IN OUR NEIGHBOURS’ SOIL OUR ANZACS SLEEP

The 60th anniversary of the End of the Malayan Emergency

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This year we mark the 60th anniversary of the end of the undeclared war known as the ‘Malayan Emergency’, a guerrilla war fought on the Malay Peninsula immediately following the end of World War 2, which lasted from 1948 until 1960.

Each year, veterans and their families gather to commemorate Malaya and Borneo Veterans Day, to honour service and sacrifice in the two post-war military campaigns on the Malay Peninsula and on Borneo – the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia.

In South Australia, the sacrifice of Australians on operational service during ‘The Emergency’ and ‘Confrontation’ is honoured annually in a Service of Commemoration in the West Torrens War Memorial Gardens hosted by the SA/NT Branch of the National Malaya-Borneo Veterans Association of Australia.

In 2018, the SA/NT Branch specially marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Malayan Emergency. This year, with circumstances preventing a public gathering for the usual solemn commemoration, veterans and families will privately acknowledge these military campaigns, particularly marking the 60th anniversary of the end of the Malayan Emergency.
The Emergency

The Federation of Malaya, a federation of eleven states (nine Malay states plus two of the British Straits Settlements, Penang and Malacca), came into existence on 1 February 1948.

Essentially, the Emergency began on 16 June that year when three European plantation managers in the northern state of Perak were executed by members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). A local State of Emergency was declared in Perak State on 18 June 1948; emergency measures were then enacted throughout the Federation, and in Singapore from 24 June.¹

The Emergency was the Commonwealth’s response to a ‘National Liberation War’ fought by communist guerrillas of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), the military arm of the Malayan Communist Party. The MNLA (predominantly Malayan Chinese) was seeking to overthrow the British colonial administration in Malaya.

Some official records give ‘18 June 1948’ for the commencement of the Malayan Emergency, however the qualifying period for the Commonwealth clasp ‘MALAYA’ for the applicable General Service Medal actually dates from 16 June 1948.

The Emergency was an ‘undeclared war’: the rubber plantations and tin-mining industries urged the use of the term ‘emergency’ since their losses would not have been covered by Lloyd’s insurers if it had been termed a ‘war’.

While the Emergency was underway, the Federation of Malaya became independent on 31 August 1957. The closing date of the qualifying period for the clasp ‘MALAYA’ was set as 31 July 1960 – the date on which Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra signed a Letter of Termination officially declaring the Emergency over.²

The formal conclusion of the Emergency set the conditions for Malaysia to come into existence on 16 September 1963 when the Federation of Malaya joined with the Singapore, North Borneo and Sarawak Crown Colonies (although Singapore later separated from Malaysia, on 9 August 1965).

The Commonwealth contribution to the Emergency included Malayan and British units, squadrons and warships, including Gurkhas and Royal Marines. Other Commonwealth troop contributing nations included Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Nyasaland, Northern Rhodesia and Southern Rhodesia. Australia’s commitment to operations against the Communist Terrorists during the Emergency fell within the context of its membership of the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR).
The Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960

The sacrifice of 45 Australians during and immediately following the Malayan Emergency was formally honoured by the SA/NT Branch, National Malaya-Borneo Veterans Association of Australia in a special Service of Commemoration held at the West Torrens War Memorial Gardens in Adelaide on Saturday 16 June 2018 – on the day the undeclared war known as the 'Malayan Emergency' commenced exactly 70 years earlier.

Among the 1,800 Malayan and Commonwealth troops who lost their lives in this 12 year conflict, 39 Australian servicemen lost their lives between the prescribed dates of the Emergency – fifteen of them as a result of operations. A further six died on active service in Malaya and Singapore in the period immediately following the prescribed closing date.

Remembrance

At commemorative services we solemnly repeat the promise to ‘remember the fallen’, but as time goes by we could rightfully ask who exactly are we remembering?

Under the leadership of President Brian Selby and Vice-President Don Cameron, the SA/NT Branch of the National Malaya-Borneo Veterans Association of Australia has gone to great lengths to ensure the names of the fallen from the Malayan Emergency have been recorded as accurately as possible.

