

Australian prisoners of war: Second World War, prisoners of the Japanese

The following sources will help discover further information about an individual's prisoner of war experience.

Sources of information

- **Personal service record** - request a copy of a Second World War service record from the National Archives of Australia [www.naa.gov.au/collection/explore/defence/service-records/army-wwii.aspx].
- Department of Veteran's Affairs **World War 2 Nominal Roll** [www.ww2roll.gov.au] includes unit name, service number and whether or not the person was a prisoner of war.
- **Australian Military Forces Prisoners of War and Missing in the Far East and South West Pacific Islands** (Official record series AWM232). This series contains lists of those imprisoned arranged by service, unit or country. It has been digitised and is searchable online [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people].
- **Roll of Honour** [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search/people?roll=Roll%20of%20Honour] records the names of service men and women who died during or as a result of service with Australian military forces.
- **Commonwealth War Graves Commission** [www.cwgc.org/] casualty database lists all British and Commonwealth soldiers who died in the First and Second World wars. The register provides details about where the individual is buried or commemorated, includes plans of cemeteries and photographs of the cemetery or memorial.
- Casualty lists - a list of AIF casualties in Malaya, Java, and Timor, as known by 2nd Echelon AIF Malaya. Arranged alphabetically and by service number. (Includes force and fate). Official record AWM54 171/11/2
- Casualty information on prisoners of war, Burma-Thailand and Japan. Official record AWM127 77

The prisoner-of-war experience

The following resources are available on the Memorial's website. Search the collections database [www.awm.gov.au/advanced-search] using the name of the unit, camp, force (such as A Force, Ramsay Force) or country (remember that some countries now have a different name – Taiwan was still called Formosa during the war).

- **Books:** Look especially for published unit histories. Some of these contain sections on the experiences of those members of the unit who were taken prisoner-of-war, often include lists of names.
- **Collections:** To find photographs and private records, search by names of individuals, camps, name of unit or service (e.g., RAAF, RAN, nurses).
- **RecordSearch** [www.naa.gov.au/collection/search/]: Search for official records in the joint database of the Memorial and the National Archives of Australia using the name of country, camp, unit or service, or prison* and relevant date range. Some examples of official records held at the Memorial:
 - Series AWM127 contains some nominal rolls, such as those for individual units, groups of nurses, or specific camps
 - War crimes and trials. Affidavits and sworn statements, various items in AWM54 1010/*. To locate items in this series, search RecordSearch using individual names (surname and prison* or prisoner of war) as keywords with AWM54 1010/* in the Series number field
 - War crimes and trials. Control copy of evidence. Synopsis of evidence. Index of names. AWM54 1010/1/8. Alphabetical list of names (not listed individually on RecordSearch) of those giving evidence. Includes name, rank, number, unit, list of prisoner-of-war camps in which they were held, dates and synopsis of evidence
- **Ephemera and souvenirs** include some material relevant to Second World War prisoners of war, such as concerts and theatre programs. Some guides to the ephemera collection are available online

[www.awm.gov.au/collection/research-at-the-memorial/findingaids], while others are only available in paper format in the Reading Room. Please contact the Research Centre if you would like assistance [www.awm.gov.au/contact/].

- **Official history of the Second World War:**

Lionel Wigmore, *The Japanese thrust*, Australia in the War of 1939-1945, Series 1 (Army), vol 4 (Canberra, 1957). Part III describes the experiences of the widely-scattered groups of prisoners of the Japanese from 1942 to 1945.

Location of camps

- Peter Brune, *Descent into hell: the fall of Singapore - Pudu and Changi - the Thai-Burma railway* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2014).
- Frances Worthington Lipe, *Japanese prisoner-of-war camps during World War II, 1941-1945: known locations of camps where American, British, Dutch, Australian, Canadian, Indian and other allied military and civilian personnel were imprisoned by the Japanese* (Brownsville, Tex.: Medical Research Committee of American Ex-prisoners of War, 1983?). AWM Map Collection G7720.S7
- General diagram of railway between Thailand and Burma and brief list showing prisoner-of-war camps (about Oct 1943). Official record AWM54 469/4/1
- Sketch map of part of Burma, Thailand showing location of F and H Force Camps and Halts - Apr-Dec 1943. Official record AWM54 469/5/13

Related research guides

- Ambon [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-ambon]
- Borneo (Sandakan) [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-borneo]
- Burma–Thailand Railway [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-burma-thai]
- Hainan Island [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-hainan]
- Japan [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-japan]
- Java and Timor [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-java-timor]
- New Britain and New Ireland [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-newbritain]
- Senior Officers' Party, Korea, Manchuria and Taiwan [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-senior]
- Singapore (Changi and Singapore Island) [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-singapore]
- Sumatra [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-sumatra]
- Prison ships [www.awm.gov.au/research/guide/pow-ww2-ships]

External sources

- National Archives of Australia, Fact sheet 61— World War II war crimes [www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs61.aspx]
- National Archives of Australia, Records relating to Australian prisoners of war of the Japanese in World War II [P]
- Department of Veterans Affairs, Thai-Burma Railway and Hellfire Pass [<https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/history/conflicts/thaiburma-railway-and-hellfire-pass>]
- The Thailand-Burma Railway Centre [www.tbrconline.com/] is an interactive museum, information and research facility dedicated to presenting the history of the Thailand-Burma Railway. The TBRC has researched the experiences of approximately 105,000 prisoners of the Japanese in South East Asia during the Second World War. They can be contacted regarding this research at admin@tbrconline.com.