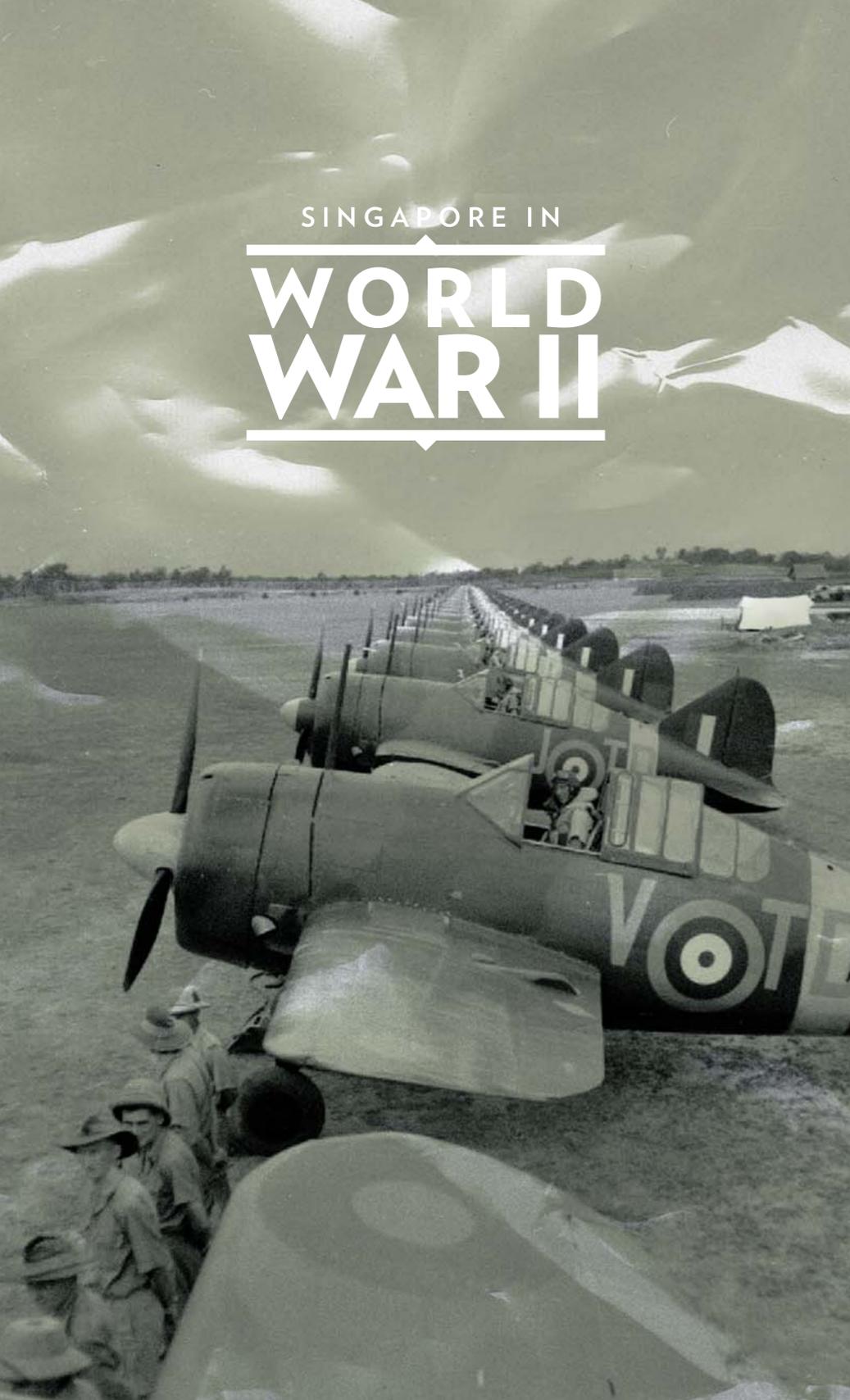


SINGAPORE IN
**WORLD
WAR II**



SINGAPORE IN
**WORLD
WAR II**



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*The Koneo Imperial Guards Division of the Japanese army under Lieutenant-General Nishimura crossing the Johor Causeway into Singapore after completing repairs, 1942
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore*

INTRODUCTION

The Second World War came to Malaya and Singapore on 8 December 1941, more than two years after it broke out in Europe. After Singapore fell on 15 February 1942, the island was renamed Syonan-To (“Light of the South” in Japanese) and it spent the next three years and seven months under the Japanese Occupation (1942–45). The war ended in Singapore with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender on 12 September 1945.

This booklet contains information about the historic sites and events associated with the battle for Singapore and the Japanese Occupation. The booklet identifies 50 war sites all over the island. Each site marks either a battle area, such as the invasion sites at Sarimbun Beach, or commemorates a significant event during the Japanese Occupation, such as the *Sook Ching* (“purge” in Mandarin) massacre sites.

There are permanent plaques placed at 20 of the 50 sites. These plaques were installed by the National Heritage Board to mark the

significance of the sites in relation to the war. Fourteen of the plaques were unveiled in 1995 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of the war while the remaining six plaques were unveiled in February 2012 as part of a series of national events marking the 70th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

The sites in the booklet are organised into six regions with the following themes:

- **North-west: Invasion and the First Battles**
- **North-east: The Defence Strategy and its Consequences**
- **Central: Battle for the Heart of Singapore**
- **South: Final Battles and the Consequences**
- **City: Remembering the Japanese Occupation**
- **East: The Guns of Singapore and Captivity**

The information, while interesting, has been kept succinct. It is intended purely as an introductory guide highlighting significant war sites. We hope the booklet will be a useful guide as you explore these World War II sites on an island once feted as an “impregnable fortress”.

COVER IMAGE: Sarimbun Beach Landing: A party of Japanese troops land on Singapore. © MAINICHI SHIMBUN. Brewster Buffalos, 453 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) at Sembawang Airfield. © IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM.



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A party of Japanese troops land on Singapore, February 1942
Source: © Mainichi Shimbun. Reproduced with permission

» NORTH-WEST

INVASION AND THE FIRST BATTLES

FIRST CONTACT... AND LOSSES

Following the loss of Malaya to the Japanese, the last Allied army unit withdrew into Singapore across the Causeway on 31 January 1942. The retreating units were redeployed along the entire coastline of Singapore in an all-round perimeter defence of the island.

Lieutenant-General (LG) Arthur Percival, General Officer Commanding (GOC) in Malaya, believed that the Japanese would invade Singapore from the east. Thus, his defence strategy allocated a bigger concentration of troops to the north-eastern part of Singapore, while the north-western half was assigned relatively fewer troops.

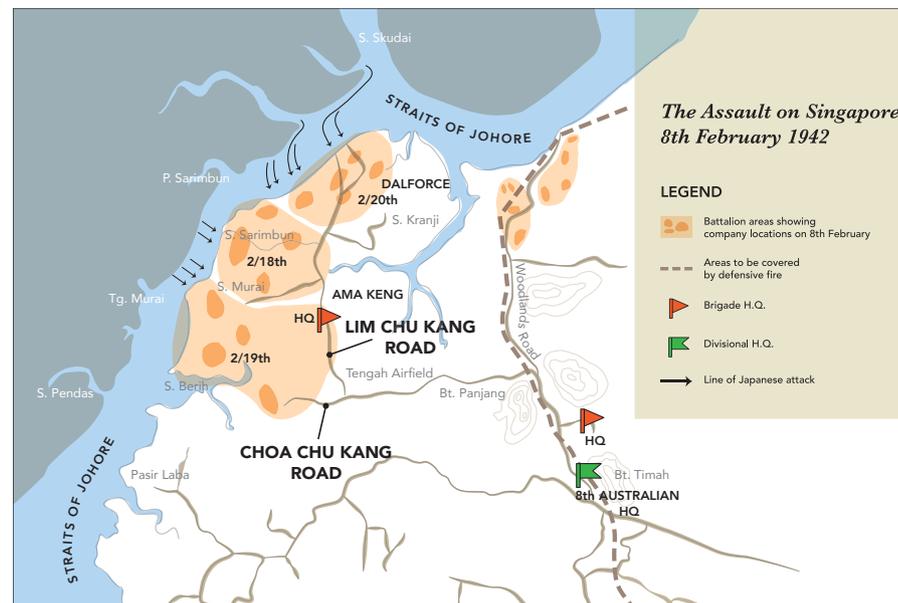
Japanese field intelligence just before the invasion revealed the lack of depth in the defences of north-western Singapore. This,

combined with the potential ease of crossing, convinced LG Tomoyuki Yamashita, the commander of the Japanese 25th Army, that his troops would face less difficulty if they invaded through this sector.

The Japanese 5th Division was to land at the Lim Chu Kang sector while the 18th Division was to attack further south-west (beyond Pulau Sarimbun). The Japanese Imperial Guards Division was to advance on the Causeway sector.

The Australian 8th Division, comprising the 22nd and 27th Brigades, was the main force defending this whole area.

North-western Singapore therefore became the initial battleground between the Allied army and the Japanese in the battle for Singapore.



SARIMBUN BEACH LANDING • HISTORIC SITE & LIM CHU KANG LANDING

The 22nd Australian Brigade had to cover the coastline from Sungei Kranji to Sungei Berih (Sungei means "river" in Malay). The brigade's three battalions (2/18th, 2/19th and 2/20th) did not have sufficient troops to defend this broad sector in depth and found themselves overstretched. The gaps in their defences proved fatal during the invasion.

On the night of 8 February 1942 at around 10.30pm, the Japanese approached the coastline between Lim Chu Kang Road and Sarimbun Beach and launched a massive 15-hour artillery barrage of Singapore's north-western area from concealed positions up the Skudai and Melayu Rivers of Johore. Under the cover of darkness and using assault boats and barges, the Japanese 5th and 18th Divisions then crossed the Straits of Johore.

The Australian artillery and searchlight units were slow to react, and only the first wave of the invasion was repelled. The Australians managed to sink several Japanese barges. However, defence efforts by the Australians were hampered as communication lines were damaged during the artillery barrage.

The numerical superiority of the Japanese forces soon overwhelmed the Australians; Japanese forces enjoyed a seven to one numerical advantage against the Australians. Despite being overstretched and outnumbered, the Australian Brigade fought valiantly and suffered their highest number of casualties in the entire Malayan Campaign.

Within two hours of the attack, the Australians were forced to retreat to new defence lines. The Japanese then advanced down Lim Chu Kang Road to capture Tengah Airfield, their first objective. The advance of the Japanese was so rapid that LG Yamashita was able to come ashore at Lim Chu Kang Road before sunrise on 10 February 1942.

AMA KENG VILLAGE

Ama Keng Village was just north of the 22nd Australian Brigade headquarters.

The Brigade's commander, Brigadier Harold Taylor, was forced to deploy all his battalions along the long coastline and had none in reserve. Anticipating that the Japanese would penetrate this thin line of defence, Taylor planned for an organised retreat to a new

defence line stretching from Ama Keng Village to Sungei Berih. This would have been only four kilometres long, making defence of the north-west more tenable. However, the speed of the Japanese advance shattered this plan. Rapid Japanese infiltration and high Australian losses on the coast made it impossible to have an orderly movement to the Ama Keng defence line. In addition, damaged communication lines made it difficult for Taylor to reorganise his frontline troops. Instead, he was forced to order an immediate retreat to Tengah Airfield.

