



Media Advisory

REMEMBERING OUR FOREFATHERS' CONTRIBUTIONS IN WORLD WAR II

Remembrance Ceremony at Kranji War Memorial

SINGAPORE, 15 February 2012

"British, Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, Chinese and Malays
An international assortment of many races
Fought for a land so defensively stark
A noble calling not for faint hearts"

The above excerpt from the poem *Tribute to Heroes*, written by LTC Andy Tan of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) in 2005, lies at the heart of the Remembrance Ceremony, held at Kranji War Memorial, on 15 February 2012 – a homage to the joint local and Commonwealth forces who paid the ultimate sacrifice in the Battle for Singapore, and the ensuing Japanese Occupation.

2. As part of the commemorative activities of the 70th anniversary of the Battle for Singapore, the Remembrance Ceremony honours the memory of the war dead who lost their lives for the defence of Singapore, and reflects on the contributions made by both the civilian and militia population in Singapore during the Battle and the ensuing Japanese Occupation.

3. The evening service, organised by the National Heritage Board (NHB) and The Changi Museum, will be attended by local and foreign war veterans, local associations, such as the National Cadet Corps and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) Veteran's League, and schools. Heads of Diplomatic Missions in Singapore and their Defence staffs and contingents of Service personnel from Commonwealth nations, will also be present, to pay their respect.

4. This year, the ceremony seeks also to further engage Singaporeans in the ceremony itself, especially the younger generation who have only known a peaceful and prosperous Singapore. Members of the National Cadet Corps (NCC), a student uniform group, will serve in the catafalque party. A student from a local secondary school will also read the war poem *Never Again!* a plea for no more war. The poem was written by Scott Beer when he was 10 years old. This is the first time that Singapore students are involved to such an extent.

5. In addition to readings specially chosen to reflect the solemnity and poignancy of this ceremony, a bell will be rung five times at 6.10pm, once for every year of the Second World War (WWII) in the Pacific, including Singapore. This was also the exact same time that the British surrendered to the Japanese army after 55 days of hard fighting. Whilst this was the darkest chapter in Singapore's history, it also reflected the unity and the strength of the people of Singapore in surviving this

difficult period, and had a profound impact on the subsequent post-war and nation-building years.

More information on the Kranji War Memorial may be found in the Annex.

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993 under the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts (MICA). Its mission is to foster nationhood, promote identity building, and champion the development of a vibrant cultural and heritage sector in Singapore. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans through a shared experience. NHB manages the national museums, the National Archives of Singapore, and the Heritage Conservation Centre.

National Archives of Singapore

About Kranji War Cemetery

Kranji War Cemetery is on a hill overlooking the scene of the Japanese landing in 1941. Its development as a permanent war cemetery began when it was found that a large cemetery at Changi, where the main prisoner of war camp in Singapore had been situated, could not remain undisturbed.

Built and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Kranji War Cemetery is the final resting place of 4,461 Allied military personnel, who perished in Malaya and Singapore in the Second World War. The cemetery also honours, on the walls of the Singapore Memorial, more than 24,000 war dead whose remains were never found.

Before the Japanese invasion, Kranji was the site of an ammunition depot. After Singapore fell, the Japanese established a prisoner-of-war camp at Kranji. This eventually became a POW military hospital. The prisoners started a small cemetery, and after the war, it was decided to develop it into the permanent and main war cemetery for the Second World War. Thus, the graves of war dead from other cemeteries in Singapore, such as those at Changi and Buona Vista, were also relocated to Kranji.

To search for a particular name or grave, there is a Register available at the Cemetery Office. You can also search online at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website: www.cwgc.org

The central avenue of the cemetery rises gently from the Stone of Remembrance near the entrance to the Cross of Sacrifice, beyond which flights of steps lead to a terrace on top of the hill. On this terrace are four memorials, the largest of which is the Singapore Memorial to 24,346 soldiers and airmen who died during the campaign in Malaya and Indonesia, or in subsequent captivity, and have no known grave. There is a separate register for this.

Grouped around it are, to the east a memorial to 107 servicemen buried with some 300 civilians in a mass grave in the grounds of Singapore Civil Hospital; to the west the memorial that commemorates 255 casualties of the Malaya campaign whose graves elsewhere in Malaya cannot be maintained; and to the south, behind the Singapore Memorial, the Cremation Memorial, which honours 789 soldiers, the great majority of whom belonged to the army of undivided India, who died during the same campaign and were accorded the last rite required by their religion-committal to fire. The last two are the subject of another register.

The Chinese Memorial in plot 44, which is shown on the plan of the cemetery, is in fact a collective grave, in which, were buried 69 Chinese-all members of the British Commonwealth Forces-who were massacred by the, Japanese during the occupation. The inscription on the memorial is in English and Chinese, and reads *"The men whose names are recorded on these panels perished in captivity in February, 1942, and lie buried here in one grave with ten comrades whose names are not known."*

The cemetery, enclosed by an evergreen hedge within a row of trees, has smooth grass grave plots. Groups of evergreen and flowering trees and shrubs lend colour and beauty; while above all towers the huge central pylon of the Singapore Memorial which rises through the roof to a height of 80 ft. and is surmounted by a star.

National Archives of Singapore