



SANDAKAN MEMORIAL PARK

SANDAKAN, SABAH, MALAYSIA



Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Office of Australian War Graves

The motif on the front cover of this brochure depicts flowers representing people of the three nations who suffered at Sandakan during the Second World War.

The design is taken from the stained glass window, created by Robin Seville, located in the pavilion and is repeated on the granite memorial and decorative gates.

© Commonwealth of Australia 2005

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without prior written permission from the Commonwealth. Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to the Office of Australian War Graves, GPO Box 9998 Canberra ACT 2601 or emailed to publications@dva.gov.au

Published by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2005.

P03217 December 2016

SANDAKAN MEMORIAL PARK

The Sandakan Memorial Park is adjacent to the site of the original Sandakan prisoner of war (POW) camp. For the visitor, the story of Sandakan is revealed at several memorial and interpretive stations around the park.

This booklet has been designed to allow visitors to explore the park at their own pace. It contains information about the Sandakan POW camp, war relics used by the prisoners and important points of interest that convey the experiences of Sandakan POWs. Numbered posts on the ground correspond to the numbered information in this booklet.



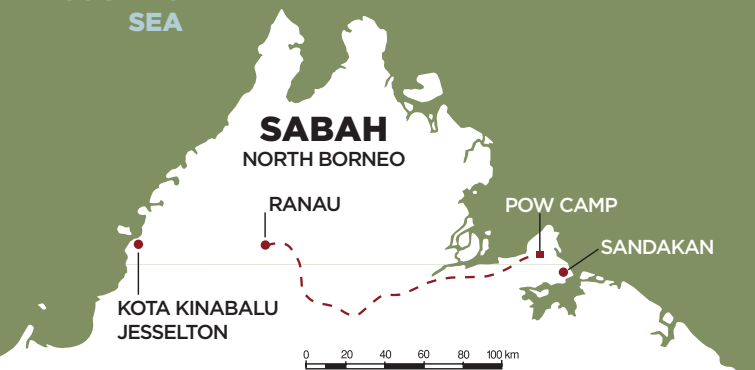
SANDAKAN MEMORIAL PARK

The Sandakan Memorial Park commemorates a tragedy and an atrocity. The tragedy was the death between January and August 1945, within sight of Allied victory in the Pacific war, of approximately 2400 Australian and British prisoners of war held by the Japanese in the Sandakan POW camp, North Borneo. The atrocity was the manner of the death inflicted upon them by their captors—starvation, overwork, beatings and punishments and the forcing of over 1000 sick and weak POWs on three marches under brutal physical conditions.

In 1942 and 1943 the Japanese brought to Sandakan about 2700 Australian and British POWs,

**SOUTH CHINA
SEA**

SULU SEA



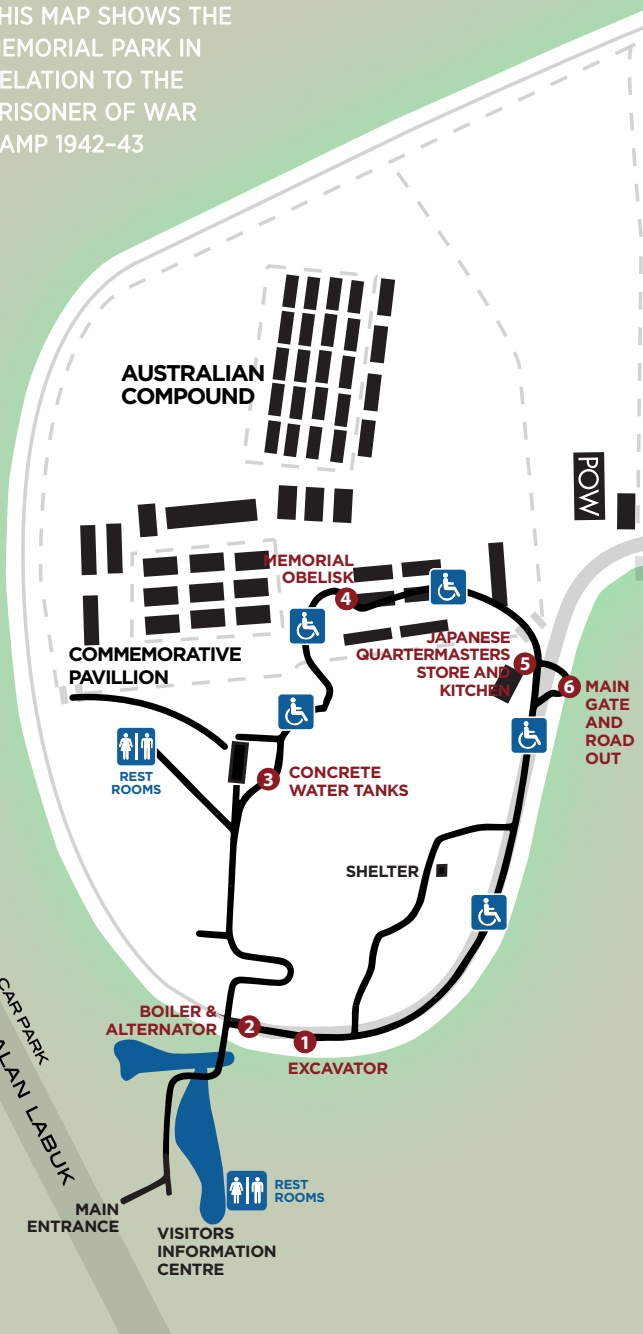
the great majority of whom had been captured at the surrender at Singapore in February 1942. They were used as a labour force to build a military airstrip. In late 1944, as the Allies advanced in the Pacific, the airstrip was bombed and destroyed. Early in 1945 the Japanese decided to move the POWs 260 kilometres west into the mountains to the small settlement of Ranau. On three forced marches between January and June approximately 500 prisoners died. The remainder died at the Ranau and Sandakan camps.