TENGAH AIRFIELD

Tengah Airfield was completed in 1939 as one of the bases constructed for the air defence of Singapore. Along with Seletar Airfield and Keppel Harbour, it was one of the first targets bombed by the Japanese after their landings in Malaya and Thailand in the early morning of 8 December 1941. These bombings intensified from 29 December onwards and the air cover over Singapore was inadequate to provide much protection.

Tengah Airfield was LG Yamashita's first main objective in the invasion of Singapore. He wanted to capture it within 12 hours of landing, but this was delayed by the dogged resistance of the Australian 22nd Brigade. However, the lack of numbers, exacerbated by the inefficiencies and poor strategies of higher command, prevented the defenders from regrouping effectively once the Japanese broke through the thinly held coastal lines, and Tengah was eventually captured on the afternoon of 9 February. Thereafter, the Japanese were able to move their main forces, including their tanks from Johore, down Lim Chu Kang Road. Yamashita then directed the rest of the invasion from his new headquarters at Tengah.

During the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese built a new runway at Tengah Airfield. After the war, the Royal Air Force (RAF) returned and operated the airfield until its handover to Singapore authorities in 1971.

JURONG-KRANJI DEFENCE LINE • HISTORIC SITE

The Jurong-Kranji Defence Line was one of the fall-back positions meant for the withdrawal and consolidation of troops



View of Lim Chu Kang landing site, 2013
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

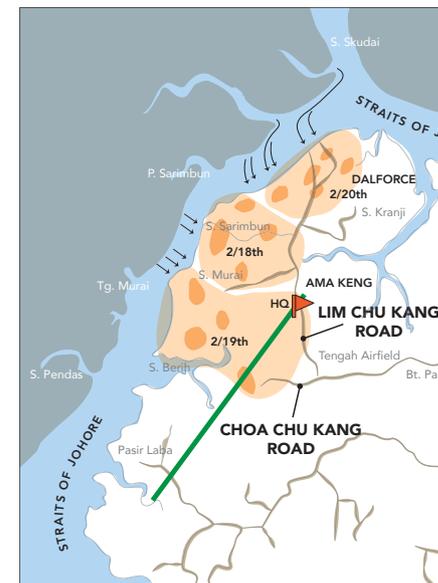


Bristol Blenheims, 62 Squadron RAF, flying in formation over Tengah Airfield, c. 1940s
Source: © Imperial War Museum

in the event that the Japanese forces overcome the coastal defending forces. However, there was a lack of preparation of the defence line, and the large area to be covered meant that troops had to be spread out very thinly along it.

Miscommunication and uncoordinated initiatives at the senior commanding level on

10 February 1942 made the problems worse. Brigadier Taylor of the 22nd Australian Brigade misinterpreted instructions and prematurely withdrew his units from the line back to the last-ditch defensive perimeter around the city. This set off other withdrawals along the line, leaving the position largely undefended against the advancing Japanese.



The planned Ama Keng-Sungei Berih defence line

By the afternoon, the line was in Japanese hands. This forced the withdrawal of all Allied forces in the north and east to the city perimeter.

KRANJI BEACH BATTLE • HISTORIC SITE

The Australian 22nd Brigade sector included a local unit made up of Chinese volunteers, Dalforce, which assisted the defence of the western bank of the mouth of Sungei Kranji. The eastern bank of the river was defended by the 2/26th Battalion of the Australian 27th Brigade.

On the night of 9 February 1942, the Japanese Imperial Guards Division crossed the Johore Straits and attempted to infiltrate the Australians' position. They encountered stiff resistance which impeded their advance. Oil from petrol tanks near Sungei Mandai Kechil was released into the Straits and set alight. The blazing inferno spilled into the Straits and Kranji coastline, causing further casualties to the invading forces.

Panicking at the heavy losses, LG Nishimura, the Commanding Officer of the Imperial Guards, wanted to withdraw his troops.

However, the Australian 27th Brigade commander had withdrawn his troops from the Kranji coastline to protect his western flank. This allowed the Japanese to establish a beachhead from Kranji to the Causeway.

Dalforce

Dalforce was named after its chief instructor and commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley of the Federated Malay States Police Force. It was also called the Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Army by the local Chinese community. Dalforce was made up of some 4,000 Chinese volunteers who came from all walks of life. Some were members of organisations such as the Malayan Communist Party and the Kuomintang. Despite their political differences, members of the two organisations found common ground in the war against the Japanese.

Dalforce volunteers were put through a crash course. They were equipped with

shotguns and learned how to use explosives. Dalforce was set up to serve as the eyes and ears of the British army and to keep them informed of Japanese troop movements. However, many Dalforce members ended up having to fight for the defence of Singapore.

Some Dalforce members who survived later joined the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) which carried out guerrilla activities against the Japanese during the Japanese Occupation.

CAUSEWAY • HISTORIC SITE

In order to improve transportation and communication links between Singapore and Malaya, a causeway across the Johore Straits had been built. It was 3,465 feet long, 60 feet wide, and carried two lines of metre-gauge railway tracks and a 26-foot wide roadway. Costing the British government 17 million Straits Dollars, it was officially completed in June 1924, three months ahead



The arrow shows the Kranji coastline on the eastern bank of Sungei Kranji where the Imperial Guards Division landed, 2013

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

of schedule. A lavish opening ceremony presided over by the Governor, Sir Laurence Nunns Guillemard, marked the opening of the first direct and uninterrupted rail and road connection from Singapore to the Malay Peninsula.

After the loss of Malaya to the Japanese, the Causeway became a critical part of Singapore's northern defences. The last Allied military unit, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, withdrew across it on 31 January 1942. Indian sappers then set charges and blew a 70-foot gap in the Causeway in an attempt to slow the Japanese advance towards Singapore.

The 27th Australian Brigade (comprising the 2/26th, 2/29th and 2/30th Battalions) was tasked to defend the four-kilometre stretch of land between Sungei Kranji and the Causeway. The 2/26th and 2/30th Battalions were deployed along the coast. This gave the Australians a strong position that overlooked the Causeway, allowing for good fields of fire for anti-tank guns and machine guns. The 2/29th was held in reserve.

On the night of 9 February 1942, the Japanese Imperial Guards Division crossed the Straits to attack the Causeway sector. The Australians put up a good fight and were able to repel the initial wave.

Unfortunately for the valiant defenders, their commander, Brigadier Maxwell, had made prior decisions to fall back. Unsettled by the Japanese attacks on the north-western coast and fearing for his western flank, Maxwell ordered a unilateral withdrawal of the 27th Brigade. His actions compromised the defence of the Causeway and the northern coast irrevocably.

With the defence of the Causeway abandoned, the Japanese managed to repair the breach and more troops and equipment entered Singapore. By the end of 10 February 1942, the Japanese had captured north-western Singapore and the Causeway, and were closing in on the vital Bukit Timah area, which contained reservoirs, food depots and ammunition stocks.



Kranji War Cemetery, 2016
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

KRANJI WAR CEMETERY

Before the war, the Kranji War Cemetery site was an ammunition depot. During the Japanese Occupation, the site became a prisoner-of-war (POW) camp and hospital.

The prisoners from the POW hospital set up a small cemetery in the area. After the war, the site was turned into a permanent war cemetery by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). As it was difficult to maintain war graves in various locations, Kranji became the consolidated cemetery for all Commonwealth war dead in Singapore from World War II. Graves were transferred from areas such as Buona Vista POW Camp, the Changi Camp and the Bidadari Christian Cemetery. Transfers were also made from overseas sites such as the Saigon Military Cemetery.

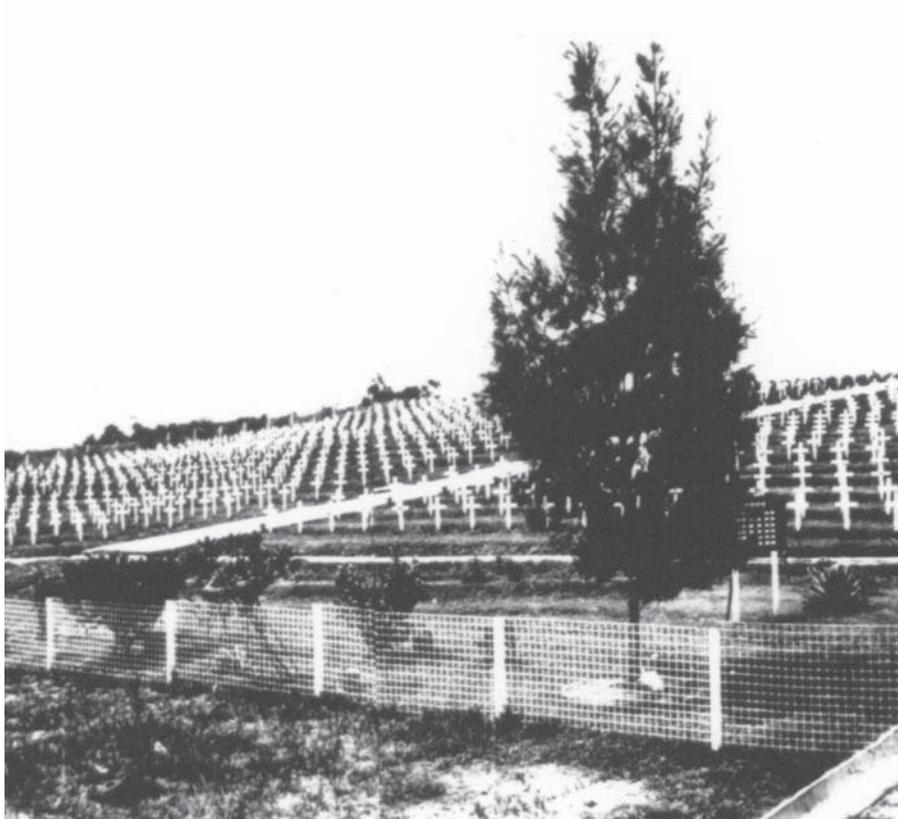
Kranji War Cemetery was officially opened on 2 March 1957, with officials from Singapore, Britain and other Commonwealth countries in attendance. The cemetery contains almost 4,500 burials that are marked by headstones. The Singapore Memorial is also located within the cemetery and has the names of around 24,000 missing personnel and the war dead with no known graves inscribed on its walls.

Significant Malaysians who fought in the war are also commemorated. One such person is 2nd Lieutenant Adnan Saidi, the courageous Malay Regiment officer who was killed at Bukit Chandu. Sim Chin Foo, who was a member of Dalforce, was also commemorated. Sim was caught by the Kempeitai (Japanese military police) after a battle at Bukit Timah and was tortured to death. Sim's story came to light when his wife, Cheng Seang Ho, wailed inconsolably at the cemetery's opening in 1957. Cheng was 66 years old when war broke out in 1942.

Other memorials that stand within the cemetery include the Singapore Cremation Memorial – commemorating those who were cremated due to religious beliefs – and the

Singapore Civil Hospital Grave Memorial at its eastern end. The latter commemorates more than 400 servicemen and civilians who died at the hospital. They were buried in a mass grave on the hospital grounds that had been previously dug out to serve as an emergency water tank.

The cemetery is still maintained by the CWGC. Founded during World War I, it maintains numerous cemeteries and memorials for the Commonwealth war dead all over the world. Major commemorative ceremonies that are held annually at Kranji War Cemetery today include Remembrance Day, which takes place in Singapore on the Sunday closest to Remembrance Day (11 November), and ANZAC Day (25 April).



