



SINGAPORE IN

**WORLD  
WAR II**

A HERITAGE TRAIL

# CONTENTS.

## » NORTHWEST

- 01 Sarimbun Beach Landing \_\_\_\_\_ p.3
- 02 Lim Chu Kang Landing Site \_\_\_\_\_ p.3
- 03 Ama Keng Village \_\_\_\_\_ p.4
- 04 Tengah Airfield \_\_\_\_\_ p.4
- 05 Jurong-Kranji Defence Line \_\_\_\_\_ p.5
- 06 Kranji Beach Battle \_\_\_\_\_ p.6
- 07 Causeway \_\_\_\_\_ p.7
- 08 Kranji War Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_ p.8

## » NORTHEAST

- 09 The Singapore Naval Base \_\_\_\_\_ p.9
- 10 Sembawang Airfield \_\_\_\_\_ p.11
- 11 Seletar Airfield \_\_\_\_\_ p.11
- 12 Punggol Beach Massacre Site \_\_\_\_\_ p.12
- 13 Japanese Cemetery Park \_\_\_\_\_ p.12

## » CENTRAL

- 14 Battle for Bukit Timah \_\_\_\_\_ p.13
- 15 Ford Factory  
(Memories at Old Ford Factory) \_\_\_\_\_ p.14
- 16 Bukit Batok Memorial \_\_\_\_\_ p.15
- 17 Force 136 &  
Grave of Lim Bo Seng \_\_\_\_\_ p.16

## » SOUTH

- 18 Pasir Panjang Pillbox \_\_\_\_\_ p.17
- 19 Kent Ridge Park \_\_\_\_\_ p.17
- 20 Reflections at Bukit Chandu \_\_\_\_\_ p.18
- 21 Alexandra Military Hospital \_\_\_\_\_ p.19
- 22 Labrador Battery \_\_\_\_\_ p.20
- 23 Siloso Battery \_\_\_\_\_ p.20
- 24 Sentosa Beach Massacre \_\_\_\_\_ p.21
- 24 Sentosa Beach Massacre \_\_\_\_\_ p.21
- 25 Keppel Harbour \_\_\_\_\_ p.21
- 26 Rimau Commandos'  
Execution Site \_\_\_\_\_ p.22

## » CITY

- 27 Sook Ching Screening Centre  
(Hong Lim Complex) \_\_\_\_\_ p.23
- 28 Fort Canning Command Centre \_\_\_\_\_ p.24
- 29 The Cathay \_\_\_\_\_ p.25
- 30 Kempeitai Headquarters  
(YMCA) \_\_\_\_\_ p.26
- 31 Raffles Library & Museum  
(National Museum of Singapore) \_\_\_\_\_ p.27
- 32 Former St. Joseph's Institution  
(Singapore Art Museum) \_\_\_\_\_ p.28
- 33 Padang \_\_\_\_\_ p.29
- 34 Municipal Building (City Hall) \_\_\_\_\_ p.29
- 35 St. Andrew's Cathedral \_\_\_\_\_ p.29
- 36 Lim Bo Seng Memorial \_\_\_\_\_ p.30
- 37 Cenotaph \_\_\_\_\_ p.30
- 38 Indian National Army Monument \_\_\_\_\_ p.30
- 39 Civilian War Memorial \_\_\_\_\_ p.31
- 40 Singapore Volunteer Corps  
Headquarters (Beach Road Camp) \_\_\_\_\_ p.32
- 41 Kallang Airfield \_\_\_\_\_ p.32

## » EAST

- 42. The Changi Museum \_\_\_\_\_ p.35
- 43. Changi Prison \_\_\_\_\_ p.35
- 44. Johore Battery \_\_\_\_\_ p.36
- 45. India Barracks \_\_\_\_\_ p.37
- 46. Selarang Barracks \_\_\_\_\_ p.37
- 47. Robert Barracks \_\_\_\_\_ p.37
- 48. Kitchener Barracks \_\_\_\_\_ p.39
- 49. Changi Beach Massacre Site \_\_\_\_\_ p.39
- 50. Pulau Ubin \_\_\_\_\_ p.39

Credits \_\_\_\_\_ p.40

Map \_\_\_\_\_ p.41

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



**National  
Heritage  
Board**

[www.nhb.gov.sg](http://www.nhb.gov.sg)



## 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 the Fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, the island was renamed Syonan-To (Light of the South) and it spent the next 3 years and 7 months under the Japanese Occupation (1942–45). The war ended in the Asia-Pacific with the signing of the Instrument of Surrender in Singapore on 12 September 1945.

As part of the efforts to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, the National Heritage Board has launched a new World War II Trail. This brochure contains information about the historic sites and events associated with the Battle for Singapore and the Japanese Occupation. The brochure identifies 50 war sites all over the island. These sites are also shown in an islandwide map at the end of the brochure. The sites are further sub-divided into six regions with accompanying maps. Each site marks either a battle area, such as the invasion sites at Sarimbun beach, or commemorates a significant event during the Occupation, such as the Sook Ching massacre sites.

There are permanent plaques emplaced at 20 of the 50 sites. These plaques were installed by 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 brochure are organised into six regions with the following themes:

- **Northwest: Invasion and the First Battles**
- **Northeast: The Defence Strategy and its Consequences**
- **Central: Battle for the Heart of Singapore**
- **South: Final Battles and the Consequences**
- **City: Remembering the Occupation Years**
- **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 brochure will be a useful guide as you explore these World War II sites on an island once feted as an “impregnable fortress”.

*Top image: The Koneo Imperial Guards Division of the Japanese army under lieutenant-general Nishimura crossing the Johor Causeway into Singapore after completing repairs.*



SARIMBUN BEACH LANDING: A party of Japanese troops land on Singapore. (February 1942)

© Mainichi Shimbun

» NORTHWEST

# 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 deployed along the entire coastline of Singapore in an all-round perimeter defence of the island.

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

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

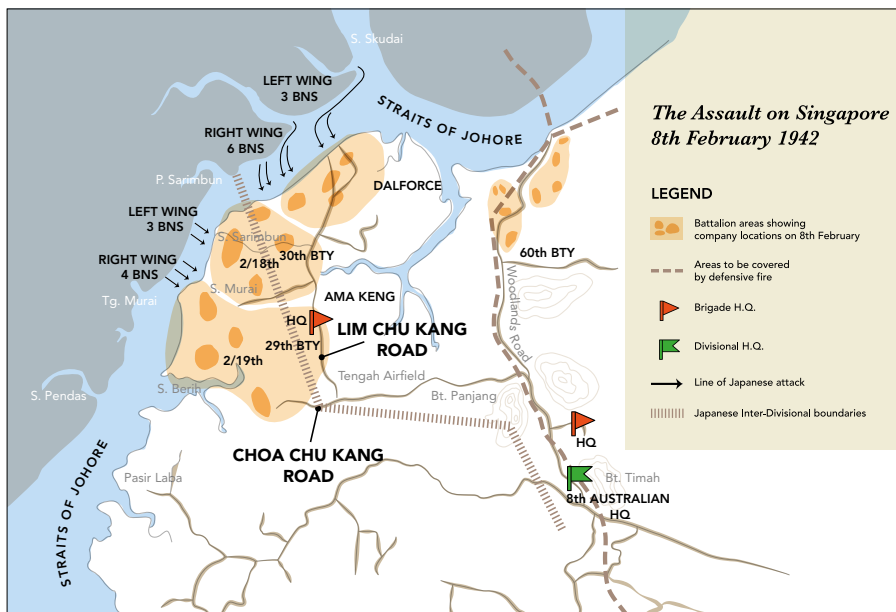
combined with the potential ease of crossing here, convinced LG Tomoyuki Yamashita, the commander of the Japanese 25<sup>th</sup> Army, that his troops would face less difficulties if they invaded through this sector.

