

The Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group Newsletter

December 2013



Following the formation of the Group some years ago, we set our aims at the promotion of the memory of the men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. We are pleased to be able to say that 2013 has been a positive year in this regard. With the publication of *Death Was Our Bedmate*, the story of the men of the 155th [Lanarkshire Yeomanry] Field Regiment has now been told; the dedication of a memorial to the Men located in the Market Place, Carluke, South Lanarkshire, has taken place and we have just received confirmation from North Lanarkshire Council that they have achieved funding to develop a memorial garden in Belhaven Park in Wishaw. The garden will commemorate all branches of the armed services, but with particular emphasis on the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Information boards will tell of the service and sacrifice of the men over the years and the centrepiece will be a specific memorial to the Men of the Regiment which we will commission. Funding has already been achieved through the sales of DVDs of the Carluke event, kindly provided by Bernard Martin, together with donations from friends and families of the Regiment.

Construction work has already begun at Belhaven Park but with the onset of winter, it would be unrealistic to plan for completion and a dedication before Spring. However, we will keep everyone updated as to progress.

A Very Special Guest

Our old friend, Tom McKie, was literally on the red carpet when he and other survivors of the Death Railway were guests of honour at the premiere of the film *The Railway Man* which was screened at the Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square, London on 4 December

The film, starring Colin Firth and Nicole Kidman, tells the story of Scots FEPOW the late Eric Lomax, and his experience while a prisoner in Thailand.



Who is that talking with Tom McKie?



Tom (R) with some of the other FEPOWs who attended the premiere.

Tom tells us that it was an evening he will never forget. Whisked off in a limousine to the Odeon and the red carpet, he was mesmerised by the sheer number of people and the photographers waiting to greet him and the others. Following the screening, he met with the stars of the film and was lavishly entertained, eventually getting to bed at 3am! Quite a night!

The film will be on general release from next month.

Telling the Story

We were once again pleased to be asked by local groups to tell the story of the Men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Presentations have been made to the Inner Wheel [Ladies Rotary] at Cambuslang; Strathkelvin Writers Group; Crawfordjohn Heritage Group and the Coalburn Historical Group.

An article about the Lanarkshire Yeomanry at Lanark in the early years of the war is to be published by the magazine, *Scottish Memories*, in their March 2014 edition and they also intend to do a review of *Death Was Our Bedmate*.

On the subject of reviews we have been pleased at the reception given to the book. We never professed to be professional writers - our intention was to tell the story of the men the best we could - but have appreciated the generous opinions which have so far been given on the websites of Pen and Sword and Amazon, the publisher and major distributor of the book, respectively. If you have obtained a copy from either source, you are very welcome to contribute your own views on the book.



Anne and Robert about to leave for Motherwell

Remembrance Day

Once again, the men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry were remembered on Remembrance Sunday.

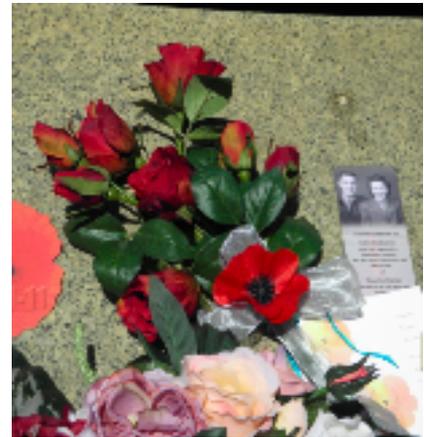
At the Cenotaph in Duchess Park, Motherwell, Anne Gilmour and her son Robert laid a Yeomanry wreath in memory of her late father and all the others who had served and died while with the Regiment in two World Wars. At Hamilton, Tom Gordon whose uncle, also Tom Gordon died while a POW on Taiwan, laid a similar wreath at the Cenotaph on Bothwell Road.



Robert laying the Lanarkshire Yeomanry wreath.

In Birmingham, Tom McKie was a special guest of the Mayor when he also laid a Yeomanry wreath in memory of old comrades.

On 11th November, while visiting in Australia, we attended the Remembrance Service at Kings Park, Perth, where we laid a floral tribute on behalf of the men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. While perhaps not as grand as some of the wreaths laid on behalf of nations including the UK, Holland and others, it still received a lot of interest and attention from the many people who attended the service.



The floral tribute laid at Kings Park, Perth

The mystery of A Battery- the lost Battery of the 155th.

Following his attendance at the unveiling of the memorial to the Lanarkshire Yeomanry at Carluke, Derrick Mant, a veteran of the 156th [Lanarkshire Yeomanry] Field Regiment, contacted *The Gunner*, the Journal of the Royal Artillery. As a result the *Gunner* printed an article and photograph about the event and Derrick has now told us that the following letter has recently been published in the *Gunner* from a Lt Col Thompson:

I am currently engaged in writing the story of 51 Fd Regt RA in WW2 and was interested in the piece in October's Gunner about the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

In Ceylon on 3 May 1942, 51 Fd Regt [Westmoreland and Cumberland Yeomanry] acquired a battery of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry [number 587] as its third battery. When the regiment moved to India in early February 1943 the Lanarkshire Yeomanry battery remained in Ceylon but rejoined the regiment in Bangalore on 29 September 1943.