Kranji War Cemetery, 1949
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

» NORTH-EAST

THE DEFENCE STRATEGY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES



HMS Prince of Wales in Singapore in December 1941
Source: © Imperial War Museum

THE FLAWED PLAN

After World War I, Japan became a major military player and adopted an aggressive expansionist policy. Britain saw this as a serious threat to its empire in the Asia-Pacific. However, due to economic reasons, Britain could not maintain a massive battle fleet in the region.

The British came to a strategic compromise: the Royal Navy's main fleet would remain in the Atlantic, but would deploy to the Asia-Pacific in the event of a threat to British interests. This required the building of a first-class naval base somewhere in the region for the fleet when it arrived. As a result, a huge naval base was built at Sembawang in Singapore. This policy was called the Singapore Strategy.

The policy meant that no major fleet would be stationed in Singapore during peacetime. If the enemy attacked, the defenders of Singapore had to hold out until the main fleet arrived, which could be anything between six weeks to several months. This requirement grew to dominate all aspects of defence planning and decision-making in Singapore and Malaya throughout the 1920s and 1930s, up till the outbreak of war in 1941.

THE SINGAPORE NAVAL BASE

The construction of the Singapore Naval Base started in 1928 and it was a massive project involving reclamation works and the building of docks, an armaments depot, wharfs, workshops and storehouses. It cost £60 million and was officially opened on 14 February 1938.



Brewster Buffalos belonging to the 453 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) at Sembawang Airfield
Source: © Imperial War Museum

Its presence led to Singapore being referred to as the “Gibraltar of the East”, an “impregnable fortress” protected by the might of the Royal Navy.

However, the Singapore Naval Base never hosted the main fleet as it was needed more urgently in other theatres of war. Just before the Japanese invasion, the base only received the much smaller Force Z, comprising the battleship HMS Prince of Wales, the battle-cruiser HMS Repulse and a few destroyers. It arrived in Singapore on 2 December 1941 amidst much fanfare, and the local media reported that it would easily derail Japanese ambitions. This was not the case. Force Z left Singapore on 8 December 1941 to attack the Japanese landing forces off the coast of Thailand, but the Prince of Wales and the Repulse never returned. The ships were sunk off the coast of Kuantan on 10 December 1941 after being attacked by 85 Japanese aircraft. This marked the failure of the “Singapore Strategy”.

Later during the invasion, the oil dumps at the Naval Base were set ablaze by Japanese bombing. The base was then partially destroyed to prevent the Japanese from using it.

After the war, the base was rebuilt and became the Royal Navy’s Far East headquarters once again in the 1950s. Today, it is partly a commercial shipyard (Sembawang Shipyard), as well as a naval facility for foreign vessels that call there for diplomatic visits, military exercises, and repairs.

INSUFFICIENT AIR DEFENCE

It was estimated that 336 modern front-line aircraft were needed to defend Singapore and Malaya against a Japanese invasion. However, by December 1941, the Royal Air Force (RAF) could only muster 181 serviceable front-line aircraft.

Parts of these meagre resources were stationed at three military airfields (Tengah, Sembawang and Seletar) and the civilian airport at Kallang.

SEMBAWANG AIRFIELD

Sembawang Airfield was constructed in 1935 to enhance the island’s defences. During the war, Sembawang Airfield was the home to a squadron of Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Brewster Buffalo fighters. The airfield was

heavily bombed and damaged by Japanese bombers in January 1942.

After the fall of Singapore, the Japanese took over Sembawang Airfield. It was also the quarters for 300 Japanese men from the 101st Maintenance and Supply Unit who were tasked to restore the Seletar Airfield.

Today, Sembawang is home to the RSAF (Republic of Singapore Air Force)’s helicopter squadrons.

SELETAR AIRFIELD • HISTORIC SITE

Seletar was the first aerodrome commissioned by the RAF in Singapore in 1930 and was the main base for the RAF in the Far East. The airfield was considered by the Japanese to be the best in Southeast Asia due to its sophisticated facilities.

It also had seaplane facilities. The Catalina Flying Boat that tracked the Japanese convoy in the South China Sea on its way to Malaya on 7 December 1941 was from the 205 Squadron based at Seletar. It was shot down before it could report the Japanese positions, becoming the first casualty of the Pacific War. During the onset of the war, Seletar operated three squadrons comprising Vildebeeste biplanes and Catalinas.

In January 1942, Seletar was hit by five heavy bombing raids and in February, it endured daily raids. On 26 January, fighters and bombers from Sembawang and Seletar carried out a raid on a Japanese troop convoy heading towards Endau in Johore. They failed to stop the Japanese landing there and suffered heavy losses instead.

Almost all RAF personnel were pulled out of Singapore by 11 February and the Japanese captured the Seletar airfield on 14 February.

When the tide of battle turned later in the war, the Allies hit back and in October 1944, American B-29 Bombers attacked Seletar.

The airfield was returned to the British after the war. In 1968, it was handed over to the Department of Civil Aviation. Today, various flight schools operate from Seletar.

SOOK CHING MASSACRE

Japanese victories during the First (1894-1895) and Second Sino-Japanese Wars (1937-1945) led the Japanese to regard the Chinese as their inferiors and were brutal to the Chinese



A mass screening centre during the Japanese Occupation, 1942
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

communities in the territories they occupied. Many overseas Chinese communities responded to the war in China by raising funds and manpower to support China’s war efforts. This was known to the Japanese officers who led the Malayan Campaign, many of whom were veterans of the war in China.

The overseas Chinese also typically had networks that spanned Southeast Asia and this presented a threat to the Japanese. The Kempeitai conducted the *Dai Kensho* (“great inspection” in Japanese) operation to screen and eliminate anti-Japanese elements in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation, but in reality it was to purge the Chinese in Malaya and Singapore. This was later known as the *Sook Ching* (“purge” in Mandarin) massacre. On 18 February 1942, all Chinese males between 18 and 50 years old were ordered to report to registration centres set up around Singapore. Thousands of Chinese civilians who turned up were unaware of their impending fates. Many even thought they would be enlisted for jobs. The uncertainty of the situation was made worse by the indiscriminate and arbitrary selection criteria that the Kempeitai used to weed out anti-Japanese conspirators.

Those who “failed” the screening process became victims of massacres at various sites around Singapore. While Japanese estimates numbered the victims at about 6,000, local estimates believe the civilian death toll for this operation could have been as high as 25,000. As the massacres were carried out, Mamoru Shinozaki used his position and influence as a Japanese civilian administrator to save more than 2,000 Chinese civilians. By leveraging on

his official position, Shinozaki managed to release many from Kempeitai prisons and registration centres.

PUNGGOL BEACH MASSACRE • HISTORIC SITE

This area is known to be one of three main sites in Singapore where the *Sook Ching* massacre took place. The killings were carried out on a large scale and the victims killed were either dumped into the sea or left on the shore. The remains of some victims were later discovered by beachgoers and fishermen after the war. In March 1977, a man found a skull while he was digging a hole in the sand. In December 1997, a beachgoer's attention was caught as a gold tooth belonging to a victim's skull glistened in the sun near the shore.

JAPANESE CEMETERY PARK

The Japanese Cemetery Park along Chuan Hoe Avenue in Yio Chu Kang is located in the midst of a quiet private residential estate, landscaped with lush greenery in a serene environment. At 29,359 square metres, it is the largest Japanese cemetery in Southeast Asia.

It was founded in 1891 by Tagajiro Futaki, a plantation owner and philanthropist, as a cemetery for the *karayuki-san* (Japanese for "people who go overseas"). These were Japanese women who came to Singapore as prostitutes and were some of the first Japanese to arrive in Singapore from 1871. The cemetery began as a burial ground for these Japanese women who died in Singapore. It subsequently became the

final resting place for other members of Singapore's early Japanese community.

Altogether, the Japanese Cemetery Park has about 1,000 graves, mostly from the pre-war years. Later, the ashes of thousands of Japanese soldiers, seamen and airmen who died during the invasion of Malaya in 1941-42 were also interred there. These remains came from the Syonan Chureito at Bukit Batok, and were transferred to the cemetery when that memorial was destroyed by the Japanese before the British returned at the end of the war. The remains of 135 Japanese war criminals who were executed at Changi Prison are also located within the cemetery.

One of the most noteworthy graves in the cemetery belongs to Field Marshal Count Hisaichi Terauchi, Supreme Commander of Japanese Expeditionary Forces in the Southern Region. Terauchi's grave is in a corner at the extreme right of the park. Due to ill health, he was unable to surrender personally to Lord Louis Mountbatten and failed to attend the surrender ceremony which took place on 12 September 1945 in the Municipal Building (later renamed City Hall). He died in Johore Bahru in early 1946 while he was under house arrest pending war-crimes investigations. Some of his ashes were subsequently interred in the park.

This cemetery served as a burial ground until 1947 and it was designated as a memorial park in 1987, with the Japanese Association of Singapore overseeing its upkeep. It now serves as an important legacy of the history of the Japanese community in Singapore.



Grave of Terauchi, Supreme Commander of Japanese Expeditionary Forces, at the Japanese Cemetery Park, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

» CENTRAL

BATTLE FOR THE HEART OF SINGAPORE



Ford Motor Factory, 1942
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

ADVANCE TO THE CENTRE

After securing the western and northern areas of Singapore, the Japanese turned their attention to Bukit Timah, the centre of the island.

This was an important location as the main trunk road to the city ran through it and vital British supply dumps were sited there. In addition, the 163-metre high Bukit Timah Hill was crucial high ground that could grant the Japanese a military advantage.

BATTLE FOR BUKIT TIMAH • HISTORIC SITE

At dusk on 10 February 1942, the Japanese launched simultaneous attacks towards Bukit Timah. The 5th Division advanced from Choa Chu Kang Road while the 18th Division advanced from Jurong Road. On the same day, LG Percival launched a counter-attack, led by

the 22nd Australian Brigade, and the 12th and 15th Indian Brigades. The counter-attack attempted to recapture the Jurong-Kranji Defence Line. However, the 22nd Australian Brigade was in a bad shape. Some of its troops were still trying to find their way back to the brigade headquarters after the Japanese invasion of 8 February 1942. Despite little artillery support and constant attacks by Japanese low-flying aircraft, the brigade fought stoutly and destroyed a few tanks. However, the Japanese troops eventually overwhelmed the Allied forces. Forced to abandon the counter-attack, the Allied troops withdrew to the Racecourse at Bukit Timah at night.

This withdrawal allowed the Japanese troops and tanks to advance down Bukit Panjang junction towards Bukit Timah Village. By

midnight of 10 February 1942, the Japanese had captured the village. The next target was Bukit Timah Hill and Japanese troops wasted no time advancing towards it. On 11 February 1942, Bukit Timah Hill was taken.

Allied counter-attacks were crushed by Japanese tanks, guns, mortars and air support. The Allied troops were forced to withdraw again and the whole of Bukit Timah was now firmly under Japanese hands.

On 11 February 1942, Yamashita invited the British to surrender but LG Percival chose to ignore it. Instead, he withdrew his forces to a new 28-mile long perimeter line enclosing the outer limits of the town area, setting the stage for the desperate final battle for Singapore.

FORMER FORD FACTORY • NATIONAL MONUMENT

In October 1941, Ford Motor Works opened their factory at Bukit Timah, establishing the first motorcar assembly plant in Southeast Asia. The factory was strategically located near the road and railway, allowing for the efficient transportation of goods between the factory and the docks of Tanjong Pagar.

