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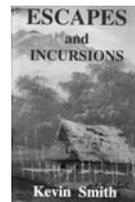
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## **BOOK REVIEWS**

### ***Escapes and incursions: Sabah 1942-45***

by Kevin Smith

*K. R. & H. Smith, PO Box 440, Armidale, NSW; 2006,  
392 pp., ISBN 0-646-45705-5,  
RRP \$38.50<sup>1</sup> (soft cover)*



*Escapes and Incursions* is really three separate stories interwoven into a single volume – the story of the Australian prisoners of war; the story of the official attempts to harass the Japanese and rescue the prisoners (Z Force); and the stories of the local people who risked everything, including their families, to help advance the allies to victory over Japan.

The author is Dr Kevin Smith, a retired University of New England academic with a strong interest in South-East Asia, particularly its recent military history and current insurgencies. He is a member of the Institute.

Over the past three decades, developments in information technology, personal computers, laptops and desktop publishing, have completely revolutionized military history. Now, instead of formal accounts of formations, divisions, brigades and regiments, in its place, there have emerged much more highly personalized, local accounts of conflicts. These “new style” personal, localized military histories are more in of the style of social history and therefore far more readable. In *Escapes and Incursions*, the author has followed this new genre. As well as drawing on official sources, Australian Archives and the Australian War Memorial, he has consulted newspapers (*The Borneo Bugle*) and private papers and has conducted interviews and corresponded with surviving veterans. The result is a very readable book giving detailed background to the events that took place in British North Borneo – now the East Malaysian state of Sabah – subsequent to the fall of Singapore.

Kevin Smith has undertaken huge research to weave together the three stories. He deserves recognition for bringing to our attention events that have previously been almost overlooked. I have personally visited Sabah and have known and interviewed decorated members of Z Force. Thus, I can vouch for some of the dreadful conditions that wartime and the Japanese inflicted on those unfortunate enough to be in Sabah during those years.

It is difficult to criticize *Escapes and Incursions*, but a large scale map of the region would have been helpful (e.g. showing Malaya and Indonesia). Further, reliance on oral history brings with it all the pitfalls of trying to accurately remember events of years gone by (e.g. what were you doing on Coronation Day in 1953?). These small criticisms, however, detract little from what is a very readable history. I believe Kevin Smith should be congratulated for writing and publishing this excellent volume.

**Roland Millbank**

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<sup>1</sup>Institute members may purchase this book direct from the publisher for \$32.70, post paid. Alternatively, it may be purchased from the Australian War Memorial bookshop and selected retailers (e.g. Abbey's bookshop near Sydney Town Hall). There is a copy in the Ursula Davidson Library.