LINTANG CAMP MEMORIALS

Brian Taylor

INTRODUCTION

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THE FLAG

When prisoners of war died in the Lintang Camp, their funerals were arranged and conducted with dignity. They were described by Bishop Howes, himself one of those interned, in a letter to Canon John Crowe. "Bodies were taken for burial to the Anglican or Roman Catholic cemetery in Kuching. The coffin covered by the Union Jack, was moved on a hearse pushed by four soldiers, and preceded by a Sergeant. The appropriate priest – RC or Anglican – brought up the rear, and six Japanese guards marched on either side."[1] Later on, disease and malnutrition increased the death-rate, and a burial ground was made close to the camp. By the end of 1944 and in 1945 deaths were so many, often running to double figures in a day, and three or four bodies might be buried at the same time, the flag being moved from one makeshift coffin to the next, before the committal.

When the Japanese capitulated to the Australians, their flag was struck on 11 September 1945, and others were hoisted, a Sarawak flag, which had been successfully hidden, and the much-used Union flag. The Australian Commander-in-Chief, General George Wootten, gave the flag to the senior British officer, Leslie