



**NATIONAL
MEMORIAL
ARBORETUM**
Part of The Royal British Legion



VJ DAY 75

TOUR
1 OF 2

ANNIVERSARY TOUR OF THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

While we can't undertake our daily guided walks at the Arboretum, we wanted to share with you just some of the stories behind the memorials that link to the end of the Second World War during this special anniversary year.

For ease, the VJ Day tour is broken into two sections

During each tour we have referenced our **Tea for II** project which explores the importance of tea in British culture and how it has become a symbol of home. Originally comprising several exhibition elements, the project was due to run from VE Day in May to VJ Day in August. Due to our necessary closure, only the art installation is available to view on our Ancient Burial Mound. This emotive display, created by students from Central St Martins, represents the tea parties held on VE Day and how those still fighting in the Far East were absent from the celebrations.

SECOND WORLD WAR FACTS

- Around 180 countries and 100 million people were involved in the Second World War
- Between 50 and 60 million military personnel and civilians died.
- 19 to 28 million more died through war related disease and famine.



MEMORIALS FEATURED IN THIS TOUR

- 1 Changi Lych Gate
- 2 Sumatra Railway Memorial
- 3 Burma Railway Memorial
- 4 Royal Norfolk Regiment, Suffolk Regiment and Cambridgeshire Regiment Memorial
- 5 Burma Star Memorial
- 6 The Chindit Memorial
- 7 Women's Auxiliary Service – The Chinthe Women Memorial Plaque
- 8 Tea for II Installation



Changi Lych Gate

The Changi Lych Gate was originally built by men who were Prisoners of War (POWs) of the Imperial Japanese occupation of Singapore and held in the Changi Prison camp. Captain Cecil D. Pickersgill, an architect prior to the war, believed that those buried in the camp deserved a final honour, to give back respect and dignity as they passed through to the burial ground.

Captain Pickersgill approached the Japanese commandant of the camp to ask if they could erect a lych gate at the entrance. The Japanese, who were keen at the time to demonstrate how well they were treating POWs through propaganda, agreed.

With permission, Captain Pickersgill along with men from the 18th Division Royal Engineers, designed and built the Lych Gate

which stood at the entrance to the burial ground until the reoccupation of Singapore.

After the war, those buried there were reinterred by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission at Kranji and the Lych Gate was stored until 1952 until it was placed outside Tanglin Barracks in Singapore. As British forces withdrew in the 1970s, the gates were brought back to Britain, first to Basingbourne Barracks near Cambridge and finally to the National Memorial Arboretum for rededication in 2003.

The Lych Gate, restored by members of the 39 Engineering Regiment, now stands at the entrance to the Far East Prisoners of War area of the Arboretum.

Sumatra Railway Memorial

During the Second World War, Japanese merchant ships carrying supplies were increasingly under threat from Allied attack, regularly being sunk by American submarines. Imperial Japan needed a supply route across land which led to the construction of both the Sumatra and Burma Railways.

The Sumatra Railway was built in extremely unhealthy and brutal conditions through the forced labour of approximately 5,000 Allied Prisoners of War and 30,000 local people. The route itself spanned 140 miles through dense jungle, rivers, swamps and mountains.

After nine months of construction, the Sumatra Railway was completed on 15 August 1945, now known as VJ Day. It was only ever used to transport the prisoners out of Sumatra on their way home.

The memorial at the Arboretum today is a replica section of track, a recreation of 20 yards of the railway, created by Jack Plant who was captured by the Japanese occupation in 1944 and put to work on the railway.



Burma Railway Memorial

In June 1942, the Japanese occupation began the construction of over 250 miles of railway spanning from Bangkok in Thailand to Rangoon in Burma (now Myanmar) to enable them to supply their armies by land.

The rail link was constructed predominantly through the forced labour of over 330,000 men, thousands of whom were Allied Prisoners of War (POWs), alongside over 200,000 Asian labourers known as Rōmusha. The POWs and Rōmusha were forced to work long hours, in hazardous conditions, with little food, shelter or medical care.

Around 16,000 POWs and 100,000 Rōmusha lost their lives. It has been said that for every sleeper that was laid, one person died. The railway subsequently became known as the Death Railway.

The 30 metres of track that forms the memorial at the Arboretum is original railway track from Burma. On arrival at the Arboretum, it was noted that the track had British markings embossed on the inside and, after extensive research, it appears that this track was manufactured in Middlesbrough and then exported to North Malaya in 1904. The Japanese then removed the track to use on the Burma Railway.



Burma Star Memorial

The Burma Star Memorial is dedicated to all the men and women who served during the Burma Campaign between 1941 and 1945. During this time 29,000 British and Allied soldiers were killed in action and a further 13,000 died from tropical diseases.

The 15ft tall monolith is a copy of the Kohima 2nd Division Memorial that stands at the Commonwealth War Grave Cemetery in Kohima, on the border of India with Burma. The Battle of Kohima saw some of the fiercest fighting of the Burma campaign and is often recognised as the site where the Japanese advance was finally halted.

