



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



Editorial Letter to Accompany OPs 21-23

Dear Members and Readers,

I have great pleasure in introducing three more of our Association's Occasional Papers. This batch comprises OP21 on the internment of civilians, OP22 on those HKVDC members held in civilian internment camps as opposed to POW camps, and OP 23 on the release of certain POWs in the course of the Japanese war-time occupation of Hong Kong. Of particular interest is the focus on the immediate post-surrender period in January and February, 1942.

Once more Henry Ching has striven to assemble facts obtained from a variety of sources in order to present a more comprehensive and intelligible account of these topics, and thereby focuses our attention on what is known, is yet in doubt, or is still obscure.

It will be obvious that, short of new sources of information coming to light, whether official or from library collections, we have to rely on family memorabilia or family lore for further enlightenment. Once more I am asking descendants to make a search for anything which may assist in expanding the printed record and dispelling present ignorance.

To date, we have been fortunate in obtaining some such assistance, and this has invariably helped to enrich the series, and thereby encouraged Henry and me to persist in our endeavours. Several valuable new OPs have resulted thereby.

However, we have always followed protocol by showing drafts to the family donor concerned for his or her comments, if any, and for agreement to publish. While undeniably good practice, this has its own drawbacks.

When consulted in this way the donor may be told by other family members that this is "private family business" and not appropriate for the public record. Or again, the donor may have second thoughts, through an excess of modesty, or perhaps due to lingering and unresolved personal doubts as to the wisdom of having it in print for fear of future criticism from wider family circles. This may lead to a request for deletions or amendments, or even the withholding of agreement to publish. When this occurs, valuable material is left unrecorded and by remaining with the family is in danger of being lost altogether.

Tempus fugit! At our age, Henry and I know this only too well. If you do have letters, papers and other memorabilia that could be of interest to us do, please, take a wider view! The time for action is surely NOW, whilst the series of OPs is proceeding! Let us not delay, either in your search for material – for its usefulness please let us be the judge – or in your cooperation with us in a most worthy endeavour. While we are all still able to make a contribution, let us strive to gather as much information as we can about Hong Kong in the Pacific War, at such a dramatic and traumatic time in its history.

This call for renewed effort is aimed not only at the HKVDC and its members and their families, but also at those other members of local Hong Kong families whose relatives may have served in the HKRNVR, the auxiliary civil defence units, the Police or the ARP. It is also in particular addressed to those whose relatives may not have played an active part in the battle, and who may have lived outside the civilian and POW camps during the occupation, because they too are part of the story. We hope that their descendants will be willing to respond, and be able to contribute something valuable to the record.

In closing, Henry and I send members and other readers warm seasonal greetings and our best wishes for 2014.

James Hayes (Series Editor)

December, 2013