

Kundasang War Memorial



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The Kundasang War Memorial was established as a tribute to the brave 2,428 Australians and British POWs who died in Sandakan, Ranau or on the infamous Sandakan Death Marches.

The beautiful memorial was initiated by Major G.S 'Toby' Carter, a New Zealander who served in the Royal Australian Engineers and organised native resistance in the Kelabit Highlands of Sarawak during the War. He was so moved by the atrocities of the Death March that he passionately lobbied for the construction of the memorial. His efforts paid off in 1962 when the Government approved the National Park Bill and the establishment of the Kundasang War Memorial. However, over the years, the memorial suffered a series of vandalism and maintenance was poor. It underwent a major restoration process in the late 2004.

Designed by resident architect, J.C. Robinson, the Kundasang War Memorial is reminiscent of a fort, built on a sloping hill. As you climb up the cobbled steps, visitors usually start their visit with a quick video presentation at the open air sitting area to give

them a better understanding of the Sandakan Death March.

The highlight of the Memorial is none other than its four beautiful Gardens, specially built to represent the homelands of those who died in the Death Marches and the locals who risked their lives to help the POWs.

The Australian Garden is truly beautiful, with its lush green lawn and in its centre is a map of Australia made of smooth white pebbles. At its far end stands the Memorial plaque. The English Garden truly reminds you of a sunny and bright summer's day! Like a traditional English garden, it is filled with rose bushes, leaving a light rosy scent lingering in the air. The Borneo Garden showcases a treasure of orchids, endemic to Borneo. A special honour is given to the plant that served as staple food during the War – the tapioca. For a quiet moment, step into the Contemplation Garden and Pool. This is where most services and prayers are held in remembrance of the fallen who never returned home. A plaque is placed here with the inscription of the words sung by a Death March survivor:

I'm dreaming of Australia, The land we left behind.

Dreaming of the loved ones, We could always bear in mind

Although its only fancy, Our hearts within us year.

But we'll make up for lost moments

When to Australia we return. There's be sailing on the harbour,

The Showboat our first choice.

Or maybe we'd be dancing

Listening to our sweetheart's voice.

Although it's only fancy, Our hearts within us yearn.

See we'll make up for lost moments

When to Aussie we return.

- Nelson Short

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