Continuing to Remember the Internees and POW’s at Muntok, Banka Island

February 16th 2017 will be the 75th anniversary of the massacre of 21 Australian Army Nurses, a civilian woman and two groups of men by Japanese soldiers on Radji beach, Muntok, Banka Island in Indonesia. Their bodies were never recovered but local people called the area ‘English Bay’ following the killings and for many years, would not eat any fish caught there.

Australian Army Nurse Vivian Bullwinkel and 2 men, Eric German and a Prince of Wales stoker Ernest Lloyd were shot but survived and were able to testify to this terrible event.

A Memorial Service will be held on Radji Beach on February 16th 2017. Families or friends of the Internees are most welcome to attend. Also remembered will be the 4,000 to 5,000 people who died when 44 boats leaving Singapore just before the Fall were bombed and sunk in the Banka Straits.

Radji beach, Muntok, Banka Island, site of massacre, 16/2/1942

The many hundreds of Internees held in the Japanese prison camps at Muntok, Palembang and Belalau will also be remembered. One half of the men and one third of the women died in these camps from malaria, dysentery and beri beri.

Memorial plaques have been taken to Muntok and the small Peace Memorial Museum, built with help from Internees’ families and friends, the Malayan Volunteers’ Group and BACSA (The British Association for Cemeteries in South Asia) was opened in September 2015.

Today, those who suffered in the area are also remembered on a website whose address is http://muntokpeacemuseum.org/ and which reflects the themes and exhibits found in the Muntok Peace Museum. MVG members are encouraged to visit this website, and contributions in the form of biographical material and or images relating to Internees, using the contact form on the website, are welcomed.
Two plans are underway if people may like to further remember their families who suffered in this region in World War 2. One is the installation of electricity to the Peace Museum – this would allow exhibits to be clearly seen and also allow schoolchildren and the local people to use the Museum building for homework and small community meetings in the evening. In this way, the Museum building can be seen as a useful asset to Kampong Menjelang where the Women’s Camp was situated and ensure it will continue to be well-respected and cared for.

The second project will involve making a donation to a hospital in Muntok, in memory of all those who suffered there during the War. This would be a living memorial, helping the local people and also fostering good relationships with the town.

If people may like to contribute to these plans through MVG, we will ensure they are sent to the appropriate sources in Muntok.

I am happy to answer any questions on these matters, Thank you, Sincerely, Judy Balcombe, Melbourne  jdbalcombe@gmail.com