had been a member of the Muntok burial party and probably buried my Grandfather - but as up to 6 men died in Muntok Camp from sickness each day, Neal did not remember him by name.

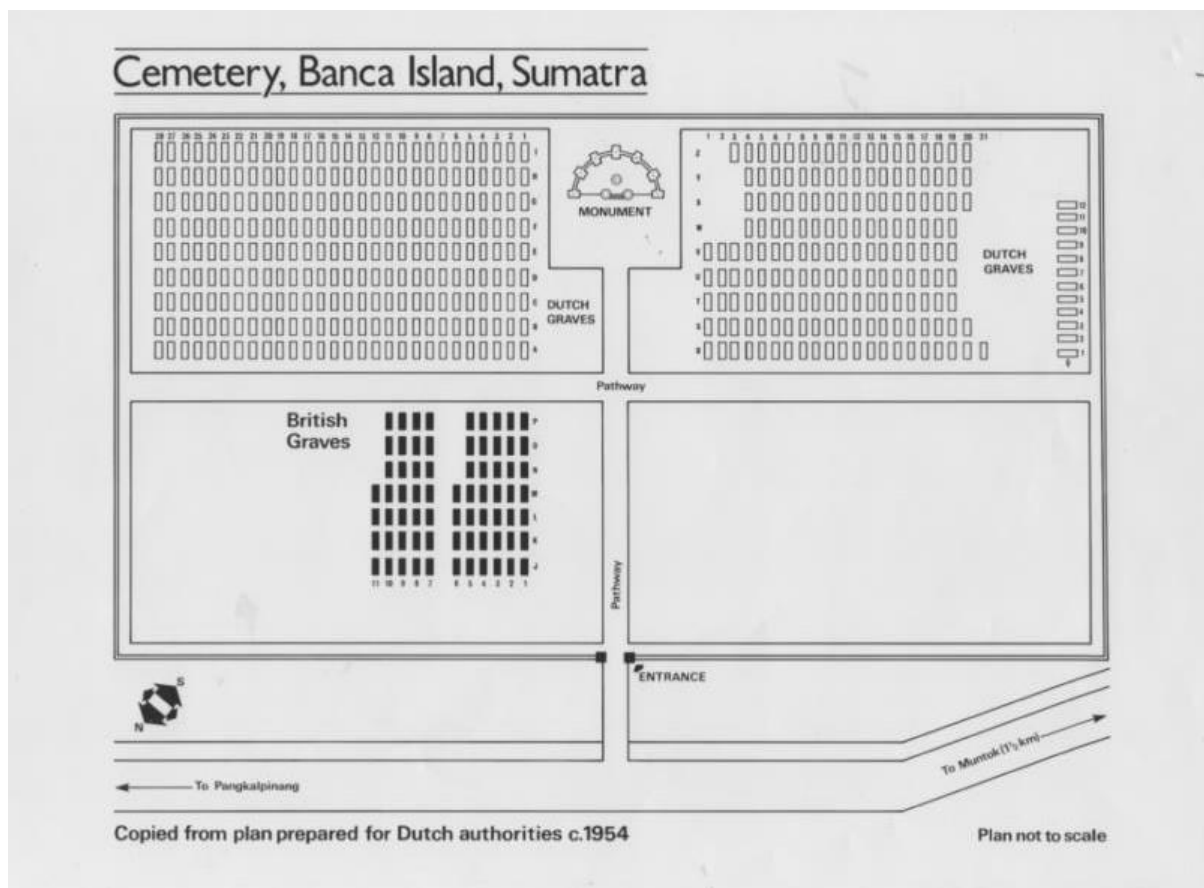
Anthony Pratt travelled to Australia to meet these 3 gentlemen in 2011, seeking any memories of his Father. In fact, all 3 men did remember Anthony's Father, who was the nephew of actor Boris Karloff, had performed in some Camp concerts in early and healthier times and had been Camp barber.

In 2011, Anthony Pratt and I decided to travel to Indonesia to see if we could find any further information about the Muntok graves. We learnt from very helpful local people that the cemetery had been closed by the Indonesian government in 1961 but that human remains had been found on the site when people began building houses there in the late 1960's.

Remains of a further 25 people were uncovered in 1981 during the building of the Pertamina petrol station – these had been given to the local priest and buried in a group grave in the Muntok Catholic Cemetery.

