



75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore



The 15th February 2017 is the 75th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore when tens of thousands of British and Commonwealth service men and women, including the men of the 155th (Lanarkshire Yeomanry) Field Regiment R.A., fell into the hands of the Japanese. In the three and a half years that followed they were all to suffer and, in many cases, die in hell camps situated throughout the Far East.

To mark and remember this suffering and sacrifice, we intend to hold a commemorative event in the St. Brigid's Centre, Newmains, at 2 pm on Sunday 12th February 2017.

After a short service of Remembrance there will be a presentation by Jon Cooper, a graduate of the Centre of Battlefield Archaeology at Glasgow University, and currently the Director of The Adam Park Project in Singapore.

Drawing by Ronald Searle of a POW in Thailand

Adam Park is a residential area in Singapore and was the centre of ferocious fighting between Allied and Japanese troops in February 1942 during the Battle of Singapore. Over the past few years, Jon and his team have made some amazing finds in that area and have been responsible for adding significantly to our knowledge of a previously little researched aspect of WW2. Using the items that have been found in the gardens of the houses, Jon and his team have been able to determine the various positions of the British and Japanese troops, the British medical post and how the battle ebbed and flowed. My sister and I met with Jon at Adam Park when we were in Singapore last year and were fascinated by his account of the last days of the battle for Singapore.



Jon Cooper (R) with members of his team in the recently discovered chapel at Adam Park.

The story of the Adam Park Project, its wartime heritage and the discoveries made by the team is told in Jon's excellent book, *'Tigers in the Park'*.

Following Jon's presentation, there will be a light buffet and an opportunity to chat.

We hope that you will be able to join us.



After the fall of Singapore, Adam Park became one of the principal locations where POWs who were labouring on the construction of a Japanese Memorial Shrine were held. Among them were twenty men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, including old friends Tom Hannah and Pat McCready.

Others from the 155th were held at various locations on the island.

Propaganda photograph taken of a work party on Singapore. William Brown of the 155th can be seen on the right of the back row. A Japanese guard is in the middle of the front row.

The Fall of Singapore was described – unjustly – by Churchill as “Britain's Biggest Military Disaster”. To this day, the capitulation of the “Impregnable Fortress’ that was 1942 Singapore is still debated by historians as they analyse and survey a range of causes.

The following article has been taken from the COFEPOW quarterly newsletter.



Chinese heads on stakes - a common sight in Singapore after the surrender.

“Everyone knows of the enormous British gun emplacements in the harbour, fixed to fire only armour piercing shells; of the sophisticated and blatant Japanese pre-war spying system, ignored by authorities; of the antiquated equipment and inappropriately trained young men shipped out to the tropics, whose bravery and resolve were simply not enough to resist a cruel and ruthless foe; of the 'secret weapon', the bicycle, with which the Japanese made light work of the jungle; of troops of the 18th Division, trained for war in the Near-East, yet diverted to Singapore and who had barely disembarked before being ordered to lay down their weapons; of the enmity of local peoples, under British rule at the start of the war and promised their freedom by the new invader's bogus “Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere”; of the absence of supplies and water on Singapore Island during the retreat; and of the UK Government's understandable obsession with the European war and lack of understanding about the consequences of capitulation.

More sinister accusations have also been levelled however. Inexcusably, after three and a half years of squalor, deprivation and hard labour, many servicemen were accused of a form of collective cowardice on their eventual return from captivity (those who survived to come home). Of conceding the day too readily to the “poor-sighted, physically short and mentally limited Yellow Peril” - the popular picture painted of the enemy. The truth of the bravery of our soldiers emerged in time, however.’

Hodge Mitchell of the 155th (R) and two other POWs being de-loused after liberation.



As families of Far East Prisoners of War, our understanding of the causes is informed by the silences of our fathers, from reading accounts written to purge their memories, or by witnessing their recurring pain which often prevailed throughout our childhoods. But we also have something else. A shared experience, a first hand connection to these men who were not cowards, or slackers, or uncommitted in their fight. We know that these 'forgotten' men were the bravest of the brave.

It is that bravery that we would like to honour and commemorate on February 12th.



A liberated POW on an aircraft carrier on the first stage of his journey home.



The L.Y. Memorial at Carluke



The L.Y. Memorial at Wishaw

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