The Association was established in Australia in June 1995. Membership is open to all Australian and Allied ex-Armed Forces personnel (and widows, widowers, family and friends) who served in the prescribed areas of Malaya, Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, the Thai/Malay Border, Ubon and Singapore during WW2, the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960, the Indonesian Confrontation with Malaysia 1962-1966, and post-1966 on the Peninsula, and in East Timor/Timor Leste.
The SA/NT Branch of the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association of Australia is the official arm of the association in South Australia and the Northern Territory for veterans of service in Malaya, Malaysia, Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei, the Thai/Malay Border, Ubon, Singapore and East Timor/Timor Leste – and their friends and families. The Branch hosts special commemorative events, as well as the annual Malaya & Borneo Veterans Day service on the Saturday in August closest to 31 August. Visit their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/NMBVAAAdelaide/

The fallen

The sacrifice of our 45 Australians who died on operational service during ‘The Emergency’ was not in vain, serving to uphold the sovereignty of the Federation of Malaya allowing the successful attainment of independence on 31 August 1957 and self-governance in Singapore on 3 June 1959 – leading to the creation of Malaysia on 16 September 1963 and the early development of Malaysia and Singapore as independent nations.

Of the Australians who died, one was buried at sea in Malayan waters, one was lost in the South China Sea and has no known grave, and one has no grave identified.

The remaining 42 Australians have been buried in a variety of places – and it might surprise most people that none are at rest in Australia.

The Australian repatriation policy in place at that time directed that Service personnel who died overseas after World War 2 were to be interred in the closest practicable Commonwealth cemetery.

A change to Australia’s repatriation policy on 21 January 1966 allowed for Service personnel who died overseas to be returned to Australia at public expense, although some were still buried overseas. On 2 June 2016, two RAAF C-17A Globemaster aircraft brought home the remains of 33 Australian Service personnel and dependents from cemeteries at Terendak in Malaysia and Kranji in Singapore. Most of the military personnel were casualties of the Vietnam War, while three were from Confrontation. This repatriation ensured that effectively all the fallen from the Vietnam War – who had been buried ‘halfway home’ – have been repatriated.
However the same is not true for the Emergency: not only are all the Australian fallen with known graves still buried overseas, but none of the 42 are buried in an official war cemetery.

Most are buried in Malaysia: 28 have graves in the Taiping (Kamunting Road) Christian Cemetery in Perak, six are buried in the Penang (Western Road) Cemetery, and two are buried in the Kuala Lumpur (Cheras Road) Civil Cemetery.11

The other six are now buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore, having been transferred there in 1975 from Ulu Pandan British Military Cemetery.12

Ulu Pandan Military Cemetery was one of two British Military cemeteries in Singapore: opened in September 1955, it was a multi-religion cemetery which ultimately contained the remains of some 1,580 British Servicemen including Gurkhas, their families, and civilians employed by the British military. By the late 1960s, the Singapore Government was finding it necessary to close down Ulu Pandan and Pasir Panjang cemeteries to make way for urban development.13 From 1968, remains began to be transferred to a site beside the Kranji War Cemetery. Following the withdrawal of British forces in 197114, further graves were relocated until Ulu Pandan Cemetery was closed in 1975.15 These six Australians were among the many Servicemen and their families who were exhumed and re-interred in Kranji Military Cemetery.16

Roll of Honour

In the 2018 Service of Commemoration to mark the 70th anniversary of the start of the Malayan Emergency, the names of the 45 Australians who lost their lives on active service were recited.

In 2020, it was intended to again recite the names of those who lost their lives on active service during and immediately following the Malayan Emergency – a person is never truly dead, and is not forgotten, as long as we continue to speak their name.

The names of the fallen are listed below with full details, as a permanent record of their sacrifice.17

While we honour the sacrifice of these 45 Australians, we should note that none of them are at rest in Australia.

During our service of commemoration we would place a poppy and recall their sacrifice overseas. Let us especially remember the three who have no known grave, and the 42 Australians who remain at rest overseas in the soil of our neighbours.