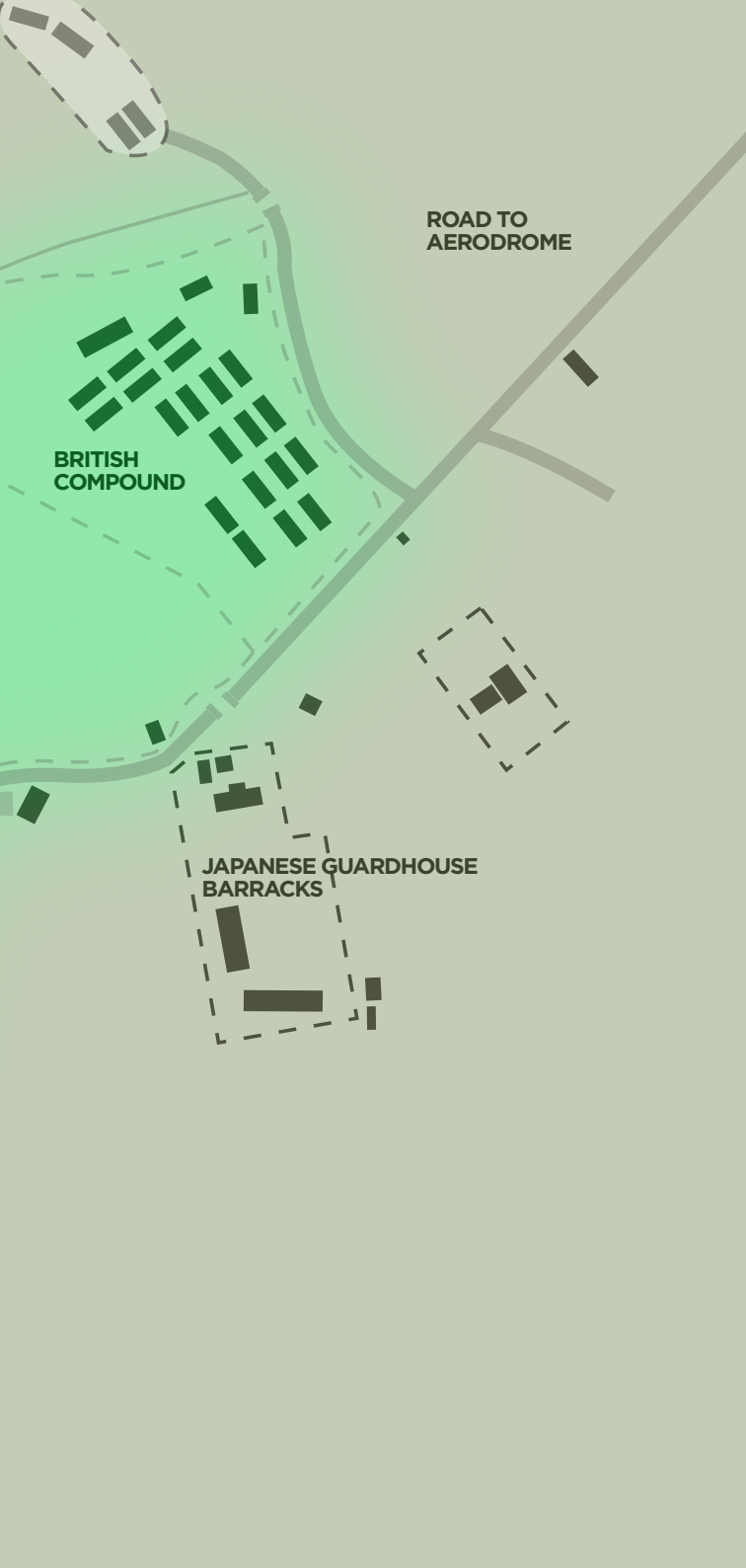
Of all those who had been alive in January 1945, by the end of August only six—all Australians—survived. Two of the six escaped into the jungle during the second march in June 1945. Assisted by local people, they were eventually picked up by Allied units. Another four escaped from Ranau in July and again, with the help of local people, were fed and hidden from the Japanese until the end of the war.

