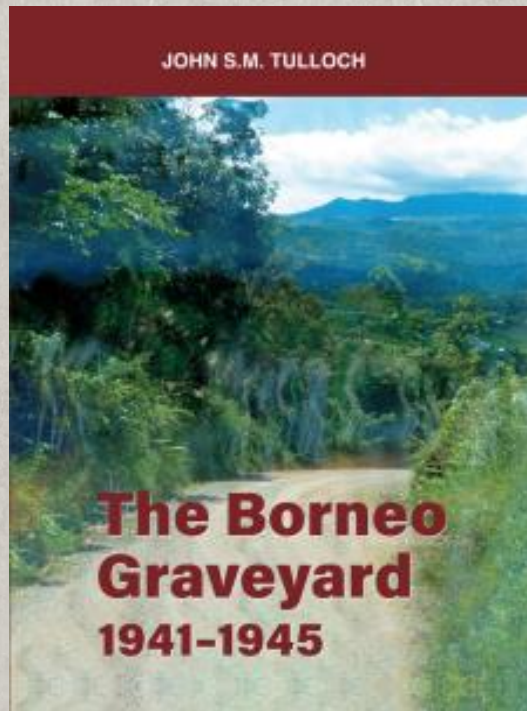




The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945

Author: John SM Tulloch

Opus Publications, Kota Kinabalu (Borneo), 2020: ISBN: ISBN 978-983-3987-65-8



Hardback. UK sales solely via the author, johnsmtulloch@gmail.com , price £25 (£22 to subscribing Friends of Millbank) plus p&p

This book follows the raising of five Royal Artillery air defence regiments in 1939, their deployment in late 1941 to South East Asia, their short campaign in the Netherlands East Indies and eventual capture as POWs in Java and North Borneo. It depicts the sadistic treatment of Australian, British, Dutch and Indian POWs in the various POW camps in North Borneo. There were three death marches from Sandakan to Ranau.

The internee account covers the men, women and children from all over Borneo interned in Batu Lintang. They experienced the unspeakable behaviour of the guards. Several internees were killed trying to escape the Japanese regime or gratuitously executed just before liberation.

The locals of Borneo suffered terribly. Torture, executions and massacres occurred throughout. Malnutrition, starvation and death were endemic.



Friends of Millbank



This scholarly and detailed researched book is written by John Tulloch who joined the New Zealand Army in 1965. He won the sword of honour at Officer Cadet School Portsea, Victoria, Australia and was commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Artillery. He served for a year in Vietnam as a troop commander and later as a Forward Observer with 9th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. He developed great expertise in jungle warfare. He transferred to the British Army in 1973 and had a very active career with numerous deployments. He retired after 38 years' service. For 21 years, including when he was an MOD civilian, he was called out to Brunei once or twice a year as a visiting jungle warfare instructor for the British Army Training Team Brunei (TTB). That is where I met him.

I have found this book review the most difficult I have ever had to do. For a number of years I was the medical advisor for the Royal British Legion War Graves Pilgrimage Department and I travelled out to the Far East regularly accompanying war widows and veterans. I have stood with widows beside their husbands' graves and with children beside their fathers' graves or memorials to the missing. I know how the men died or were murdered by the Japanese. John Tulloch's book names individuals and the manner of their deaths. I have spoken in Sabah with an old man who as a boy ferried Japanese soldiers across a river on one of the Sandakan "death marches" and who saw the soldiers butcher alive two prisoners of war for fresh meat.

There are apologists for the Japanese who said that soldiers who surrender deserve no compassion. The British and Commonwealth troops who were captured in Singapore and Java did not surrender, they were ordered by their commander to lay down their arms. The code of Bushido is also given as a reason for brutality meted out on the POWs. There are seven virtues of Bushido: Integrity, Respect, Heroic Courage, Honour, Compassion, Honesty & Sincerity, and Duty & Loyalty. No one can ever deny the Heroic Courage of the Japanese soldiers, but where were the integrity, respect and compassion? I have stood by the graves of the three medical officers who survived the Sandakan death marches and whose outstanding medical care to the POWs was rewarded by being shot two weeks **after** the war had ended. The Japanese wanted no witnesses to their war crimes.

About 20% of the British, Commonwealth and Dutch POWs died on the horrific Siam–Burma Railway. By contrast every POW on Borneo's Labuan and other Indonesian islands like Ambon and Ballale was murdered when they had finished building the airstrips for the Japanese. At Sandakan, the three death marches to Ranau, and at Ranau, 99.75% of the POWs perished by various means.

Six Australians who escaped into the jungle miraculously survived and were saved by locals at great risk to themselves. There were no British POW survivors.

John Tulloch tells the story of POWs and civilian internees factually and with compassion. Their Red Cross food parcels were kept and stored by the Japanese while their prisoners starved to death. There will never be a better account written of this terrible time between 1941 and 1945 unless there is ever more access to Japanese records. This is very unlikely as they tried to destroy every record of their war crimes and many of their perpetrators committed suicide or were hanged as war criminals at the War's end.



info@friendsofmillbank.org



www.friendsofmillbank.org



This book is beautifully produced and illustrated. It is a personal story of the search for the truth about what happened in Borneo 1941-1945. This is a story that needed to be told.

JC Richardson, July 2021

Chairman's notes

The reviewer, Colonel (retired) John Richardson FRCGP L/RAMC, a Bart's graduate, is Emeritus Defence Professor of Primary Care and General Practice, Defence Medical Services. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1964 to 2012, and has been my mentor and friend since the 1990s. He is also Membership Secretary and Treasurer of the West Sussex History of Medicine Society which holds talks on alternate Saturday mornings in autumn at the Postgraduate Centre of St Richard's Hospital, Chichester, see <https://wshoms.co.uk/>. WSHOMS is affiliated to the British Society of the History of Medicine, as is Friends of Millbank.

This is the second book review that Professor Richardson has kindly carried out for Friends of Millbank. He says that this one was 'the most difficult I have ever had to do'. I can see why, for the emotions aroused by some of the accounts of war crimes in this book are raw indeed, as they should be. I salute him for persevering and for reviewing this 492 page book so eloquently and succinctly.

It must have been even harder for the author to research and write 'The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945'. Twelve years of painstaking research in the UK, with visits to Singapore, Sarawak, Brunei, Sabah and Australia, underpin this compassionate work, published to coincide with the 75th VJ Anniversary (15 August 2020). John Tulloch has succeeded in his aim of putting pen to paper to faithfully recount what happened to our fellow human beings at the hands of brutal captors, on an individual basis. He also researched and created the North Borneo Roll of Honour while doing so.

We should be inspired by this work. To mention but one example, even if the three medical officers whose outstanding medical care to the POWs in Borneo was rewarded by being shot two weeks **after** the war had ended, they were indeed 'Faithful in Adversity', and the unstinting good that they have done has not been interred with their bones, despite the evil intentions of their captors. Their memory lives on strongly, as does the memory of those they cared for, thanks to John Tulloch.

This was indeed a story that needed to be told.

David Vassallo

Chairman, Friends of Millbank

August 2021