The Japanese 5<sup>th</sup> Division was to land at the Lim Chu Kang sector while the 18<sup>th</sup> Division was to attack further west (beyond Pulau Sarimbun).

The Japanese Imperial Guards Division was to advance on the Causeway sector.

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

Northwestern Singapore therefore became the initial battleground between the Allied Army and the Japanese in the battle for Singapore.



*The planned Ama Keng-Sungei Berih defence line, February 1942*

### SARIMBUN BEACH LANDING • WARSITE

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

On the night of 8 February 1942 at around 10:30pm, the Japanese launched their invasion from concealed positions up the Skudai and Melayu Rivers of Johore. Under the cover of darkness and using assault boats and barges, the 5th Division crossed the Straits of Johore. They landed on the coastline between Lim Chu Kang Road and Sarimbun Beach.

As the Australian artillery and searchlight units failed to react, only the first wave of the invasion was repelled.

However, the numerical superiority of the Japanese forces soon overwhelmed the Australians.

Within two hours of the attack, the Australian forces were either wiped out on the beaches or retreating to new defence lines.

### LIM CHU KANG LANDING SITE • WARSITE

The Japanese 5th Division, an experienced amphibious unit, was tasked to capture the Lim Chu Kang roadhead in the invasion of Singapore. This area was defended by the Australian 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade.

The Japanese prepared for the invasion of the sector by launching a massive 15-hour artillery barrage of Singapore's northwestern area. This resulted in significant damage to the defenders' communication lines to the artillery and searchlight units.

The Australians managed to cause heavy damage to the first wave of Japanese troops who crossed on 8 February 1942. They sank several barges. However, defence efforts by the Australians were hampered as communication lines were damaged. Japanese forces enjoyed a seven to one numerical advantage against the Australians and the sheer numbers eventually overwhelmed the defenders. Despite being overstretched and outnumbered, the Australian Brigade fought valiantly and suffered their highest number of casualties in the entire Malayan Campaign.

After they penetrated the Australian

defences, the Japanese headed 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 • WAR SITE**

Ama Keng Village was just north of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Australian Brigade headquarters.

The Brigade's commander, Brigadier Harold Taylor, was dissatisfied with the long coastline his unit had to defend. He was forced to deploy all his battalions and had none in reserve. Anticipating Japanese success along the coastline, 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 northwest 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 organise his frontline troops. Instead, he was forced to order an immediate retreat to Tengah Airfield.

#### **TENGAH AIRFIELD • WAR SITE**

Tengah Airfield was completed by 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. The airfield also lost its Station Commander, Group Captain Watts, who committed suicide near the end of January due to the stresses of the campaign.

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 22<sup>nd</sup> Brigade. Lack of numbers, exacerbated by the inefficiencies and poor strategies of higher command,



(Top): View of Lim Chu Kang landing Site.

(Above): Bristol Blenheims, 62 Squadron RAF, flying in formation over Tengah Airfield.

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.

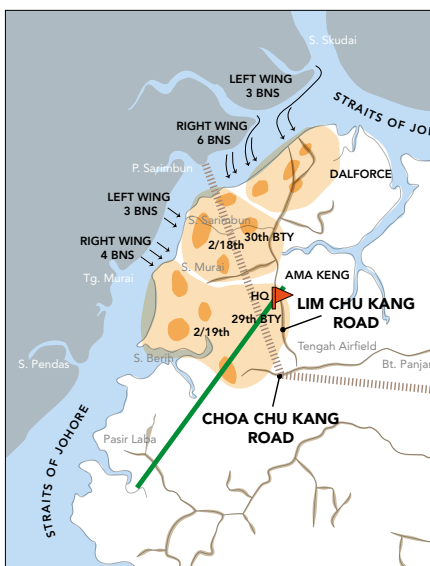




© Imperial War Museum

Yamashita then directed the rest of the invasion from his new headquarters at Tengah.

During the 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.



*The planned Ama Keng-Sungei Berih defence line, February 1942*

### JURONG-KRANJI DEFENCE LINE • WAR SITE

The Jurong-Kranji Defence Line was one of two fall-back positions meant for the withdrawal and consolidation of troops, should the Japanese forces overcome the coastal defending forces. Its equivalent on the east was the Serangoon Line, which stretched from the Serangoon River to the southeast coast.

However, there was a lack of preparation of the Jurong-Kranji Line, and the large area to be covered meant that troops had to be spread out very thinly along the Defence Line.

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.

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.

AFTER THE LOSS OF MALAYA TO THE JAPANESE, THE CAUSEWAY BECAME A CRITICAL PART OF THE SINGAPORE'S NORTHERN DEFENCES. THE LAST ALLIED MILITARY UNIT, THE ARGYLLS 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.

#### KRANJI BEACH BATTLE • WAR SITE

The Australian 22nd Brigade sector included a local unit, Dalforce, which defended 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 2/26th position. They encountered stiff resistance which impeded their advancement. Oil from petrol tanks located near Sungei Mandai Kechil was released 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 Guards, wanted to withdraw his troops. However, due to an inexplicable decision by the Australian 27th Brigade commander to withdraw his troops from the coast, the Japanese were eventually able to establish a beachhead from Kranji to the Causeway.



*Mouth of Sungei Kranji after it was dammed with the Johore Straits to the left of the photo. The arrow shows the Kranji coastline on the eastern bank of Sungei Kranji where the Imperial Guards Division landed.*



## DALFORCE

Dalforce was named after its chief instructor and commander, Lieutenant Colonel John Dalley of the Federated Malay States Police Force. It was formed due to the severe manpower shortage faced by the British military. Dalforce was made up of a total of 4,000 Chinese volunteers who came from all walks of life. Many Chinese organisations were represented, including the Malayan Communist Party and the Kuomintang, all united by their common anti-Japanese sentiments.

Dalforce volunteers were put through a crash course and equipped with weapons not suitable for warfare, such as shotguns. Those with experience in firearms were given proper rifles but with limited ammunition, as little as 3 bullets each. It was not intended to be a fighting force, and members were meant to serve as sentries tasked with keeping military units informed of the Japanese progress.

As the Japanese troops advanced, Dalforce was forced to go to battle. They fought so bravely that they became known as "Dalley's Desperadoes". Despite their resolve, they suffered heavy casualties in fighting. They were especially disadvantaged because of their inadequate training and weapons.

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

## CAUSEWAY • WAR SITE

In order to improve transportation and communication links between Singapore and Malaya, a causeway across the Johore Straits was proposed. It would be 3,465 feet long, 60 feet wide, and would carry 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 of schedule. There was a lavish opening ceremony presided over by the Governor, Sir Laurence Nunns Guillemard, and it 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 2/26<sup>th</sup>, 2/29<sup>th</sup> and 2/30<sup>th</sup> Battalions) was tasked to defend the 4-km stretch of land between Sungei Kranji and the Causeway. The 2/26<sup>th</sup> and 2/30<sup>th</sup> Battalions were deployed along the coast. This was therefore a strong position that overlooked the Causeway, allowing for good fields of fire for anti-tank guns and machine guns. The 2/29<sup>th</sup> 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 northwestern coast and fearing for his flanks, Maxwell ordered a unilateral withdrawal of the 27<sup>th</sup> 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 close of 10 February 1942, the Japanese had captured northwestern Singapore and the Causeway, and were closing in on the vital Bukit Timah area, which contained the reservoirs, food depots and ammunition stocks.

