

SOCIETY PAGES

SPECIAL COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE

NUMBER 48 ■ SPRING 2016 ■ \$2.00



BATTLE OF HONG KONG: 75th ANNIVERSARY

THE STORIES & LEGACY OF QUEBEC CITY'S ANGLOPHONE REGIMENT IN ASIA

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The mission of the **Morrin Centre** is to share and foster English-language culture in the Quebec City region. The Morrin Centre is administered by the Literary & Historical Society of Quebec. ISSN 1913-0732

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Members, supporters and friends,

The 192nd Annual General Meeting of the Literary and Historical Society Quebec will be held on Wednesday, March 30, 2016, at 7 pm. I strongly encourage all members to attend. This is your chance to get a recap of the accomplishments of 2015 and meet Council and staff. And please stay on for the always popular and entertaining magazine auction.

We are pleased to be launching our temporary exhibition, Hong Kong and the Home Front. I have a personal connection to this exhibition as my father, now 80, was a small child during the Japanese Occupation of Malaya. The Pacific Theatre, specifically as relates to Hong Kong, is a part of the Second World War that is not well-known in North America, including the direct connection to Quebec City. I hope to see you at the launch on March 24.

As you may have seen in the newspaper or on our Facebook page, the Royal Bank of Canada was at the Morrin Centre in January to announce a two-year, \$20,000 donation to the Centre. This contribution is a

testament to our work over the past few years to build programming in our three pillars of Heritage, Education and the Arts. On behalf of Council, I would like to again thank RBC for believing in our model and vision.

Speaking of our Education pillar, I'd like to highlight our We Are One/Nous Sommes Un project. We Are One brings together four local high schools – Collège François-de-Laval, École Joseph-François-Perrault, St. Patrick's High School and Quebec High School – to carry out a common project. The students selected their own project: addressing poverty in our society. The project has been made possible by the Department of Canadian Heritage and Desjardins. We've also been fortunate to be able to count on support from Centraide, Concordia University and Free the Children/We Day. We Are One not only brings students together, it draws on the educational heritage of both the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec and Morrin College. It was launched in February and will continue through December. Be sure to follow our website and social media for more updates.

Have a wonderful spring,

Sovita Chander

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Members, friends, partners,

The ImagiNation 2016 lineup includes a number of fantastic writers, including Jeffery Deaver, author of *The Bone Collector*; Anna and Jane McGarrigle discussing their family history in their book *Mountain City Girls*; Giller Prize winner Will Ferguson and so much more. We also added a few literary events with a twist, including Panache sommelier Yann Barrette-Bouchard pairing six fine wines with books being presented at this year's festival. Books and Brunch with Douglas Gibson will feature one of Canada's greatest literary personalities and a full brunch plate served by Classic Traiteur. Be sure to check out details in this issue.

We have been busy with a number of non-literary events as well, including our Arts in Action workshops series which covered songwriting, elemental theatre, Irish dance, travel writing and more. Your reaction to them was overwhelmingly positive and we will do everything in our power to continue activities like these in the future.

In 2015, we set another new record for total visitors to the Morrin Centre with 43,000 visitors, compared to 38,000 in 2014. I am confident that with the great activities already planned for 2016 we will again set a new high water mark in 2016. I hope to see you soon at the Morrin Centre.

Best regards,

Barry McCullough

TRANSACTIONS

A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY QUEBEC CITY AND THE FALL OF HONG KONG

By Patrick Donovan

Quebec City's main English-speaking regiment, the Royal Rifles of Canada, took part in what has been called "one of the darkest stories in Canadian military history." The 963 men in the regiment were sent to defend the British colony of Hong Kong. Compared to the seasoned Japanese troops, they were unprepared, ill-equipped, and soon outnumbered. Roughly a third of them did not return. The rest faced inhumane conditions in Japanese POW camps for nearly four years. At the end of the war, the survivors were welcomed as heroes, but some harboured bitterness at being sent on such an impossible mission.

Imperialism and its Discontents

Early in 1941, Winston Churchill claimed there was "not the slightest chance" of successfully defending Hong Kong against the Japanese. "We must avoid frittering away our troops on untenable positions," he said. He was later persuaded that there was value in putting up a fight, and that it would provide strong stimulus to the garrison and the colony. Britain requested reinforcements from Canada. Few of Canada's English-speaking population were likely to question the British crown at the time.

In hindsight, we may see this loyalty to imperial Britain as misguided. Defending the British imperial legacy in Hong Kong certainly seems questionable when judged from a 21st century moral standpoint. Historian Nigel

Cameron describes Hong Kong's early years under British rule as one of the most "unsavory and ignoble episodes in British mercantile ventures, surpassed only by the horrors of the slave trade." By the 1940s, the colony's social structure was still morally suspect.



