



In May 1945 the Australian Army launched three major amphibious assaults in Borneo. The operations were collectively known as “Oboe” and comprised the individual landings on Tarakan, Brunei and Balikpapan. These operations were considered to be the most efficient and well planned conducted by the Australian Army.

Borneo is surrounded by a number of waters – the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean and others between Borneo and New Guinea. It is a volcanic island which has a rocky coastline with some beach areas. The centre of the island is mountainous. This means that farming is difficult, so oil wells and rubber plantations are the main product of the island.

Borneo before the Second World War was used by the Dutch for oil production and the British for the production of rubber. The Japanese invasion in 1942 was to their much needed of oil to be used in the mobility of their forces.

Borneo was home to British and Dutch colonial persons, as well as a Chinese population. Indigenous people had their origins in Indonesia, then known as the Netherlands East Indies, and from Malaya.

The landings in Tarakan, Brunei and Balikpapan, made little or no contribution to the defeat of Japan. The island had been bypassed in the planning of the Supreme Commander, South West Pacific Area – General Douglas MacArthur – whose eyes were fixed upon the liberation of The Philippines and the subsequent invasion of the Japanese mainland.

This presentation will look at the amphibious landings and subsequent land operations in Borneo.

**LECTURE TIME AND VENUE: 10:30AM Saturday 2 March 2024 at The Auditorium, Anzac Memorial Hyde Park, Hyde Park South, corner Elizabeth and Liverpool Streets, Sydney CBD. Admission is free of charge but a donation would be appreciated. For information call 0419 698 783 or email: [president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au](mailto:president@militaryhistorynsw.com.au)**



## Major (retd) Paul Handel, RFD – Biography

Paul Handel studied mechanical engineering after leaving school and worked for Email Ltd at Waterloo and Botany in the 1970s. He then joined a German Engineering company, based in North Sydney, in 1980. He was involved with large steelworks and open cut mining projects until 2000, when the company's operations ceased. In 2004 he joined a division of his former company as the Production and Logistics Manager for the manufacture of overhead travelling cranes, retiring in 2016.

He joined the Citizen Military Forces in 1970, and was commissioned in 1972 into the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME). A series of postings followed, including five years as the OC of the LAD/TSS of 1/15 Royal NSW Lancers. Promoted to Major in 1981, he served on HQ 2 Division Plans Team, before being posted as OC 103 Field Workshop. Attendance at the Reserve Command Staff College (Senior Course) in 1987 was followed by a posting to the HQ 2nd Division Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

In the middle of 1986, he was appointed as the RAAC Tank Museum's Honorary Research Officer. At the end of 1989 he was posted as Research Officer Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) Tank Museum, and in February 1999 was transferred to the Army History Unit, and became the Museum Manger of the RAAC Museum, later Australian Army Tank Museum, a position he held until August 2012.

In September 2016, he returned to Army Reserve service and undertook a project for Army History Unit involving the sectioning of a Leopard Tank. This project was undertaken by the RAN Fleet Support Unit (SE) at Garden Island in Sydney. The sectioned tank is now an exhibit at the Tank Museum, Puckapunyal.

He is a volunteer at the Australian Army Museum of Military Engineering and the Australian Army Tank Museum.

He is the author of three books on Australian armoured history – *Fifty Years of the RAAC 1948 to 1998*; *Dust, Sand and Jungle – A History of Australian Armour 1927 to 1948*; and *The Vital Factor - The History of the 2/6<sup>th</sup> Australian Armoured Regiment 1941 to 1945*.