The memorial is inscribed with the Kohima Epitaph, written by John Maxwell Edmonds an English classicist during the First World War. The epitaph is now used around the world on memorials and during services of remembrance:

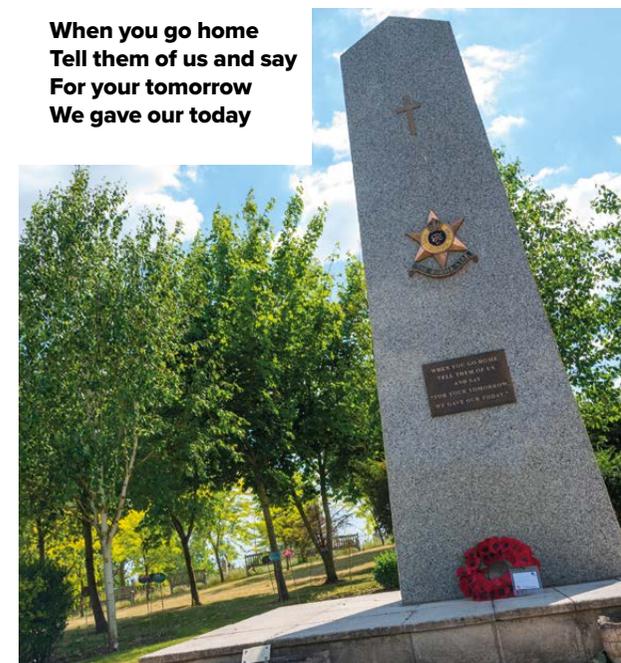
**When you go home
Tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow
We gave our today**

Royal Norfolk Regiment, Suffolk Regiment and Cambridgeshire Regiment Memorial

The Norfolk and Suffolk Regiments can both trace their history back to 1685 when they were formed to suppress a rebellion. They underwent a number of re-organisations and changes of role over the years, but eventually came back together in 1959 as the 1st East Anglian Regiment. They were finally disbanded in 1967.

The Cambridgeshire Regiment was more of a Territorial Army or volunteers' regiment, dating back to 1860, but was also disbanded in 1967

During the Second World War, many men from these regiments died as Prisoners of War, having been forced to work on the notorious 'Death Railway' through Burma. The 2nd Battalions of the Suffolk and Royal Norfolk Regiments served in General William Slim's 14th Army that drove the Japanese from Burma. Appropriately, this memorial lies between the memorial for the 'Death Railway' and the Burma Star Memorial.

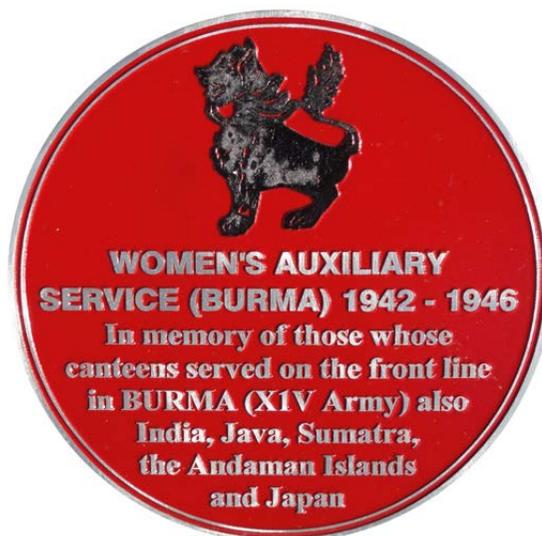




Women's Auxiliary Service (Burma), WAS(B) Memorial Plaque

In 1942, following the Japanese invasion of Burma, a group of intrepid women, working as cypher clerks, formed themselves into mobile canteen operators to serve the front line troops helping to sustain morale. Providing mugs of hot tea, cigarettes, sandwiches and a cheery smile, the women moved ahead of the troops, sometimes to only a few miles ahead of the enemy. By VJ Day there were 250 wonderful women who were constantly on the move or sleeping under the stars.

Servicemen often joked that they were never without a WAS(B) between themselves and the frontline. Lieutenant General Slim, Commander of the 14th Army, said the WAS(B)s "*showed the highest standards of devotion and courage.*"



Thank you to Arboretum volunteers Mick Byrne and David Bardell for creating this trail.

The Chindit Memorial

The Chindits were the largest of the Allied Special Forces of the Second World War, formed and led by Major General Orde Wingate DSO who died in action in 1944.

For many months the Chindits lived and fought in the jungles, surviving on airdrops and marching on foot through challenging terrain clearing their own paths with machetes to penetrate deep behind enemy lines. Their objective was to prevent supplies being transported by railway through Burma to the battlefield. They had some successes, demolishing the railway in over 70 places, but suffered greatly from the climate and the constant shortage of supplies. Few of them were fit for further service after emerging from the jungle.

The obelisk at the National Memorial Arboretum, in memory of this multi-national force, is topped with a bronze Chinthe, the mythical beast which guarded Burmese temples, from which the Chindits derived their name. The memorial is engraved with the motto of the Chindits "The boldest measures are the safest".

Tea For II



Tea for II is a new artwork produced collectively by students studying BA Ceramic Design at Central Saint Martins, University of the Arts London. The installation commemorates 75 years since the end of the Second World War and was inspired by the Arboretum and the region's famous pottery industry.

The installation is inspired by the tea parties that were at the heart of VE Day celebrations, taking place on rows of tables and chairs in the streets. While people in Britain were celebrating VE Day, the Second World War continued in the Asia-Pacific. Britain, its Allies and the Commonwealth were caught in conflict with Imperial Japan until VJ Day on 15 August 1945.

Those who served in the Asia-Pacific were absent from VE Day celebrations and their contribution to the war effort is often overlooked. Their absence inspired the omission of a table from the installation. In place of a table, grasses from Africa, Britain and the Asia-Pacific grow to remember the diverse army that served in the region and whose bravery, sacrifice and collaboration gave us the freedoms we enjoy today.

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ual: central
saint martins