

POWS OF THE JAPANESE – AN EXAMPLE OF MATERIAL AVAILABLE AT THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Prisoners of the Japanese, Borneo (Sandakan)
Australian prisoners of war: Second World War

The Japanese conquered British and Dutch Borneo early in 1942. B and E Forces were sent by ship from Changi to Borneo . B Force (1,496-strong) included 145 officers and medical staff. Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel A. W. Walsh of the 2/10th Field Regiment, it left Singapore in the Ubi Maru on 8 July 1942 and after a nine-day journey in poor conditions disembarked at Sandakan . E Force embarked on the steamer de Klerk on 29 March 1943 . It contained 500 British prisoners, who disembarked at Kuching, and 500 Australian prisoners, who were sent to Berhala Island (North Borneo). In early June 1943, E Force was moved to Sandakan .

Prisoners in B and E Forces included troops from the 2/18th, 2/19th, 2/20th, 2/26th, 2/29th, 2/30th Battalions, 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion, and the 2/10th Field Ambulance. There were four main camps in Borneo : Sandakan , Kuching, Labuan and Jesselton. Of these, Sandakan contained the majority of Australians. Captain Hoshijima Susumi commanded Sandakan Camp. In January 1945 the first forced march to Ranau occurred, and the second in May 1945. Of the 2,500 Australian and British prisoners of war, only six Australians survived these “death marches”.

Official Records

Official records held by the Memorial include:

[8th Division in Captivity - "B" Force (Borneo):] General Report on the activities of "B" Force in Borneo, July 1942 to July 1943 "E" Force Escape Parties, AWM54 554/3/1

[8th Division in Captivity - "B" Force (Borneo):] Information regarding Allied Prisoners of War Sandakan - Jesselton and Ranau. Compiled by 3rd Australian PWC and I Unit, 24/9/45 . Part I - Movements; Part II - Information regarding movements; Part III - Information regarding Jap Officers in charge of POW "B" Information regarding Australian and British POW last seen alive; Part IV - Summary, AWM54 554/3/2

[8th Division in Captivity - "E" Force (Borneo):] Report on "E" Force AIF Prisoners of War, Malaya, by Major J.G. Stanley, 1945, AWM54 554/6/1

War Crimes and trials. Affidavits and Sworn Statements. Searchable by name and number, AWM54 1010/*

Records of Australian Military Forces prisoners of war and missing, Far East and South West Pacific Islands . Contains nominal rolls and paybook photographs arranged by name, theatre of war and unit, AWM232. The nominal roll

is available online.

Private Records

Private records held by the Memorial include:

- A.W. Walsh, (Lieutenant Colonel) B Force. Nominal roll, EXDOC083
- R. Maffey, (Major) E force, Voyage from Singapore to Sandakan, MSS0851
- W.J. McDonagh (Sergeant) B force, Voyage from Singapore to Sandakan, PR00496
- B. Young, (Private) 2/29 Btn. Describes POW experiences, MSS1364
- W.H. Sticpewich, (Major) Papers regarding Sticpewich's experiences as a POW in North Borneo and post-war duties with 1 Australian Search Party, 31 Australian War Graves Unit. Includes detailed statement describing treatment of POWs at Sandakan, destruction of camp, forced march to Ranau, PR00637
- H. Rayson (Major) 2/10 th Fld Amb. Captivity and voyage Sandakan and Kuching, PR00720
- Hon. Athol Randolph Moffitt, CMG , QC (Captain, 1914-). Significant collection of papers relating to War Crimes Trials, Borneo 1945-1946, and to the Sandakan POW camps, PR01378
- H.W.S. Jackson (Lieutenant Colonel) Extensive collection of papers and reports documenting the search for missing and deceased POW's, both in Borneo and Hainan, PR84/231

Books

Books held in the Research Centre include:

- Gavin Long, The final campaigns, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1 (Army), vol. VII (Canberra : Australian War Memorial, 1963)
- Athol Moffitt, Project Kingfisher, (North Ryde, N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1989).
- Kevin Smith, Borneo: Australia's Proud but Tragic Heritage (Armidale, N.S.W. : Kevin R. Smith, 1999). Appendices contain calendar of events, AIF Prisoner Movements- Sandakan, Officers of B and E Forces, POW deaths, Australians in Outram Road Gaol.
- Allan S. Walker, Middle East and Far East, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 5 (Medical), vol. II (Canberra : Australian War Memorial, 1953).
- Neville Watterson, Borneo : the Japanese P.O.W. camps : mail of the forces, P.O.W. and internees (Northampton : W. N. Watterson, c1989).
- Lionel Wigmore, The Japanese Thrust, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1 (Army), vol. IV (Canberra : Australian War Memorial, 1957).