During the war, the factory played a key role in the surrender of Singapore. By 13 February 1942, the Japanese commander, LG Yamashita, had converted the factory into his forward headquarters.

Meanwhile, the defending forces were in shambles. At 9.30am on 15 February, LG Percival held a commanders' conference at Malaya Command's headquarters at Fort Canning Hill (today's Battle Box). They made the decision to surrender.

At 11.30am, a British deputation, carrying a Union Jack and a white flag, set out towards Japanese lines to invite LG Yamashita to Fort Canning to discuss surrender terms.

The Japanese instead demanded that Percival go to their headquarters at 4.30pm. The British delegation, now comprising Percival, Brigadier Torrance, Brigadier Newbigging and Major Wild, were forced to go to the Ford Factory. They arrived half an hour late due to heavy fighting along the route.

Percival attempted to negotiate the terms of surrender. One of them was that the British Army keep 1,000 armed men to maintain order in the city area immediately after surrender. Yamashita, however, demanded unconditional

surrender, failing which he threatened an immediate night attack. At this point, Percival capitulated and at 6.10pm signed the surrender document. This unconditional surrender was the largest capitulation of British forces in their military history, and was the largest loss in the history of the Australian forces.

After just seven days of fighting, Singapore had fallen. This marked the beginning of the Japanese Occupation, which lasted for three years and seven months.

During the Japanese Occupation years, the Japanese used the Ford Factory to manufacture motor vehicles for the Japanese army.

After the war, Ford Motor Works took back the factory and used it till 1980. The building was then transferred to the state in 1997. A permanent exhibition opened on 15 February 2006 and the site was also gazetted as a National Monument on the same day. The exhibition underwent a revamp in 2016, and reopened on 15 February 2017. It showcases events and memories surrounding the British surrender, the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, and the legacies of war through rich archival collections.

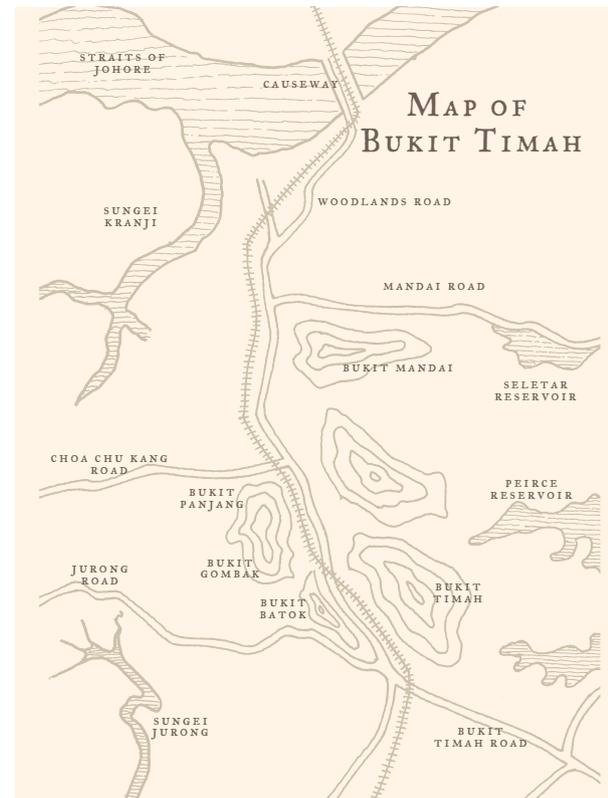
BUKIT BATOK MEMORIAL • HISTORIC SITE

Bukit Batok Hill is the site where two memorials, the Syonan Chureito and the Allied Memorial, once stood.

The Syonan Chureito was a Japanese memorial built to honour the Japanese war dead during the battle for Singapore. The Japanese used 500 British and Australian prisoners of war (POWs) from Sime Road Camp to build the Syonan Chureito.

The Allied POWs also requested a memorial for their own war dead. The Japanese granted the request and a smaller POW monument was built behind the Chureito.

The Syonan Chureito was a 12-metre high wooden obelisk crowned with a brass cone, and had the words "*chu rei to*" on it, which means "the sacrifice made by the fallen soldiers". Behind it stood a small hut that housed the ashes of those killed in the battle at Bukit Timah. The Allied Memorial was a three-metre high cross where the ashes of some of the war dead were interred.



Map of Bukit Timah
Illustrated by Jafri Janif

The dedication ceremonies of the above-mentioned memorials were held on 8 December 1942 to mark the first anniversary of the commencement of the Pacific War and the Japanese "liberation" of Southeast Asia. The dedication ceremony for the Syonan Chureito was held first, followed by the ceremony for the Allied Memorial, where a British commander gave a speech thanking the Japanese army. A special ceremony was also held where the ashes of the Japanese war dead were brought up the torch-lit stairs leading to the memorials and placed at the Syonan Chureito.

With the surrender of Japan, local Japanese forces destroyed the Syonan Chureito and removed the cross. They also transferred the ashes of the Japanese soldiers to the Japanese Cemetery Park at Chuan Hoe Avenue. Returning British forces blew up the Chureito's concrete foundation.

FORCE 136 & GRAVE OF LIM BO SENG • HISTORIC SITE

Force 136 was a clandestine military unit that existed from 1941 to 1946. It gathered intelligence and conducted operations behind enemy lines in Southeast Asia during the war.

The unit was part of the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). The SOE was formed in Britain in July 1940 to organise sabotage missions behind enemy lines in Europe. The SOE formed a Malaya Country Section in India and this was renamed Force 136 in 1944. It also established a training school, 101 Special Training School (101 STS), for its agents at Tanjong Balai, near the mouth of Jurong River. It trained local Malaysians - Indians, Chinese and Malays - in sabotage, small arms, explosives etc.



Force 136 member Lim Bo Seng's funeral service at MacRitchie Reservoir, 1946
Tham Sien Yen Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

Some of these trainees joined Dalforce, a volunteer army made up of local Chinese, and others formed Force 136.

Force 136 was headquartered in Kandy, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), and was further organised into three groups to conduct covert operations in different parts of Asia. Group A took charge of Burma and French Indochina; Group B oversaw Malaya and the East Indies; and Group C was responsible for China.

Force 136 recruited both local Chinese and Malays who had escaped to China and India as agents. Their local knowledge was critical as covert operatives in Malaya.

Force 136 groups infiltrated Japanese-occupied Malaya initially by sea, aided by Dutch and British submarines. These operations were codenamed Gustavus. Airborne infiltrations followed later and these had various codenames such as Carpenter, Oatmeal, Hebrides and Beacon.

Some of the Force 136 agents involved in the infiltrations into Malaya later became the pioneers of the post-war Malayan Armed Forces.

Lim Bo Seng

One of the operatives from Singapore who trained in India was Lim Bo Seng. He led the Gustavus V Operation in October 1943. However, Lim was betrayed by triple agent Lai Teck, and was captured by the Japanese. He

died in captivity at Batu Gajah Prison in Perak in 1944.

After the war, his remains were brought back to Singapore. Hailed as a war hero, a special funeral service was conducted on the steps of the Municipal Building (later renamed City Hall). He was then laid to rest at MacRitchie Reservoir.

HERITAGE TREE

Bachang (*Mangifera foetida*)



Located near Lim Bo Seng's burial site at MacRitchie Reservoir Park is a 22m-tall Bachang tree. A native to Singapore, this tree can grow up to 30m in height. Its crown is dense and dome-shaped, and its bark is light brown in colour and exudes a whitish sap. Its leaves are large, stiff and leathery, and the tree's flowers are reddish-pink and occur near branch tips.

» SOUTH

FINAL BATTLES AND THE CONSEQUENCES



Pasir Panjang Pillbox, 2013
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

SOUTHERN SINGAPORE

The southern sector held key installations, such as ammunition depots and the British Military Hospital (today's Alexandra Hospital).

After the fall of Malaya, LG Percival established an all-round perimeter defence plan for Singapore.

The southern sector was assigned to local military units, such as the Malay Regiment and the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force.

PASIR PANJANG MACHINE-GUN PILLBOX • HISTORIC SITE

The southern sector was one of the most heavily fortified areas of Singapore.

Concrete pillboxes were built along the southern coastline as part of the defence of the island. Equipped with machine guns, they were positioned at intervals of 600 yards along the beach. Land mines and barbed wire fences reinforced these coastal defences.

The Pasir Panjang machine-gun pillbox was within the area that was defended by the Malay Regiment. They might have used it in their fierce resistance against the Japanese 18th Division in February 1942.

KENT RIDGE PARK • HISTORIC SITE

Kent Ridge Park is part of what was formerly known as Pasir Panjang Ridge.

Fighting broke out in Pasir Panjang as the Japanese 18th Division advanced towards the city via Reformatory Road (today's Clementi Road), Ayer Rajah Road and Pasir Panjang Road. The Malay Regiment was deployed on Pasir Panjang Ridge, which overlooks these key roads. The intent was to deny the enemy the use of these roads. The ensuing Battle of Pasir Panjang Ridge witnessed some of the most ferocious fighting in Singapore.

The Japanese had numerical superiority in both troops and weapons. However, in the

face of a determined, well-trained and highly disciplined Malay Regiment, the Japanese faced strong resistance and suffered many casualties.

The Japanese attacked the ridge in full force on 13 February 1942. They managed to push back most of the Malay Regiment's frontlines on the ridge with the help of continuous mortar and artillery fire, as well as air and tank support. An exception was "C" Company of the Malay Regiment's 1st battalion. The battalion defended Pasir Panjang Village and engaged the Japanese stubbornly.

The battered but resilient company eventually withdrew to a new defence position near the eastern edge of the ridge. The new position was on a low hill called Bukit Chandu (Malay for "Opium Hill"), named in reference to the nearby Government Opium Factory.

REFLECTIONS AT BUKIT CHANDU

Located in a restored colonial bungalow, Reflections at Bukit Chandu is a World War II Interpretative Centre that commemorates and celebrates the history and spirit of the Malay Regiment, and its defence of Pasir Panjang Ridge.

In particular, the centre pays homage to the heroism of "C" Company, 1st Battalion Malay Regiment in their battles against the Japanese at Bukit Chandu. The story of 2nd Lieutenant Adnan Saidi is also highlighted.

Lt Adnan foiled Japanese attempts to disguise themselves as Punjabi troops and inspired his men to fight to the very end. The

company's courageous defence of Bukit Chandu cost the Japanese many lives.

The final assault on Bukit Chandu resulted in desperate hand-to-hand fighting and only few members of the regiment managed to escape.

In the Battle of Pasir Panjang Ridge, the Malay Regiment lost 159 men (six British officers, seven Malay officers and 146 other ranks) and suffered heavy casualties.

LG Percival paid the Malay Regiment this stirring tribute: "These young and untried soldiers acquitted themselves in a way which bore comparison with the very best troops in Malaya... [setting] an example for steadfastness and endurance which will become a great tradition in the Regiment and an inspiration for future generations".

