



THE OBSERVATION POST

The official publication of the
National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association Australia Inc
South Australia & Northern Territory Branch

SA/NT Branch Patron:
Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia

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OPERATION “HORNBILL 2025”

This is the third special edition of “The Observation Post” detailing the executive liaison visit by our President and Vice-President to Sarawak, and the preparations made for 2026. But the images and stories in these newsletters do not adequately convey the emotions of such a trip.

The film clip “80th Anniversary Commemoration of the Liberation of Sarawak” has been released by the Sarawak Tourism Federation. It is a moving and poignant summary of the many anniversary commemorative events. Notably there is one scene in which a young boy is seen at Pending Point jetty waving an Australian flag – he is the great-great-grandson of Sir Thomas Eastick Kt CMG DSO ED JP, who had accepted the Japanese surrender at that very same location 80 years earlier. We, and the Sarawak Tourism Federation, express our gratitude to Tony Zappia MP and his Makin Electorate Office for making these flags available.

OPERATION "HORNBILL 2025"

6 – 18 September 2025

The video "80th Anniversary Commemoration of the Liberation of Sarawak" has been released by the Sarawak Tourism Federation as a record of the commemorative events which took place on 11 September 2025. It can be accessed here (CTRL + Click to follow the link):

[Liberation of Sarawak](#)

Alternately, a copy may be downloaded by scanning this QR Code:



The South Australia and Northern Territory Branch of the NMBVAA has adopted a four-pronged approach to commemoration:

- ☞ Remember the fallen
- ☞ Remember Malaysia
- ☞ Honour the living
- ☞ Look to the future

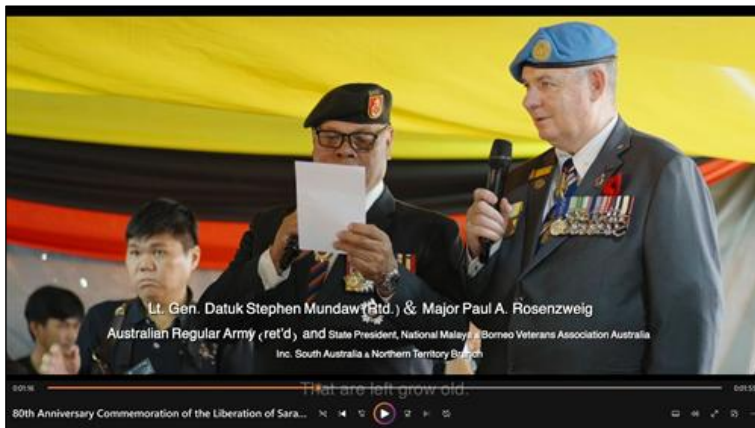
In particular, we honour the eight Australian soldiers who died on operational service in Sarawak in 1965 and 1966 during Confrontation, and three who died after being evacuated from Sarawak. The sacrifice of these eleven Australian Defenders of Sarawak has been documented in a paper published by the Sarawak Museum. A copy of this paper may be downloaded here (CTRL + Click to follow):

[‘In our Neighbours’ Soil our Anzacs Sleep’](#)

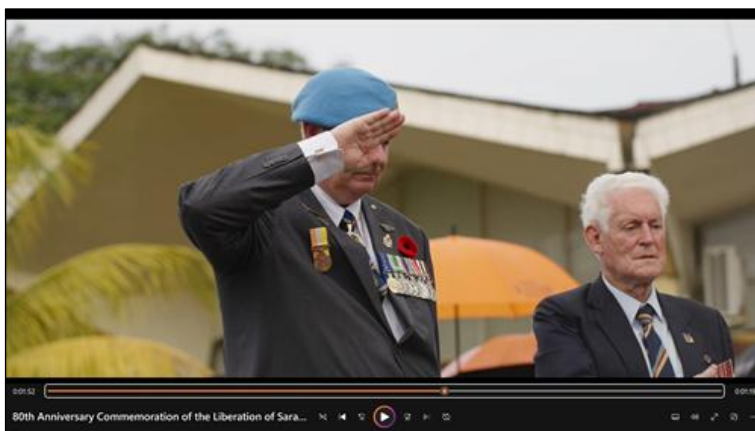
Alternately, a copy of this paper may be downloaded from the Sarawak Museum portal by scanning this QR Code:



