



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



OCCASIONAL PAPER NUMBER 8

Australians in Hong Kong in the Pacific War

Official Pacific War rosters do not identify Australians as such unless they served in an Australian unit, and lists of POWs repatriated to Australia after the war show, not necessarily Australians, but men rejoining their families who were compulsorily evacuated there in 1940. All peoples of the British Empire were simply British Subjects without regard to the country to which they belonged.

It was not until 1949 that, to meet the wishes in particular of countries like Australia and Canada for an identity of their own, there was introduced into UK law the “threshold” citizenships whereby it was necessary to be a citizen of a particular country in order to be a British Subject, and Australians then became “British Subjects, Australian Citizens”.

Named in this paper are but a few of the many Australians in Hong Kong during the Pacific War because of the difficulty in identifying them. Any reader who knows of any other names that should be mentioned is invited to forward the information.



*The Anzac Company at camp in 1934 (from the 1954 Centenary Number of **The Volunteer**)*

An Anzac Company was formed in the HKVDC in 1932, but it was short lived. Early enthusiasm waned and the unit was disbanded in 1935, but some of its members continued to serve. The last OC, Captain Cameron Desailly Robertson (pictured standing at left above) commanded the HKVDC's Pay Detachment in 1941. Born in Melbourne, he was in the 4th Pioneer Battalion, AIF and received the Military Medal in the First World War.

Lt.Col. Lindsay Tasman Ride was born in Newstead, Victoria and served in the 38th Battalion, AIF in the First World War. He commanded the HKVDC's Field Ambulance, and when the Hong Kong Field Ambulance was formed in 1941 with men from the Royal Army Medical Corps, St. John Ambulance and the HKVDC, he was put in overall command of that. He escaped from Sham Shui Po Camp in January, 1942 and formed the BAAG.

Frederick Percy Franklin (father of Joan, wife of our Association's Treasurer Bill Izard) was born in Hampshire, England but went to Australia prior to the First World War and in 1916 enlisted in the 3rd Pioneer Battalion, AIF. In Hong Kong he joined the HKVDC and in the mid-1930s was a private in the Reserve Company. In 1941 he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. He was wounded at the RE Depot in Sookunpoo.

Captain Arthur John Dewar of the RASC was at the munitions depot, Little Hong Kong, on 27th December with some men refusing to surrender and threatening to blow up the depot. They were persuaded to surrender on promise of safe conduct. Dewar, from Swanbourne, West Australia, was awarded the DSO for distinguished service in the defence of Hong Kong.

Two Australians served with the RAF in Hong Kong, including Flying Officer Francis Peter Hennessy whose home was in Bondi, Sydney. He was posted to Hong Kong in November, 1941.

Commander Reginald Charles Creer from Watson's Bay, Sydney left the Royal Australian Navy in 1926 but later joined the Royal Navy and in 1941 was senior officer in command of the gunboat flotilla, China Station. His ship, HMS Moth, in dry dock on 8th December, was scuttled. He became a POW, but Moth was refloated by the Japanese and renamed Suma – she served on the Yangtze River until she struck a mine and sank.

Two Fincher brothers were in the HKVDC – CQMS Edward Charles Fincher in No.3 Company and Bdr Ernest Francis Fincher in 5th (AA) Battery (the latter killed in action). Their parents were born in Australia; their mother, Elena Mow Fung, a Chinese Australian.

Employed as a nurse by the Repulse Bay Hotel was Sister Elizabeth Mosey, from Robertstown, South Australia. In the First World War she was Mentioned in Despatches and received the Royal Red Cross Medal. At the hotel in 1941 she nursed wounded soldiers, whom she shielded from the Japanese. She was awarded an MBE.

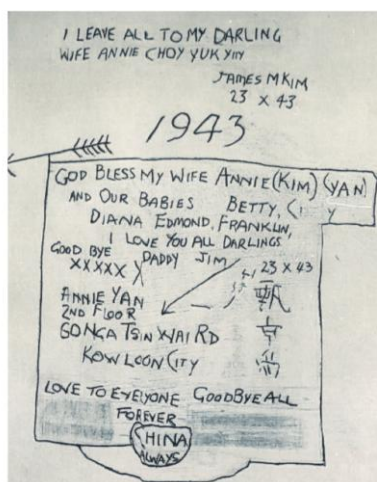
Gnr Bruce Yuen Hoy Poy of 5th (AA) Battery, HKVDC came from Perth, Western Australia. He escaped the massacre at Sai Wan Hill on 18th December and became a POW, but was released in 1942 with other Asians. He then went into China and eventually to India. Cpl William George Poy (not related) was a despatch rider in Corps Signals, HKVDC. Born in Chiltern, New South Wales, he won the Military Medal for bravery in the battle for Hong Kong. He evaded capture and got to Canada with his family. His daughter Adrienne (married name Clarkson) later became Governor-General of Canada.

In 3rd Battery, HKVDC was Sgt John Monks from Victoria who was in the Anzac Company in the mid-1930s. He was a POW in Sham Shui Po, while his wife Eileen, an auxiliary nurse, was in Stanley with other Australians including Arthur Hamson (Eurasian from Ballarat), and journalists Dorothy Jenner and Richard Cloake.

In the Auxiliary Nursing Service were Florence Wong and daughters Florrie and Jessie - Eurasians from Queensland. Florence was in the relief hospital at the race course stands. Florrie (married name Adams, an Association member for many years) was in the relief hospital believed to have been in St Paul's College in Wyndham Street, while Jessie was in the relief hospital in La Salle College in Kowloon.

The largest single group of Australians served in the Royal Naval Dockyard Police (RNDP). There was a Crown Sgt E. Bellamy who came from Australia, plus twelve others who were recruited in Sydney in 1940. Through a misunderstanding, they were enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy and then sent to the Royal Navy in Hong Kong where they finally joined the RNDP as intended.

Possibly the first civilian Australian to be killed in Hong Kong was Harold Bateson, on 12th December. The story is that he was killed by a Japanese patrol while trying to get to the Island from Kowloon. Several Australians were arrested by the kempetei during the Japanese occupation. Harry Ching (father of Association member Henry Ching), born in Brisbane, was amongst the lucky ones. After a sojourn in gendarmerie cells in Le Calvaire Convent in Happy Valley, he was released. Amongst the far less fortunate was James Kim from Casterton, Victoria who was in Stanley Gaol and, as Yan Cheuk Ming, was one of the 33 BAAG agents executed on 29th October, 1943. A last message to his family was inscribed on the wall of his cell.



James Kim's last message. The name partially erased is "Cissy".