Lest we Forget
A32323 CORPORAL JOHN MARCUS O’DONNELL (1929-1957)

Corporal John Marcus O’Donnell of No 2 Airfield Construction Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, who died in Penang on 17 March 1957 aged 26, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in the Penang (Western Road) Cemetery in Malaysia. [images contributed by Mr Dean Norman].
THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY, 1948-1960
ROLL OF HONOUR

Royal Australian Navy, D37 HMAS Tobruk

R51381 Cook Alan Campbell Cooper (25 December 1957, drowned – Singapore Naval Base); originally buried in Bidaddari Cemetery in Singapore, re-interred in Ulu Pandan British Military Cemetery in 1969; transferred to Kranji Military Cemetery in 1975

Royal Australian Navy, D59 HMAS Anzac

R49694 Able Seaman Robert William Spooner (26 April 1957, accidentally killed at sea – Malayan waters); buried at sea on 27 April 1957 near the island of Pulau Tioman, Malaysia

Royal Australian Artillery

2/9510 Gunner Sidney John Blanch, ‘A’ Field Battery, RAA (3 May 1959, motor vehicle accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/3546 Gunner Ross Macleay Ducat, ‘A’ Field Battery, RAA (25 January 1959, motor vehicle accident near Simpang southwest of Taiping); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/42764 Craftsman Bruce Dudley Henderson (Royal Corps of Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers), Vehicle Mechanic attached to ‘A’ Field Battery, RAA (16 January 1959, injuries); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/8649 Bombardier Donald Keith Sutton, 105 Field Battery, RAA (2 August 1957, motor vehicle accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/7789 Sergeant Lionel Aubrey Tucker, 101 Field Battery, RAA (26 February 1961, illness-leptospirosis, Malacca, Malaya); Kuala Lumpur Civil Cemetery, Malaysia

28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group

3/6331 Private I M Jonas (Royal Australian Army Medical Corps), attached to 16th Commonwealth Field Ambulance (12 March 1961); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

3/42616 Signaller Kevin Victor Jones (Royal Australian Corps of Signals), attached to 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group Signal Squadron (18 September 1959, motor vehicle accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

3/5778 Signaller Edward Raymond Norris (Royal Australian Corps of Signals), attached to 28th Commonwealth Infantry Brigade Group Signal Squadron (22 March 1958, accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/4104 Private Eugene Francis Thompson (Royal Australian Army Service Corps), 126 Transport Platoon, Royal Australian Army Service Corps (22 March 1957, motor vehicle accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment

2/8409 Lieutenant Clive William Bridge (28 July 1961, injured in a military truck accident near Malacca on 17 July 1961 / died of injuries in the British Military Hospital, Singapore); Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore
2/12680 Private Brian Howard Ferrell (23 August 1960, drowned accidentally in Perak, Malaya near the Thai border; body recovered in Sungei Perak 25 August 1960); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/2817 Corporal John Robert Harrison (31 May 1960, died of wounds – accidentally wounded); Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore

2/9849 Private Leslie Ray Smedley (16 May 1960, motor vehicle accident near Ipoh); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment

2/2836 Corporal John Norman Allan (22 June 1956, killed-in-action during an ambush in northern Perak near the Malay-Thai border); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/7271 Sergeant Cecil Charles Anderson (4 March 1956, wounded-in-action during a fire-fight in Kedah / died of wounds; posthumously Mentioned-in-Despatches); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/8608 Private James Ian Decent (23 March 1956, died of wounds – accidentally wounded); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/2706 Sergeant Keith Henry Ewald (31 January 1956, died of wounds – accidentally shot in an ambush position in Kedah State); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/3693 Private Geoffrey Clyde Fritz (22 June 1956, wounded-in-action during an ambush in northern Perak near the Malay-Thai border / died of wounds; posthumously Mentioned-in-Despatches); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/9108 Private Thomas Benjamin Hallard (24 June 1957, killed-in-action during a fire-fight near Kroh in northern Perak on the Malay-Thai border in an encounter with 30 Communist Terrorists); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/3207 Private Cedric Charles Ingra (22 June 1956, killed-in-action during an ambush in northern Perak near the Malay-Thai border); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/8764 Private Carl Adrian Jay (23 March 1956, died of wounds – accidentally wounded while on patrol); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

3/2983 Private Henry Maxwell Jephson (18 August 1956, motor vehicle accident south of Kampar, Malaya); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/410190 Private Alfred William Keen (21 October 1956, illness); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/8234 Corporal Duncan MacVicar (2 November 1956, died of wounds – accidentally wounded); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/3542 Private James Neville Metcalf (4 July 1957, motor vehicle accident); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

2/7623 Private Jack Frederick Potts (24 June 1957, killed-in-action during a fire-fight near Kroh in northern Perak on the Malay-Thai border in an encounter with 30 Communist Terrorists); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia
3/410140 Private Joseph J Wilson from Machine Gun Platoon, Support Company (26 June 1957, accidentally shot near Kroh in northern Perak on the Malay-Thai border); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment