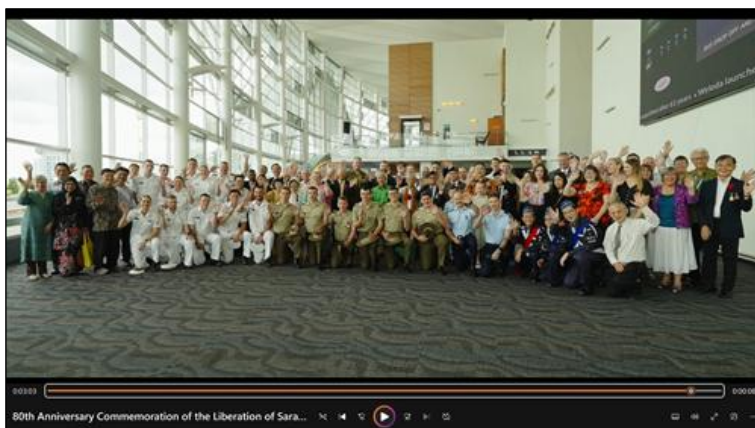
With Sarawak Veterans Association members at Pending Point



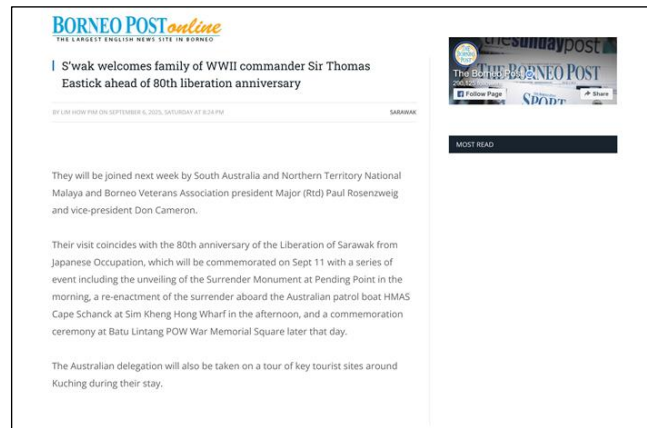
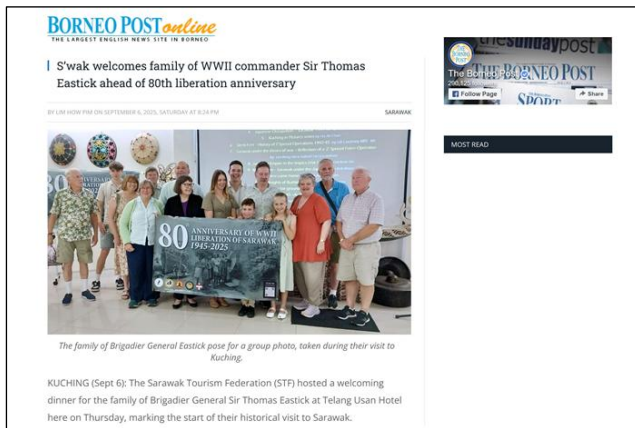
Reciting the Ode of Remembrance at the memorial dedication ceremony



Honouring the fallen in Batu Lintang WW2 Memorial Square



The commemoration parties at the Borneo Convention Centre Kuching



IN THE MEDIA : 80TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

A week after conducting our Malaya & Borneo Veterans Day service, our President and Vice-President embarked on Operation "Hornbill 2025" – a self-funded executive liaison visit to Sarawak.

The prime purpose of this trip was to join the various 80th Anniversary commemorative events conducted for the Eastick family in memory of Brigadier Tom Eastick DSO ED from South Australia.

These events were reported on widely in Sarawak and Borneo (CTRL + Click over the URL to follow the link):

'S'wak welcomes family of WWII commander Sir Thomas Eastick ahead of 80th liberation anniversary'
Borneo Post online, 6 September 2025

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2025/09/06/swak-welcomes-family-of-wwii-commander-sir-thomas-eastick-ahead-of-80th-liberation-anniversary/>

'Waris Brigadier General Eastick lawat Sarawak, imbau sejarah Perang Dunia Kedua'
Suara Sarawak (Sarawak online), 6 September 2025

<https://suarasarawak.my/waris-brigadier-general-eastick-lawat-sarawak-imbau-sejarah-perang-dunia-kedua>

'South Australian veterans to join WWII 80th anniversary events in Kuching'
Borneo Post online, 7 September 2025

<https://www.theborneopost.com/2025/09/07/south-australian-veterans-to-join-wwii-80th-anniversary-events-in-kuching/>

'Brig-Gen Eastick's grandson presents 1945 Japanese Surrender document to S'wak Governor'
Dayak Daily online, 9 September 2025

<https://dayakdaily.com/brig-gen-easticks-grandson-presents-1945-japanese-surrender-document-to-swak-governor/>

'Sarawak Governor proposes war museum to preserve history, honour fallen heroes'
Dayak Daily online, 9 September 2025

<https://dayakdaily.com/sarawak-governor-proposes-war-museum-to-preserve-history-honour-fallen-heroes/>

'Governor proposes Sarawak establish war museum for deeper understanding of state's history'
Borneo Post online, 9 September 2025

