

Kanchanaburi War Cemetery

The Kanchanaburi War Cemetery (known locally as the Don-Rak War Cemetery) is the main prisoner of war (POW) cemetery for victims of Japanese imprisonment while building the Burma Railway. It is on the main road, Saeng Chuto Road, through the town of Kanchanaburi, Thailand, adjacent to an older Chinese cemetery. The cemetery contains 6,982 graves of British, Australian and Dutch prisoner of wars of which 6,858 have been identified.

History

The cemetery was designed by Colin St Clair Oakes and is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It is located near the former prisoner of war base camp of Kanchanaburi. There are 6,858 POWs buried there, mostly British, Australian, and Dutch. It contains the remains of prisoners buried beside the south section of the railway from Bangkok to Nienke (Niki Niki), excepting those identified as Americans, whose remains were repatriated.

There are 1,896 Dutch war graves, 5,085 Commonwealth graves and one non-war grave. Two graves contain the ashes of 300 men who were cremated after a cholera outbreak in Niki Niki. The Kanchanaburi Memorial gives the names of 11 from India who are buried in Muslim cemeteries.

Nearby, across a side road, is the Thailand–Burma Railway Centre about the railway and the prisoners who built it. There is also a Dutch Roman Catholic church nearby – Beata Mundi Regina.

Chungkai War Cemetery

Chungkai War Cemetery, also known as Chung Kai War Cemetery, is a war cemetery in Tha Ma Kham near Kanchanaburi, Thailand. Established in the 1950s, the cemetery hosts the graves of 1,426 British and 313 Dutch prisoners of war who died during World War II. It was originally a prisoner of war camp on the Burma Railway.

Description

The cemetery at Chungkai hosts the graves of 1,426 British and 313 Dutch servicemen who died during World War II. The majority of the interred died building the sections of the nearby Burma Railway. The cemetery is built on the site of a prisoner of war camp used by the Japanese army to house Allied POWs during the conflict.

In 1946, it was decided to re-bury the Burma Railway deaths which were buried in many graveyards along the line in three large cemeteries. The current Chungkai cemetery is an extension of the existing camp cemetery. American POWs were repatriated back to the United States. The status of the Australian soldiers is unclear. One source describes Australians being buried at the cemetery, while another states no Australians are buried there. Or that it only contains several non-military Australian prisoners. The cemetery was designed by Colin St Clair Oakes.

Camp Chungkai

Chungkai (also: Thai No.2 Camp) was founded as a prisoner of war work camp. It was located 57 kilometres from the beginning of the line, at the edge of the jungle near the Mae Klong River. The first prisoners arrived in October 1942, and were tasked to work on the bridges at Tamarkan and the section up to Wun Lun, at kilometre 68. One of the tasks was the Chungkai cutting, a railway cutting through solid rock. In November 1942, a hospital was constructed at Chungkai. Chungkai was considered one of the better PoW camps with sufficient food. The camp and hospital closed in June 1945. The hospital had treated 19,975 patients during its existence.

Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery

The Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery (Burmese: သံဖြူဇရပ်စစ်သင်္ချိုင်း) is a prisoner of war cemetery for victims of Japanese imprisonment who died building the Death Railway in Burma. It is at the Burmese end of the Second World War railway construction, in Thanbyuzayat, 65 kilometres south of Mawlamyine (Moulmein). Thanbyuzayat is considered the terminus of the Death Railway and is where it connected with the Burmese main line (Burma-Siam Railway).

The cemetery was formally inaugurated on 10 December 1946 by General Aung San and Governor Sir Hubert Rance. It is open every day between 07:00–17:00.

History

The Burma-Siam railway, built by Commonwealth, Dutch and American prisoners of war, was a Japanese project driven by the need for improved communications to support the large Japanese army in Burma. During its construction, 12,619 prisoners of war died and were buried along the railway. An estimated 80,000 to 100,000 civilians also died in the course of the project, chiefly forced labour brought from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, or conscripted in Siam (Thailand) and Burma (Myanmar).

Two labour forces, one based in Siam and the other in Burma worked from opposite ends of the line towards the centre. The Japanese aimed at completing the railway as soon as possible and work began on 16 September 1942. The line, 415 kilometres long, was completed by 25 October 1943.

Thanbyuzayat became a prisoner of war administration headquarters and base camp in September 1942 and in January 1943 a base hospital was organised for the sick. The camp was close to a railway marshalling yard and workshops, and heavy casualties were sustained among the prisoners during Allied bombing raids in March and June 1943. The camp was then evacuated and the prisoners, including the sick, were marched to camps further along the line where camp hospitals were set up. For some time, however, Thanbyuzayat continued to be used as a reception centre for the groups of prisoners arriving at frequent intervals to reinforce the parties working on the line up to the Burma-Siam border.

The graves of those who died during the construction and maintenance of the Burma-Siam railway (except for the Americans, whose remains were repatriated) were transferred from camp burial grounds and isolated sites along the railway into three cemeteries at Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in Thailand and Thanbyuzayat in Myanmar.

Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery was designed by Colin St Clair Oakes and created by the Army Graves Service who transferred to it all burials along the northern section of the railway, between Moulmein and Nieke. The burials in Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery also includes Allied POWs who died of sickness or were executed by the Japanese at Victoria Point Myeiki, Dawei and Mawlamyine, between June and September 1942.

There are 3,149 Commonwealth and 621 Dutch burials of the Second World War in the Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery.

War dead

There are 3,626 identified former POWs buried there:

- 1,651 British;
- 1,335 Australians;
- 621 Dutch;
- 15 Indian Army;
- 3 New Zealanders;
- 1 Canadian.
- 72 Unidentified.

Post-war

The local authorities in the district have constructed a small museum as a memorial to the victims of the railway construction.

