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PUDU GAOL, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYA

17 Sep 2021

*PUDU GAOL, KUALA LUMPUR,
Malaya*



Above: Entrance



Constructed in 1895

Pudu originally housed about 350 British and Australian POWs and civilian prisoners. Another estimation put the figure at about 500 confined in buildings intended to house 70 prisoners during the British regime.

Included amongst the numbers were soldiers captured in Malaya and escaped POWs from Singapore including **Jock McClaren, Burnett and Wilkie** who had all been together with **Penrod Dean and Jock McGregor of 2/4th** at a Chinese Guerrilla Camp in Malaya having escaped Singapore.

Conditions were primitive and rations scarce with almost all prisoners suffering with beri beri, pellagra and other vitamin deficiencies. Lack of vitamin 3 resulted in 'the four D's' – diarrhoea, dermatitis, dementia and death.

Dysentery was rife with overcrowding. Initially the small outdoor areas were dug up to provide pit latrines which overflowed. Prisoners then switched to buckets.

Fortunately POWs could volunteer for work parties that went into the city to load scrap iron and other materials intended for the planned Burma-Thai Railway – and where opportunities arose to scavenge food. Those too sick to work were unlikely to survive. Known escapees were forbidden to work in the city – including **McClaren, Burnett and Wilkie**. They were trapped inside the overcrowded and disease-ridden gaol and knew they would be lucky to survive.

Four Australians and 101 British died at Pudu between January to September 1942. Following the retreat in the face of Japanese advancement to Singapore, many soldiers were caught behind the front lines had lived in the jungle for months before being brought in; and were in dire physical condition.

During October 1942 the POWs were moved to Changi, Singapore.

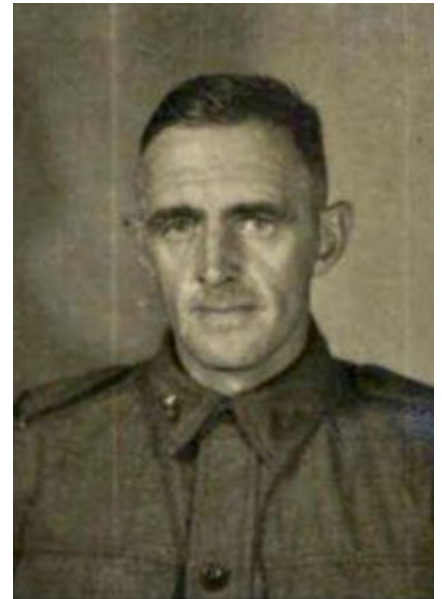
McClaren was later sent with 'E' Force Borneo from Singapore to Sandakan. He was one of the 8 successful escapees from Berhala Island as the Japanese were moving the POWs on the last stage to Sandakan. The 8 men were assisted by the Sandakan Underground Network – in fact they could not have escaped without their invaluable assistance.

Please read further about the Underground and its discovery by the Japanese and the terrible consequences for all involved. (<https://2nd4thmgb.com.au/story/23730/>).

Please read more about Jock McClaren (<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mclaren-robert-kerr-11001>).

QX20158 McClaren, Robert Kerr (known as 'Jock') Enlistment photo.

Successful POW escapee from Singapore only to be captured in Malaya, imprisoned Pudu Gaol POW Camp before being returned to Singapore.



Below: At the end of War, McClaren in Beret in centre visits Berhala Island, from where he was one of 8 successful escapee POWs – only made possible by assistance of Sandakan Secret Underground Network.



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