In February 2012, Anthony Pratt and I returned to Muntok with Margie and Stephen Caldicott. Margie's Mother and Grandmother had been interned in the Camps and Margie's Grandmother had died there.

Margie had brought with her a Muntok cemetery plan and lists of people buried there, which had belonged to her Mother. We were now able to know exactly where each internee had been buried.



Plan of Muntok Town Cemetery, also called the Civil or Old Dutch Cemetery, c 1948

The names of the British, Australian and one New Zealander Civilian who died in Muntok Japanese Civilian internment Camp are listed below:

Below are the 55 Men and 33 Women who died in Muntok Internment Camps and were buried in Muntok Cemetery. The Men were buried here by their friends and the Women were moved here from Kampong Menjelang after the War.

Dutch War Cemetery, Muntok, Bangka Island

The list is in order of plot numbering as shown on the plan on page 12.

<u>Location of Grave</u>	<u>Name and Forenames or Initials</u>	<u>Date of death</u>
Plot 1, Row D, No 2	Mr Algernon Neville Laybourne Aged 54. ¹	28 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 5	Mr Michael Francis Enright ² of Bankstown, New South Wales, Australia.	30 June 1945.
Plot 1, Row D, No 6	Sir John Bruce Stuart Campbell, DSO & Bar, Croix de Guerre, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Perlis, Malaya. Aged 66.	14 October 1943
Plot 1, Row D, No 8	Mr G.C. Spandaw ³	30 May 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 9	Mr L.G. Jeffrey ⁴	2 May 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 10	Mr George Basil Warburton Gray ⁵	12 February 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 12	Mr Hubert Victor Miles Woods of 23 Leigh Street, Ghant, Penang. Aged 43.	21 November 1943.
Plot 1, Row D, No 13	Mr G. Holderness, of Batu Anam Estate, North Johore.	28 May 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 14	Mr Robert Wallace Morris, of East Molesey, Surrey. Aged 42.	8 June 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 15	Mr Frederick Fletcher, of Walton-on-Naze, Essex. Aged 70.	9 June 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 16	Mr Frederick Langharne Llewellyn BSc, AMIEE. Aged 48. ⁶	13 May 1944.
Plot 1, Row D, No 18	Mr Charles John Arnold, of Norwich. Aged 70.	3 January 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 1	Mr F.V. Boswell ⁷ Aged 51.	10 July 1944.

- Notes:
1. Husband of Gladys Irene Laybourne who died Palembang October 1944.
 2. IWGC publication Civilian War Dead 1939-1945, Vol VII, London, 1957, shows date of death as being 24 January 1942 which is a date prior to the setting up of the Civilian POW camps at Muntok. The Australian and Dutch cemetery lists give the date as '30 June 1945'.
 3. G.C. Spandaw is not included on the Dutch Cemetery List.
 4. Shown as 'L.C. Jeffery' in the Dutch cemetery list.
 5. The Dutch Cemetery List gives the date of death as being '12 February 1945'. Husband of Majory Gray who died at Muntok on 13 January 1945.
 6. The Dutch Cemetery List gives the date of death as being '13 May 1944'.
 7. The Dutch Cemetery List gives the date of death as being '10 July 1944'.

<u>Location of Grave</u>	<u>Name and Initials</u>	<u>Date of death</u>
Plot 1, Row E, No 2	Mr George Henry Hallam	18 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 3	Mr John Samuel Evans, of Austral Malay Tin Ltd, Puchong, Federal Malay States. Aged 37.	17 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 5	Mr Walter Penrice, of Singapore. Aged 47.	20 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 6	Mr David Richard Evans, of Baulkham Hills, New South Wales, Australia. Aged 60.	30 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 7	Mr Colin Douglas Campbell Aged 53.	2 August 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 11	Mr Francis Grainger Brown ⁸	5 November 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 12	Mr Vincent Bristow Pybus Aged 57.	11 November 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 13	Mr Robert Stephenson, MM ⁹	8 April 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 14	Mr W. Vorlauf ¹⁰	5 February 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 15	Mr Donald Frederick Pratt Aged 37.	1 May 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 16	Mr James Henry Stanners, of Grangemouth, Stirlingshire.	22 January 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 17	Mr John C.H. Aitken, of West Cults, Aberdeen. Aged 54.	25 November 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 19	Mr Riley Lewellyn Morgan, of Devonport, Devonshire. Aged 28.	24 March 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 21	Mr John McGuffin, of Mosman Park, Western Australia. Aged 52.	8 March 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 22	Mr Gordon Burt, OBE, of Dunedin, New Zealand. Aged 46.	28 January 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 23	Mr C.H. Adam	5 October 1944.
Plot 1, Row E, No 24	Mr L.R. Blake, of Hove, Sussex. Aged 47.	23 February 1945.