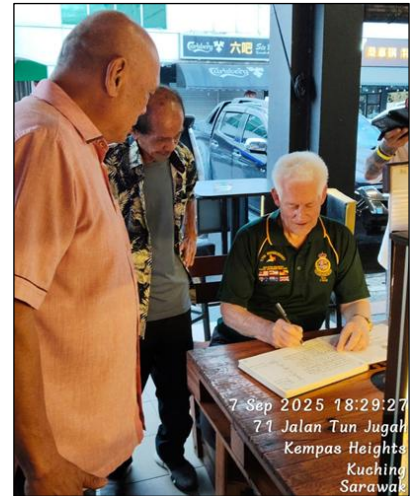
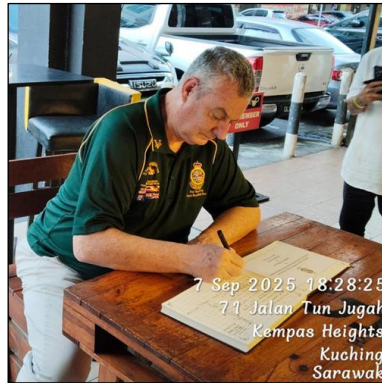
<https://www.theborneopost.com/2025/09/09/governor-proposes-sarawak-establish-war-museum-for-deeper-understanding-of-states-history/>

'Bendera era Rajah Brooke diserahkan kepada Muzium Sarawak'
Suara Sarawak (Sarawak online), 9 September 2025

<https://suarasarawak.my/bendera-era-rajah-brooke-diserah-kepada-muzium-sarawak/>



OPERATION "HORNBILL 2025"



On Sunday 7 September, our liaison party was warmly welcomed to Kuching by Lieutenant-General Datuk Stephen Mundaw PGBK (ret'd) and Datin Jacqueline Mundaw, and Sarawak Veterans' Association members.



On Friday 12 September, our liaison party was very honoured to be invited to join a reception for members of the Malaysia-Australia Defence Alumni Association hosted by Colonel Corey Shillabeer, Australian Defence Advisor to Malaysia together with members of the Defence Section at the Australian High Commission Kuala Lumpur. This gathering was a testament to the strength of our bilateral Defence partnership. And thanks for the shirts!



OPERATION "HORNBILL 2025"

Borneo 1965. The Operation "Hornbill 2025" visit to Sarawak, and particularly the visits to Kampung Gumbang and Sekolah Kebangsaan Gumbang (Gumbang School), reminded Don Cameron that it was sixty years ago that 'B' Company of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment re-deployed from Borneo to the Malay Peninsula. 3RAR Routine Order No 176 was promulgated on 28 July – an 'Order of the Day' marking the battalion's departure from Sarawak.

Don provided the image below right: *"Taken just off Terendak camp, arriving back from Borneo August 1965. We were helicoptered from Bukit Knuckle to the Albion, arriving in Malacca Straights, we scaled down the side into the landing craft with all belongings, stepping off the LC with rifle and 2-inch mortar. Sixty years ago!"*

The 3RAR rifle companies in the forward defensive positions immediately adjacent to the Sarawak-Kalimantan border were replaced by rifle companies from the 2nd Battalion, 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles.



Private Don Cameron at Kanchanaburi War Cemetery in Thailand in 1963 with 'B' Company, 2RAR.



At the 'Bukit Knuckle' position near Kampung Gumbang in Sarawak in 1965 with 'B' Company, 3RAR.



Arriving on the Malay Peninsula with 'B' Company, 3RAR in August 1965 after re-deploying from Sarawak.



OPERATION "HORNBILL 2025"

Following the release of our Observation Post HB25-1 Special Edition-1, Dato Lim Kian Hock wrote to us:

"You know all your presence and contribution had made our WW2 80th Anniversary Celebration so meaningful and historical that it continues to inspire me also".



LIBERATION OF SARAWAK

11 September 2025

There were two important background stories to the 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Sarawak. Firstly, recognition of the troops of the 9th Australian Division of the Second Australian Imperial Force, who were responsible for liberating the Raj of Sarawak, including the liberation of Batu Lintang POW camp. And paying tribute to Sarawak's last surviving child Prisoner-of-War from World War 2, Jeli Abdullah (Michael Tiong).



