



The Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group Newsletter *March 2017*

Seventy five years ago on the 15th February 1942 during WW2, the British garrison at Singapore capitulated to the Imperial Japanese Army. That day was too prove a nightmare for the British and Commonwealth troops involved. In the three and a half years which followed tens of thousands of them were forced to slave in what were to be considered hell camps located throughout the Far East. In those camps they were starved and either worked or beaten to death. Many of them were local men serving in the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

On 12th February they were remembered at a commemorative service held at the St Brigid's Centre, Newmains. Taking part were children of some of those men.

The service began with an introduction by Campbell Thomson of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group and was followed by a welcome by Provost Jim Robertson of North Lanarkshire Council during which he told of a recent trip he had made to Singapore where he had visited Changi Jail and the nearby beach where men from the Lanarkshire Yeomanry had been forced to bury the bodies of hundreds of Chinese civilians - men, women and children - who had been murdered by the Japanese Army in what became known as the Sook Ching massacres.

The main address was by Agnes Dougan, whose late father John McEwan had been one of the men so gruesomely employed at Changi Beach. Using the stories from a number of servicemen who had fought during the Battle for Singapore, she graphically outlined some of the emotions and feelings they had experienced that fateful day: anger and frustration at having to surrender, bitterness at how they had been let down by their political leaders and a real fear for what was to come.

Gill Friel, another daughter of a POW, Lance Bombardier William Burns of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry, read a prayer entitled 'We Remember Them' a poignant reminder of the fact that the men were very much forgotten at that particular time in history. Following the prayer, the large number of friends and families attending the service were able to light candles in memory of all the men and women who suffered, and in many cases died, during that terrible time. A minute's silence was followed by the Last Post played on the bugle by Angus Friel, the great grandson of Lance Bombardier Burns.

The service concluded with an Epitaph read by Clare Wilkinson the daughter of Captain Gordon Brown of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry who was awarded the Military Cross during the Battle of Slim River in Malaya but who lost an arm in the ferocious fighting which ensued.



L-R Agnes Dougan, Angus Friel, Gill Friel, Clare Wilkinson, Provost Eileen Logan, Vice Lord Lieutenant John Brown, Jon Cooper, Provost James Roberson

The service was followed by a fascinating presentation by Jon Cooper the director of the Adam Park Project in Singapore. Adam Park was the location of some of the fiercest fighting during the Battle for Singapore and Jon told the story in a gripping and powerful way which held the large audience transfixed.

The afternoon's programme was concluded by Provost Eileen Logan of South Lanarkshire Council, who in a moving vote of thanks to all those involved, clearly illustrated the effect which the service and presentation had had on all those attending.

Campbell Thomson later said:

'This was a special day and there were many tears shed. But there was also pleasure and happiness that loved ones were being remembered. And the presentation by Jon Cooper was outstanding and so relevant to the day'.



As far as we are aware, only two of the men from the 155th who were involved in the Fall of Singapore are still with us. One is Raymond Poland, who lives in Birmingham. Before the war, Raymond had intended to follow a nursing career. Instead he trained as a Signaller at Scarborough before being assigned to the 155th (Lanarkshire Yeomanry). After being seriously injured while preparing defences at Jitra, Raymond was moved down to hospital in Singapore and, when he was considered fit, the medical authorities decided he would be more useful in a nursing capacity than in returning to his regiment. Raymond then worked as a medical orderly, assisting the doctors in Singapore, Thailand and Saigon. Raymond is now 98 years old.

Raymond Poland 2015

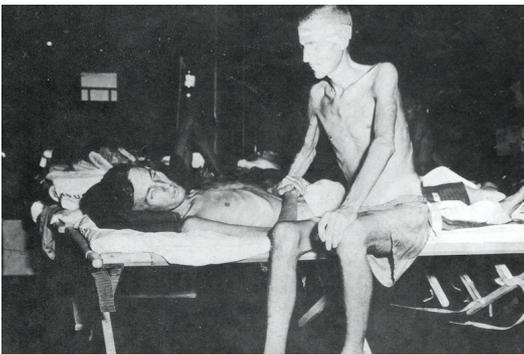
The other man still with us from the 155th is Andy Coogan, from Carnoustie. Originally from the Gorbals in Glasgow, Andy also trained as a Signaller after he was called up.

Before the war, Andy was a champion runner, who would have represented Britain in the Olympics if his health had not been destroyed as a POW. Instead, when he came home, he coached many young athletes in running to give them the chance to fulfil their dreams. Andy carried the Olympic torch for the London Olympics in 2012.

Andy will reach the grand age of 100 years on 1st April this year. If you would like to send your congratulations, his address is 8 Lawson Avenue, Carnoustie. DD7 6BS.



Andy with great nieces of Thomas Caldwell VC, Wishaw, 2014



Former Taiwan POWs on hospital ship

Following her successful talk to the Lanarkshire Family History Society, “Following in my POW Father's Footsteps”, Agnes was contacted by the Rotary Club of Bothwell and Uddingston to request that she repeat the talk for them. A member of the Rotary Club had been present at the event in Motherwell and had found it very moving.

The talk, on 14th February at the Bothwell Park Golf Club, was very well attended by members and some of their wives. As well as the slide presentation, Agnes had prepared the average daily food ration for a POW. This was given to one of the ladies present – then some of this was taken from her to illustrate the fact that, if a man was unable to work he did not get fed so the food allocation for each of the POWs was reduced accordingly.

Agnes went on to explain that the paucity of food and the almost constant dysentery had been the reason for her father weighing only 5 ½ stones at the end of the war.

A great deal of interest has been shown in the journey which Agnes and Rosemary made, with enquiries as to travel arrangements and hotels used in Singapore, Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Len Tadman, brother of Tom Tadman of the 155th who died as a POW on Borneo contacted us to say that he had told Tom's story to the Telegraph newspaper. Over the years, Len and other family members have made several trips to the Far East to try and piece together Tom's last movements.

Len remembers precisely the moment he heard of the Fall of Singapore. It was a cold February night and the nine o'clock news chimed on the family wireless set at home in Dulwich, South London. His mother was ironing. Len, then 16 years old, and two of his eight siblings were seated at the kitchen table, listening diligently. Everybody feared the worst.



Bdr. Tom Tadman, 1941

“It came on as the top story: The Fall of Singapore,” Len recalls, adding grave emphasis to what happened on 15th February 1942. “My mother dropped the iron to the floor. We just sat there in silence, shaken rigid. We all knew what it meant for Tom.”

To read the full article, key in *Len Tadman Telegraph* in the URL bar of your computer.

Grateful thanks to: The Marshall Family, The Quinn Family and Lin Mount (daughter of L/Sgt. John Farmer) for their generous donations. These will be used towards the purchase of wreaths in memory of the Men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

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