## KRANJI WAR CEMETERY • WAR SITE

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 inscribed on its walls. These are the war dead with no known graves.

Significant locals 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. Also commemorated is Sim Chin Foo, a member of Dalforce, a Chinese volunteer battalion formed in 1941. Sim was caught by the Kempeitai after the Battle at Bukit Timah and tortured to death.

His story came to light when his wife, also a Dalforce volunteer, wailed inconsolably at the cemetery's opening in 1957. Her name was Cheng Seang Ho and she is known today as the 'Granny Who Went to War' as she was 66 years old in 1942.

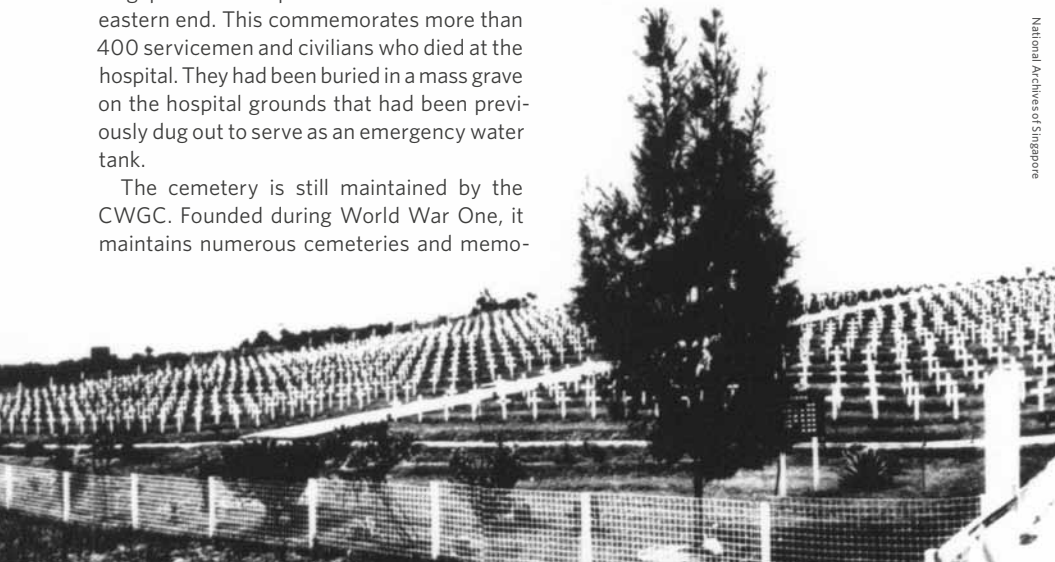
Other memorials that stand within the cemetery include the Singapore Cremation Memorial - commemorating those who were cremated due to religious beliefs - and the Singapore Civil Hospital Grave Memorial at its eastern end. This commemorates more than 400 servicemen and civilians who died at the hospital. They had been 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 One, it maintains numerous cemeteries and memo-



*Present-day Kranji War Cemetery. (Below): Kranji War Cemetery in 1949.*

rials for Commonwealth war dead all over the world. Major commemorative ceremonies that are held annually at Kranji War Cemetery today include Remembrance Sunday, which takes place on the Sunday closest to Remembrance Day (11 November), and ANZAC Day (25 April).



» NORTHEAST

# THE DEFENCE STRATEGY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES



© Imperial War Museum

*HMS Prince of Wales in Singapore in December 1941.*

## THE FLAWED PLAN

After the First World War, Japan became a major military player and was demonstrating 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 swing 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 to house the fleet when it arrived. As a result, a huge naval base was built at Sembawang in Singapore. This was called the Singapore Strategy.

This meant that no major fleet would be stationed in Singapore during peacetime. Therefore, 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 • WAR SITE

Construction of the Singapore Naval Base started in 1928 and was a massive project, involving reclamation works and the building of docks, an armaments depot, wharfs, workshops and storehouses. It cost £60 million and



*Brewster Buffalos, 453 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF), Sembawang Airfield.*

was officially opened on 14 February 1938.

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 local media reported that it would easily derail Japanese ambitions. This was not to be 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 pair was 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 in the invasion, the oil dumps at the Naval Base were set ablaze by Japanese bombing. The Base was then partially de-

stroyed 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.

### **THE BROKEN SPEAR**

The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) operates the most advanced variant of the F15 Strike Eagle and is deemed by some as the most formidable air force in the region today. Such achievements stem from the painful lessons drawn during the Fall of Singapore.

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 3 military airfields (Tengah, Sembawang and Seletar) and the civilian airport at Kallang.

### SEMBAWANG AIRFIELD • WAR SITE

Sembawang Airfield was constructed in 1935 to enhance the island's defences. During the war, Sembawang Airfield was the home to Brewster Buffalo fighter and Hudson bomber squadrons.

The airfield was heavily raided 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's helicopter squadrons.

### SELETAR AIRFIELD • WAR 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 as the best in Southeast Asia.

It also had seaplane facilities and it was a Catalina Flying Boat of the 205 Squadron based at Seletar that tracked the Japanese convoy in the South China Sea on its way to Malaya on 7 December 1941. It was shot down before it could file a report, becoming the first casualty of the Pacific War. At 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 wound up suffering heavy losses instead.

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

When the tide of battle turned later in the war, the Allies started to hit back. 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

During the Sino-Japanese War in the 1930s, many Chinese in Malaya and Singapore supported the war effort in China. They either volunteered to fight the Japanese or they raised funds through campaigns such as the China Relief Fund. This was fresh in the minds of the Japanese officers who led the Malayan Campaign, many of whom were veterans of the war in China.

Overseas Chinese also typically had networks that spanned Southeast Asia and this presented a threat to the Japanese. Therefore, Operation Sook Ching was carried out by the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) to screen and eliminate anti-Japanese elements in Singapore during the Occupation. 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 were being enlisted for jobs. The uncertainty of the situation was made worse by the indiscriminate and arbitrary selection criteria the Kempeitai adopted in seeking out anti-Japanese conspirators.

Those who failed the screening process became victims of horrifying 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 50,000. In the midst of these atrocities, Mamoru Shinozaki stood out. He was a Japanese civilian administrator who used his position and influence to save more than 2,000 Chinese civilians during Sook Ching. By leveraging on his official position and liberties, Shinozaki managed to release many from Kempeitai prisons and registration centres.



## PUNGGOL BEACH MASSACRE SITE • WAR SITE

This area is known to be one of three main sites in Singapore where the Sook Ching massacres took place. The killings were done on a large scale and the victims who perished were hastily discarded either into the seas or left abandoned on the foreshore. The remains of some victims were discovered by beachgoers and fishermen. 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 • WAR SITE

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, to house the graves of the karayuki-san. These were Japanese women brought here for prostitution and were some of the first Japanese to arrive in Singapore starting from 1871. The cemetery began as a burial ground for these young Japanese women who died destitute and subsequently also became a resting ground 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. It also has the ashes of thousands of Japanese soldiers, marines and airmen who died during the invasion of Malaya in 1941-42. These remains were mainly from the Syonan Chureito at Bukit Batok, and were transferred when that memorial was destroyed by the Japanese before the British returned at the end of the war. Also located within the cemetery are the remains of 135 Japanese war criminals who were executed at Changi Prison.