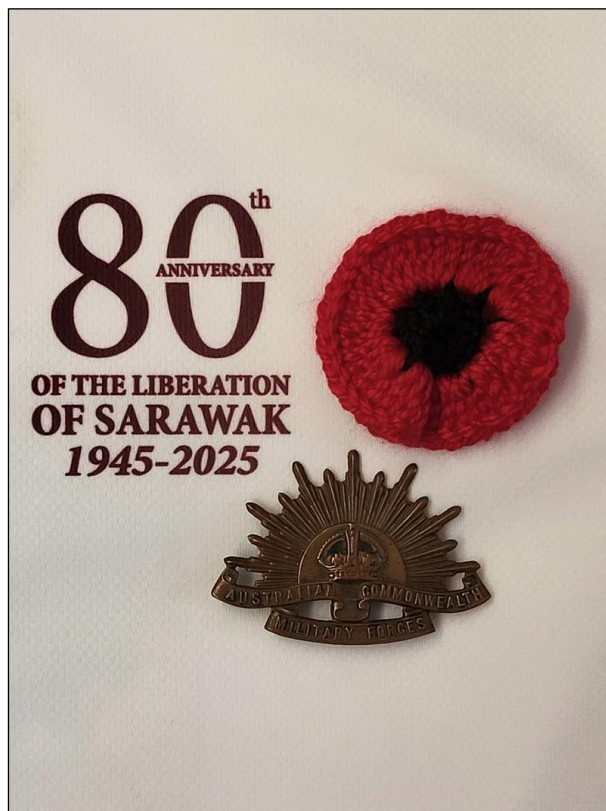
Jeli 'Mike' Abdullah

Jeli Abdullah's mother died from labour complications after giving birth to twins on 19 March 1940. To their Bisaya tribe, this was seen as a bad omen, and his father did not know what to do with the two boys. Fortunately, an Australian missionary couple decided to adopt the newborns. But misfortune fell upon the new family when the Imperial Japanese Army invaded Borneo in World War 2.

On 16 December 1941, forces from the 35th Infantry Brigade ('Kawaguchi Detachment') captured the oil fields and airfields in Miri and Seria in Sarawak, then Kuala Belait and Lutong, and Kuching airfield was captured on 25 December.

Together with other captured Europeans, the one year old Jeli and his family were sent to the Batu Lintang POW camp in Kuching where they remained until the camp's liberation by the 9th Australian Division on 11 September 1945.

Some of our NMBVAA members including Don and Jenny Cameron and Beverley Dubois met Jeli (Mike) during our 2016 visit to Sarawak.



9th Australian Division, AIF

This 'Rising Sun' hat badge was given to a Sarawakian by a member of Kuching Force in late 1945.

The liberation of Borneo by the 9th Australian Division, code-named Operation 'Oboe Six', comprised landings on 10 June followed by an advance south-west to Kuching. Brigadier Tom Eastick was appointed commander of 'Kuching Force', responsible for the Raj of Sarawak.

Kuching Force totalled around 2,000 men, drawn from the following units of the 20th Infantry Brigade:

2/4th Pioneer Battalion, AIF: Present for the surrender on 11 September, undertook garrison duties to maintain law and order, and processed prisoners of war for return to Japan.

2/12th Commando Squadron, AIF: Carried out ceremonial duties. Returned to Puckapunyal and was disbanded.

2/7th Field Company, AIF: 'Kuching Party' (35 soldiers) departed Labuan on 18 September; the company carried out projects associated with local infrastructure.

SIR THOMAS EASTICK Kt CMG DSO ED JP (1900-1988)



Michael Eastick displayed the medals of his grandfather Sir Thomas Eastick Kt CMG DSO ED JP. To the left is the original Sarawak flag which had flown over the Astana during the period of Australian military administration, was presented by Michael Eastick to the Governor of Sarawak. Upper right is the gift presented by Paul Rosenzweig on behalf of the SA/NT Branch, NMBVAA to Tuan Yang Terutama Yang di-Pertua Negeri Sarawak Tun Pehin Sri Dr Wan Junaidi Jaafar, His Excellency the Governor of Sarawak.



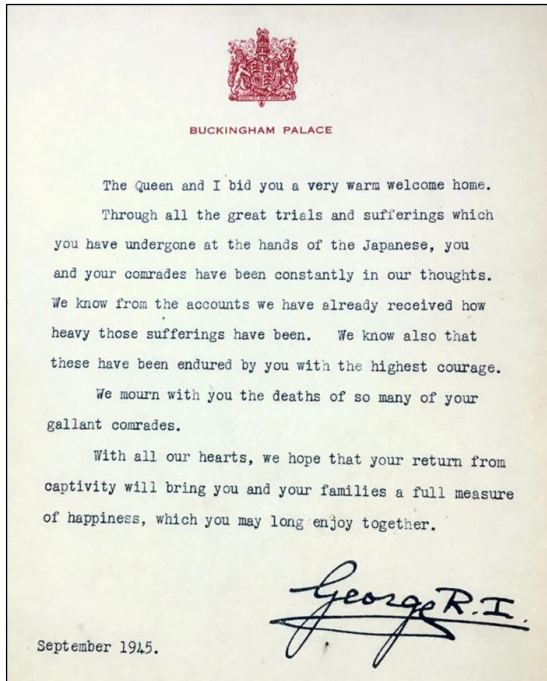
This is the insignia of the Companion of the Order of the Star of Sarawak. This was awarded by the last White Rajah of Sarawak, Sir Charles Vyner Brooke GCMG for Eastick's service as Commander of Kuching Force which liberated the Raj of Sarawak and established military control in the zone, including the liberation of Batu Lintang camp, and for service as the military Governor of Sarawak until December 1945.



