



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



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Families in Arms

For many long-established residents in pre-war Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps was very much an organisation for family involvement. Many families had members who served together in the HKVDC. Identified below are some of those families with three or more members in the HKVDC, but there are others. Much of the information contained in this Occasional Paper has been gleaned from Tony Banham's indispensable Hong Kong War Diary website and published books.

The family with perhaps the largest number of brothers in the HKVDC was the Reed family. Maria Rita and Amaro John Reed had six sons in the HKVDC, four of whom were killed. They are remembered on the Memorials at the Diocesan Boys' School and at the Club de Recreio. Three of them served in No.3 Company; Pte Arthur Augustus Reed (age 33) and Pte Edgar Vincent Reed (age 38) were killed in action at Jardine's Lookout on 19th December, and Pte Stephen Arnold Reed (age 32) died of wounds on 15th January. Gnr Francis Oswald Reed (age 28) in the 5th Battery was killed in action at Sai Wan on 18th December. L/Bdr Robert Cyril Reed was also in the 5th Battery but he and his brother Pte Reginald John Reed (unit unknown) survived the war.



The Memorial at the Club de Recreio with the names of the four Reed brothers in the right hand column.

Three families had five members each in the Volunteers - the Leonard, Broadbridge and Zimmern families. All five members of the Leonard family survived – they were L/Sgt David John Leonard and Gnr Norman Lionel Leonard in 3rd Battery, L/Bdr Albert Reginald Leonard in 4th Battery, L/Cpl Terry Arthur Leonard in No.3 Company and Pte Stanley Leonard in the ASC Company.

All but Albert Reginald were POWs in Japan. Terry Arthur and Stanley were in the Fifth Draft sent to Narumi on the *Soong Cheong* in December, 1943 (the *Soong Cheong* broke down in Taiwan en route and the POWs were transferred to the *Toyama Maru* for the remainder of the journey).

David John and Norman Lionel were in the Sixth Draft on the *Naura Maru* in April, 1944 sent to Sendai.

The Broadbridge brothers were the sons of Lily and Alfred Cyris Broadbridge (Lily was Chinese, adopted by a family surnamed Hunter). Gnr William Broadbridge (age 34) in the 5th Battery was killed in action at Sai Wan on 18th December. His name also is on the Diocesan Boys' School Memorial. Cpl Norman Broadbridge (a member of our Association) and his brothers L/Cpl Reginald Thomas Broadbridge, L/Cpl Freddie Arthur Broadbridge, and Pte Stanley Broadbridge (all four in No.3 Company) survived the battle and were sent to POW camps in Japan. Norman and Reginald Thomas were in the Third Draft on the *Tatsuta Maru* in January, 1942 sent to Innoshima. Freddie Arthur and Stanley were in the Fifth Draft



The Tatsuta Maru (photo from Tony Banham's Hong Kong War Diary website)

The five Zimmern brothers were the sons of Mary and Adolph SHI Charn Kwong. Sgt Ernest Zimmern in No.3 Company was killed in action at Jardine's Lookout on 19th December while L/Bdr Andrew Zimmern in 5th Battery was killed at Sai Wan on 18th December. Both are named on the Memorial at the Diocesan Boys' School. Pte Frederick Zimmern (in Corps Headquarters), L/Cpl Francis Zimmern and Pte Archibald Zimmern (both in No.3 Company) survived and were released from Sham Shui Po POW Camp before the end of the war.

The four members of the family of Yoshino and John Maycock who were in the HKVDC all survived the war. They were Pte Ernest Richard Maycock of No.2 Company, Pte John Maycock of the Field Company Engineers, Pte Robert Joseph Maycock (unit unknown) and Pte William George Maycock (unit unknown). All but Robert Joseph were sent in the Fifth Draft to Japan.

The three Lapsley brothers (all members of our Association) served in the HKVDC with their father, Lt Robert Lapsley of the Field Company Engineers. Pte Anthony Wilfred Lapsley (father of Association member Brian Lapsley), Pte Ferdinand Lapsley (father of Association secretary Philomena Lapsley) and Pte Robert Henry Lapsley were together in No.2 Company. All three brothers were sent to Japan together in the Third Draft. Occasional Paper No 14 gives a splendid account of Robert's war experience and his miraculous survival after being wounded.

The Cunninghams, the Engelbrechts, the Lees and the Millingtons were families with three members each in the Volunteers. The sons of Sally and Leon Cunningham were Cpl Albert Laing Cunningham (age 42) of the ASC Company who was killed on 23rd December (remembered on the Diocesan Boys' School Memorial), and Gnrs Edward Samuel Cunningham and William Leon Cunningham of the 3rd Battery. Edward Samuel was sent to Japan in the Fifth Draft.

The Engelbrecht brothers were Pte Fernand Engelbrecht (unit unknown), Sgm Paul John Engelbrecht (Fortress Signals) and Gnr Raymond Engelbrecht (1st Battery). All three were sent to Japan in the Sixth Draft. Paul John and Raymond were members of our Association.

Three sons of Mary Ann and William LEE Foo served in the HKVDC. L/Cpl R.E.Lee (Field Company Engineers), L/Bdr Albert T. (Tinker) Lee (5th Battery) and Pte Frank Lee (Armoured Car Platoon) survived the battle and Sham Shui Po POW Camp. Frank was the husband of Ellen Field (Nellie Lee), whose exploits during the Pacific War are recounted in her published book **Twilight in Hong Kong**, including the assistance she gave to some escaping POWs (her code name with the BAAG is said to have been "The Shadow").

Members of the Millington family who served were CSM Henry James Millington and Sgt Leslie Charles Millington in 1st Battery (both were troopers in the First Battery in the mid-1930s), and Pte Victor John Millington (unit unknown). Leslie Charles was sent to Japan in the Third Draft.

In the Nursing Detachment were sisters Joan Constance Sahn and Cynthia May Sahn, with their mother Miriam Kate Sanh (a teacher at St.Stephen's Girls' College). Also in the Detachment were sisters Beryl June Booker and Maureen Dorothea Booker (married name Carruthers), with their mother Daisy Booker (wife of Sgt.N.J.Booker, HKVDC). All six ladies were interned in Stanley. Maggie Budden, also in the Detachment and interned in Stanley, was the wife of Pte H.E.Budden of the Dockyard Defence Corps (an auxiliary unit of the HKVDC) and mother of Cpl G.E.Budden (HKVDC No.1 Coy), both of whom died as POWs..

As indicated above, there were undoubtedly other groups of family members (three or more) who served in the HKVDC. Any reader who can add to the names in this Occasional Paper is asked please to inform the editor, James Hayes (via info@rhkrnws.org)