



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



OCCASIONAL PAPER NUMBER 18

An Undefined Heritage



*Father in Heaven who lovest all,
Oh help Thy children when they call;
That they may build from age to age,
An undefined heritage.*

Rudyard Kipling's "The Children's Song"

The Diocesan Boys' School, photo by Mike Cussan posted on www.gwulo.com

The official school hymn of the Diocesan Boys' School (DBS) was boisterously sung with the memorable words of Rudyard Kipling's poem from his **Puck of Pook's Hill**. Few Old Boys fail to remember at least some of those words, and few would deny that their lives have been, to greater or lesser extent, influenced by them even if only by awareness that their conduct was in breach of the ideals the words portray.

Perhaps this has been at no time more clearly demonstrated than in the turbulent years of the Second World War when Old Boys rallied to the Allied cause both in Hong Kong and elsewhere.

No official lists exist, but it would appear, based on the memory of some older Old Boys, that approximately 200 served in the Allied cause, of whom at least 50 are known to have lost their lives. Over 150 of them served in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (HKVDC) in the defence of Hong Kong.

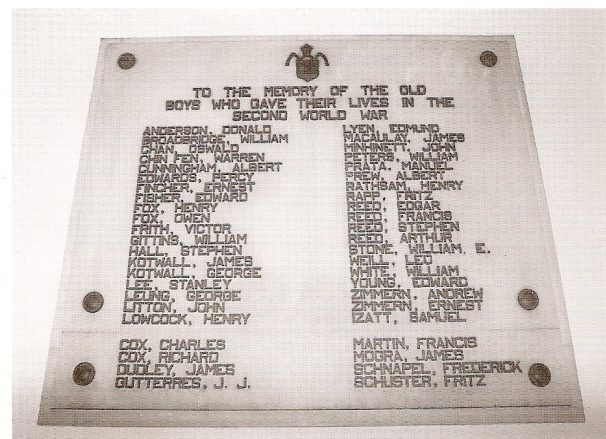
Others served in other units, in Hong Kong as well as in other theatres of war, and some lost their lives in underground activities off the battle field. The memorial plaque at the school commemorates 46 Old Boys who gave their lives in the Second World War.

Of the 46 named on the plaque, 33 were in the HKVDC, one in the Dockyard Defence Corps, five in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve and four were involved with the British Army Aid Group (of whom two had served with the HKVDC and evaded capture). No information is available for the remaining three.

The four involved with the BAAG were executed by the Japanese; they were Manuel Prata, William White, George Kotwall and James Kotwall - the two who served in the HKVDC were Prata (No.6 Company) and George Kotwall (No.3 Company). The 33 in the HKVDC were members of the ASC Company (6), 5th Battery (6), 4th Battery (3), 2nd Battery (1), No.5 Company (1), Field Company Engineers (1) and No.3 Company (15).

Some names are missing from the memorial shown at right; for example, Cable Dalziel who was at the school between 1932-1935 was killed in action with the Australian Infantry in New Guinea and is buried in the Lae War Cemetery. He had previously served in the Middle East and was mentioned in despatches.

Other omissions more difficult to understand are those who are known to have been in the HKVDC in the defence of Hong Kong, including Harry Joseph (1911) and N.B.White (1906) (both in the ASC Company), and Harold Brown (1928) (4th Battery), all three killed in action. Frederick Christian Rapp (1889) (Hughes Group) died in POW camp (the years given in brackets are the years they entered the school).



The comparatively larger number of Old Boys killed while serving in No.3 Company is not surprising. This Company was known as the Eurasian Company, and DBS had long and strong links with the Eurasian community, so that many of its Old Boys were Eurasians who, on joining the HKVDC, gravitated towards No.3 Company. That is not to say that the Old Boys who served in the HKVDC were all Eurasians. Many were not.

The masters at DBS were not slow to follow the example of the Old Boys. Nine members of the then past and current teaching staff served in the HKVDC in 1941 (including the Headmaster, G.A.Goodban, and two teachers who were Old Boys). Five of the nine lost their lives in the battle; they were Conrad Brown and Albert Prew (an Old Boy) of the ASC Company, William Ford of No.2 Company, M.W.Sayers and J.R.M.Smith of the 1st Battery. Occasional Paper Number 2 on the subject of Hong Kong's Memorials erroneously stated that all had survived.

Teachers in other schools also served, including E.G.Stewart, Headmaster of St.Paul's College, who was Officer Commanding No.3 Company. He survived the war and resumed his headmastership. Occasional Paper Number 17 gives a full account of Douglas Orr of the 1st Battery who was killed in action at Stanley; he taught at the Central British School and briefly at Queen's College.

Also killed in action was Arthur Job of No.1 Company who was a teacher at St.Stephen's College. Another teacher at that school, John Gaunt of the 2nd Battery, died as a POW while a third, Tam Cheung Hon, was murdered when the Japanese entered the school in Stanley on Christmas Day, 1941. Preston Wong, a teacher at St.Paul's College, was executed with 32 other BAAG agents on 29th October, 1943.

In the past and present membership of our Association there are a number of DBS Old Boys who left the school before the War and who served in the HKVDC, and these include Landon Burch, Robert Lapsley, Anthony Lapsley, Ferdinand :Lapsley (all four in No.2 Company) and Norman Broadbridge (No.3 Company),