



# Hong Kong Volunteer and Ex-PoW Association of NSW



## OCCASIONAL PAPER NUMBER 3

### Volunteer Casualties



*The Roll of Honour commemorating the Volunteers who were killed in action or who died as prisoners of war which used to hang in the foyer of the RHKDF Headquarters in Sports Road, Happy Valley.*

Because of the destruction and loss of records following the surrender of Hong Kong, no reliable figures exist regarding the mobilised strength of the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps in December, 1941 or the casualties (killed and wounded) suffered by each unit. However, in Appendix I of Evan Stewart's **Hong Kong Volunteers in Battle** some figures are given which were first made out by unit commanders in POW camps, and which have since been updated several times. These figures are as good as any given elsewhere, and will be used in this Occasional Paper.

The greatest discrepancies relate to the HKVDC's Auxiliary and Affiliated Units. These units have therefore been excluded – this should not be taken to imply that these excluded units were in some way not a part of the HKVDC or that the casualties suffered by them were not, in any sense, as important as those suffered by the Corps Units. It is simply because the figures available for them cannot be verified.

The Auxiliary and Affiliated Units all played an important part in the defence of Hong Kong, and in particular the Nursing Detachment, the Stanley Platoon, the Dockyard Defence Corps, and what became popularly known as “Hughes Group” and the Public Works Corps.

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The Corps Units had a mobilised strength of 1540 officers and men, and casualties totalling 371, giving an overall casualty rate of 24.1%. The individual units with casualty rates significantly higher than this average figure were No.3 (Eurasian) Company (63.2%), 1<sup>st</sup> Battery (60.3%), No.2 (Scottish) Company (51.0%), No.1 Company (46.2%), ASC Company (45.8%) and 5<sup>th</sup> (AA) Battery (44.8%) .

The 5<sup>th</sup> (AA) Battery manned the two 3-inch anti-aircraft guns at Sai Wan Hill. They were over-run by the enemy late on 18<sup>th</sup> December, unaware that a landing had even taken place. Some twenty men were taken prisoner, tied up and kept in confinement until they were taken out and bayoneted to death.

No.1 Company was in the area of Quarry Gap and Tai Tam Valley, and suffered most of its casualties on the night of 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> December.

Most of No.3 Company's casualties occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> December, at Jardine's Lookout, Stanley Gap and Wong Nai Chung Gap.

The ASC Company was sent into the front line on the Ridge in Repulse Bay Road. These stores clerks and lorry drivers were used because of reluctance to abandon the all-round defence of the coastline by re-deploying trained infantry troops. They were no sooner in position than it was decided the position was untenable and efforts were made to withdraw, without success. A last attempt to withdraw was made on 22<sup>nd</sup> December. Most of those who left the Ridge that night were never seen again. Those who were captured were executed at Eucliff, while the wounded left behind at the Ridge were captured and killed.

No.2 Company suffered its highest number of casualties on 24<sup>th</sup> December, occupying the first line of defence in Stanley. The day before it had taken up positions at Chung Hum Kok and had suffered some casualties there.

1<sup>st</sup> Battery began the war on the D'Aguilar Peninsula, where they manned two 4-inch naval guns. On the morning of 19<sup>th</sup> December orders were received to blow up the guns and 1<sup>st</sup> Battery withdrew to Fort Stanley where they were given an infantry role. Most of their casualties occurred in the defence of Stanley on Christmas Day.

This recital makes it clear that the HKVDC played its full part in the defence of Hong Kong, and in particular in the fighting on Hong Kong Island between 18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> December, 1941 and suffered in proportion. It deserved the special mention of its services accorded by the General Officer Commanding, Major-General C.M.Maltby in his dispatch to the War Office dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1945 which stated "In closing my dispatch 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 to training, their mobilisation was completed smoothly and quickly, and in action they proved themselves stubborn and gallant soldiers."