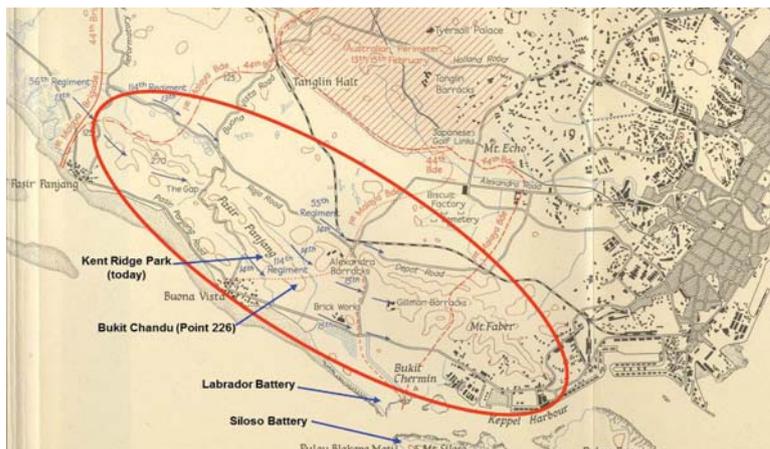
HERITAGE TREE

Penaga Laut (Calophyllum inophyllum)

Next to Reflections at Bukit Chandu is another heritage tree, the Penaga Laut, an evergreen tree that can grow up to 25m in height. Its crown is widely spread and its trunk is usually short and thick. The Penaga Laut has many uses: oil from the seeds can be used to heal a multitude of skin ailments, and the resin, leaves and roots also have various medicinal uses.



Map of Pasir Panjang Ridge
Source: S. Woodburn Kirby, with modifications by Singapore History Consultants



Reflections at Bukit Chandu, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants



Painting of the Malay Regiment by Hoessein Enas at Reflections of Bukit Chandu, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

ALEXANDRA HOSPITAL • HISTORIC SITE

Alexandra Hospital was opened in 1940 as the main hospital for British military personnel in Singapore. Known as Alexandra Military Hospital or British Military Hospital, it was described as "one of the largest and most up-to-date military hospitals outside Great Britain" and was established to cater to the increased number of troops due to the buildup of fortifications in Singapore in the 1930s. It was also the site of a terrible massacre.

The Japanese Invasion

On 14 February 1942, after the Battle of Pasir Panjang, Japanese troops swept down Alexandra Road and were at the gates of the hospital. This medical facility was overcrowded, with almost twice as many patients as there were beds.

Ignoring the fact that it was clearly marked as a hospital and claiming that Allied troops had earlier fired at them from the hospital area, the Japanese troops embarked on a murderous rampage.

The Japanese soldiers rushed into the wards and bayoneted about 50 unarmed patients and medical personnel. They even broke into an operating theatre and killed everyone, including the patient undergoing surgery. Some of those attacked escaped by pretending to be dead.

After the initial rampage, some 200 patients and staff were then locked up overnight in the nearby servants' quarters. They were deprived of food and water and many men died that night. The survivors were brought out and shot the next day. Only a few managed to escape to tell the tale.

News of the massacre reached the commander of the 18th Division, LG Mutaguchi. On 17 February 1942, he toured the hospital and offered apologies for the atrocities committed by Japanese troops. He reportedly ordered the soldiers who were responsible to be punished.

Post-war

After the war, the British reoccupied and continued to use Alexandra Military Hospital. It was handed over to the Singapore government by the British forces when they pulled out from Singapore on 15 September 1971, and was renamed Alexandra Hospital.



Replica of the 6-inch guns at Siloso Battery, 2013
Courtesy of National Heritage Board

Today, the architecture of Alexandra Hospital evokes a sense of its rich history and heritage. Plaques installed in the garden (in front of the main entrance) commemorate the massacre victims.

THE GUNS OF SINGAPORE

The Singapore Naval Base at Sembawang was protected against enemy attacks from the sea by 29 coastal artillery guns.

Comprising 6-inch, 9.2-inch and 15-inch guns, they were organised into two fire commands. The Changi Fire Command guarded the eastern approach to the Naval Base. The Faber Fire Command protected Keppel Harbour and prevented landings on the southern coast.

LABRADOR BATTERY • HISTORIC SITE

Labrador Battery (now part of Labrador Park) was under Faber Fire Command. It had a pair

of 6-inch guns and was manned by gunners from the 7th Coast Artillery Regiment. This was a multi-ethnic unit. Local Malays operated the searchlights, Indians operated the guns, and British artillery regulars served as the Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and officers. The Indians and British were from the Hong Kong and Singapore Battalion, Royal Artillery (HKSRA).

Together with Siloso Battery, it sank a Japanese ammunition vessel travelling west on 12 February 1942. The next day, it fired on Japanese soldiers coming from West Coast Road and Jurong River. The guns of the battery were later destroyed to deny their use by the Japanese.

SILOSO BATTERY

Siloso Battery was the twin battery of Labrador and similarly had two 6-inch guns. Together with Labrador, the guns protected the western



Keppel Harbour overlooking Pulau Brani, c. 1920s
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

approach to Keppel Harbour, providing a deadly field of fire through their combined use.

Siloso fired on the same targets as Labrador. It maintained continuous fire on Pulau Bukom and Pulau Sebarok, islands located on the south of Singapore, even after the destruction of Labrador's guns.

The guns destroyed the oil installations on Bukom as part of the policy to deny the Japanese the use of these facilities. The fires that ensued contributed to the pall of black smoke that hung over the war-torn island.

Today, both Labrador and Siloso retain their military heritage, educating tourists and locals alike on the guns of Singapore.

SENTOSA BEACH • HISTORIC SITE

Pulau Blakang Mati (today's Sentosa Island) is believed to be one of the sites where mass executions were conducted by the Japanese during the war. An eyewitness account from

a resident living in the nearby Pulau Sekijang (today's St John's Island and Lazarus Island) claimed to have seen Japanese soldiers shooting Chinese civilians at sea and tossing their bodies into the water. It is possible that the bodies of other *Sook Ching* victims from other beach sites drifted over to Sentosa Island.

KEPPEL HARBOUR • HISTORIC SITE

Early History

Keppel Harbour's history stretches back centuries before the arrival of the British. The area was originally a base for pirates during the 14th century and later on, a location where nomadic tribes of Orang Laut (literally "sea people" in Malay) settled before Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in 1819. In the 1850s, the British developed Keppel Harbour to bolster Singapore's growing maritime commerce.

The Japanese Invasion

During the invasion of Malaya, Keppel Harbour was amongst the first targets of Japanese bombing on 8 December 1941.

Large numbers of soldiers arrived in Singapore via Keppel harbour to bolster the defence of Malaya and Singapore. This increased the number of troops dramatically from 88,000 in December 1941 to 137,000 in February 1942. One such group was the last section of the British 18th Division which arrived on 29 January 1942, shortly before the surrender.

On the other hand, the harbour also witnessed the desperate evacuation of thousands, particularly in the last few days of the battle for Singapore. Unfortunately, many of the ships were sunk while departing the harbour.

Under Japanese Rule

During the Japanese Occupation, Keppel Harbour was the target of Operation Jaywick on 27 September 1943, one of the most successful commando raids in World War II.

The raid was led by Major Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders. The men from Jaywick sank 37,000 tonnes of Japanese shipping in one night.

Jaywick's success was followed by the ill-fated Operation Rimau in 1944 which sought to cause damage similar to the earlier operation at Keppel Harbour. Operation Rimau was a failure and all of the commandos involved, including Lyon and five others from Jaywick, were killed, or captured and later executed by the Japanese.

Japanese Surrender

On 4 September 1945, HMS Sussex and the lead elements of the 5th Indian Division became the first Allied forces to return to Keppel Harbour after the defeat of Japan. Senior Japanese officials went onboard HMS Sussex to coordinate the landing of Allied troops on the docks and begin the reoccupation of Singapore.

Today

While a section of Keppel Harbour remains part of one of the world's busiest ports, most of it has been transformed for recreational use.

EXECUTION OF CAPTURED RIMAU COMMANDOS • HISTORIC SITE

The area near the Dover Road entrance to University Town (U-Town) was the execution site for ten members of Operation Rimau. This was a daring raid undertaken by 23 British and Australian commandos from Z Special Unit. The team was led by the newly-promoted Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Lyon, who had led the earlier successful raid, Operation Jaywick, in September 1943.

The team left Australia for Singapore on 11 September 1944 on board the submarine HMS Porpoise. Sailing into heavily patrolled enemy waters, they commandeered a Malay prahu, Mustika, on 28 September 1944 and continued the rest of the journey posing as local sailors.

The mission was aborted when the men were discovered by local auxiliary forces just off Kasu Island near Batam, Indonesia around 6 October 1944. According to Japanese sources, the men fired at a local patrol vessel thinking that it was Japanese. One man escaped and reported the incident, and the Japanese went searching for the party.

Over the next few days, the commandos were hunted down by the Japanese. Ten out of the 23 men were captured and transferred back to Singapore. The remaining commandos were killed while attempting to escape back to Australia.

The captured commandos were imprisoned at Outram Prison, infamous for its dire conditions and brutal punishments.

The ten men were put on trial on charges of irregular warfare and spying on 3 July 1945. All were sentenced to death.

On 7 July 1945, they were driven to their execution site near Pasir Panjang. They were to be executed by beheading. The youngest member was Lance Corporal Jon Hardy, who was only 23 years old. The men faced their deaths bravely, even refusing to be blindfolded.

All ten were buried nearby in three graves. In November 1945, their remains were exhumed and eventually transferred to Kranji War Cemetery.

Today, 17 of the 23 commandos are interred at the cemetery. The remains of the other six men were never found.

» CITY

REMEMBERING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION

DOWNTOWN SINGAPORE

The Japanese Occupation in Singapore lasted from 15 February 1942 to 12 September 1945. Many significant events of that period took place within the city area. Facilities such as the Fort Canning Command Centre and the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) Building were taken over and used by the Japanese. The city area also witnessed the historic Japanese surrender ceremony at the Municipal Building (later renamed City Hall) and Padang in 1945.

Adjacent to the Padang are the war memorials bearing testimony to the pain and suffering caused by the war: the Cenotaph, the Lim Bo Seng Memorial and the Civilian War Memorial. A marker locating the historic site where the former Indian National Army memorial once stood is also located nearby.

The city area is thus marked with many sites that tell the story of invasion, occupation, liberation and remembrance.

SOOK CHING INSPECTION CENTRE (HONG LIM COMPLEX) • HISTORIC SITE

During the Japanese Occupation, the Kempeitai used the junction at Hong Lim Complex as a *Sook Ching* inspection centre. This was where the mass screening of the Chinese male population was held.

Instructions for civilians on the screening exercise were widely distributed and broadcasted. Although only Chinese men between the ages of 18-50 were summoned, many children and women had also headed towards these inspection centres.

The primary task of *Sook Ching* appeared to weed out anti-Japanese elements. The Kempeitai were originally instructed to screen for five main categories of priority suspects: those whose names were listed by military intelligence authorities as anti-Japanese suspects, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (SSVF) members, communists, agents of social unrest such as



The Battle Box, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

secret society members and looters, and those who possessed firearms. In reality, the screening was conducted in an arbitrary manner.

Hong Lim Complex stood at the epicentre of a large cordoned area where the *Sook Ching* screenings took place. Barbed wire stretched from South Bridge Road to New Bridge Road, and the peripheries of Elgin Bridge, North Bridge Road and Kreta Ayer were also bound by this enclosure. This was to ensure that suspects could not escape. Those who “passed” the screenings were released while those who “failed” were loaded into trucks and transported to remote areas to be executed.

FORT CANNING COMMAND CENTRE • HISTORIC SITE

Fort Canning Command Centre occupied the top of Fort Canning Hill. It included an office building that housed the headquarters, with barracks sited on the other side of the hill. An underground complex, also known as the Battle Box or Fort Canning Bunker, was located between both buildings. The Battle Box was a bomb-proof underground bunker.