2/8924 Corporal Peter Leslie Haynes (23 May 1958, died of wounds – accidentally wounded); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

6/143 Sergeant Maurice Ryan, Royal Australian Army Service Corps (14 December 1958, died of wounds – accidentally wounded); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

1/3822 Corporal David Arthur Seesink (28 February 1958, illness); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

5/410165 Private Aeneas John Tulloch (31 January 1958, illness); Taiping Christian Cemetery, Malaysia

Royal Australian Air Force

A31167 Warrant Officer Heathcote Byron Brown, No 1 Squadron (9 April 1953, accident-ground, Singapore); Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore

O15609 Flying Officer M V Curtis (16 June 1961); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A218384 Leading Aircraftman William Patrick Duffy, Base Squadron, RAAF Butterworth (26 July 1959, accident-ground); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A312847 Leading Aircraftman D J Hall, Headquarters No 78 Wing (4 March 1959, accident-ground); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A312178 Aircraftman John George Lawson, Base Squadron, RAAF Butterworth (26 July 1959, accident-ground); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A22152 Airman Pilot III Gordon John McDonald, No 38 Squadron, attached to No 110 Squadron, RAF (31 August 1950, accident-flying, South China Sea between Changi and Saigon); no known grave – commemorated on the Memorial Wall at Terendak Military Cemetery, Malacca, Malaysia

A51076 Leading Aircraftman Michael Murphy, No 1 Squadron (3 December 1956, accident-ground, Singapore); Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore

O3606 Wing Commander Norman Henry Nixon DFC (9 February 1961, motor vehicle accident); Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore

O52768 Flight Lieutenant Dennis St George Greaves Oates, Base Squadron, RAAF Butterworth (10 July 1959, illness, Hong Kong); no grave identified

A32323 Corporal John Marcus O’Donnell, No 2 Airfield Construction Squadron (17 March 1957, accident-motorcycle accident in Penang); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A217227 Leading Aircraftman Colin John Rowe, Base Squadron, RAAF Butterworth (18 September 1959, motor vehicle accident); Penang Cemetery, Malaysia

A197 Warrant Officer George Robert Tait, No 38 Squadron (22 April 1951, illness); Kuala Lumpur Civil Cemetery, Malaysia
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

Two members of the Royal Australian Navy lost their lives during the Malayan Emergency: R51381 Cook Alan Campbell Cooper and R49694 Able Seaman Robert William Spooner. Able Seaman Spooner was buried at sea on 27 April 1957 near the island of Pulau Tioman, Malaysia.

R51381 COOK ALAN CAMPBELL COOPER (1933-1957)

Cook Alan Campbell Cooper of the Royal Australian Navy (HMAS Tobruk), who drowned at Singapore Naval Base on 25 December 1957 aged 24, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore.
1/2817 CORPORAL JOHN ROBERT HARRISON (1924-1960)

Corporal John Robert Harrison of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, who died of wounds on 31 May 1960 aged 36, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore.

2/8409 LIEUTENANT CLIVE WILLIAM BRIDGE (1933-1961)

Lieutenant Clive William Bridge of the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, who died in the British Military Hospital, Singapore on 28 July 1961 aged 27, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore.
A31167 WARRANT OFFICER HEATHCOTE BYRON BROWN (1907-1953)

Warrant Officer Heathcote Byron Brown of No 1 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, who died in Singapore on 9 April 1953 aged 45, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore.

O3606 WING COMMANDER NORMAN HENRY NIXON DFC (1916-1961)

Wing Commander Norman Henry Nixon DFC of the Royal Australian Air Force, who died in a motor vehicle accident on 9 February 1961 aged 45, is one of six Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in Kranji Military Cemetery in Singapore.
Private Brian Howard Ferrell of ‘C’ Company, 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment accidentally drowned on 23 August 1960 near the Thai border, aged 28. Private Ferrell is one of 28 Australians who died during the Malayan Emergency or immediately after who are buried in the Taiping (Kamunting Road) Christian Cemetery in Perak, Malaysia.

Because his death occurred after 31 July 1960, the date the government of Malaya officially declared the Emergency over, his name is listed by the Australian War Memorial under the title ‘Southeast Asia, 1955-1975’.