Statue Square in British Hong Kong, 1946.
The statue of Queen Victoria, missing from the monument, was taken to Tokyo during WWII. It was returned in 1952.
(Photo: Hedda Morrison)

Hong Kong was essentially founded by British drug dealers, who smuggled Indian-grown opium into China. Because of this, there were 12 million opium addicts in China by the 1830s. In 1838, Chinese government official Lin Zexu wrote to Queen Victoria to complain: "Since you do not permit opium to harm your own country, you should certainly not allow it to be passed on to other countries." The Queen was unfazed. Britain justified this unsavory business through the principle of free trade. When China finally took military action against British smugglers in a nineteenth-century version of the "war on

drugs," they lost the island of Hong Kong in 1841.

Over the next century, Hong Kong grew from a series of small fishing towns to a large commercial port with over 1.5 million people. It was a place where, as historian Philip Snow puts it, "everyone did their best, seemingly, to look down upon anyone different." Colonial Hong Kong was deeply unequal and racist, with a whiff of apartheid thrown in. Although the Chinese outnumbered Europeans, they were second-class citizens forbidden from living in certain parts of town.

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Enterprising Chinese with the right British connections could make fortunes in Hong Kong, but the Chinese were grossly underrepresented in government and the public service. The top brass was not elected by the people, but appointed by Britain.

By 1940, Japan had taken over a sizable chunk of China, tensions were mounting with Britain, and Japanese troops were at Hong Kong's doorstep. Britain evacuated thousands of European women and children from Hong Kong to Australia. Many Chinese objected that their taxes were being used to evacuate a privileged minority, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

The Royal Rifles of Canada

Many people have heard of Quebec City's Francophone Royal 22nd Regiment, popularly known in English as the Van Doos, but there was a time when Quebec also had a prominent English-language regiment. The Royal Rifles of Canada were founded in 1862 to defend Quebec against a possible spillover of the American Civil War. The regiment took part in the Boer War and served on the European front in World War I.

The list of Royal Rifles officers sent to Hong Kong reads like a Who's Who of the city's prominent English-speaking families. They include John Herbert Price (who gave us Quebec's Price Building), Reginald Simons (of the *Maison Simons* dynasty), James Forsyth Ross (whose father's signature appeared on Canadian banknotes), and Frank Power (son of WWII defense minister Charles Gavan "Chubby" Power). The Royal Rifles were led by another Quebec City native, William James Home, who had fought in World War I after graduating from the High School of Quebec.

Although the officers were largely from Quebec City, recruits hailed from all over eastern Quebec and northern New Brunswick. The regiment officially operated in English, but over a third of the ranks were bilingual Francophones. Many of the recruits were fresh out of high school. Sixteen-year-old Ken Cambon was

earning meagre wages as a "soda jerk" at the Citadel Cigar Store near Quebec City's Clarendon Hotel when he signed up: "Walking home I passed a recruiting sign for The Royal Rifles of Canada and felt a burst of patriotism when I discovered the pay was \$1.30 a day." He told the recruiters he was nineteen, nobody bothered to check, and he was off to Hong Kong.



W.J. Home
Commanding Officer of the
Royal Rifles of Canada in Hong Kong

Eastward Ho!

When the Royal Rifles were shipped to Hong Kong in October 1941, the regiment had had scant training and was classified as "unfit for combat" by the Canadian defence department. Some hardly knew how to use a rifle. Misleading lectures on board ship provided the troops with a false sense of security by perpetuating stereotypes of the Japanese as short people with buck teeth who could not see at night because of the shape of their eyes. "Our indoctrination was as comforting as it was misleading," wrote Cambon in his autobiography *Guest of Hirohito*.

Canada thought the troops would have plenty of time to train in Hong Kong. They only had three weeks. While this period lasted, their military salaries provided them with luxuries undreamed of in Canada during that time. Many soldiers hired servants to shine their shoes. They took advantage of the Chinese prostitutes at night. Soldier Georges Verreault was unsure whether he had committed a mortal sin, confessing in his journal that a prostitute "[lui a] fait des caresses à damner St-Pierre lui-même." Soldier William Allister described this time as "three glorious weeks of wild luxury, shopping, dining, drinking, spending, buying embroidered kimonos, carved tusks, silk pyjamas."

The Battle

On December 8, 1941, six hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on Hong Kong. That same day, they also attacked Americans in the Philippines and the British in Malaya. Forty-eight Japanese planes destroyed Hong Kong's measly air defence of five RAF planes.

The British colony consisted of a part of the Chinese

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mainland and some 260 islands, with the political and commercial centre located on Hong Kong Island. The Japanese sent in ground troops and the main line of defence on the mainland collapsed 36 hours later; it was supposed to have held for at least a week. The Allies retreated to Hong Kong Island.