One of the most noteworthy 'occupants' of the Cemetery Park is Field Marshal Count Hisaichi Terauchi, Supreme Commander of Japanese Expeditionary Forces in the Southern Region. His tomb 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 the City Hall). He died in Johore Bahru in early 1946 while he was under house arrest pending war-crimes investigations and some of his ashes were subsequently interred in the Park.

This Cemetery Park 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 in Singapore.

*Grave of Terauchi,  
Supreme Commander  
of Japanese  
Expeditionary Forces,  
at the Japanese  
Cemetery Park*





» CENTRAL

# BATTLE FOR THE HEART OF SINGAPORE

National Archives of Singapore



"Ford" Works - "Ford" Motor Works Factory

## 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 581-foot high Bukit Timah Hill was crucial high ground that could grant the Japanese a military advantage.

## BATTLE FOR BUKIT TIMAH • WAR 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 sought to recapture the Jurong-Kranji 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 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 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 cap-

tured 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 powerful air support. The Allied troops were forced to withdraw again and the whole of Bukit Timah was now firmly under Japanese hands.

That very day (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.

### **FORD FACTORY (MEMORIES AT OLD FORD FACTORY) • WARSITE**

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

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

After just seven days of fighting, Singapore had fallen. This marked the beginning of the Japanese Occupation that lasted for 3 years and 7 months.

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

After the war, Ford Motor Works reused the factory until 1980. The Hong Leong Group later purchased the land to build a condominium. However, the ownership of the historical front portion was transferred to the state in 1997. On 15 February 2006 (the 64th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore), the site re-opened as the Memories at Old Ford Factory, and now houses a World War II exhibition gallery. It was also gazetted as a national monument on the same day.

### **BUKIT BATOK MEMORIALS • WARSITE**

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

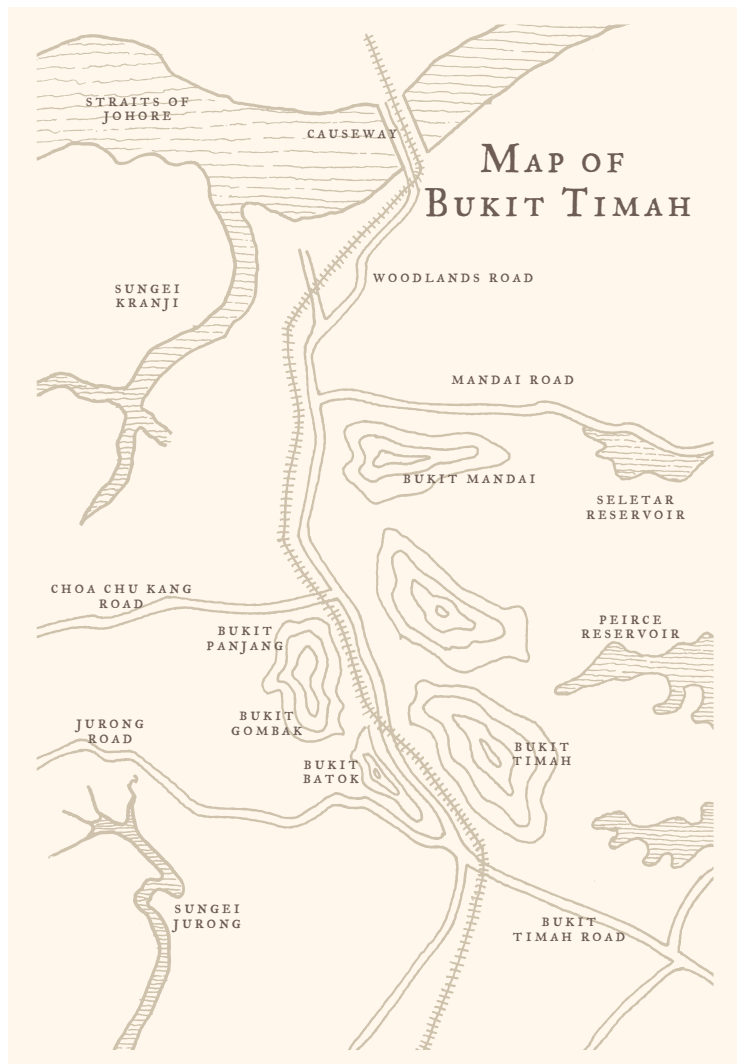
The Syonan Chureito was the Japanese memorial built to honour the Japanese war dead during the battle for Singapore.

The Japanese used 500 British and Australian 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 pylon crowned with a brass cone, and had the words 'chu rei to' on it, which meant 'the sacrifice made by the fallen soldiers'. Behind it stood a small hut that housed the ashes of those killed in the Battle of Bukit Timah. The British Memorial was a 3-metre high cross where the ashes of some of the British war dead were laid.

Both monuments were unveiled on the same day, on 8 Dec 1942, to mark the first anniversary of the commencement of the Pacific War



Map of Bukit Timah

and the 'liberation' of Southeast Asia. The Japanese monument was unveiled first, followed by the unveiling of the British monument by a British commander with a speech thanking the Japanese army. On the night of the unveiling, a special ceremony was held where the ashes of the Japanese dead were brought up the torch-lit stairs leading to the monuments and placed at the Syonan Chureito.

With the surrender of Japan, local Japanese forces destroyed the Chureito and removed the

cross. Returning British forces blew up the concrete foundation.

The ashes of the Japanese soldiers were subsequently transferred to the Japanese Cemetery Park at Chuan Hoe Avenue.

Today, a television transmission tower occupies the site where the memorials used to stand.

All that remains is the flight of steps that led to the memorials.



*Force 136 member Lim Bo Seng's funeral service at Macritchie Reservoir. Mrs Lim Bo Seng (Nee Gan Choo Neo) can be seen on the far right in black. Pall bearers include Force 136 members Tan Chong Tee (with back to the camera) and Tham Sien Yen on his right. Yi Tian Song can be seen carefully laying the coffin down.*

## **FORCE 136 & GRAVE OF LIM BO SENG** • **WAR SITE**

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

The unit was part of the 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.

Eventually headquartered in Kandy, Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Force 136 was further organised into three Groups to conduct covert operations in different parts of Asia. Group A took charge of Burma and French Indo-China. 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 teams 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 Operations Carpenter, Oatmeal, Hebrides and

Beacon.

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

SOE established its training school, 101 Special Training School (101 STS), for its agents at Tanjong Balai, near the mouth of the Jurong River. It trained local Malaysians – Indians, Chinese and Malays – in sabotage, small arms, explosives, spreading anti-Japanese propaganda, etc.

A number of the Chinese agents were Communists who had been incarcerated earlier by the British. After the fall of Singapore, these men went on to form a guerrilla force called the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army.

## **LIM BO SENG**

One of the operatives from Singapore who trained in India was Lim Bo Seng. He later led the Gustavus V Operation in October 1943. He was betrayed and captured by the Japanese and 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. He was then laid to rest at MacRitchie Reservoir.

» SOUTH

# FINAL BATTLES AND THE CONSEQUENCES



*Pasir Panjang Pillbox*

## SOUTHERN SINGAPORE

The southern sector held key installations, such as ammunition depots and the British Military Hospital (today's Alexandra Hospital). It also included Pasir Panjang Ridge which was aligned to roads leading to the city.