At the time of completion, the Fort Canning Command Centre was the largest military operations complex in Singapore. It served as the headquarters of Malaya Command and had an area of responsibility that covered many regions including Singapore, Malaya, North Borneo and Hong Kong.



Entrance to the Battle Box, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

The Japanese Invasion

LG Percival was forced to shift his command centre from Sime Road to Fort Canning on 11 February 1942. This was because of the increased machine-gun fire near Sime Road Camp during the battle for Singapore. From the Battle Box at Fort Canning, Percival continued to plan military operations until the British surrender.

Decision for Surrender

The decision to surrender in Singapore was first made by the Allied commanders in the Battle Box. They gathered at the Battle Box on the morning of 15 February to reassess their ability to resist the Japanese. Surrender seemed like the only option for Percival and his senior commanders in view of the depleting



The Cathay Building, 1947
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

supply of food and ammunition, and the defenders and civilians in the city no longer had access to water supplies.

On the afternoon of 15 February, Percival and a delegation of senior officers left for the Ford Factory in Bukit Timah, headquarters of LG Yamashita. They signed the surrender document that marked the start of the Japanese Occupation in Singapore.

Under Japanese Rule

The Japanese took over the Fort Canning Command Centre, converting it into the headquarters for Major-General Saburo Kawamura. The underground complex was largely abandoned with the possible exception of the signals room.

End of War

Although the British military reoccupied Fort Canning Command Centre when the war ended, the Battle Box was eventually sealed off and abandoned.

Today, the Battle Box is a museum that narrates the events leading to the fall of Singapore during World War II.

FORMER CATHAY BUILDING • NATIONAL MONUMENT

The flagship Cathay cinema with 1,300 seats was housed in the Cathay Building on Handy Road. It was designed by architect Frank Brewer and inaugurated on 3 October 1939 by Loke Wan Tho, the founder of Cathay Organisation.

The 17-storey building was then 79.5 metres in height, making it the first skyscraper in Singapore, and the tallest in Southeast Asia at that time. It used to house Singapore’s first air-conditioned cinema, lavish apartments, a restaurant and a hotel.

The Cathay Building also housed the British Malaya Broadcasting Corporation, from which it transmitted updates on the progress of the war. In addition, the building’s ground floor was used as a bomb shelter for nearby residents.

Under Japanese Rule

The building was hit by an estimated 14 shells in February 1942, and was subsequently taken over by the Japanese when the British surrendered.

It then housed the Japanese Broadcasting Department, the Japanese Military Propaganda Department and the Japanese Military Information Bureau. Syonan-To (the Japanese name for Singapore) was subsequently declared the media centre for all newspapers in Syonan-To and Malai (the Japanese name for Malaya).

The cinema in the Cathay Building was renamed Dai Toa Gekijo (“Greater East Asian Theatre” in Japanese) and screened mainly Japanese movies and propaganda films. Cinema-goers had to sit through propaganda clips showcasing Japan’s power as well as newsreels of Japanese military forces in action and their victories in Southeast Asia.

South East Asia Command (SEAC)

With the Japanese surrender on 12 September 1945, the building served as Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten's Southeast Asia Command (SEAC) headquarters in the postwar period. It was returned to the Cathay Organisation in November 1946. In February 2003, the Cathay Building was gazetted as a National Monument. Extensive renovations headed by Paul Tange were completed in 2006 for the launch of the new Cathay Cineplex and shopping mall. Today, a history gallery called The Cathay Gallery is located on the second floor of the Cathay Building.

KEMPEITAI EAST DISTRICT BRANCH (YMCA) • HISTORIC SITE

The Kempeitai was established in 1881 in Japan. During World War II, it was responsible for maintaining internal security in Japanese-occupied territories.

In Singapore, the Kempeitai came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War and was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Masayuki Oishi. Its headquarters was the Art Deco-styled former YMCA building. Serving under Oishi were 200 regular Kempeitai officers and 1,000 auxiliaries in the army, deployed for operations in Singapore and Malaya.

The Kempeitai were responsible for many of the atrocities that were conducted during the Japanese Occupation in Singapore and an unknown number of people died or suffered terribly at their hands. The YMCA building was at the heart of much of this and came to be regarded with dread by the general population. Among the numerous internees there were Elizabeth Choy and her husband Choy Khun Heng. They were arrested in October 1943 and accused of relaying messages to Allied prisoners of war (POWs).

During their imprisonment, they were tortured by electric shock, beaten and starved. Elizabeth was imprisoned for 200 days, while Khun Heng was released only after the Japanese surrender. During the war crimes trials held after the war, many of the Kempeitai officers defended their actions. They rationalised that they were compelled to carry out the orders of their superiors, prompted by fear of the consequences of failure, and did not hold personal grudges or agendas against their victims.

After the war ended, the fate of the YMCA building became a subject of much discussion. The British wanted to demolish it and designate the open space as a memorial to those who had suffered under the Japanese. It was used for a while as a Forces Centre for the Salvation Army Services Welfare team from India. In December 1946, the YMCA reclaimed the building and resumed operations there. In 1981-82, they received approval and raised the required funds to have it demolished and to construct a new nine-storey building in its place, which stands on the site today.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE • NATIONAL MONUMENT

The National Museum of Singapore had its beginnings in 1849 as a small extension to the library reading room of the Singapore Institution (later Raffles Institution) located at Beach Road.

The museum started as a private collection with just two gold coins contributed by the Temenggong of Johore and later grew to house a wide range of ethnographic and zoological collections.

In 1874, the institution was officially established under the colonial government as the Raffles Library and Museum. The museum building was completed at Stamford Road in 1887.

HERITAGE TREE

Indian Rubber (*Ficus elastic*)



An Indian Rubber tree stands next to the National Museum of Singapore. An evergreen tree, this species is hardy and fast growing, and can reach up to 30m in height. A distinguishing feature is its descending aerial roots.

The Indian Rubber was once a species of economic importance in this region. Its latex was tapped and processed into *gutta rambong*, a type of low quality rubber. After the introduction of the Para Rubber (*Hevea brasiliensis*), which produced better quality rubber, the planting of Indian Rubber and tapping of its latex were slowly phased out.



Raffles statue in front of Victoria Memorial Hall, 1919
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Building, 1923
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

The War Years

After the fall of Singapore in 1942, Governor Shenton Thomas wrote a letter to the Japanese officials to propose the preservation of the scientific collections of the museum. The officials were receptive to the idea as Emperor Hirohito had a personal regard for biological studies and had called for the preservation of museums, libraries and collections of scientific interests in occupied lands.

Marquis Tokugawa, the advisor to the head of the Japanese Military Administration in Syonan-To (the Japanese name for Singapore), became President of the Gardens and Museum. As a result, the Raffles Museum and the Singapore Botanic Gardens were carefully managed and protected. British civilian

internees were even released to help maintain the Gardens. The preservation work also included the statue of Sir Stamford Raffles. The statue, sculpted by Thomas Woolner, was first unveiled in 1887 at the Padang to commemorate the Golden Jubilee Day of Queen Victoria. It was commissioned to preserve the memory of modern Singapore's founder. Following the surrender of Singapore in February 1942, the Japanese authorities ordered Indian labourers to remove the statue from its display compound in front of Victoria Memorial Hall. The Renaissance colonnade that once stood with the statue at Empress Place was destroyed while the bronze statue was kept in the museum and fortunately remained intact whilst in storage.



St Joseph's Institution at Bras Basah Road, c. 1900
Arshak C Galstaun Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Lord Louis Mountbatten speaking at the
Municipal Building after the Japanese surrender,
12 September 1945
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

In 1946, the Raffles statue was restored to its original site at Empress Place. The Raffles Museum was renamed the National Museum of Singapore in 1960, and the building was later gazetted as a National Monument in 1992. It was reopened in 2006 after an extensive three-year redevelopment. The museum underwent a revamp in 2015 to celebrate Singapore's 50th year of independence, and its permanent galleries house some 1,700 artefacts from the National Collection.

FORMER ST JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION (SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM) • NATIONAL MONUMENT

The school bells at St Joseph's Institution (SJI) rang for the first time in 1852 in an old chapel off Bras Basah Road. Six members of a French Catholic fellowship, the De La Salle Brothers, had founded the education institute to provide education opportunities for the poor. By 1922, the number of students enrolled had grown to 1,600.

As the war approached the island, all schools, including SJI, closed. The inner courtyard and a classroom at SJI were hit by bombs during the war. Although no casualties resulted from the blasts, one of the attacks left a noticeable crater in the school courtyard, which was discernible until 1992.

The institution was later used as a hospital by the Red Cross to treat military casualties. Classrooms were converted into wards while the Map Room was transformed into an operation theatre. Most survivors of the sunken battleships, the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, were wheeled in for treatment at SJI. Apart from serving as a Red Cross Hospital during the war, the school also housed the Air Raid Precautionary (ARP) group.

Once the Japanese had captured Singapore, SJI was turned into a temporary barracks for the Japanese soldiers. As the Japanese consolidated their rule in Singapore, the brothers of SJI were made to leave. The school was later structured along military lines and renamed the Bras Basah Boys' School. Students were separated into different classes according to their ethnicity, and were taught singing, gymnastics, gardening and the Japanese language among many other subjects.

With the Japanese surrender in 1945, the brothers returned to SJI and the school was restored to its pre-war functions. Having outgrown its capacity by 1988, the institution moved to a new campus at Malcolm Road. The building was gazetted as a National Monument in 1992. After several renovations and rounds of refurbishment, the old SJI building presently stands as the Singapore Art Museum.

PADANG

The Padang, which means "field" in Malay, was a hub of British colonial life in Singapore. It was used for sports and recreation. Most notably, the Singapore Cricket Club and Singapore Recreation Club were set up on opposite ends in the 1800s, and still remain there today.

Immediately after the fall of Singapore, thousands of surrendered Allied military personnel and European civilians were gathered on the field and marched to their POW camps in Changi.

At the end of the Occupation on 12 September 1945, Allied forces gathered again at the Padang with thousands of local civilians. This time however, they had gathered to witness the Japanese surrender in the Municipal Building (today's City Hall).

FORMER CITY HALL • NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Municipal Building was constructed to house the various departments of the Municipal Commission in one building. Designed in a neoclassical style by the municipal architect F. D. Meadows and Alexander Gordon, the building was completed in 1929 and has an exterior fronted by a row of Corinthian columns.

The building has been the site of various important events in Singapore's history. One of the most significant was the Japanese surrender ceremony of 1945. It was a major surrender ceremony that marked the end of World War II in Southeast Asia. On 12 September, General Itagaki signed the surrender document that formally concluded the surrender of all Japanese military forces in the Southeast Asian theatre of war. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Commander of the Southeast Asia Command, accepted the surrender in a chamber inside the building before addressing the people present from the steps of the building.

The funeral ceremony of the World War II hero Lim Bo Seng also took place at the steps of this building on 13 January 1946 before he was buried at MacRitchie Reservoir.

In 1951, the Municipal Building was renamed City Hall after Singapore was officially conferred the status of a city. Subsequently, the building housed many government offices, the last being the chambers of the High Court. The building was gazetted as a National Monument in 1992. It became the National Gallery, Singapore in 2015.

ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL • NATIONAL MONUMENT

Situated next to City Hall MRT station, St Andrew's Cathedral is the oldest Anglican house of worship in Singapore. It was constructed by Indian convict labourers.