This photograph is contained in a scrapbook held by the 1RAR ‘Clancy Scholes’ Museum, Coral Lines, Lavarack Barracks in Townsville.

Refer also:

“Service and Sacrifice in the Malayan Wars: Malaya-Borneo Veterans Day 2019, Part 1 – The SA/NT Branch”.

“A Person is never truly dead as long as they are not forgotten: the 70th anniversary of the Start of the Malayan Emergency”.

“6 Wing AAFC helps mark Malayan Emergency 70th”.
Contact, Air Land & Sea (online), 18 June 2018
http://www.contactairlandandsea.com/2018/06/18/6-wing-aafc-helps-mark-malayan-emergency-70th/
THE AUTHOR

This paper is based on a Commemoration Address prepared for a service of commemoration to be held by the SA/NT Branch, National Malaya-Borneo Veterans Association of Australia at the West Torrens War Memorial Gardens in Adelaide on Saturday 29 August 2020, but cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time.

Major Paul Rosenzweig (Royal Australian Infantry Corps, ret’d) is a non-professional military historian and biographer who has contributed to various Australian historical journals and Defence publications for over 35 years.

He was awarded the Centenary Medal (2001) for “significant research on Australian military history over the last twenty years”, and the Medal of the Order of Australia (2017) “For service to military history preservation”. Paul is a Fellow of the Military Historical Society of Australia, and an Australia Day Ambassador for South Australia.

Through his Facebook entity ‘Thanks Digger’, Paul has supported various organisations in commemorating key anniversaries including the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign, the centenary of World War 1, the commencement of the Malayan Emergency, and the cease-fire which ended Confrontation.

Thanks Digger is increasingly becoming an effective portal for collaborative research with families, young Australians and organisations both nationally and internationally, and for promoting research outcomes.

https://www.facebook.com/Thanks_Digger
Notes

1 The Emergency was put in place by Emergency Regulations Ordinance 1948 (Federation of Malaya Ordnance no 17 of 1948).

2 Emergency Regulations Ordinance 1948 (Federation of Malaya Ordnance no 17 of 1948) was repealed in 1960 and replaced by the Malaysian Internal Security Act 1960 (Act no 18 of 1960, passed 22 June 1960) to be effective from 1 August 1960 (Peninsular Malaysia) and 16 September 1963 (East Malaysia).

3 RAN 2, Army 27, RAAF 10.

4 Army 4, RAAF 2.

5 R49694 Able Seaman R W Spooner, HMAS Anzac (26 April 1957).

6 A22152 Airman Pilot III Gordon John McDonald, RAAF (31 August 1950).

7 O52768 Flight Lieutenant Dennis St George Greaves Oates, RAAF (10 July 1959).

8 From the early 1960s, next of kin could have the remains returned to Australia at their own expense. This post-war repatriation policy changed on 21 January 1966, after which time Service personnel who died overseas were meant to be returned to Australia at public expense.


10 Three Vietnam War casualties were not brought home because the families declined the government’s offer.

11 In addition, one Australian from the period of Confrontation is also buried in the Kuala Lumpur Civil Cemetery: 13339 Private F N O’Sullivan (14 November 1963).

12 Note: not in Kranji War Cemetery which it adjoins. Kranji Military Cemetery is a substantial non-world war site created in 1975 when it was found necessary to remove the graves of servicemen and their families from Pasir Panjang and Ulu Pandan cemeteries.

13 The former Ulu Pandan Cemetery site, located to the south of Ulu Pandan Road near its junction with Clementi Road, is now Pine Grove condominium complex.

14 On 18 July 1967, Britain announced through its Defence White Paper its plans to withdraw British troops from Singapore by the mid-1970s: six months later, the deadline was moved forward to the end of 1971. Farewell ceremonies marking the withdrawal of British forces from Singapore were held in October 1971.


16 An additional seven Australian servicemen from the period of Confrontation are also now buried in Kranji Military Cemetery, having been transferred there from Ulu Pandan Cemetery: 1200029 Private L R Downes (17 May 1965), 37562 Lance-Corporal P H Denehey (6 June 1965), 58702 Sapper A J Colohan (16 December 1965), 6363 WO2 M C Hutchinson (8 April 1966), 215881 Private L M O’Carroll (27 May 1966), 14982 Private J W Jones (28 May 1966) and 342550 Corporal P J J West (2 July 1966).