



70th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore
Service of Remembrance

In commemoration of all F.E.P.O.W. and in remembrance of those who did not survive, the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group will hold a Service of Remembrance at St. Brigid's Hall, Newmains on Sunday, 12th February 2012 at 2 p.m.

It may appear strange that we would wish to commemorate what Winston Churchill so famously described as 'the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British History'. While such a description may well be historically accurate, it fails to recognise that the fault did not lie with those servicemen who were to give their all throughout the Malayan Campaign and who suffered from the gross and culpable failure of military planners and leaders - including Churchill himself - few of whom were to personally reap the whirlwind which followed the Fall of Singapore.

In order to facilitate catering and seating for the Service, it would be useful for us to have an idea of possible numbers so, if you would be interested in coming along, we would be grateful if you would let us know.

At this stage, only a rough idea of numbers is needed - final numbers can be confirmed at a later date.

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V.J. Day, National Arboretum, Lichfield.



Tom McKie, VJ Day 2011

In August we attended the Annual Service for V.J. Day, which is now also known as FEPOW Day where we met up again with our old friend Tom McKie..

Tom, from Birmingham, has been a stalwart in the local British Legion and FEPOW Organisation, for whom he has acted as the carrier of the Colours since the end of WW2. This year the Colours were being laid up in the FEPOW Memorial Building and Tom performed this duty, as well as laying the principal wreath at the FEPOW Memorial.

Along with him, laying the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Wreath, was Sally Dorrian whose grandfather, Sgt Bill Anderson from Kirkfieldbank, served with the Regiment in the Far East and died as a POW at Kinkaseki in January 1945 leaving behind a widow and five children.

While at the Arboretum we attended the Annual Conference of COFEPOW where we were brought up to date with what is happening throughout the UK in respect of the FEPOW story.

COFEPOW has an excellent web site - an invaluable tool for anyone wishing to carry out research on relatives or POW camps in the Far East.



Sally Dorrian (L) and Tom McKie (far right) at the wreath laying ceremony at the FEPOW Memorial



Agnes Dougan speaking with Patrick Toosey, son of Lt. Col. Philip Toosey, Commanding Officer at Tamarkan POW Camp, where two bridges were built over the Mae Khlong River. (often referred to as the River Kwai).

Taiwan POW Reunion, South Shields

In September we again met Sally when we attended the Taiwan POW Reunion at South Shields which is masterminded and organised by the remarkable Eileen Bacon. This is the fourth year that Eileen, assisted by her daughter Clare, has brought together the last surviving veterans of the Taiwan POW Camps and their families. The weekend is an opportunity for memories and stories to be exchanged in a relaxed atmosphere and, also, to see something of the local area. This year, Eileen organised a visit to the fascinating Maritime Museum at Hartlepool - giving everyone a chance to experience life on a 'tall ship'.



A. Dougan, Lin Mount, Mike Farmer, Rosemary McGhie, Sally Dorrian

Sadly the re union this year did not include any of the very few veterans from the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, although we did have the chance to renew our friendship with some exceptional men, including our special friends George Reynolds and Ken Pett. It was a pleasant surprise to meet for the first time Rose McGhie, whose late husband Fergus and his brother Robert, were both with the 155th and POWs at Kinkaseki.

We also met up again with Lin Mount and her family. Their father, John Farmer was a Lance Sergeant with the 155th and another victim of the Taiwan POW camps.

New Contacts

In September we were contacted by Frances White whose father, *Eric Allen* from Streatham in London had been with the 156th during WW2 and had been responsible for many of the illustrations which feature in that excellent book, '593 The Story of a Field Battery', produced after the war and which recounts the exploits of the 156th. Frances was keen to make contact with relatives of other former members of the 156th and we were able to put her in touch with Damion Lawrence whose 91 year old grandfather, Bernard Lee was also with the Regiment during the war.

Another link was with *Geoff Storey*, a veteran of the 156th who is still hale and hearty and living in Norfolk. Sadly, like former member of the 155th, Tom McKie from Birmingham, Geoff recently lost his wife after many years together and finds the empty house hard to bear. However, never daunted, Geoff, like Tom, has indicated an interest in coming to Lanarkshire for the Remembrance Service planned for Sunday 12th February and we hope that he will manage to come as it would be tremendous to meet him.



John Mackay Kelly (L)

Colin Kelly, nephew of John Mackay Kelly, the 20 year old Gunner from Biggar in Lanarkshire who was tragically killed during the last days of the Battle for Singapore. has been in contact as he is researching his family.

John's friend, Gnr. Ian Scott, also from Biggar, survived the fighting but died at Kanburi from pneumonia on 10th December 1943 after having been one of the unfortunate "F" Force workers on the Death Railway.