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 PILLBOX • WAR 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 strategic intervals so that their fields of fire would overlap, thereby reinforcing each other and covering almost the entire coast. Land mines and barbed wire accompanied the pillbox defences.

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

## KENT RIDGE PARK • WAR 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 attempted to advance 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.

Under continuous pressure and facing a shortage of ammunition, this was one of the sectors that held out as all the other fronts were collapsing in the face of the relentless Japanese onslaught.

The Japanese attacked the ridge in full force on 13 February 1942. Assisted by continuous mortar and artillery fire and provided with air and armour support, they managed to push back most of the Malay Regiment's frontlines on the ridge. One of the exceptions was 'C' Company of the 1st Battalion. They 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 • WAR SITE

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, Reflections pays homage to the heroism of 'C' Company, 1st Battalion in their battles against the Japanese at Bukit Chandu. The story of 2nd Lieutenant Adnan Saidi is also highlighted.

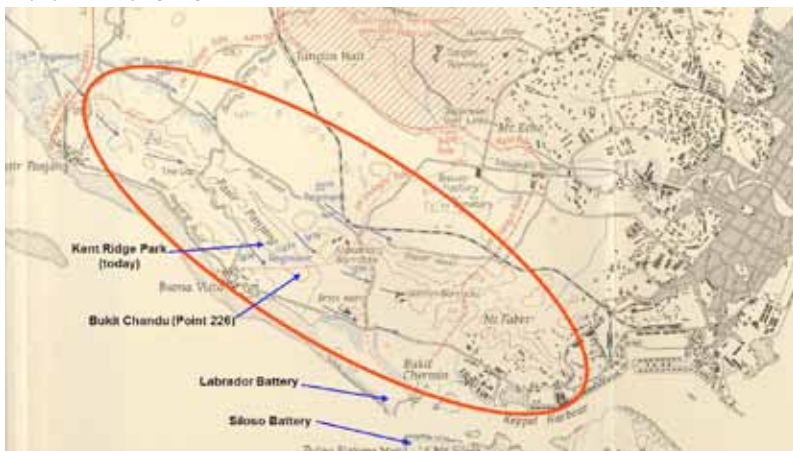
Adnan foiled Japanese attempts to disguise themselves as Punjabi troops and inspired his men to fight to the very end. Their courageous defence of Bukit Chandu cost the Japanese many lives.

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 (6 British officers, 7 Malay officers and 146 other ranks) and suffered a large number of wounded.

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".

Map of Pasir Panjang Ridge







*Reflections at Bukit Chandu*



*Painting of the Malay Regiment by Hoessein Enas at Reflections of Bukit Chandu*

### **ALEXANDRA MILITARY HOSPITAL • WAR SITE**

Alexandra Hospital was opened in 1940 as the main hospital for British military personnel in Singapore. 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.

#### **DURING THE BATTLE**

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

Ignoring the fact that it was clearly marked

as a hospital, the Japanese troops engaged on a murderous rampage. They claimed that Allied troops had earlier fired at them from the hospital area.

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 executed.

#### **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 it was renamed Alexandra Hospital.

Today, the architecture of Alexandra Hospital evokes a sense of its rich history and heritage.



*Modern photo of remake of Siloso six inch guns.*

Plaques installed in the garden (in front of the main entrance) commemorate the infamous massacre and its unfortunate victims.

### THE GUNS OF SINGAPORE

The Singapore Naval Base at Sembawang was protected against enemy attacks from the sea by 29 long-range 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 • WAR 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, and also aided the Malay Regiment in its heroic fight on Pasir Panjang Ridge. The guns of the battery were later destroyed to deny their use by the Japanese.

### SILOSO BATTERY • WAR SITE

Siloso Battery was the twin battery of Labrador and similarly had two 6-inch guns. Together with Labrador, the guns protected the western approach to Keppel Harbour, providing a deadly field of fire through their combined might.

Siloso fired on the same targets as Labrador. It maintained continuous fire on Pulau Bukom and Pulau Sebarok 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.



Keppel Harbour Overlooking Pulau Brani in the late 1920

### SENTOSA BEACH MASSACRE • WAR SITE

The gunners on Siloso Battery saw human bodies floating in Keppel Harbour and a number of these washed ashore on *Pulau Blakang Mati* (today's Sentosa Island). These were Sook Ching victims whose bodies had drifted over after being shot at sea or executed at other beach sites.

### KEPPEL HARBOUR • WAR 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 (Sea Gypsies) settled before Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival in 1819. In the 1850s, the British developed Keppel Harbour to bolster Singapore's growing maritime commerce.

#### Calm before the Storm

In the lead up to the Pacific War, the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse sailed into the harbour amidst much fanfare on 2 December 1941 before making their way to the Naval Base at Sembawang in the north of Singapore.



Cyril Wild questioning Outram Road Gaol commandant, Colonel Mikizawa in an attempt establish the identity of victims buried off Reformatory Road

### **The Japanese Invasion**

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

The harbour reflected both hope and desperation for the island at war. Large numbers of soldiers arrived 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 of Singapore. Many of the ships were sunk while escaping.

### **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 the Second World War.

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 spawned the ill-fated Operation Rimau in 1944 which sought to cause damage similar to the earlier operation. Although three large merchant ships were sunk, it also resulted in the deaths of all the commandos involved, including Lyon and five others from Jaywick.

### **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 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.

### **RIMAU COMMANDOS' EXECUTION SITE • WAR SITE**

The area near the Dover Road entrance to University Town (U-Town) was the execution site for 10 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 on 10 October 1944. The commandos were forced to engage them. However, Lyon along with six other men continued with the mission to Keppel Harbour on four submersible canoes. The seven men were successful in destroying three merchant vessels.

However, 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 use of corporal punishment.

The 10 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 from Outram Prison. They were to be executed by samurai sword. The youngest member was Lance Corporal Jon Hardy, who was only 23 years old. These men faced their deaths bravely, even refusing to be blindfolded.

All 10 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 have never been found.

» CITY

# REMEMBERING THE OCCUPATION YEARS

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 (Battle Box) and the YMCA Building were taken over and used by the Japanese forces. 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 various war memorials. They are the Cenotaph, the INA (Indian National Army) and Lim Bo Seng memorials. Located nearby, bearing testimony to the pain and suffering caused by war, stands the Civilian War Memorial.

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

## SOOK CHING SCREENING CENTRE (HONG LIM COMPLEX) • WAR SITE

During the Japanese Occupation, the Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) had used the roads in the vicinity of Hong Lim Complex as a Sook Ching registration centre. Here they held a prolonged mass screening of the Chinese male population.

While instructions for civilians on the screening exercise were widely distributed, details were written in Japanese and were incomprehensible to many locals. Although only Chinese men between the ages of 18-50 were summoned, many children and women had also headed towards these screening centres amidst the confusion.

The primary task of the Sook Ching operation was to weed out anti-Japanese elements. In doing so, the Kempeitai were specifically



*The Battle Box*



instructed to discern 5 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 secret society members and looters, and those who possessed arms.

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 anti-Japanese suspects could not escape. Those who “passed” the screenings were released while those who “failed” were loaded into trucks and transported to remote areas for execution.

### FORT CANNING COMMAND CENTRE • WAR 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 (HQ) of Malaya Command and had an area of responsibility that covered many regions including Singapore, Malaya, North Borneo and Hong Kong.

Just before the outbreak of war, the HQ was shifted to Sime Road Camp where a unified command headquarters was established with the Royal Air Force.

