



# Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



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## Editorial Letter to Accompany August 2012 OPs

Dear Readers,

This editor's letter is intended for issue just before our annual Liberation Day lunch gathering, which commemorates the 67<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this historic event in Hong Kong's modern history. Liberation from Japanese wartime rule came after three weeks' fighting and three years eight months of military occupation.

The contents of the two Occasional Papers being distributed on this occasion owe much to an account of those harrowing times contributed by one of our senior members, Mrs Beatrice (Bea) Hutcheon. One (OP Number 10) relates Bea's experiences during the defence of Hong Kong in December, 1941 and her wartime stay in Macau between 1942 and 1945. The other (OP Number 11) focuses on the early postwar war crimes trials in Hong Kong, which Bea attended as a specially recruited court reporter for the South China Morning Post. This was an experience rendered the more poignant by court visits, including one made to Lyemun where her brother Stanley, serving with the HKVDC, had been killed during the fighting.

I am particularly pleased that Bea has made this contribution to our record. It came as a longer piece which, with her permission, we have separated into these two parts, but it is intended that her original will be put on our Association's website when it is up and running.

Whilst few of us nowadays can personally recall the war crimes tribunals sittings, they may rightfully be regarded as the concluding part of the record of the Japanese wartime occupation of the Colony. Bea has added an extra paragraph on her work reporting the trials, at our request, and I feel sure that her memories and Henry's brief summary of these post-war trials of Japanese personnel, for crimes committed in breach of the Geneva Convention governing the conduct of war, will be of interest to us all. The remainder of Bea's personal memoir has been incorporated in this second OP.

As editor, I wish also to report that Henry and I have become interested in the subject of conscription, introduced into Hong Kong in 1939, and its effect upon the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps which went to war with conscripts as well as volunteers in its ranks. Information is hard to find, but from what little is readily available it would appear that for the HKVDC as a whole, the proportion of conscripts to volunteers was in the region of 30:70.

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We have asked our remaining war-time Volunteers for any information they can supply. Solomon Bard has already done so, and we are hoping that Landon Burch and Robert Lapsley will be able to send us something. Apart from numbers and postings to units of the Corps, we are also (and more so) interested in the human aspects. How did our conscripts respond to being conscripted into the Corps, how were they regarded by the volunteers, were there any differences to be detected in their respective attitudes and behaviour, or were all welded into one under the searing influence of war, and so on.

With best wishes to you all from Henry Ching and myself,

James Hayes.