LIBERATION OF BATU LINTANG

11 September 2025

The commemoration ceremony on 11 September 2025 acknowledged the liberation of Batu Lintang Prisoner-of-War and Civilian Internment Camp (formerly Lintang Barracks). The prisoners and internees had endured harsh conditions and brutal treatment, and faced a 'Kill Order' in the event of any attempt to attack the camp: the timely liberation of the camp by Kuching Force prevented the murder of over 2,000 men, women and children. Families attended to honour Batu Lintang survivors including Lieutenant Alex Bulford, Corporal Len Hygate and John Lyle Noakes, and Gunner Bill Yaxley who died in captivity.



Colin Hygate attended the ceremony to honour his father Corporal Len Hygate, a Machine-gun Section Commander of the 1st Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force. On his return to England, Len received this welcome home letter from His Majesty The King.

After liberation on 11 September 1945, Len Hygate was transferred to the Australian Recuperation Hospital on Labuan Island, and then in October was repatriated to England. Len and Joan married at Kingswood Church, Surrey on 11 December 1945.



Paul and Don were part of the official party at Batu Lintang WW2 Memorial Square.

LIEUTENANT ALEXANDER EDWARD HENRY BULFORD

Batu Lintang POW || Liberated on 11 September 1945

Bulford family members came to Sarawak to honour Alec Bulford from Penang, who had served as a Second Lieutenant with the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force and was held at Batu Lintang POW and Internment Camp until 11 September 1945.

The SSVF was a military reserve force in the Straits Settlements during the period they were under British rule. It was officially formed in 1922 through the amalgamation of existing volunteer forces, and in 1928 was re-organised into four multi-racial battalions. Most personnel came from Singapore (1st and 2nd Battalions), but there were other members like Alec who lived in other parts of the Settlements, including Penang, Province Wellesley, Malacca and Labuan.

Alec was born on 18 February 1921 in Racecourse Road, Penang to Edward Henry ('Bully') Bulford and Ida Margaret May (née Hilton). In 1912 Bully Bulford had left England for Penang, where he worked as the Accountant for the Eastern Smelting Company. Of note, on 28 October 1914 he was a member of a patrol of the Penang Volunteers which detected and captured some Germans from a shore party from the German cruiser *Emden*.

Alec Bulford (1921-2007) had completed his Oxford and Cambridge School Certificate exams in the UK in December 1937, and in Penang was employed by Henry Waugh & Co (1938-41). He was a member of the 3rd Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (the former Penang & Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps), which had its headquarters at George Town, and in 1941 he attended the first Officer Cadet Training Unit (OCTU) course, graduating as a Second Lieutenant.

On the night of 16-17 December 1941, Edward and Alec escaped to Singapore with the remaining European males aboard four coastal ferries. Edward worked with the Singapore Central Fire Station, assisting with controlling fire-fighting on the Docks and Harbour area after the Japanese air raids, while Alec served with the 4th Battalion, SSVF. In February 1942, Edward escaped on the Singapore Harbour Board launch *Bagan*, travelling via Sumatra and Ceylon, to finally arrive in Fremantle, Western Australia on the *Katoomba* to join his wife and two of his children.

The SSVF took part in the Battle of Singapore in 1942, and most of its members including Alec were captured on 15 February 1942 when their positions were overrun. Alec spent his 21st birthday at Bukit Timah Racecourse in Singapore, sitting on the ground with a group of POWs, in the middle of the racecourse with Japanese bayonets and rifles pointed at them. Alec was first held at No 4 POW Camp at Changi on Singapore (registration number '4/4030' – see capture record below).

On 28 March 1943, Alec was the Adjutant aboard the steamer *De Klerk* which carried a group of POWs known as 'E Force' to Borneo. Most ended up at Sandakan in North Borneo and thousands died on the Sandakan to Ranau Death Marches. Alec was among those offloaded in Kuching on 1 April 1943 and transferred to Batu Lintang Camp.

After the war, Alec worked briefly in Penang, then as Manager of the local Henry Waugh & Co office at 47 Main Bazaar, Kuching. Alec's children Rob, Adrian and Roslyn were born in Kuching, while Bruce was born in Australia. In 1996, Alec produced a memoir titled "The Fall of Singapore – a Battle that should never have been fought".

Joining the visit to Sarawak were Rob, Roslyn with her husband Michael, and Bruce with his wife Joselle.