During the war in Malaya in February 1942, the cathedral was used as an emergency hospital and a casualty clearing station. Casualties of the frequent bombings were also sent to the cathedral, which led to overcrowding. Nevertheless, church services continued regularly.

In 1952, a War Memorial Wing was added in dedication of those who died in the war. In 1988, a memorial plaque was installed in

remembrance of the Malayan Civil Service (MCS) officials who died during the war.

The cathedral was gazetted as a National Monument in 1973 and remains as an important place of worship for the Anglican community today.

LIM BO SENG MEMORIAL • NATIONAL MONUMENT

The Lim Bo Seng Memorial is a 3.6m-high octagonal pagoda in the centre of a large landscaped area. The pagoda is made of bronze, concrete and marble, and has four bronze lions at its base and a top that is crowned by a three-tiered roof. The memorial is the work of architect Ng Keng Siang, who was appointed by Lim Bo Seng's widow.

Lim was part of Force 136, which carried out clandestine operations in Malaya. He was captured by the Japanese and eventually died in Batu Gajah Prison. Lim's remains were transferred back to Singapore and a funeral service was held on the steps of the Municipal Building on 13 January 1946. He was then buried with full military honours at the MacRitchie Reservoir.

Considered a war hero, a memorial for him was proposed by the Lim Bo Seng memorial Committee set up in 1946. Requests made by the Memorial Committee to have a Memorial Park around his tomb at MacRitchie Reservoir were rejected by the British Government. They instead gave permission for a memorial to be set up at its current location at Esplanade Park. It was unveiled on 29 June 1954, on the 10th anniversary of Lim Bo Seng's death.

CENOTAPH • NATIONAL MONUMENT

Located at Esplanade Park, the Cenotaph is a war memorial that was originally built to honour volunteers in Singapore who died in World War I. The Cenotaph was later rededicated as a World War II memorial. This is done on the other side of the Cenotaph, which was inscribed with the words "They died so we might live" in the four official languages of Singapore, and the steps were extended to include the years of 1939 to 1945.

Many famous individuals have stood at the Cenotaph. Georges Clemenceau, Premier of France, witnessed the laying of its foundation stone on 15 November 1920. The Prince of Wales (and later Edward the VIII)



Unveiling of Lim Bo Seng Memorial by the Commander-In-Chief, Far East Land Forces Sir Charles Loewen, 1954
Collection of Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Unveiling of the Cenotaph, 1922
S.R. Nathan Collection, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

unveiled it on 31 March 1922 with a young Louis Mountbatten at his side. The same Mountbatten was to later receive the Japanese surrender directly across the Padang in September 1945. In the postwar years, Richard Nixon, Queen Elizabeth II and Singapore's first President, Yusof bin Ishak have laid wreaths there in remembrance of the fallen.

INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY • HISTORIC SITE

The Indian National Army (INA) was a force set up with the assistance of the Japanese in 1942. Following the British surrender in February 1942, the Japanese encouraged and

The monument was demolished by British forces soon after their return. A marker was installed on the site of the former Indian National Army Monument to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II.

CIVILIAN WAR MEMORIAL • NATIONAL MONUMENT

Featuring four parallel pillars that taper towards the top, the Civilian War Memorial (CWM) commemorates the civilians who died during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. The four pillars symbolise the four major ethnic groups in Singapore, while the joining of the pillars at the base represents unity and shared suffering.

The building of a memorial for civilians was triggered by the discovery of human remains believed, and later verified, to be victims of the Japanese Occupation in the Siglap area in February 1962.

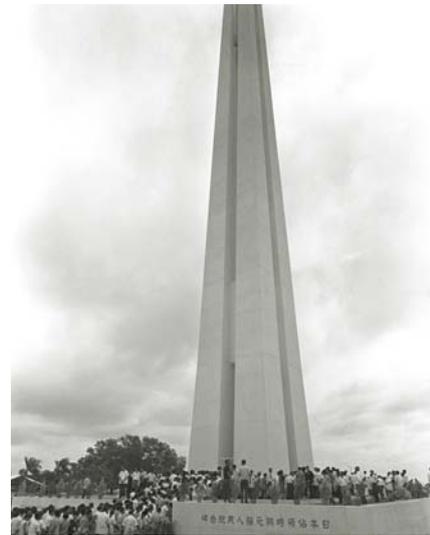
The news reports generated on these graves brought attention to the *Sook Ching* massacre of 1942, a purge conducted by the Japanese authorities on the Chinese civilian population in Singapore. Estimates of the number of dead as a result of *Sook Ching* range from about 6,000 to 25,000.

Following the discovery of the human remains in 1962, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce requested for permission from the authorities to build a memorial and park for the civilian victims. This eventually led to the construction of the Civilian War Memorial that we see today at Beach Road.

Construction of the memorial cost \$750,000. The money came from the Singapore Government and from donations made by Singaporeans.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew unveiled the monument on 15 February 1967 "to remember the men and women who were the hapless victims of one of the fires of history".

Under the 222-foot high structure is a vault that contains the remains of many unidentified victims. Every year on 15 February, which is also commemorated as Total Defence Day in Singapore, a ceremony will be held at the Memorial to remember and honour the lives lost during the war years.



Unveiling of the Civilian War Memorial, dedicated to the civilians who were victims of the Japanese Occupation, 1967
Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Subhas Chandra Bose reviews "Rani of Jhansi" regiment and other Indian National Army troops at Waterloo Street, 1943
Collection of Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

sometimes forced soldiers from the defeated British Indian Army in Southeast Asia to join the INA to liberate India.

The INA was initially led by Captain Mohan Singh and subsequently taken over by the well-known Indian independence campaigner, Subhas Chandra Bose. It was dissolved with the Japanese defeat in 1945.

The Indian National Army Monument was built at the Esplanade in August 1945 just before the Japanese surrender. This monument was dedicated to the "unknown warrior" of the INA and to the INA members who were killed in fighting in Burma.

PEOPLE'S DEFENCE FORCE HEADQUARTERS (BEACH ROAD CAMP) • HISTORIC SITE

The Singapore Volunteer Corp (SVC) was the first British volunteer force established in the Far East. Its motto reads *In Oriente Primus*, which means "First in the East" in Latin. It was set up in 1854 when 61 Europeans offered assistance to the overstretched police to quell the Chinese riots between Hokkiens and Teochews.

The origins of Beach Road Camp can be traced back to 1907, when it became the headquarters for the Chinese Company of the Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC). Beach Road Camp's importance increased when it became the main headquarters of SVC in 1932.

The SVC, which also had artillery and engineering units, was placed under the command of the Straits Settlement Volunteer Forces (SSVF) in 1922. This included volunteers from Penang and Province Wellesley (today's Seberang Perai), and Malacca. By 1941, the 2,000-strong SSVF also had its headquarters at Beach Road Camp.

According to LG Percival, the SSVF did not receive proper military training due to a lack of funds. During the Japanese invasion, the SVC did not see action against the Japanese because they were stationed in the southern sector of Singapore along with the Malay Regiment. They mainly performed guard and patrolling duties, manned observation posts and strengthened existing defences. During the invasion, they had to endure constant Japanese aerial attacks. The 1st SSVF Battalion in particular was deployed in defensive positions just before Singapore's surrender, in the area stretching from Newton to the Ford Factory.

The volunteers' experiences during the Japanese Occupation varied. Although Malay and some Eurasian volunteers were released, some 200 Chinese volunteers were executed during the *Sook Ching* massacre. Many European and Eurasian volunteers became POWs and were sent to build the Thai-Burma Death Railway.

Some of Singapore's political leaders served in the SVC. The first Chief Minister of Singapore, David Marshall, was a private in the SVC. He became a POW during the war and was shipped to a forced labour camp in Hokkaido, Japan, where he remained until the



Singapore Governor Sir Franklin Gimson (on platform) during the Singapore Volunteer Corps presentation award ceremony at its Beach Road headquarters, 1951
Collection of Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

war ended. Singapore's first Minister for Defence, Dr Goh Keng Swee, was a non-commissioned officer in the SVC.

The SVC disbanded in 1946 but was revived in 1949. It was merged with the fledgling Singapore Military Forces in 1954 and served during the Konfrontasi with Indonesia in the 1960s. Its veterans played an important role in developing the young Singapore Armed Forces. The SVC was renamed the People's Defence Force after Singapore became independent in 1965. Beach Road Camp was redeveloped into a commercial site in 2007 but several of its buildings were conserved.

KALLANG AIRFIELD • HISTORIC SITE **The Last Holdout**

The Kallang Airfield opened in 1937, serving as Singapore's civil airport. It was regarded as a feat of modern engineering as it was built over what was once swampland.



Japanese soldiers at Kallang Airfield, 1942
Collection of David Ng, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



A postcard of the painting titled "Fighter Place W8155 at Kallang Airfield", by Saburo Miyamoto, 1942
Collection of Taka Sakurai, Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

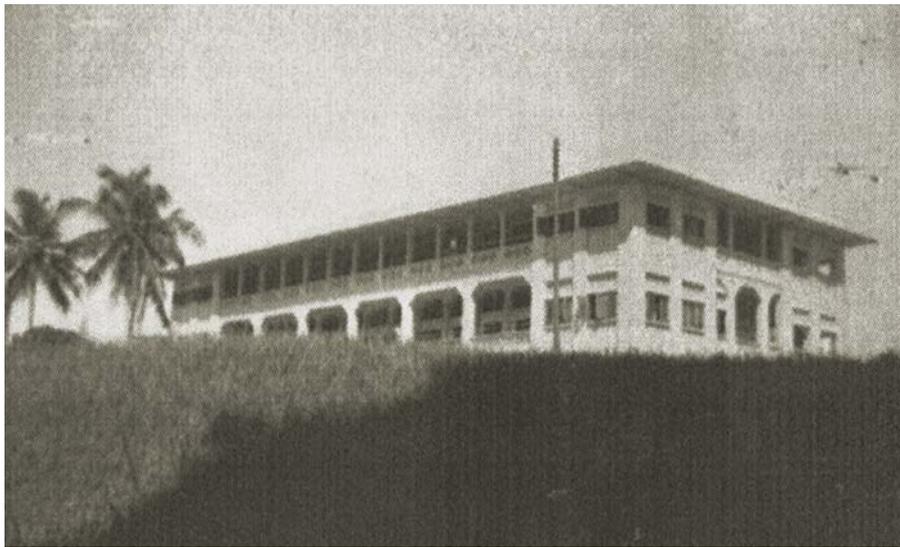
At the start of the Malayan Campaign, the airfield was home to two squadrons of Brewster Buffalo fighter planes.

In January 1942, overwhelming air attacks by the Japanese forced the British to withdraw their planes from Singapore. The majority of the airplanes were ordered to evacuate to Sumatra, while a small number remained at Kallang, which became the last operational airfield with Allied air power in Singapore. The remaining six Buffalo and eight Hurricane fighter planes at Kallang were launched to attack the Japanese forces landing on the west coast of Singapore. The airfield was soon badly damaged as its landing field and control tower were the targets of heavy Japanese bombing. By 7 February, the last Buffalo plane was destroyed at Kallang, and the last Hurricane planes left for Sumatra on 10 February.

One of the airfield's last actions before the surrender was the evacuation of high level personnel to the Dutch East Indies. Two flights were launched using Royal Australian Air Force Hudsons over the course of 10 February, which succeeded in evacuating senior Royal Air Force (RAF) personnel. However, Air Marshal Conway Pulford, the commander of the RAF in the Far East, refused to leave the stricken island until 13 February 1942. Pulford's decision to later escape by sea cost him his life.

