

Sandakan Memorial Boyup Brook

September 2021

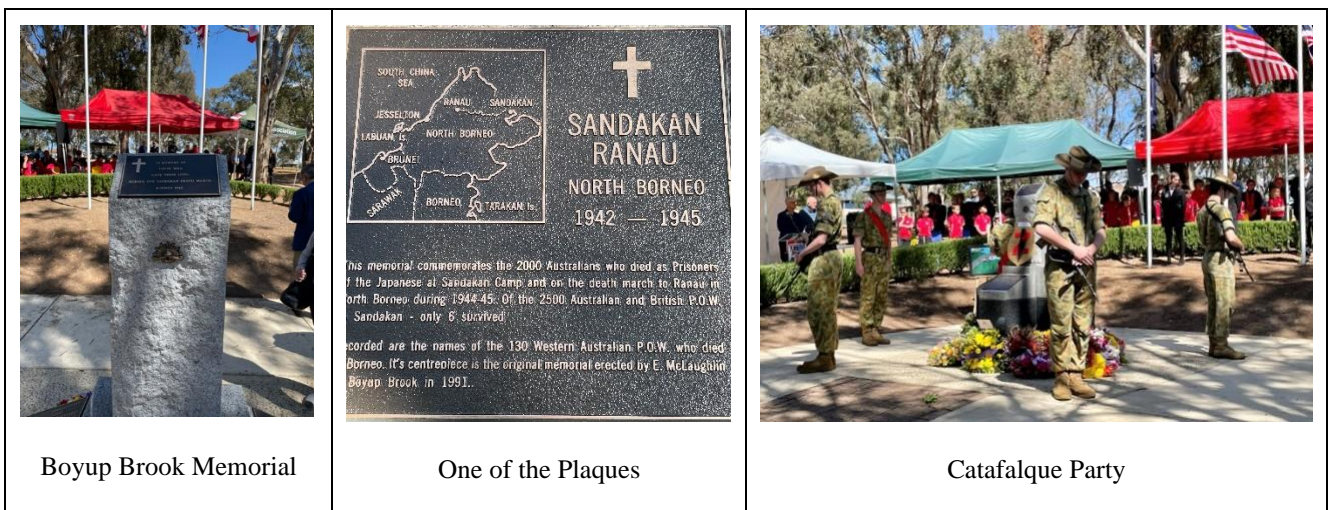
Jessamy Welfare



In 2017 I trekked Kokoda. Beforehand I read all the books about the conflict that I could lay my hands on and happened to come across Paul Ham's book '*Sandakan - The untold story of the Sandakan Death Marches*'. Paul Ham interviewed the families of survivors and the deceased in Australia, Britain and Borneo, and consulted thousands of Court documents in an effort to piece together exactly what happened to the people who suffered and died in the then British North Borneo, and who was responsible. It is a very powerful and historically correct book that portrays the brutality as it was.

I was incredibly moved by what I read about in the camp and on the death marches. It astounded me that so little of this was known to the public in general. Out of 2500 POWs the only men who survived were the 6 Australians that managed to escape. As a result, it has been on my agenda to visit Borneo to pay homage there, and walk a section of the route to Ranau.

A local Boyup Brook farmer Ted McLaughlin, who was a POW on the Burma-Thailand railway during WW2, was determined to erect a memorial to honour his mates who died at Sandakan to ensure they would never be forgotten. So, in a little country town in the south west of Western Australia is this beautiful memorial honouring those men who went through 3 years of brutality. Consequently, when I became aware of the September 2021 service at Boyup Brook, I felt compelled to attend.



Boyup Brook Memorial

One of the Plaques

Catalfalque Party

I felt very honoured to attend and to remember all the men who died at Sandakan.

Each year Boyup Brook awards a Sandakan Scholarship. This year the recipient was a local school girl, Anne Deas. Anne made a powerful speech about the horrors of Sandakan. Following her speech she

sang a song she had composed, and also had on display an art piece she had painted about Sandakan. Anne was extremely impressive and a credit to her family and school.

I had the honour of meeting some of the local veterans. Colin Hales, President of Boyup Brook Sub Branch and Graham Pemberton, President of Kojonup Sub Branch. Graham was quite surprised to hear how many turn up each month at North Beach, and expressed his interest in attending as a visitor when next in Perth



Colin Hales President Boyup Brook Sub-Branch, Terry Myers Kojonup Sub-Branch, Jessamy Welfare North Beach Sub-Branch, Graham Pemberton President Kojonup Sub-Branch, Peter Aspinall AM President RSLWA

After the beautiful service, I enjoyed some country hospitality and had a “cuppa” with Vietnam veteran, Kevin George (Fred) Casson who was with 4 RAR. Fred was a great bloke to talk to and I was told by another veteran that Fred has a chest full of medals but only wears them on Anzac Day. He was awarded for his bravery during Operation Ivanhoe at Nui Le.



(Fred was Mentioned in Despatches for his role in the Battle of Nui Le – the last battle by Australians in Vietnam before the withdrawal of troops, and was consequently awarded the Medal of Gallantry)

<http://vvaavic.org.au/battle-of-nui-le/>

I am constantly impressed with the way these little country towns honour our fallen.

Sandakan must never be forgotten.