Notes: 8. IWGC publication Civilian War Dead 1939-1945, Vol VII, London, 1957 gives the date of death as being '15 November 1944'.
9. The Dutch Cemetery List gives the surname as 'Stevenson'.
10. The Dutch Cemetery List gives the date of death as being '9 February 1945'.

(New Zealander Gordon Burt had received an OBE (Order of the British Empire) in the King's Honours List on 1/1/1942 for his work in the Armoured Car Division of the Straits Volunteers just prior to internment.)

<u>Location of Grave</u>	<u>Name and Forename or Initials</u>	<u>Date of death</u>
Plot 1, Row E, No 26	Mr Alfred Herbert Wright, AMIMechE, AMIEE, FRSA., of Griffnock, Glasgow. Aged 44.	9 February 1945.
Plot 1, Row E, No 27	Mr Herbert Zimmerman	11 June 1944.
Plot 1, Row H, No 20	Mr E.H.M. Manden	23 July 1944.
Plot 1, Row I, No 27	Mr E.A.G.A. Dumas	1 December 1944.
Plot 2. There is no record of British or Australian burials in this plot.		
Plot 3, Row J, No 7	Mrs Mary Louise Day Aged 53. ¹¹	16 December 1944
Plot 3, Row J, No 8	Mrs Marjory Gray ¹²	13 January 1945.
Plot 3, Row J, No 9	Mrs Rena Rosie Haynes Aged 49.	10 January 1945
Plot 3, Row J, No 10	Mrs Resie Armstrong	7 February 1945.
Plot 3, Row J, No 11	Mrs Louise Sinnatt wife of Lieutenant J.A.H. Sinnatt, Royal Artillery. Aged about 32.	23 February 1945
Plot 3, Row K, No 7	Mrs Esme Barbara Skinner, of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. Aged 38.	22 March 1945
Plot 3, Row K, No 8	Mrs Amy Alexandra Mary Simmons Aged 30.	26 February 1945
Plot 3, Row K, No 9	Mrs Edith Florence Bedell, ¹³ Nurse, of Batang-Kali Estate, Kuala Lumpur, F.M.S. Aged 65.	19 January 1945.
Plot 3, Row K, No 10	Mrs Mary Elizabeth Brown, ¹⁴ of Grove Court, Katong, Singapore. Aged 67.	17 January 1945.
Plot 3, Row K, No 11	Mrs Helen Dixey ¹⁵ Aged 48.	28 February 1945.

- Notes:
11. The date of death recorded in a 'Camp List' is given as '17 December 1944'.
 12. Wife of George Basil Warburton Gray who died in the Male Internment Camp, Muntok on 12 February 1944. [Plot 1, Row D, Grave No 10 - see page 12].
 13. Wife of Doctor A.E. Bedell.
 14. Wife of Edwin A. Brown, OBE, VD, JP. [Her daughter Miss Shelagh Brown, later Mrs Shelagh Lea, was also interned in the Womens POW Camp at Muntok].
 15. The wife of A.C.N. Dixey. The date of death is shown as '27 February 1945' in the Dutch and Australian Lists of burials and as '26 February 1945' in the 'Camp List'.