The odds were stacked against the 14,000 British, Indian, Canadian, and Chinese troops defending the colony. Faced with 40,000 veteran Japanese troops, Royal Rifles commanding officer William Home pleaded for surrender to save Allied lives. He clashed with British high command, and there was even talk of charging him with high treason. Churchill said that there was to “be no thought of surrender,” and that every day of resistance helped the Allied cause.

The battle raged on and claimed more lives. The Japanese disembarked on the island on December 18, took control of the water supply a few days later, and Britain surrendered on Christmas Day, 1941. Thousands of soldiers died on both sides, and there were around 7,000 civilian casualties. Lt. C. Douglas Johnston of Quebec City, wrote “my first reaction was one of great relief that now I would, at least, be able to have a good night’s sleep.”

Prisoners of Japan

But things actually got worse: some 10,000 Allied soldiers, including around 1,700 Canadians, faced the horrors of Japanese prisoner-of-war camps in Hong Kong and Japan for nearly four years.

Unlike Germany and Italy, Japan had rejected the

Geneva Convention with regard to POWs. The Japanese Bushido code stated that surrender was contemptible—victory or death were the only acceptable paths. Consequently, the captured Canadians were treated with little regard. Roughly one in six of the Canadian POWs, 267 in all, died under the cruelty, starvation, and slave labour they endured for nearly four years. The death rate for captured Canadians was four times higher than for Allies captured by Nazi Germany. POWs in Thailand and Burma fared even worse.

POWs lived off small portions of rice, unfamiliar greens and occasional bits of rancid fish. Vitamin deprivation and poor sanitation soon took their toll. Many saw their legs swell up like balloons with a condition called beriberi, while others became walking skeletons. Some suffered from “electric feet,” shooting pains every 10-15 seconds that made it impossible to sleep. Starvation caused many to lose their eyesight, and some never recovered.

Some guards were wilfully cruel. Kanao Inouye, nicknamed the “Kamloops Kid,” had grown up in Canada before relocating to Japan. He remembered being called “a

dirty yellow Jap” in Canada. British Columbia was not a welcoming place for Japanese in the early twentieth century. During WWII, most Japanese-Canadians on the west coast were interned in camps solely on the basis of their ethnic origin, and their property was seized and sold. The Kamloops Kid took out his pent-up anger on Canadian POWs, inflicting beatings that killed at least three prisoners. After the war, he was convicted for his crimes by a military tribunal and sentenced to hang. “A life gone full circle” wrote POW William Allister. “It



Recruitment poster for a new Royal Rifles regiment printed after the fall of Hong Kong (CWM)

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was a sentence we were, in a way, pronouncing on ourselves, destroying our own Frankenstein creation.”

Lt. C. Douglas Johnston writes about the trade that went on with the underpaid Japanese guards. Prisoners traded watches, rings, cuff links, uniforms, and cigarettes—25 cigarettes could get you 20 duck eggs. The guards even asked the Canadian dental officers to stash gold in their teeth where it would be safe until their return to Japan. “Where they got the gold is a partial mystery,” writes Johnston, “but I do know that some came from two wisdom teeth fillings which I had traded for food.”

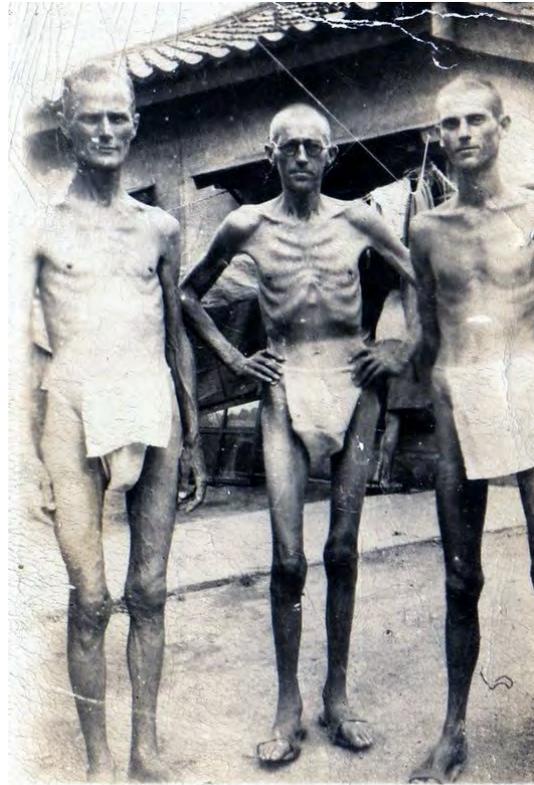
Life was also difficult for civilians in Hong Kong. Although many Chinese considered both the British and the Japanese as arrogant upper castes, they experienced more vicious repression under the latter. The occupiers raped 10,000 Chinese women in the days after surrender. Under the occupation, they made civilians bow to them, forced them into hard labour and performed routine executions. Food was rationed and most people went hungry. Nearly a million people were deported to famine-ridden China, and many did not survive.