Today the POW dead whose bodies were recovered are buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission war cemetery at Labuan. Those who could not be identified, or who have no known grave, are commemorated on Memorials to the Missing at Labuan and Singapore.

SANDAKAN MEMORIAL PARK

THIS MAP SHOWS THE
MEMORIAL PARK IN
RELATION TO THE
PRISONER OF WAR
CAMP 1942-43





ROAD TO
AERODROME

BRITISH
COMPOUND

JAPANESE GUARDHOUSE
BARRACKS

1. EXCAVATOR

The excavator or trenching machine seen here was commandeered by the Japanese for use during construction of the airfield. However, parked by the power plant while awaiting repair, it was sabotaged by an Australian prisoner. It never worked again. A Fordson tractor was also sabotaged by some local men. Prisoners used whatever opportunities were available to them to slow down the construction of the airfield. This 'go-slow' campaign was seen also on the Burma–Thailand Railway and at other POW camps.

2. BOILER AND ALTERNATOR

This boiler and remaining piece of an alternator were part of the electricity generation plant for the Sandakan POW Camp. The plant was built by the British prior to Japanese occupation of Borneo (then British North Borneo).

The boiler produced steam which in turn powered an engine driving the alternator. The system produced 110 volts and this electricity was used for the camp perimeter lighting and internal lights in camp buildings. The plant was housed in two huts and was fuelled with firewood which was cut and stacked by the POWs.

The power plant played an important role for the POWs' underground network during 1942–43. In order to obtain sufficient voltage to operate the

clandestine radio made by the prisoners, the Australians had the local operator of the plant, Chan Ping (also called Ah Ping), increase the power supply in the evenings. The arrangement worked well until the Japanese discovered the radio in July 1943.

3. CONCRETE WATER TANKS

These tanks are part of the water supply system built before the war by the British administration. When the first POWs arrived at the camp, water was pumped here from a local stream via the boiler at the bottom of the hill, and then piped to the camp. Not long after, the Japanese removed most of the pipes and fittings and took them to the Japanese barrack area to the east. Although water from these tanks was still able to flow to the kitchen in N°1 compound, other sources of water had to be found. A couple of wells were sunk but were unsuccessful. As the water from the swamp inside the camp was polluted, water was obtained from local streams and from a pond near the boiler.

At the time of the camp, these tanks were covered with a roof. An agricultural building stood adjacent and was used by the Japanese as a storeroom. The Commemorative Pavilion now stands on that site.

During 1942–43 the main entrance to N°1 compound was a little further towards the top of the hill. The walking track to the site of the Big Tree passes approximately through that entrance.



4. INSIDE THE CAMP: THE BIG TREE

You are now inside N^o1 compound. This spot is close to the site of the so-called Big Tree. The Big Tree towered over the huts and was a major landmark of the Sandakan POW camp.

The tree overshadowed everyday life at Sandakan. It represented different things to different individuals: to some it was a symbol of strength and hope; others detested it. It had large, buttressed roots, among which sleepless hospital patients would sit and talk through the night. POWs are said to have hidden valuables in its hollow trunk. This commemorative area stands on the site of the “big tree” which was destroyed after the war.

You are now ‘inside the wire’. We invite you to reflect on the things that happened here inside Sandakan’s 8 Mile Camp.



5. JAPANESE QUARTERMASTER'S STORE AND KITCHEN

This concrete tank and slab are understood to be the site of the Japanese Quartermaster's Store and adjacent kitchen. Food was held here in storage, and a kitchen for the Japanese, staffed by British POWs, also operated here. Although several Japanese guard buildings were in this area outside N^o 1 compound, the main Japanese precinct was developed further east. POWs stealing food from this store risked a life-threatening term inside the punishment cages.

Not all food was stored here. A large stockpile of rice was kept under the house of the camp commandant Captain Hoshijima. This rice did not reach the prisoners.