During the Japanese Occupation, the Japanese replaced Kallang's grass runway with concrete. Kallang reopened as a civil airport in 1949. In its heyday between 1949 to 1954, as many as 149,000 passengers passed through the airport each year.

The airport stopped operating in 1955. Its premises then served as the home for the People's Association, a statutory board of Singapore, until it relocated in 2009.



Block 151 of Roberts Barracks, c. 1950
Courtesy of The Changi Museum

» EAST

THE GUNS OF SINGAPORE AND CAPTIVITY

EASTERN SINGAPORE

The name Changi may have been derived from the local timber “chengal” or “chengai”, which could refer to either the *Hopea sangal* or *Neobalanocarpus heimii*.

The name was used to refer to the south-eastern tip of the island as early as 1824. Right up to the early 1920s, Changi was a rural area, comprising mostly Malay villages, rubber plantations and large tracts of mangrove swamps and forests.

The area became militarised from the late 1920s when the British constructed a massive cantonment consisting of coastal gun batteries, barracks, a railway for transporting ammunition to the guns and a road system.

The batteries were part of a gun-defence system that protected the Naval Base at Sembawang.

During the Japanese Occupation, the entire area became a major prisoner-of-war (POW) camp where close to 50,000 Allied POWs, mainly British and Australian, were interned.

The Japanese forced POWs to construct the first military airfield in Changi. When the Allies returned, the air base became Royal Air Force (RAF) Changi. Singapore authorities took over the site in 1971 when British forces ended their long military presence here. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) now operates part of the facility as Changi Air Base. The rest of the site has become Changi International Airport.



The Changi Museum, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

THE CHANGI MUSEUM • HISTORIC SITE

The Changi Museum provides in-depth accounts of the lives of Singaporeans, POWs and civilian internees who were imprisoned in Singapore and the region. It also serves as a resource centre for the records of nearly 5,000 civilian internees who were registered in Singapore during the Japanese Occupation.

The Changi Museum opened on 15 February 2001, the 59th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore. The museum was built to replace the old Prison Chapel and Museum, which was built in 1988 by the then inmates of Changi Prison.

There are several significant exhibits housed within the museum, including replicas of the “Changi Murals” (the originals are currently conserved in Block 151, Changi Air Base) and the Changi Quilts. The museum also houses original works such as the paintings of Angela Bateman, a civilian internee in Changi Prison, and the Changi Cross. The Changi Chapel is a place where commemoration ceremonies are sometimes held, as a mark of respect and remembrance of those who died in the war.

CHANGI PRISON • NATIONAL MONUMENT

Changi Prison, also known as Changi Gaol, is a historically significant site in Changi. Built in

1936 to replace the Outram Prison, it was designed to hold up to 600 prisoners.

During the Japanese Occupation, civilians from Britain and other Western nations were incarcerated at Changi Prison. Up to 3,500 men, women and children were held at Changi Prison until May 1944.

The civilian internees carried out many activities in spite of their difficult circumstances to maintain and improve morale. They took to gardening, boxing, organising concerts and cricket tournaments and even set up a school for the children in the camp.

However, death and suffering were constant possibilities, as was the case in the “Double Tenth Incident”. Suspecting the internees had planned a raid that sunk seven Japanese ships in Keppel Harbour in September 1943, the Kempeitai swooped on Changi Prison on 10 October 1943 (thus the name “double-tenth”). Fifty-seven internees were taken to Kempeitai cells for interrogation. The brutality of the interrogation resulted in the death of 15 internees.

In May 1944, the civilian internees in Changi Prison were transferred to Sime Road Camp, while the POWs from the camp were brought to Changi Prison. In total, more than 10,000



Replica of a 15-inch gun at the site of Johore Battery, 2013
Courtesy of Singapore History Consultants

prisoners were crowded in and around the prison. Five thousand POWs were incarcerated within the prison while the rest were accommodated in attap huts outside the prison walls. By then, many POWs had already been transported out of Singapore as slave labour to several countries in the region and to Japan.

After the war, many Japanese soldiers were incarcerated at Changi. They were held there for up to two years because of the lack of transport to repatriate them.

A new prison complex was constructed in 2004, but key features of the original structure were preserved: two turrets, the 180-metre prison wall, and the entrance gate. These were gazetted as a National Monument in February 2016.

JOHORE BATTERY • HISTORIC SITE

The Johore Battery was part of the coastal-gun defence system that protected the British Naval Base at Sembawang against Japanese warships that would come through the Straits of Johore.

The guns in the eastern sector, comprising 6-, 9.2- and 15-inch calibre guns, came under the Changi Fire Command. The batteries were distributed from Changi to Pulau Tekong and Pengerang in the southern tip of Johore. Together, they covered the eastern entrance into the Johore Straits.

Johore Battery, one of several batteries under the Changi Fire Command, was armed with three 15-inch guns. They had a maximum range of 21 miles.

Construction work began in late 1933 and was completed in 1938. The battery was named “Johore Battery” in 1935 in recognition of the Sultan of Johore’s contribution of £500,000 to the British government. Most of this money was used to build the battery.

The Johore Battery was used extensively throughout the battle for Singapore. On 5 February 1942, two of its 15-inch guns fired north towards Japanese targets in Johore Bahru and on the Causeway. The battery fired at Pasir Panjang from 10 to 12 February and only stopped firing when the Allied defenders moved outside of the gun’s range. With defeat looming, the soldiers withdrawing from Johore Battery blew up the guns to prevent the battery’s use by the Japanese.

In the 1970s, airport facilities were built over two of the gun positions. The magazine of the remaining gun was rediscovered in 1991. In remembrance of the battery’s significance to Singapore’s history, a replica of a 15-inch gun was mounted on this site. It was unveiled on 15 February 2002, during a ceremony marking the 60th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore.

INDIA BARRACKS

India Barracks was one of four barracks built in Changi in the 1930s by the British. The four barracks formed a huge 2,000-acre military base which included the coastal-gun batteries of Changi Fire Command.

India Barracks, built in 1934, accommodated the Anti-Aircraft (AA) Regiments which operated the AA defences in the area. The barracks became known as the India Barracks because the quarters were mostly occupied by Punjabi soldiers from the Hong Kong and Singapore Battalion, Royal Artillery.

SELARANG BARRACKS

Constructed in 1936, Selarang Barracks was home to a British infantry unit, the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders from Scotland, until 1941. The unit’s location in Changi ensured that a full battalion of soldiers was available to defend the guns of Changi.

During the Japanese Occupation, the barracks in Changi became internment camps for some 50,000 Allied POWs.

Selarang Barracks, besides being a POW camp, also had its Officers Mess and one of its barrack blocks transformed by the POWs into an auxiliary hospital for 2,000 patients. This was necessary as the primary POW hospital in Changi, established at Roberts Barracks, was overwhelmed by the large numbers who required medical treatment.

Selarang Barracks was also the site of the infamous “Selarang Incident”. In September 1942, the Japanese forcefully relocated the Allied POWs in Changi to Selarang Barracks after they refused to sign a declaration giving up their right to escape. Built to accommodate only 800 soldiers, 15,400 POWs were moved into the barracks. The overcrowding made living conditions extremely poor. As there were only two water taps available at Selarang Barracks, the POWs had to dig holes to be used as latrines. In the face of continued POW defiance, the Japanese threatened to transfer the sick POWs from Roberts Barracks to Selarang. Eventually, the POWs were ordered by their officers to sign the declaration as they feared an outbreak of disease. The “Selarang Incident” came to an end after the declarations were collected.

POWs at Selarang Barracks also organised concert parties to boost morale. Internees improvised with the available resources and created props to complement their performances. The concerts also attracted regular attendance from Japanese officers, some of whom were sympathetic and provided stage equipment for the POWs.

Most of the original buildings of Selarang have been demolished following redevelopment in 1980, with the exception of the old Officers’ Mess, which was handed over to the Singapore Armed Forces.

ROBERTS BARRACKS

Roberts Barracks was constructed between 1934 and 1936 as living quarters for the Coast Artillery Regiment of the Royal Artillery, which operated the gun batteries in Changi.

Roberts Barracks was turned into a hospital within two weeks of the British surrender. An operating theatre was sited at Block 126 while an isolation wing for diphtheria (a serious bacteria infection) patients was situated at Block 128. Blocks 144 and 151 served as the dysentery wing and a mortuary was set up at a nearby temporary building.



Kitchener Barracks, 2013
Courtesy of HG Properties

In a bid to keep morale up, Reverend F H Stallard, an internee, convinced a Japanese officer to agree to convert a room in Block 151 into a chapel. The chapel was named after St Luke, the patron saint of physicians. The chapel is one of several chapels and synagogues built by POWs in the Changi area.

St Luke's houses the original "Changi Murals". A British POW named Stanley Warren painted these murals when he was hospitalised at Block 151. He was in an extremely weak state when he painted them

but he persevered through the pain and completed five life-sized murals.

However, in May 1944 the Japanese took over Block 151 and used it as a storeroom, and the murals were nearly destroyed when part of the wall was demolished.

After the war, the RAF took over Roberts Barracks and the chapel remained a storeroom. In 1958, the murals were rediscovered in the room. A search for the artist who had drawn these paintings began, and Warren, who was then living in England, was eventually identified.

KITCHENER BARRACKS

Kitchener Barracks was built in 1935 to house the Royal Engineers. During the Japanese Occupation, troops of the former Singapore Garrison and a few RAF men were incarcerated there. The barracks was also known for a short time as the Southern Area College of the "Changi University". The "university" referred to the informal education programme started by the Army Education Corps staff within the prison camps. They gathered lecturers from amongst the POWs to conduct classes on a variety of topics.

CHANGI BEACH MASSACRE • HISTORIC SITE

This serene beach was once the site of a *Sook Ching* massacre. Bound by ropes in rows of eight to 12, victims at this site were instructed to walk towards the sea in batches. Japanese soldiers would then shoot them as they reached the shallow waters. The ensuing bayoneting of the victims after the initial firing by the Japanese soldiers meant that there were few survivors. While many died instantly, some managed to swim away or seek temporary refuge underwater as the ropes binding them loosened in the waters.

The bodies of the massacre victims on Changi Beach were buried within the area in mass graves dug by a work party of 100 British and Australian POWs from Changi Prison. POW accounts reveal that some of the victims were still alive. However, the Japanese soldiers ordered them to be buried. As the soldiers threatened injury to those who disobeyed, the POWs had little choice but to comply.

PULAU UBIN

Pulau Ubin was the site of LG Yamashita's deception plan. On 7 February 1942, 400 men from one of the three Japanese army divisions, the Imperial Guards Division, landed in collapsible boats on Pulau Ubin. These troops were sighted by a British patrol that retreated quickly following orders not to engage the enemy. This attack in the east was a crafty move to distract the defending forces from the real invasion in the north-west. This diversionary move was accompanied by heavy artillery bombardment to further reinforce the bluff.

The RAF invited Warren to restore the paintings and he returned in 1963 and 1968. He also came back to Singapore in July 1982 and May 1988 to continue to work on the murals and to participate in a documentary about POWs.

The murals stand today as a testament of POW suffering and bravery. Block 151 and the original murals have been conserved in Changi Air Base by the Ministry of Defence. Replicas of the mural were drawn at the Changi Museum to allow the inspiring story of the POWs be shared with all visitors.

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ILLUSTRATION: Jafri Janif