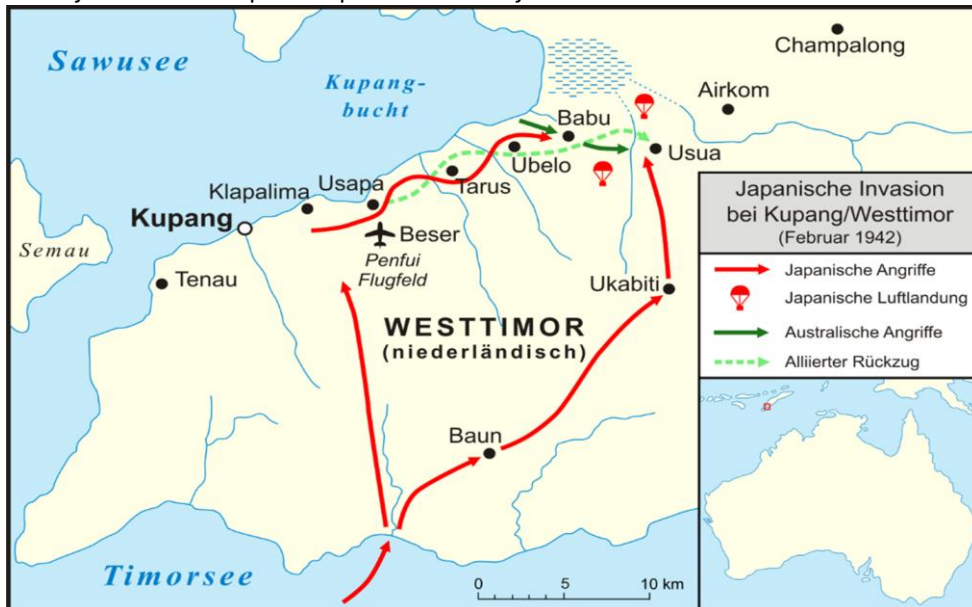


Extract from “The Men Who Came Out of the Ground” by Paul Cleary

“The Last of the Bayonets” Captain Norman Johnston-, 38, a salesman from Launceston led A Company’s attack on the left flank and quickly achieved its first objective, capturing a knoll near the entrance of the village from where they were able to direct fire onto the ridge and support B Company. Sergeant Reg Hay, 21, of Launceston, led a party across open ground to take the knoll from which the enemy had inflicted heavy casualties on A Company. Hay and his men charged the position and killed many of the enemy with bayonets. After this breakthrough, Leggatt approached the knoll and ordered his mortars to come forward and target the side of the ridge where the enemy had fired on C Company, killing many of its NCOs and soldiers.

Extract from “Straight Left” by Tom Uren

Our carrier went up to the front line to give cover fire for a group of men from the 2/40. battalion, who were walking up a steep grade of hill on either side of the road in an attempt to take Japanese machine-gun positions dug into the crest of the ridge. I was crouched down beneath the steel armour and could feel the bullets hitting the side of the Bren gun carrier, which was attracting machine-gun fire. I remember seeing Leggatt standing in the middle of the road only a few metres away from our carrier, calmly directing our troops. His sureness and confidence at that time and in the hours that followed rekindled my faith in our Australian soldiers and their heroism. As schoolboys we had been constantly told about the courage of the Australians at Gallipoli and in the trenches in France but so far I had only seen confusion in the Timor conflict. My experience at Oesaoe Ridge and my respect for the leadership and courage of our 2/40 Infantry battalion remains with me to this day. The taking of that ridge was the only time that I have personally witnessed a bayonet charge. With the Japanese entrenched on the ridge with their machine guns, the men of the 2/40 battalion walked steadily up the slope, cool as cucumbers. They eventually overran the Japanese position and bayoneted those in the trenches.

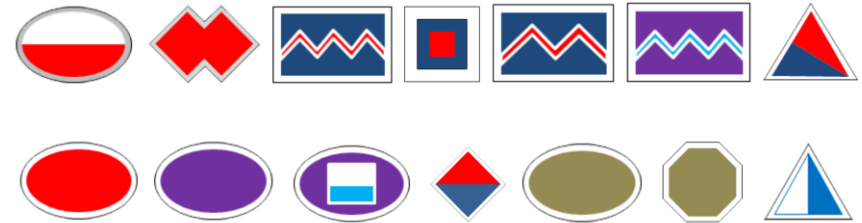


Ceremony of Rededication/ Upacara Dedikasi Ulang

**SPARROW FORCE MONUMENT
(MONUMEN AUSTRALIA)**

April 2026

Oesau, Kab. Kupang, Timor, NTT, Indonesia



Lest We Forget



*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.*

BATTLE OF OESAU RIDGE

The Sparrow Force Monument (aka Monumen Australia) is located at the site of the Battle of Oesau Ridge. Sparrow Force was sent by the Australian government in December 1941 to defend Timor against the Japanese. Of the 1400 troops sent about 900 were from the 2/40th Battalion raised in Tasmania, and 200 from the 2/2 Independent Company, which was soon sent on to Portuguese Timor. Additional units were gunners (2/1st Heavy Battery, B Troop 18th Anti-Tank Battery plus about 150 of the 79th Light AA Battery of the Royal Artillery). The Force's main task was the defence of Penfui airfield and Kupang City. A HQ and supply base was established at Camplong about 40 km east of Kupang.