Adrian Hayes has been in touch from New Zealand in respect of his father, *Norman George Hayes*, who served with the 156th during WW2. His father was from Derby and Adrian can recall that his father's prized possession was an ornamental box inscribed with the insignia of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.. He is keen to learn more about his father and can be contacted on email adrianhayes@slingshot.co.nz

Gnr Robert Brown



Robert Brown, India 1941



Robert in later years

Some time ago we were made aware of a former member of the 155th, *Robert Brown* from Airdrie Road in Carlisle in Lanarkshire. Thanks to the ever helpful Ron Harris of the Lanark and Carlisle Gazette, an article was printed in the paper and we were contacted by George Finlay, a nephew of Robert Brown.

We knew from our own research that Robert had been a POW at Changi until April 1943 when, as part of "F" Force, he was sent up country to work on the Death Railway. "F" Force was one of the last groups to be sent to slave on the railway and many of the men were sick and unfit. Over 50% of the men on "F" Force perished.

George was able to tell us that Robert had returned to Carlisle after the war and, while convalescing in England, met his future wife, Jean. They married and settled in England but, as a result of his time as a POW, Robert never fully recovered his health and died at an early age. In November we had the privilege of meeting Jean when she visited the family at Carlisle and it was obvious to us that although he had never got over his awful time as a POW, Robert's later years with his family in England had been very happy.

Rachael Leachwick is seeking information on her late father, *Jack Greenshields Watherston* who served as an officer with the 155th. In August 1942 just before the Regiment was sent to Malaya, it was re-designated a two Battery Field Regiment and "A" Battery was detached and moved to Quetta in the North of India, ostensibly to form the nucleus of a new Field Regiment. Many of the men, including Tom Laird, were transferred to other units including the Chindits where Rachael believes her father later served. Unfortunately, information about "A" Battery is scarce and if anyone can help, please get in touch.

Lt. Col. James Fasson

Another family with whom we have recently made contact is that of the late James Fasson who, following the fall of Singapore, was appointed commanding officer of the 155th. Lt Col Fasson was one of the many members of the Regiment transported to Taiwan on board the hellship, the 'England Maru' and was held at Kinkaseki and Shirakawa on the island before being sent to Japan and then to Manchuria in 1945 with other senior officers. He was later 'Mentioned in Despatches' for his leadership and example during the POW years.

The Fasson family had a distinguished, if tragic, war record. James Fasson's brother, Anthony 'Tony' Fasson was posthumously awarded the George Cross while serving in the Royal Navy when he recovered the code books relating to the famous ENIGMA coding machine from a sinking U Boat in the Mediterranean. Sadly, on re entering the submarine to recover more documents, he lost his life when it sank to the bottom.

His nephew and namesake, Tony Fasson, the son of Lt Col James Fasson, has generously donated to us the Lanarkshire Yeomanry tunic belonging to his father and another relating to his father's service with the Lothian and Borders Horse Yeomanry. The latter tunic is now destined for the Museum at Jedburgh, the home town of the Fasson family, while the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Tunic, along with the Boer War banner and other artefacts relating to the Regiment will be offered for permanent display in Lanarkshire.



A Lanarkshire Yeomanry banner dating from the Boer War which has been given into the safe keeping of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group.

Memorial News

We are pleased to report that planning permission has been given by North Lanarkshire Council for a memorial to the Lanarkshire Yeomanry to be sited in Strathclyde Country Park. We will now set about the necessary enquiries in respect of raising funds.



the suggested site in Strathclyde Park

We have also been approached by Carluke Development Trust with the suggestion that a Memorial be sited in the Market Place in the village. The location suggested is very apt as it would form a 'triangle' with the existing War Memorial and a Memorial to local holders of the Victoria Cross, one of whom, Thomas Caldwell, was a former trooper with the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

Captain J.H. Fraser Stewart

The local paper came to our assistance when we were seeking information about Fraser Stewart of Lanark, a former officer with the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Captain Stewart, who before the war had been an architect in the town, served with the 155th throughout the disastrous Malayan Campaign and was amongst the batch of over 200 men of the Regiment to be sent as POWs to Taiwan in October 1942.

While on Taiwan, he used the neatness and accuracy gained as an architect to compile detailed records of the men of the Regiment. Unfortunately, he became a particular target of dislike by some of the evil guards in the camp and his health suffered as a result. Sadly he died at Shirakawa POW Camp on Taiwan in June 1945 at the age of 31 years, leaving his widow and two daughters back home in Lanark.

Thanks to the Lanark Gazette, we have made contact with his two daughters, Elizabeth, now living in the New Forest and Lesley who lives on Orkney. In addition, his great niece, Lesley Bousbaine, has been of great help to us in the work she has done in compiling the family history.

Remembrance Day Service and dedication of the Memorial Wall at Kinkaseki, Taiwan

The following article was sent to us by Gloria Dingwall, who attended this year's Service. in remembrance of her uncle, Gnr James Cowan of the 155th.