#### **The Battle**

LG Percival was forced to shift his command centre from Sime Road back to Fort Canning on 11 February 1942. This was because of the increased heavy machinegun 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.

Entrance to the Battle Box







*A Photo of the Cathay Building during the Japanese Occupation*

### **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 re-assess their ability to withstand the Japanese. Surrender seemed like the only option for Percival and his senior commanders in view of the depleting supply of food, water and ammunition.

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

### **Occupation**

The Japanese took over the 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**

The Indian Army's 5th Division re-occupied the the Battle Box for the returning Allied forces. Over time, the Battle Box was neglected and forgotten.

On 31 January 1992, the Battle Box was reopened to educate tourists and locals on the events leading to the surrender of Singapore during World War II.

### **THE CATHAY • WAR SITE**

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 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 sophisticated restaurant and a hotel.

### **WAR YEARS**

The Cathay 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.

Percival's surrender deputation was first required to fly a Japanese flag for 10 minutes on the Cathay Building to ensure safe passage to Ford Motor Factory.

### **Occupation Years**

Despite being hit by an estimated 14 shells in February 1942, the Cathay was subsequently taken over by the Japanese.

It housed the Japanese Broadcasting Department, the Japanese Military Propaganda Department and the Japanese Military Information Bureau. Syonan (Singapore) was subse-

quently declared the media centre for all newspapers in Syonan and Malai (Malaya).

The cinema in The Cathay was renamed Dai Toa Gekijo (Greater East Asian Theatre) showcasing mainly Japanese movies and propaganda films. Chinese films were banned. In addition, 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 South-east 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 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.

### **KEMPEITAI HEADQUARTERS (YMCA) • WAR SITE**

The Kempeitai (Japanese Military Police) was established in 1881 in Japan. It was responsible for maintaining internal security in occupied Southeast Asia during World War II.

In Singapore, the Kempeitai came under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of War and was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Masayuki Oishi. His headquarters was the Art Deco-styled former YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) building. Serving under him were 200 regular Kempeitai officers and 1,000 auxiliaries recruited from the army, deployed for operations in Singapore and Malaya.

The Kempeitai were responsible for many of the atrocities 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 internees.

During their imprisonment, they were tortured by electric shock, beaten and starved. Elizabeth was imprisoned for 193 days, while Khun Heng was released only after the Japanese surrender. During 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.

### **RAFFLES LIBRARY & MUSEUM (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE) • WAR SITE**

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 1887, the institution was officially established under government management as the Raffles Library and Museum at Stamford Road.

### **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



*Raffles statue unveiled in front of Victoria Memorial Hall in 1919*



*Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) Building*

of the Japanese Military Administration in Syonan (Singapore), became President of the Gardens and Museum. Thus, 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 Diamond Jubilee year 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 dislodge 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 newly-renamed Syonan Museum.

Although the Japanese forces had decided to put away the statue to signify the liberation of Asians from Western imperialism, the statue was preserved in one piece whilst in storage.

In 1946, the Raffles statue returned to its previous site at Empress Place. After the war, the Raffles Museum regained its title and was later renamed the National Museum of Singapore in 1969. The building was gazetted as a national monument in 1992. It was reopened in 2006 after an extensive 3 year redevelopment. Today, it houses the 11 National Treasures of Singapore and features various historical and cultural exhibitions about Singapore.



(Top): St Joseph's Institution at Bras Basah Road, between Waterloo and Queen Streets. When it was opened in 1867, only the centre block was built; the wings were added in 1900 by Father Charles Benedict Nain who also designed the Chapel at Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHI). Since 1995, it has been home to the Singapore Art Museum. (Above): Lord Louis Mountbatten speaking at the Municipal Building after the Japanese surrender (12 September 1945)

### FORMER ST. JOSEPH'S INSTITUTION (SINGAPORE ART MUSEUM) •WAR SITE

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 encroached on the island, all schools, including St Joseph's Institution were closed down. Amidst the Japanese bombings of Singapore, the inner courtyard and a classroom at St Joseph's Institution were hit. Although no casualties resulted from the blasts, the attacks did leave a noticeable crater in the school courtyard (still discernible until 1992).

The Institution was later utilised by the Royal Army Medical Corps as a hospital to treat military casualties. Classrooms were converted into wards while the Map Room was transformed into an operation theatre. In there, soldiers who suffered life-threatening injuries had their arms and legs amputated just so they could survive. Most survivors of the sunken battleships, the HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse, were wheeled in for treatment at St. Joseph's Institution. 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 successfully captured Singapore, St Joseph's Institution 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. Transformed into a primary school, the students were separated into different classes according to their ethnicity. Students were taught singing, gymnastics, gardening and Japanese language among many other subjects.

With the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Brothers returned to SJI and the school functioned as it did in pre-war times. Having outgrown its capacity, the Institution moved to a new campus at Malcolm Road in 1988 when it became an independent school. The building was preserved 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** • WAR SITE

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.

### **MUNICIPAL BUILDING (CITY HALL)** • WAR SITE

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, the building was completed in 1929 and has an exterior consisting of 18 huge 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 became the last major surrender ceremony of the Second World War. 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, conducted and 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 is set to become the new National Art Gallery which will be opened in 2015.

### **ST. ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL** • WAR SITE

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 and was meant for both British officials and locals.

As the Japanese launched their attacks 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 became overcrowded. At the same time, church services continued on a regular basis.

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 by the state in 1973.



### LIM BO SENG MEMORIAL • WAR SITE

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 guerrilla group Force 136 carrying out clandestine operations in Malaya. He was captured by the Japanese and eventually died in Batu Gajah Prison. His 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 Esplanade Park, its current location. It was unveiled on 29 June 1954, on the 10th anniversary of Lim Bo Seng's death.

### CENOTAPH • WAR SITE

Located at Esplanade Park, the Cenotaph is a war memorial that was initially built to honour soldiers who had died in World War I but later commemorated the World War II war dead as well. This is done on the reverse side of the Cenotaph, which was inscribed with the words "They died so we might live" in the four official languages of Singapore. The steps were extended in 1951 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) 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, Yusoff bin Ishak

Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts,  
National Archives of Singapore



National Archives of Singapore



*Clockwise from top left:* • Unveiling Of Lim Bo Seng Memorial By The Commander-In-Chief, Far East Land Forces Sir Charles Loewen. • Unveiling Ceremony of the Civilian War Memorial, dedicated to the civilians who were victims of the Japanese Occupation. The Memorial was completed in January 1967. • Subash Chandra Bose reviews "Rani of Jhansi" regiment and other Indian National Army troops at Waterloo Street. • Ceremony of the Unveiling of the Cenotaph.

have laid wreaths there in remembrance of the fallen.

### INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY MONUMENT • WAR 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 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-





Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, National Archives of Singapore



S. R. Nathan, National Archives of Singapore

### CIVILIAN WAR MEMORIAL • WAR SITE

Consisting of four parallel pillars that taper together to at the top, the Civilian War Memorial (CWM) commemorates the civilians who were lost during the Japanese invasion and occupation of Singapore. The four pillars signify the four major ethnic groups in Singapore, while the joining of the pillars near the top represents unity and shared suffering.

The building of a memorial for civilians was triggered by the discovery of wartime graves in the Siglap area in February 1962.

The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce carried out investigations and identified the area, which was given names such as the “Valley of Death” and “Valley of Tears”, as a site containing numerous war graves.