BM/8

收容所 Camp	馬本四	番 No. 號	馬本四-4030
姓名 Name	BULFORD, Alexander Edward Henry	生年月日 Date of Birth	Feb 18 1921
國籍 Nationality	British 英	所屬部隊 Unit	No. nil 4/S.S.V.F.
階級身分 Rank	2nd. Lieutenant 陸軍少尉	捕獲年月日 Date of Capture	昭和 17 年 2 月 15 日
捕獲場所 Place of Capture	Singapore	母ノ名 Mother's Name	Ida
父ノ名 Father's Name	Edward Henry	職業 Occupation	商人
本籍地 Place of Origin	Changi Jail Singapore.	通報先 Destination of Report	Mrs. I. Bulford (Mother) c/o Bank of New South Wales, Perth, AUSTRALIA.
特記事項 Remarks			



Japanese record card of Second Lieutenant Alexander Bulford showing his date of capture as 15 February 1942 (Showa 17).

Family research and images courtesy of Rob Bulford.

Lieutenant Alec Bulford, pictured in 1945. After liberation, Alec was transferred to Labuan Island Military Hospital, and later to a hospital on Morotai Island where he met his future wife Beryl.

CORPORAL LEN HYGATE
Batu Lintang POW || Liberated on 11 September 1945

Colin Hygate attended the Batu Lintang memorial service on 11 September 2025 to honour his father who was held captive there during the war, assigned to work in the Bau mercury mine – Len Hygate, known as an ‘Accountant, Cricketer and Soldier’.

Len Hygate was born in Sussex, the son of a toolmaker for a company making motor cars and aero-engines. He was successful in the Chartered Accountants Examinations of 1934, and gained employment with an international firm of accountants McAuliffe, Davis and Hope. He left England in 1935 to work in Singapore, and whilst there was a member of the Singapore Cricket Club and also the 1st Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (1SSVF), an army reserve military unit.

He enlisted in 1936, and by 1939 was a Corporal Machine-gun Section Commander of No 3 Section, Headquarters Company. He attended training at the SSVF Drill Hall on Beach Road, and periodic training camps, although these increased in frequency after conscription began on 1 November 1939.

He became engaged to Joan in June 1940 who was in England, and a volunteer with the Women’s Royal Naval Service (WRNS, ‘the Wrens’), serving at a shore station at Bordean House in Hampshire.

On 1 December 1941, Len was mobilised for full-time duty: his machine-gun section and its .303-inch Vickers Machine Gun initially occupied a pill-box overlooking the Johore Causeway.

When Singapore fell, Len Hygate was captured and imprisoned in Changi and in work camps on Singapore Island, including Bukit Timah in 1942 and Pasir Pajang (Ayer Rajah) on Portsdown Road in 1943.

On 28 March 1943, Len was in a group of 500 British and 500 Australian prisoners known as ‘E Force’ sent to Kuching aboard the steamer *SS De Klerk*. Of note, Second Lieutenant Alec Bulford of the 3rd Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (3SSVF) was the Adjutant aboard the *De Klerk*. Most ended up at Sandakan in North Borneo and thousands died on the Sandakan to Ranau Death Marches. Len was among those offloaded in Kuching on 1 April 1943 and transferred to Batu Lintang Camp.

He briefly stayed in Batu Lintang Camp before being sent in a smaller group of around 150 to a work camp on the Dahan Rubber Estate in Bau district on 10 April.

This was located between the old Dahan Estate and the old Tegora antimony mine at Mount Tegora near Kampung Puak and the adjacent river called Puak (also referred to as ‘Poak’ or ‘Poek’), about 18 miles south-west of Kuching. The ‘Red Bridge’ at Kampung Seropak near Bau, built by the Borneo Company with the assistance of Rajah James Brooke, is the only remaining landmark on the pathway to Tegora. Len was engaged on road-building work, to re-open the access route to the Tegora Mine, south of the Dahan Estate in the Krokong mountain range, to obtain a supply of mercury.

On 17 September 1945, Len was transferred by Catalina aircraft to the Australian Recuperation Hospital on Labuan Island. On 16 October Len boarded the HMT *Ranchi* for his repatriation voyage to England. When the *Ranchi* berthed in Southampton, the Mayor arrived to greet the returning prisoners and to deliver a welcome home letter from The King.

Len and Joan married at Kingswood Church, Surrey on 11 December 1945. Before long Len was settled with his family as a Chief Accountant in Gloucestershire, playing county cricket with the company team, and serving as a volunteer with the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars (Territorial Army) and as a Secretary of his local branch of the Royal British Legion. He became a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in 1960.

On retirement Len became a Lay Preacher, enjoying services at a number of local village churches.