<u>Location of Grave</u>	<u>Name & Forenames or Initials</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
Plot 3, Row L, No 7	Mrs Lilian Rodrigues	1 January 1945.
Plot 3, Row L, No 8	Mrs Agnes G. Dominguez ¹⁶	9 November 1944.
Plot 3, Row L, No 9	Mrs Marion Galloway Langdon Williams. ¹⁷ Aged 46.	7 February 1945.
Plot 3, Row L, No 10	Mrs Dorothy MacLeod ¹⁸ Aged 59.	1 April 1945.
Plot 3, Row M, No 7	Mrs Evelyn Mary Parr, ¹⁹ Red Cross Nurse, of Singapore. Aged 38.	11 January 1945.
Plot 3, Row M, No 8	Mrs Edith Evangeline Castle, ²⁰ of Doncaster, Yorkshire. Aged 50.	19 November 1944.
Plot 3, Row M, No 9	Miss Eva Prouse, of Bukit Bintang Road, Kuala Lumpur, F.M.S. and Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia. Aged 49.	2 February 1945
Plot 3, Row M, No 10	Miss Dixie Resie Armstrong. Aged 32.	5 April 1945.
Plot 3, Row M, No 11	Mrs Kathleen Mary Hutchings ²¹ of 12 Balmoral Road, Singapore. Aged 46.	12 April 1945.
Plot 3, Row N, No 7	Mrs Olga Mary Neubronner, CMB., SRN, Senior Superintendent, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Singapore. ²² Aged 39.	2 March 1945.
Plot 3, Row N, No 8	Mrs Mary Awmack Battensby ²³ (known as Mona) of Tapah Rubber Estate Ltd., Tapa Road, Perak, F.M.S. Aged 51.	11 February 1945.

- Notes:
16. Wife of J.G. Domingues who died at Muntok on 11 September 1944.
 17. Widow of L. Langdon Williams of Singapore. Shown in the Imperial War Graves Commission publication Civilian War Dead 1939-1945, Vol VII, under the surname of 'Williams'. She was, however, always known as 'Mrs Langdon Williams' in the POW Camp at Muntok.
 18. Wife of Lieutenant Colonel D.G. MacLeod.
 19. Widow of the late Reverend A.C. Parr, of St Andrews School, Singapore.
 20. Mrs E.E. Castle is shown on the 'Camp List' as having died on '18 November 1944'.
 21. Wife of Major Philip Townshend Hutchings of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Reserve who also died in captivity.
 22. Wife of Captain Guy Vivian Neubronner of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. It has been reported that Mrs Neubronner was exhumed and moved probably to a Dutch Cemetery when the Dutch nationals were exhumed and reburied in a war cemetery at Jakarta, Java
 23. Wife of Eric William Battensby.

These additional Men's graves are shown in List No 2 of Margie's Mother's lists:

ROW F :-

F 2 Rev A V Wardle d.4.01.1945

F 3 Mr R Meldrum d. 13/12/1944

F 4 Mr F Thompson d. 27.11.1944

F 6 Mr G S Reis d. 2.11.1944
F 7 Mr H S Tisshaw d.24.11.1944
F 8 Mr T Efford d.24.11.1944
F 9 Mr W P Douglas d. 23.11.1944
F 10 Mr R J P Clarke d.19/23? Nov.1944
F 11 Mr T K Wilson d. 22.11.1944
F 12 Mr H L Watson d.2/20 Nov 1944
F 13 Mr C M Jenkin d.17.11.1944
F 17 Mr L Burn d.8/14? Nov. 1944.
F 19 Mr J S Messenger d. ?1 Nov 1944
F 20 Mr C F Grixoni d.28.10.1944
F 21Mr G A Dohoo d.25/26? Oct 1944.
F 22 Mr T Burns d.22/23? Oct 1944
F 23 Mr VS Connolly d. 17.10.1944
F 26 Mr. JG Dominguez d.11.09.1944
F 27 Mr RH Prior d. 15/16?Aug.1944

On our visit to Muntok in February 2012, we brought with us plaques in memory of the men, women and children who had suffered or died in the Camps, to who had been killed on Radji Beach and those who had died in the Banka Straits. These plaques were most kindly sponsored by the Malayan Volunteers Group. The MVG has been consistently helpful and supportive and it is through them that we have been able to contact a number of families of the internees.

I made a further visit to Palembang and Muntok in November 2012 with the family of Mr Vivian Bowden, Australia's representative to Singapore, who had been killed by 2 guards outside the Muntok Cinema on 17 February 1942. Most recently I visited with friend and former internee Neal Hobs, who is now aged 90.

We have taken donations from the family of one of the Australian Nurses to help to deepen the original well at Kampong Menjelang, the site of the former Women's Camp and to assist in building a new well.