"I was deeply disturbed by Kinkaseki (Jinguashi). We went there twice – on Thursday, November 10 to visit the museum and see the Memorial Wall of names and again on Sunday, Nov 13 for the dedication of the Wall, the "Mates" sculpture and Memorial Service. Both times, it was absolutely awash with monsoon-like rainy conditions so I never got to see the entrance to the mine or 'boot hill' where my poor Uncle, Gnr James Cowan, was originally interred.

It would be fair to say that Kinkaseki was the most god forsaken place I have ever been to. It rained the entire week in Taipei but both times we went to Kinkaseki the heavens opened and you couldn't see a finger in front of you. I can only imagine the hell that these souls went through whether they lived or died. The weather and place was just as your Dad described it in "Out of the Depths of Hell".



Ken Pett, beside the 'Mates' sculpture.

Ken, formerly 80th Anti Tank Regiment, was with the men of the 155th in both Kinkaseki and Kukutsu and has been of immense help to us in our research into both camps.

When we were in the Museum at Kinkaseki, the mine they take you into was running with water from all the rain that was pouring down. There was water everywhere and it is a wonder the museum/mine has never caved in because I've never seen so much water in my life. The place definitely had an air of sadness about it and I could only think about the atrocities committed there against these brave men who did nothing to deserve the treatment meted out to them. I am so glad that their story was told by former POWs like your Dad, Jack Edwards and Arthur Titherington and especially pleased to see the current level of commitment of the Taiwan Government and various Trade Offices including British, Canadian, Australian and The Netherlands whose Directors attended the ceremonies in Taipei, Nov 11 and at Kinkaseki, Nov 13.

We also went to Kukutsu - the jungle camp that some of the men were sent to after Kinkaseki. The area was fascinating because of the vegetation and the height up the mountain. It is easy to see why the Japs took the POWs there as they would feel that no-one would ever be able to locate them as it is so remote.

Local people went out of their way to welcome us. They were kindness itself and I am sure they were not treated well either when their country was under Japanese occupation. They had two bands playing for us and after the ceremony at the Memorial they hosted a lunch for us. You never saw such a spread of local food - all home cooked, hot dishes and cold.

They also served sweet potatoes and peanuts in recognition of the POWs having to clear the land and plant these crops.

After we left Taiwan, we went to the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery at Sai Wan on Hong Kong island. It was comforting to see how well the war graves are kept. A small army of men were attending to the headstones, washing them down, cutting the grass etc and the place was immaculate. It was such a contrast from Kinkaseki – it would be similar to comparing heaven with hell."



A section of the Memorial Wall.

Remembrance Sunday

Representing the Lanarkshire Yeomanry at this year's Remembrance Services at Hamilton and Motherwell were members of the families of Gnr Tom Gordon and Gnr Andrew McKay of the 155th.

At Hamilton were Gnr Gordon's nephew, also Tom and his son and at Motherwell was Anne Humphrey, daughter of Andrew McKay.



Anne and Nancy with their families

We are delighted to add our congratulations to Andy Coogan who has been selected as a member of the Team who will carry the Olympic Torch throughout the UK next year as the precursor to the London Olympic Games. Andy, now in his nineties, is no stranger to the athletics stage and over the years has won many accolades, including the British Empire Medal in recognition of his work with young athletes. But for WW2 and its aftermath, where Andy was a victim of Japanese Hell Camps in Taiwan and Japan, he would almost certainly have competed in the 1948 Olympic Games. Denied this opportunity as a result of the effects of his horrific experiences, it is very apt that he should now be recognised in this way. Andy was nominated for the honour by a young in-law, the Olympian Sir Chris Hoy. Congratulations Andy.

A special event was that held at St Brigid's Centre in Newmains in October in association with COFEPOW where a veteran of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, Tom Hannah, agreed to talk about his experience as a POW on the Death Railway. It was a moving and humbling experience for those who had gathered to hear Tom's story and you could have heard a pin drop as he was speaking. Thank you, Tom, for what must have been a painful experience but one which helped those present appreciate what it had been like for their loved ones.



Tom Hannah (L), Andy Coogan (R)

Thank You

Once again we are grateful for the kindness shown by relatives of men of the Regiment

At the Newmains meeting in October, Nancy Smith (top picture) donated items to be raffled towards the start of a Memorial Fund. A generous £143 was given by those in attendance.

Audrey Douglas, widow of Jock Douglas of Penrith, a veteran of the 155th who was a POW in the Kinkaseki Copper Mine made a generous donation which we will add to the Fund.

Olympian, Sir Chris Hoy has offered to donate a track suit to be raffled or auctioned - the proceeds to be given to the Memorial Fund.

Talks and Presentations

These have included a talk at Hamilton Town Library to mark Remembrance Day,

Participation in the Lanarkshire Museum's Forum Open day at Low Parks Museum at Hamilton

The Lanarkshire Family History Society Military Event held at the Livingston Centre in Blantyre.

We are always pleased at the interest shown by the general public about the Men of the Regiment.

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