On 24 October 1943 the regiment was reconstituted as a 'Special Infantry Battalion' to be known as 51/69 Regt RA and began training as Chindits. At the beginning of February 1944, 51 and 69 Columns [still including the Lanarkshire Yeomanry] marched into Burma as part of 16 Bde and - it would appear - were actually the first Chindit unit to engage the Japanese in a successful action at Lonkin on 16 March 1944. Captain Mant might like to add this to the list of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry's exploits.

The above letter goes a long way in resolving the mystery of what happened to A Battery when B and C Batteries had left India for Malaya in August 1941. We were aware from the late Bob McCrum and George Tominey [whose late father was with the 155th] that the men of A Battery had served with the Chindits but had been unsure of the actual details of the unit. Now with Col Thompson's letter, we have more information. Derrick is making steps to try and make contact with Col Thompson to see if we can learn more.

Lanarkshire Yeomanry in WW1

As next year marks the 100th Anniversary of the start of the 'Great War', we have been asked by the Lanarkshire Family History Society to prepare something on the involvement of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. The Regiment saw action at Gallipoli, where many of the men were lost, and in the Middle East where they were also fighting against the Turks. This is an aspect of WW1 which has largely been forgotten owing to the terrible carnage of the Western Front but many allied troops, including the Yeomanry, lost their lives fighting in the deserts around Gaza and Jerusalem.



Thomas Caldwell



*Flowers from the Holy Land
brought back by Isaac Caldwell.*



Isaac Caldwell (seated)

Later on in the war, the Lanarkshire Yeomanry joined with the Ayrshire Yeomanry to form the 12th Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers. It was under this banner that Yeomanry trooper, Sgt Thomas Caldwell from Carluke won the VC on the Western Front. During his time at war, Thomas was alongside his brother, Isaac, and we are very grateful to Isaac's granddaughter, Anne Caldwell, for information about him and his brother, Thomas.



Jim Wilson

We are also obliged to David Wilson for photographs and information about two relatives, James and John Wilson, who both served with the Lanarkshire Yeomanry during the Great War.



John Wilson

Another relative of the Wilson brothers is Mary Mitchell from Douglas who was instrumental in us receiving the donation of a Lanarkshire Yeomanry sword which is currently on display at Low Parks Museum, Hamilton.

Thank You

We would like to acknowledge our thanks to the following for their kind donations since our last newsletter:

William Brown	Andy Coogan	Derrick Mant	Sheila Brine
Anne Mair	Lin Mount	Carrie Watson	Tom McKie
Fergus McGhie	John Fergusson	Audrey Douglas	Nancy Smith

and a generous cheque from a lady in Blackpool who wishes to remain anonymous.

We are also grateful to Richard Smith for his donation of a set of books about WW1. They have already been very useful for the research that we are doing into the Lanarkshire Yeomanry in the Great War.

When giving talks about the 155th and the POW story, we are often asked why some men survived while others died. There are many explanations which can be given but, by far the most important factor in any POW's survival was where he was sent and even the camp/s in which he was held.

Sadly, for the majority of the men who were sent to Borneo, survival was unlikely. At Sandakan in the north of the island, every single POW died or was executed – apart from six Australians who escaped and were hidden by local people. Meanwhile, the three hundred men who were moved from Kuching to Labuan in August 1944 all died or were executed. The executions were in accordance with the “Final Disposition” of prisoners when there was a possibility of their rescue by approaching Allied forces.



By the time of the Japanese surrender on 15th August, two thirds of the POWs at Batu Lintang Camp, Kuching, had died. The date for the ‘Final Disposition’ at this camp had been set for 17th and 18th August.

The Memorial which has been erected on the site of the camp at Batu Lintang.

A copy of the Method of Disposition was found in the offices at Batu Lintang Camp when it was liberated. It revealed that the POWs were to be marched into the jungle, shot and burnt. At the nearby internment camp the instructions were:
Women internees, children and nuns - to be given poisoned rice.
Internee men and Catholic Fathers to be shot and burnt.
Sick and weak left at Batu Lintang main camp to be bayoneted and the entire camp destroyed by fire.



Six men from the 155th were among those sent to Borneo. Sadly, none of them survived. Gunner Rodger Campbell and Gunner David Laing are buried in the War Cemetery at Labuan.

Staff Sergeant John Parker, Gunner Charles Shun Bombardier Thomas Tadman and Gunner Frederick Wain (all of whom had been among those sent to Labuan) are commemorated on the Memorial at Kranji, Singapore as their bodies could not be recovered after the war.

The Kranji Memorial, Singapore

The wording on the front of the Memorial reads

ON THE WALLS OF THIS MEMORIAL ARE RECORDED THE NAMES OF TWENTY FOUR THOUSAND SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN OF MANY RACES UNITED IN SERVICE TO THE BRITISH CROWN WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN MALAYA AND NEIGHBOURING LANDS AND SEAS AND IN THE AIR OVER SOUTHERN AND EASTERN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC BUT TO WHOM THE FORTUNE OF WAR DENIED THE CUSTOMARY RITES ACCORDED TO THEIR COMRADES IN DEATH.
THEY DIED FOR ALL FREE MEN



To organise a tour to the Death Railway, contact admin@tbrconline.com
For Taiwan camps, contact Michael Hurst, www.powtaiwan.org

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