Last October, the concert featuring the music of the original Palembang Women's Vocal Orchestra was organised in Chichester, UK. The concert was sponsored by the Malayan Volunteers Group. Half of the funds from the concert have been sent to Muntok to assist the primary school now at Kampong Menjelang; the other half of the ticket sales will prepare a plaque with the names of the internees who died in Muntok and whose graves now lie under houses and a petrol station and those who were reburied in the unnamed grave in Muntok Catholic cemetery.

We have formed good friendships with the local people, who are very interested in preserving the history of Muntok and the Camps. The Muntok Heritage Community and the Muntok Cares Foundation would like to prepare a heritage path from Muntok Harbour, past the former Customs House and Cinema where the shipwrecked evacuees were processed, to Muntok Jail (the former Men's Camp), to Kampong Menjelang and the new Museum, to Radji Beach and the Australian Nurses' Memorial.

Land for the new Museum has been donated at Kampong Menjelang and the project can proceed if we are able to raise the construction costs, estimated to be 14,000

pounds sterling. I was asked to be an Honorary Member of the Muntok Cares Foundation and together with Margie Caldicott, am trying to contact family members of the internees and the Nurses, Members of the Malayan Volunteers Group and any other interested people to ask if they may please like to contribute to this new building?

The Museum will be a traditional wooden building, 8 x 9 metres in size with 3 rooms containing displays, photographs and items donated by captives and their families, models of the Camps and a reference library. It will be in a simple style out of respect to the poverty of the people held in the Camps.

The building will be called the Peace Museum and the local people hope that visitors will learn that war is very harmful and hopefully prevent it from happening again. I am in touch with Professor Gary Topping in Utah, the biographer of journalist and former internee William McDougall, who wrote 'By Eastern Windows,' about his years in these Camps after the War. Professor Topping has written that he is very gladdened in his heart to learn that Muntok can now become a place of beauty and education rather than one of dread.

We hope the Museum construction can commence this year and be completed by September 2015, to commemorate 70 years from the liberation of the Camps.

The name Muntok translates to mean 'the end of the road', as it lies on a point, beyond which there is only sea. Muntok was the 'end of the road' for those who died there and many of the survivors and their families had a very difficult road in the years that followed.

We hope that the ongoing friendship with the people of Muntok and in particular the information and message from the new Museum will help to heal the wounds of the War and act to contribute to lasting Peace.

Thank you very much for thinking about this proposed Museum and mentioning the Museum to family, friends and others, if they may please like to donate towards its construction.

With sincere best wishes,
Dr Judy Balcombe, Melbourne



Planned Muntok Peace Museum

(more photos below)



Radji Beach, Muntok, Banka Island, also known as English Bay, 2 groups of men, 21 Nurses and 1 civilian woman killed here, February 14, 1942



Stone from former Muntok pier, Customs House at rear



Former Muntok cinema, 1000 internees processed 16/2/42



Anthony Pratt and Neal Hobbs, Muntok Jail, former Men's Camp, February 2014



Current location of Male Internees' graves, former Muntok Cemetery



Pertamina Petrol Station, Main Road, Muntok, old cemetery site



‘Here lie 25 English victims of the Japanese War’, now in one grave, Muntok Catholic Cemetery, believed to be the Female Internees’ remains



Placing of plaque at Women’s Camp, Kampong Menjelang, Muntok February 2012

In loving memory of the women and children interned in Muntok by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945. Civilians and army nurses were held captive here, experiencing hardship, ill-health and often death. They cared for one another and shared the very little they had. Despite the squalor, they sought beauty in song

*‘As blended voices filled the air,
The soul could soar to worlds more fair,
Escape from prison bounds.’ (Margaret Dryburgh, camp internee)*



Plaque at former Men's Camp, Muntok jail

In loving memory of the civilian men and boys interned at Muntok by the Japanese between 1942 and 1945. They experienced sickness, starvation and often death but they showed great care for one another and courage in the face of such adversity.

'Who would true valour see, let him come hither.' (John Bunyan)

Later, my Mother and others were sent to another camp called Belalau near Loeboek Linggau in Sumatra. The men, women and children had been in the prison camps for 3 ½ years. At Belalau, the survivors were finally rescued by Australian and South African soldiers who parachuted from the sky.