The news reports generated on these graves brought attention to the ‘Sook Ching’ operation of 1942, an extermination exercise by Japanese authorities to eradicate potential threats in the Chinese civilian population. Estimates of the number of dead as a result of Sook Ching range from about 6,000 to 50,000.

Following the discovery of three of these war graves, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce requested for permission from the authorities to build a memorial for the civilian victims at Thomson Road. This eventually evolved to become the Civilian War Memorial that we see today at Beach Road.

Construction of the memorial cost \$750,000. The money was sourced from funds from the Singapore Government, from donations made by Singaporeans and partially from the \$25 million atonement fund paid by Japan.

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” and who came from all races and religions.

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

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.

The memorial was demolished by British forces soon after their return. A marker is installed on the site of the former Indian National Army Monument to highlight the historic events that took place on the site.

## SINGAPORE VOLUNTEER CORPS HEAD-QUARTERS (BEACH ROAD CAMP) • WAR SITE

The Singapore Volunteer Corp (SVC) was the first volunteer force not only in Singapore but in the whole of Asia. For that reason, its motto reads 'in oriente primus' (first in Asia). 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 overall headquarters of SVC in 1932.

The SVC, which also had Artillery and Engineering units, was placed under the Straits Settlement Volunteer Forces (SSVF) in 1922. This included volunteers from Penang and Province Wellesley, and Malacca. By 1941, the 2,000-strong SSVF also had its headquarters at Beach Road Camp.

Due to a lack of funds, the SSVF did not receive proper military training. During the Battle for Singapore, no units of the SVC were used in direct action against the Japanese. 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 conducted improvements to the existing defences. 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 Motor Factory.

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

Some of Singapore's political leaders served with 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 saw out the war. Independent Singapore's first Defence Minister, Dr Goh



Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts, National Archives of Singapore

Keng Swee, was a non-commissioned officer in the SVC.

The SVC was disbanded in 1946 but revived in 1949. It was merged with the fledgling Singapore Military Forces in 1954 and served during the Confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960s. Its veterans played an important role in developing the young Singapore Armed Forces. Beach Road Camp was sold for commercial re-development in 2007 but several of its buildings are to be conserved.

## KALLANG AIRFIELD • WAR 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 built over what was formerly swampland.

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



David Ng, National Archives of Singapore

Taka Sakurai, National Archives of Singapore

*Clockwise from top left: • Singapore Governor Sir Franklin Gimson (on platform) during the Singapore Volunteer Corps presentation award ceremony at the headquarters of the Singapore Volunteer Corps Liaison Regiment, Beach Road • Japanese Soldiers at Kallang Airport. • A postcard of the painting titled "Fighter Place W8155 at Kallang Airfield", by Saburo Miyamoto.*

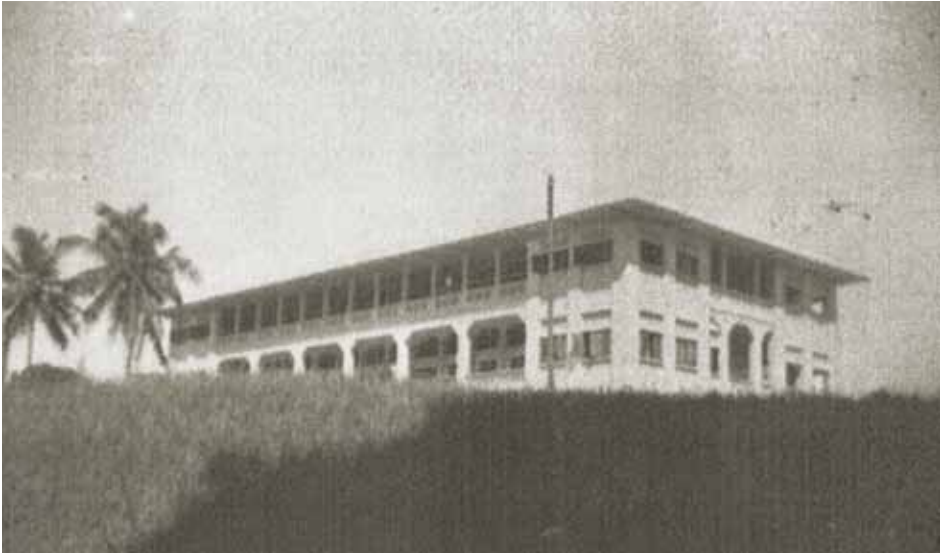
Once Japanese artillery from Johore started shelling Seletar, Tengah and Sembawang in early February, these three airfields had to be abandoned. The majority of the surviving airplanes were ordered to evacuate to Sumatra, with the remaining airplanes heading to Kallang from 4 February 1942. Kallang thus became the last operational airfield with Allied airpower in Singapore, which had been reduced to 6 Buffalo and 8 Hurricane fighter planes. These fighters 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 Indonesia. Two trips were made

using Royal Australian Air Force Hudsons over the course of 10 February which succeeded in evacuating senior 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. His decision to later escape by sea cost him his life.

During the Occupation, the Japanese replaced Kallang's grass runway with concrete. However, Kallang was not in operation as a civil airport again until 1949. In its heyday between 1949 to 1954, as many as 149,000 passengers passed through the airport each year. The airport once again stopped operating in 1955.

The premises then served as the home for the People's Association, a statutory board of Singapore, until its move to new premises in 2009.



The Changi Museum

» EAST

# THE GUNS OF SINGAPORE AND CAPTIVITY

## INTRODUCTION

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 POW camp where close to 50,000 Allied POWs, mainly British and Australian, were incarcerated.

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



Left: Block 151 of Roberts Barracks, c.1950. Above: The Changi Museum.

### THE CHANGI MUSEUM • WAR 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 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' (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 the war dead.

### CHANGI PRISON • WAR SITE

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, enemy civilians from Britain and other Western nations, were incarcerated at Changi Prison. Up to 3,500 men, women and children were held at Changi Gaol till 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 Kempetai (Japanese Military Police) swooped down on Changi Gaol on 10 October 1943 (thus the 'double-tenth'). Fifty-seven internees were taken to Kempetai cells for interrogation. The harshness 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 were transferred to Changi Prison in May 1944. More than 10,000 pris-





*Johore Battery*

oners were crowded in and around the Prison. Five thousand were incarcerated within the prison while the rest were accommodated in attap huts outside the prison walls. Many POWs had already been transferred out of Singapore as slave labour to several countries in the region and to Japan.

After the war, it was the turn of many Japanese soldiers to be incarcerated at Changi. They were held there for up to 2 years because of the lack of transport to send them home.

Today, all that remains of the old Changi Prison is a 180 metre wall with watch-towers at both ends and the iconic gateway which was transferred to the centre of the wall.

#### **JOHORE BATTERY** • WAR SITE

The Johore Battery was part of the coastal-gun defence system that protected the British

Naval Base at Sembawang against Japanese warships coming 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 extensively involved 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. On 8 February 1942, intensive fire was exchanged with Japanese artillery on Pulau Ubin. The battery was also heavily engaged in the battle at Pasir Panjang from 10 to 12 February. Its last contribution was to provide cover for troops who were retreating towards the city centre from Bukit Timah Village on 12 February 1942. 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. It was officially marked as a historic site by the National Heritage Board in 2001.

### **INDIA BARRACKS • WAR SITE**

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 (HKSRA).