IMAGE ABOVE: Remains of the burnt-out No. 1 Sandakan POW camp looking towards the big tree. (AWM120463)



IMAGE ABOVE: This cemetery at Sandakan contained the graves of all POWs whose bodies were recovered from Sandakan, Ranau and the route of the death marches. (AWM Robertson Collection 122/1)



IMAGE ABOVE: The bodies were later removed to Labuan War Cemetery (above).



6. MAIN GATE AND ROAD OUT

You are now in the general vicinity of the main gates to N°1 compound 1943–45. The benched road that is visible in front of you is the road leading from the camp—either left to the airfield, or right to the 8 Mile point on the main Sandakan road. It was in the latter direction that about 40% of the camp's inhabitants left on the death marches to Ranau in 1945. For all but six of the over 1000 people who passed by here, en route to Ranau, this road was a road to death.

From here the main path follows the old road for some distance and takes you back via the boiler to the park entrance.

SURVIVORS

Only six POWs survived Sandakan and the death marches to Ranau. Two escaped on the second death march in June 1945. Four others managed to escape in July at Ranau.

Those who escaped in July were:

- Private Nelson Short, 2/18th Battalion;
- Warrant Officer William Hector 'Bill' Sticpewich, Australian Army Service Corps;
- Private Keith Botterill, 2/19th Battalion;
- Lance Bombadier William 'Bill' Moxham, 2/15th Australian Field Regiment.

The two who escaped earlier were:

- Gunner Owen Campbell, 2/10th Australian Field Regiment;
- Bombadier Richard 'Dick' Braithwaite, 2/15th Australian Field Regiment.

Escape was no easy task, as all prisoners were suffering malnutrition and were affected by tropical diseases including beri beri, malaria and dysentery. Escapees were also at risk of being turned over to their captors as the Japanese offered large rewards for the recapture of escaped POWs.

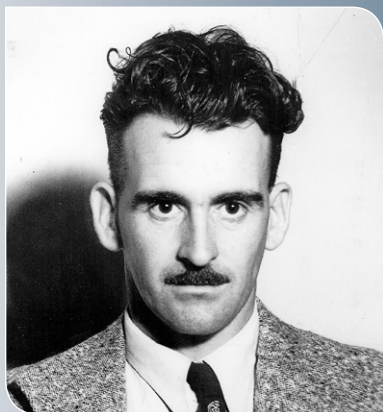
This small group of survivors was able to testify against their tormentors to ensure that the world received eyewitness accounts of the crimes and atrocities committed at Sandakan, on the death marches and at Ranau.



Sydney, Australia, May 1946:
Sandakan POW survivor, Richard
'Dick' Braithwaite, 2/10th Australian
Field Regiment Braithwaite escaped
from the second Sandakan-Ranau
death march in June 1945.
(AWM 041488)



Sandakan POW survivor William
'Bill' Moxham, 2/15th Australian
Field Regiment. Moxham escaped
from Ranau in July 1945.
(AWM 041486)



Sandakan POW survivor, Owen Campbell, 2/10th Australian Field Regiment. Campbell escaped from the second Sandakan-Ranau death march in June 1945. (AWM 041489)



Three Australian POW survivors who escaped from Ranau in July 1945: from left to right; Private Nelson Short, 2/18th Battalion; Warrant Officer William Hector 'Bill' Sticpewich, Australian Army Service Corps; and Private Keith Botterill, 2/19th Battalion. (AWM OG3553)

DONATIONS

Donations to the Sandakan Memorial Park support the continuing operation of the park.

The Sandakan Memorial Park commemorates the sacrifice and suffering endured by both Australian and British soldiers who were held by the Japanese as Prisoners of War between 1942 and 1945.

The Memorial provides information on the atrocities suffered by the soldiers during this time to the many visitors who travel to the park including those from Malaysia, Australia and other countries.

Visitors are welcome to view displays and walk through the park at no charge. However, donations for maintaining the day to day operations, improvements and upgrades to the Memorial Park are gratefully received.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR DONATION

The Office of Australian War Graves operates an account for the receipt of donations.

Donations to the contributions account are formally receipted and acknowledged. A donor may wish to discuss with staff the option of funds being used for a specific purpose.

Donations, payable to

DVA Official OAWG Contributions
Account may be forwarded to:

The Office of Australian War Graves
Department of Veterans' Affairs
GPO Box 9998
Canberra ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA



IMAGE ABOVE: Members of the 2/24th Australian Pioneer Battalion visit the grave of Captain Lionel Matthews GC MC, 8th Division signals, at the cemetery at Kuching. September 1945. (AWM 118550)



Australian Government

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Australian War Graves