



Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



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Eurasian Volunteers

The ethnic basis of some of the units in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps was reflected in the Schedule to the Volunteer Ordinance of 1933 which listed the units including the Scottish Company, the Portuguese Company and the Anzac Company.

The Anzac Company was formed in 1932 and was designated No.3 (MG) Company, being the third machine gun company to be formed in the HKVDC. It lapsed in 1935, but continued to exist on paper and was soon revived, although no longer identified with Anzacs, and the HKVDC Year Book for 1936 gives a nominal roll for it. Suggestions were made that it should be named the Eurasian Company, and this is the name which subsequently became popular although it seems not to have received legal backing. On mobilisation in December, 1941 most of the members of this Company were from the Eurasian community.

Two of the three platoons of No.3 (MG) Company (8 and 9 Platoons) were stationed on Stonecutters Island when the Hong Kong battle began, and they came under artillery and aerial bombardment and suffered their first casualty there. On the withdrawal from Kowloon, the two platoons were sent to Wong Nei Chong Gap where they were joined by the Company's 7 Platoon.

9 Platoon, commanded by Lt B.C.Field, was given the task of manning pill boxes JLO1 and JLO2 situated on either side of the catchwater on the western slopes of Jardine's Lookout. There they put up a stubborn defence denying the enemy the use of the catchwater as a means of reaching the Gap. Lt Field later wrote: *I was particularly impressed by the fine spirit and steadiness shown by the Volunteers under my command. They were all Eurasians, most with a British father and a Chinese or Eurasian mother, a type which in Hong Kong had not been credited generally with the character these men showed.*

These comments were endorsed in Major-General C.M.Maltby's despatch to the Secretary of State for War in 1945. He wrote: *In closing my despatch I wish to pay a special tribute to the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. They proved themselves to be a valuable portion of the garrison. In peace they had surrendered a great deal of their leisure in training.....and in action they proved themselves stubborn and gallant soldiers. To quote examples seems almost invidious but I should like to place on record the superb gallantry of No.3 (Eurasian) Company at Wong Nei Chong Gap.....*

High praise indeed! Who were these Eurasians?

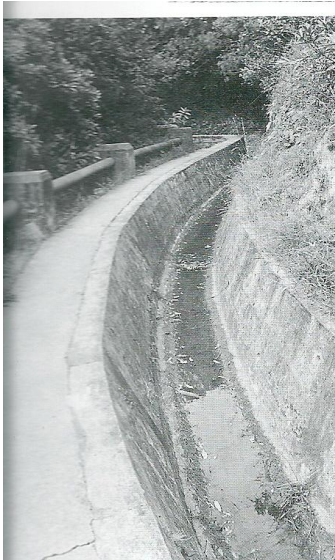
There are difficulties in answering this question, and the author of a much publicised and informative book on Hong Kong's Eurasians (**In the Web**, written and first published by Peter A. Hall, 1992) may have encountered these difficulties. To illustrate the presence of Eurasians in the HKVDC he refers to the Kowloon Cricket Club which was popular amongst certain Eurasians, cricket being an outward and visible sign of detachment from the Chinese community. He mentions the War Memorial in the Club and gives the names of 19 Eurasians who lost their lives. Unfortunately, only six of the names he gives are actually on the Memorial.

In Hong Kong, Eurasians tended to be regarded as all those who were not accepted by the two main communities of westerners and Chinese and had no minority community with which to identify. Some were not of mixed blood at all. Some, of mixed blood or not, were returned from overseas, no longer able to speak the language - many of these were Volunteers, such as the Fincher brothers from Australia and the Lee brothers from England.

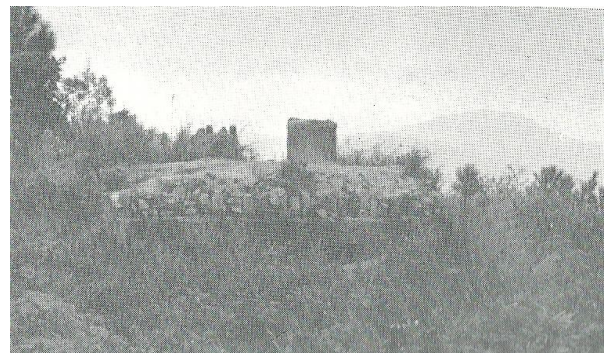
Amongst the Eurasians in Hong Kong was a relatively small group whose European patriarchs were merchants and senior officials, many of whom typically did not marry or even co-habit with their “protected” Chinese partners. Their sons were raised by the mothers, speaking and dressing as Chinese. Many attended the Central School (later known as Queen’s College) and acquired a smattering of English. They used Chinese names, but later generations typically reverted to the western surnames of the European patriarchs. A notable exception to this were the descendants of the Eurasian brothers Ho Tung and Ho Fook, who retained the surname “Ho”.

But the Eurasians in the HKVDC included only a handful of men descended from this small group. Notable amongst them were: Lt D.J.N.Anderson, killed in action with No.3 (MG) Company (grandson of Hung Kam Ning); Gnr A.Ho, killed in action with 5th (AA) Battery (grandson of Ho Fook); Sgt.W.M.Gittins, 4th Battery (son of Hung Tsin), died as a POW in Japan; Sgt. G.A.V.Hall, Field Company Engineers (son of Sin Tak Fan); L/Cpl J.F.Shea, ASC Company (son of She Po Sham); Pte W.A.Zimmern, ASC Company (son of Shi Beng Kwong); and five Zimmern brothers (sons of Shi Charn Kwong) of whom two were killed in action - Sgt E.Zimmern with No.3 (MG) Company, and L/Bdr A.Zimmern with 5th (AA) Battery. It may be noted that only two of these men were in the No.3 (MG) Company. The names given in brackets were the first generation Eurasian fathers or paternal grandfathers of these men.

The majority of the Eurasians in the HKVDC were descended from European men who were typically, for example, mariners, soldiers, tavern keepers, teachers, missionaries, policemen and shop-keepers rather than merchants and senior officials. They included, to name but a few, men with surnames such as Broadbridge, Cunningham, Fox, Greaves, Hicks, Izatt, Kew, Leonard, Litton, Maycock, Maxwell, Minhinett, Peters, Prew, Rapp and Rathsam. There were many others. The European ancestors of these men married and lived with their Chinese wives, and their continued presence at home influenced the upbringing of their children who used their European surnames. These Eurasians tended to be kept at arm’s length by westerners, being perhaps an unwelcome constant reminder of what may have been regarded at the time as the questionable morality of the western men who had fathered them. The Eurasians who served in the No.3 (MG) Company, where they were in the majority, tended to come from this background.



*The catchwater at Jardine’s Lookout (from **Ruins of War** by Ko Tim Keung and Jason Wordie, Joint Publishing (HK) Co.Ltd.1996)*



*Pill box JLO1 (from **Season of Storms** by Robert L. Gandt, South China Morning Post Publications Division, 1982)*

The No.3 (MG) Company suffered an overall casualty rate of 63%, killed and wounded. A handful of the survivors were released from POW camp under sponsorship. But the majority remained POWs until the end of the war, and many were shipped to Japan in the Third and Fifth Drafts.