### **SELARANG BARRACKS • WAR SITE**

Constructed in 1936, Selarang Barracks was home to a British infantry unit, the 2nd Battalion of the Gordon Highlanders, until 1941. Their location in Changi ensured that a full battalion of infantry 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 forced the Allied POWs in Changi to relocate to Selarang Barracks after they refused to accede to their demands to sign a declaration giving up their right to escape. Built to accommodate 800 soldiers, 15,400 POWs were forced into Selarang. Living conditions were extremely bad. Only two water taps were available at Selarang Barracks and 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, and the 'Selarang Incident' came to an end.

POWs at Selarang Barracks also organised concert parties to boost morale. Props were the result of the internees' ingenuity as they improvised with the available resources. 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. The one exception is the old Officers Mess that is now home to a small heritage centre.

### **ROBERTS BARRACKS • WAR SITE**

Roberts Barracks was constructed between 1934 and 1936 to provide living quarters for the Coast Artillery Regiment of the Royal Artillery who 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 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.

In a bid to keep morale up, Reverend FH Stal-



*Kitchener Barracks*

lard convinced a Japanese officer to agree to convert a room in Block 151 into a chapel. The chapel was named after Saint 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. While recuperating in the Block, Warren painted the murals. 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 as an office and painted over the

murals.

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

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 work on the murals and to participate in a documentary about POWs.

The murals still stand today as significant legacies of POW suffering and bravery. Block 151 and the original murals have been conserved in Changi Air Base by the Ministry



Courtesy of HG Properties

of Defence. A replica was drawn at the Changi Museum to ensure that the inspiring story of the POWs is shared with all visitors.

### **KITCHENER BARRACKS • WAR SITE**

Kitchener Barracks was built in 1935 to house the Royal Engineers. During the 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 SITE • WAR SITE**

This serene beach was once the site of a Sook Ching massacre. Bound by ropes in rows of 8 to 12, victims at this site were instructed to walk towards the sea in batches. Japanese soldiers would then machine-gun them as they reached the shallow waters. While many died on-site, some managed to swim away or seek temporary refuge underwater as the ropes binding them loosened in the waters. The ensuing bayoneting of the victims after the initial firing by the Japanese soldiers meant that there were few survivors.

The bodies of the Sook Ching 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 drowned. As the soldiers threatened injury to those who disobeyed, the POWs had little choice but to comply.

### **PULAU UBIN • WAR SITE**

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 had to retreat quickly. This attack in the east was a crafty move to distract the defending forces from the real invasion in the northwest. This diversionary move was accompanied by heavy artillery bombardment to further reinforce the bluff.

The decision to attack the northwestern coast was based on successful Japanese reconnaissance which revealed that northwestern Singapore was thinly defended in this area.

# CREDITS<sup>+</sup>

We would like to thank the following for their assistance in the making of this brochure:

» PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

**(NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD)**

**Thangamma Karthigesu, Tay May Ling, Justin Ho**

» RESEARCHERS AND WRITERS

**(SINGAPORE HISTORY CONSULTANTS)**

**Jeya Ayadurai, Savita Kashyap, Razeen Chan,  
Booi Carlyn, Cai Yinghong, Anand Balan,  
Isabelle Chan, Paul Chia, Faza Mahirah,  
Muhammad Azharuddin, Cao Yu,  
Yeo Pei Zhen, Wong Yeang Cherng,  
Jelynn Chiam, Tan Kian Tong, Aileen Tan**

» IMAGE PROVIDERS

**National Archives of Singapore  
Australian War Memorial  
Imperial War Museum  
Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts  
Singapore History Consultants  
Singapore Tourism Board  
The Changi Museum**

» DESIGN

**Ridzwan Ali**

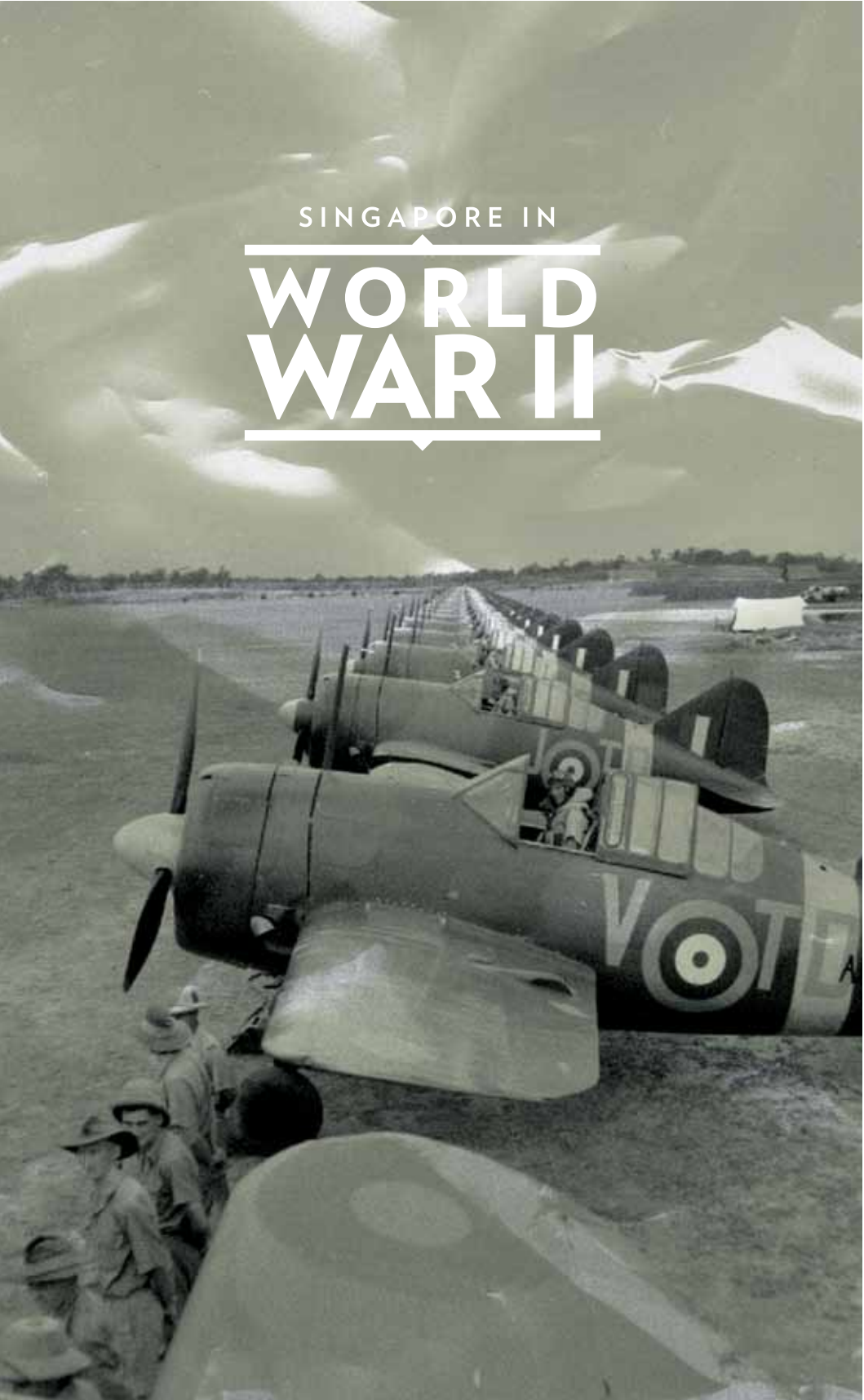
» PHOTOGRAPHY

**Alex Heng**



SINGAPORE IN

**WORLD  
WAR II**





PRESENTED BY



National  
Heritage  
Board