Colin Hygate addressed attendees prior to the memorial service at Batu Lintang on 11 September 2025.



Placing tributes at the Batu Lintang Borneo Memorial: Colin Hygate in the background approaching the memorial.

JOHN LYLE NOAKES MBE QSO JP MNZIS (1907-1992)
Batu Lintang Internee | | Liberated on 11 September 1945

Les Pearson honoured the service of his wife Judy's father, who was a Civilian Internee at Batu Lintang from 24 December 1941 until the camp's liberation by troops of the 9th Australian Division, AIF on 11 September 1945. We received this message from Judy Pearson, who was unable to be in Kuching for the 80th anniversary events:

I was extremely upset not to be able to attend especially as my father played a huge part prior to the Japanese invasion and during the period as an internee in Batu Lintang. His involvement seems to have gone largely unacknowledged apart from researchers such as Dr Peggy Day and people such as Dato Lim and Edward Mansel.

My father Lyle Noakes came to Sarawak in 1930 as a surveyor in the Survey Department. In February of 1941 he became Director of Air Raid Precautions for Sarawak; in May 1941 he became Deputy Secretary for Defence and then Secretary for Defence in July 1941.

After his release, Noakes was made Superintendent of Lands and Survey for the First Division, and on 8 October 1946 was appointed Magistrate of the Second Class. He then held the appointment of Superintendent of Census (1947-48).

Dad returned to Sarawak after convalescing in New Zealand. Hookworm had taken a huge toll on his eyesight and he could no longer work as a surveyor. One of his major roles was undertaking the first census in 1947. That census is still referred to today. In 1948 he became Registrar of Co-operative Societies and in 1951 he became a member of the Kuching Municipal Board. My mother came to Sarawak in 1950 as a midwife. My parents met and married here and then returned to New Zealand in 1954.

Dad never spoke of Batu Lintang and he never commented on treatment by the Japanese although I believe he was badly treated. It was a close friend of Dad's who told me the circumstances after Dad had passed away. Dad's MBE did not see the light of day again until last year when a group of Australians and New Zealanders were visiting the little museum at Batu Lintang. Edward Mansel asked me to come along and I decided to take the medal with me.

In 2011 Les and I visited Kuching for the first time (see image below). We had made contact with Dato Lim beforehand and we were treated like royalty.



John Lyle Noakes was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire in 1948, "For services to fellow internees at Kuching, Sarawak, during the enemy occupation". Judy observes: "To the best of my knowledge Dad did not wear his medal again after the investiture. He never attended Anzac Day services and never spoke of the reason for receiving the MBE".



"Very few people know of the part that Dad played in the history of Sarawak in terms of WW2. They are more likely to remember him for carrying out the 1947 census and his involvement with the Heng Hua and Sungai Apong. Jalan Noakes at Sungai Apong is named after Dad".



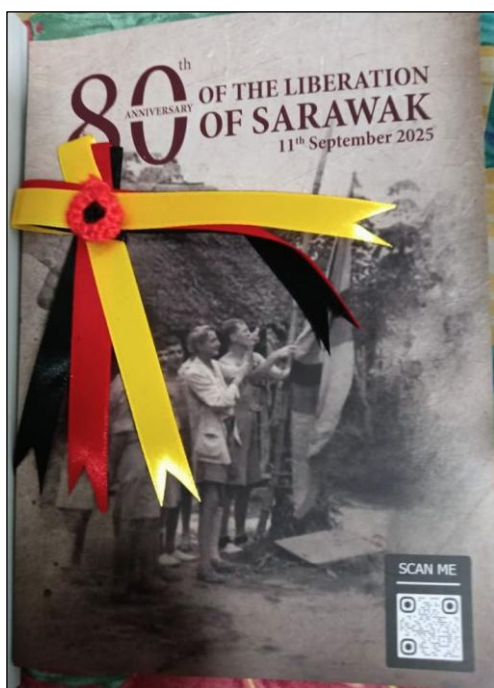
'80th ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION'

11 September 2025

This souvenir book was produced as a team initiative by Dato Lim Kian Hock, local historian Dr John Chew, Edward Mansell and journalist Jennie Soh. The SA/NT Branch, NMBVAA was privileged to be able to contribute some entries relating to our pilgrimage reunion visits and Malaya & Borneo Veterans Day commemorative ceremonies.

The book was produced with the support and blessing of the Honorary Consul of Australia Datuk Dr Philip Ting AM. Proceeds from the sale were contributed to the Cancer Children of Miri.

Dato Lim said, *"The book is to commemorate this Sarawak inspiring history for various parts of Sarawak as our heritage treasure for you and young generation to remember our history"*.



'THE ANZAC-SARA TREE PRECINCT'



With three commemorative 'Eastick', 'Wootten' and 'Lim' Bornean Ironwood trees now standing in the vicinity of the *Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak* (DUN), Dato Lim has proposed the creation of a short walking trail.