The main Japanese invasion force landed on the coast south of Kupang on February 19th. In addition, about 600 Japanese paratroopers were dropped close to Babau. The Australians were forced to retreat along the road to Camplong, but the Japanese paratroopers had blocked the road close to Oesau and were dug in on the Oesau Ridge. The Australians broke through the roadblock, but came under fire from the paratroopers. One company of the 2/40th took the knoll where this monument now stands, and were able to direct fire on the Japanese entrenched on the Ridge. There followed a famous bayonet charge by the 2/40th up the slope.

Most of the paratroopers were killed, but Sparrow Force had suffered 84 KIA and suffered more casualties. Supplies were low. The main Japanese force caught up to the Sparrow Force convoy just east of Oesau on the following morning of February 23rd 1942, and threatened air attack unless the Australians surrendered. Commanding officer, Lt Colonel William Leggatt decided to surrender. About 140 of Sparrow Force were able to escape, some into Portuguese Timor where they joined the 2/2nd Independent Company, who fought a successful guerilla campaign until evacuated in December 1942. The surrendered troops were held for about 7 months in a camp at Oesapa Besar. From Kupang, they were dispersed to camps all over Southeast Asia and Japan. Many suffered on the Thai/Burma and Sumatran Railways. An estimated 340 died as POW's. Those buried in the Oesapa Besar camp were later relocated to the Commonwealth War Graves cemetery in Ambon.

Terima kasih kepada Keluarga Kapitan, khusus Mama Ariani sebagai juru kunci, dan Dept. of Veterans Affairs Australia

PERTEMPURAN DI PUNGGUNGAN OESAU

Monumen Sparrow Force (Monumen Australia) terletak di lokasi Pertempuran Punggungan Oesau. Sparrow Force dikirim oleh pemerintah Australia pada Desember 1941 untuk mempertahankan Timor dari Jepang. Dari 1400 pasukan yang dikirim, sekitar 900 berasal dari 2/40th Battalion yang dibentuk di Tasmania, dan 200 dari 2/2nd Independent Company yang dengan cepat dikirim ke Timor Portugis. Unit tambahan lainnya adalah artileri (2/1st Heavy Battery, B Troop 18th Anti-Tank Battery dan 150 dari 79th Light AA Battery Royal Artillery). Tugas utama pasukan ini adalah mempertahankan lapangan terbang Penfui dan Kota Kupang. Markas besar dan pangkalan logistik didirikan di Camplong, sekitar 40 km sebelah timur Kupang.

Pasukan invasi utama Jepang mendarat di pantai selatan Kupang pada 19 Februari 1942. Selain itu, sekitar 600 pasukan terjun payung diterjunkan di dekat Babau. Pasukan Australia terpaksa mundur menyusuri jalan menuju Camplong, tetapi pasukan terjun payung Jepang telah memblokir jalan raya di dekat Oesau dan telah siapkan pertahanan di Punggungan Oesau. Pasukan Australia berhasil menerobos penghalang jalan, tetapi kemudian dihujani tembakan dari pasukan terjun payung di punggungan tersebut. Satu kompi dari 2/40th merebut bukit kecil ini persis Dimana monumen itu sekarang berdiri, dan mampu membalas dengan tembakan ke arah pasukan Jepang yang bercokol di punggungan tersebut. Kemudian terjadilah serangan bayonet terkenal oleh the 2/40th menaiki lereng punggungan tersebut.

Sebagian besar pasukan terjun payung tewas, tetapi Sparrow Force menderita 84 korban dan lebih banyak terluka. Apalagi persediaan menipis. Ketika pasukan utama Jepang menyusul konvoi Sparrow Force tepat di sebelah timur Oesau pada pagi hari tanggal 23 Februari 1942, Jepang mengancam akan melakukan serangan udara kecuali jika pasukan Australia menyerah. Komandan Sparrow Force , Lt Kolonel William Leggatt, memutuskan menyerah . Sekitar 140 anggota Sparrow Force berhasil melarikan diri , sebagiannya ke Timor Portugis, di mana mereka bergabung dengan 2/2nd Independent Company yang melakukan kampanye gerilya yang sukses hingga dievakuasi pada Desember 1942.

Pasukan yang menyerah ditahan selama sekitar 7 bulan di sebuah kamp di Oesapa Besar. Dari Kupang, mereka disebar ke kamp-kamp di seluruh Asia Tenggara dan Jepang. Banyak yang menderita di jalur kereta api Thailand/Burma dan Sumatra. Diperkirakan 340 orang meninggal sebagai tawanan perang. Mereka yang dimakamkan di kamp Oesapa Besar kemudian dipindahkan ke pemakaman Commonwealth War Graves di Ambon.