This trail, connecting the three trees to the present walkway, might be called "The ANZAC-SARA Walking Trail".

Dato Lim envisages that the site will include flag poles to display in solemnity dignity the national flags of Malaysia and Australia together with the state flag of Sarawak.

This will create a unique ANZAC symbolic site of reverent reflection for local Sarawakians and visitors alike.

Visiting Australians could be proud to make a pilgrimage visit and pay tribute to their Australian forefathers Sir Thomas Eastick and Sir George Wootten who played such a significant role in the liberation of Sarawak and Borneo in 1945.



SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN STASS

The NMBVAA visit to SK Stass was hosted by Puan Jacelyn Nihar, Senior Assistant for Administration.

The visit was arranged by Puan Shane Anak Regok (pictured below) who, as well as being a Pre-School Teacher, is Secretary of the SK Stass Parents and Teachers Association, and Secretary for the Kampung Stass Village Development and Security Committee, JKKK – *Jawankuasa Kemajuan dan Keselamatan Kampung*.

Of particular interest, Shane's late father had received a JKKK commendation certificate in appreciation of his contribution to Kampung Stass during Confrontation.



SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN GUMBANG

The visit to SK Gumbang was hosted by the Headmistress (*Guru Besar*) Puan Phiong Kiuk Fa, who was previously Headmistress of SK Serabak from 2016 to 2024.



SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN SERABAK

The visit to SK Serabak in Kampung Serikin was hosted by the Headmistress (*Guru Besar*) Puan Julina anak Nudui (pictured below, right).

Our executives were met on arrival at the school by the students in various forms of National Dress.

The visit was arranged by Puan Magdelina anak Joseph Nyadi, *Guru Penolong Kanan Hal Ehwal Murid* (Senior Assistant for Student Affairs), who has supported each of our past visits. In particular, our visit in September 2022 when SK Serabak hosted the ceremony in which presentations were made to the leaders of all three schools.



SEKOLAH KEBANGSAAN SUBA BUAN

Unfortunately on this visit there was no opportunity to visit SK Suba Buan. Freddie has sent us this message after receiving our first 'Hornbill Special' newsletter:

Thank you for sharing this special edition report with us.

We appreciate receiving the update on the recent liaison visit to Sarawak and the important commemorative events surrounding the 80th Anniversary of the Japanese surrender.

We also note with great interest the preparations underway for the combined Malaysia, Australia, and New Zealand Commemoration Service in Kuching in 2026.

This will indeed be a significant occasion, marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia.



TRIBUTE TO THE FALLEN HEROES OF AUSTRALIA

In the sacred memory of those who gave their lives defending Sarawak during the Confrontation of the 1960s, I, Temenggong Atok anak Derop, extend the deepest gratitude and solemn respect on behalf of the Bidayuh community of Kuching Division.

To the brave sons of Australia who crossed oceans to stand with us in our hour of need—your courage was not only a shield for our land, but a testament to the enduring bonds of humanity. You came not as conquerors, but as protectors. You stood firm in foreign soil, under foreign skies, so that our children might grow in peace and our villages remain free.

Your sacrifice is etched into the soil of Sarawak, into the hearts of our elders, and into the stories we pass down to our youth. We remember you not only as soldiers, but as brothers in spirit—men of valor whose legacy lives on in the freedom we cherish today.

To your families, we offer our prayers and our thanks. Know that your loved ones are honored not only in Australia, but here in the hills and rivers of Borneo. Their names may be written in distant cemeteries, but their memory walks among us.

May the light of their sacrifice continue to guide our path toward unity, peace, and mutual respect. And may the bond between our peoples—Australian and Bidayuh—remain strong, forged in the fire of shared struggle and sealed by the grace of remembrance.

We salute you. We honor you. We remember you.

With deepest honour and gratitude,
Temenggong Atok anak Derop

From 1963, Commonwealth military forces deployed to the Sarawak-Kalimantan border to protect the Sarawak capital Kuching by defending the approaches to Bau – which was recognised as “the key to the door of Kuching”. These were successively drawn from 40 and 42 Royal Marine Commando, 1st Green Jackets, 1st Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh’s Own Gurkha Rifles, 1st and 2nd Battalions, 10th Princess Mary’s Own Gurkha Rifles, and 1st Malaysian Renjers.

In 1965, these fortified patrol bases were occupied by elements of the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR), and by the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR) in 1966. Eight Australian soldiers died on operational service in Sarawak, and a further three died after being evacuated. Temenggong Bidayuh Atok anak Derop (Cultural Leader for Kuching Division), the immediate past Village Chief of Kampung Gumbang, prepared this tribute to the Sarawak Defenders.