Liberation

The controversial atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which killed some 200,000 Japanese, put an end to the war. As a result, Hong Kong returned to British rule and all POWs were freed.

Quebec City rifleman Ken Cambon remembers August 15, 1945, the day the Japanese surrendered. At noon, the guards were lined up, bowing deeply to a small radio, listening to Japanese Emperor Hirohito’s voice telling them they must “endure the unendurable.” American fighter planes soon swooped overhead, dropping magazines and cigarettes. Cambon snuck out

into town and bartered some cigarettes for saké, drinking until he passed out. War was over! Most prisoners returned on American navy ships, gorged themselves on food, and, in October, were given a hero’s welcome when they finally made it back to Quebec City.



Allied POWs in Niigata, Japan, 1945
Quebec City rifleman Ken Cambon was sent to this camp, which he called “the worst Camp in Japan.” He worked long days unloading coal from ships and was given very little to eat.

Among the returnees was Lt. John McGreevy. He went back to working as an accountant in Quebec City and became a devoted community volunteer. McGreevy was Treasurer of the Literary and Historical Society for 48 years and President from 1961 to 1966. “I was treasurer of every single bloody Anglophone foundation in Quebec,” he said, “that and the kitchen sink.” This earned him the Order of Canada in 1989.

Others had a more difficult time readjusting, particularly the lower ranks who as POWs had endured smaller rations and harsher conditions. Nearly half the returnees suffered from long-term ailments related to food deprivation under the Japanese. Many died young. Others carried psychological trauma with them,

causing difficulties at home and work. “Freedom is more than the lack of a barbed wire fence,” wrote Ken Cambon.

William Allister, a Hong Kong veteran from Montreal, came out of the experience questioning the very essence of war. He mused that men loved war because it gave them the chance to play God: “War, the ultimate insanity, was the magic password. Once accepted, all values, norms, ethics could be stood on their heads and made to look very sensible. Now the fun was over and we could all go home. Back to sanity. Or was it? Could the world just flick a switch, sign a paper and return everything to its former state?” ■

Patrick Donovan is a PhD Candidate in History at Université Laval and former Executive Director of the Morrin Centre.

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“BLOODSHED AND BROKEN HEARTS”

THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG ON THE QUEBEC CITY HOME FRONT

By Lorraine O'Donnell, PhD

The Second World War battle of Hong Kong was a catastrophe for Quebec City's English-language regiment, the Royal Rifles of Canada (RRC). The troop's official history states things baldly. RRC “was destroyed while fighting in defence of the colony.

This article will look at the Hong Kong tragedy on the home front. It presents key moments of a very difficult time in the history of the local English-speaking community. Delving into Quebec City's English newspaper, *The Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph* (the QCT), we see that the paper both reflected the news and helped form it.

One interesting aspect was how women fit into the paper's reports in these years. Media defined women's roles in wartime like in times of peace. In the pages of the QCT, women were active, strong yet always ladylike on the home front.

War and Women's Roles

When Canada declared war in September 1939, the QCT communicated what it called a truism: “There can be no neutrality for any part of the Empire when another part is at war.” For the next five years, Quebec City's English paper was filled with war stories. Page after page talked of Empire, the Allies (including Russians or “Reds”) and the enemy Axis Nazis and Japanese (usually called “Japs”).

People in Quebec City thus knew all about the horrors going on overseas. Life had to go on back home, however. At this time, life in Quebec included clear and publicly accepted roles for men and women. For

instance, when Canada declared war it was the back-to-school season. That meant work for mothers to prepare their children for school. A QCT insert remarked that “most mothers are now suffering from SCHOOL DAZE.”

The Silk Situation



War on the Pacific Front led to silk shortages in Quebec (QCT)

The war came directly to Quebec's English-speaking community through the Royal Rifles. They were headquartered in Quebec and also included men from the 7/11 Hussars, an Eastern Townships Regiment. The city hosted splashy RRC recruitment drives. One in August 1941, for instance, featured a Dufferin Terrace concert with military bands and “choice artists” including Roger Thorne singing, “When we all come back.”

A fine, husky looking group

Soon after that event, RRC troops left to join the war. A British Commander later commented that they and other Canadians were “a fine, husky looking group.” The

Rifles were initially garrisoned in Newfoundland, but families and friends back home did not know details.

They were, however, aware of another fact of the war in late 1941: Japan was becoming increasingly aggressive. The QCT ran many menacing stories with headlines like “Japanese claim gains on all Chinese fronts.” At this point, the Sino-Japanese war had not merged into the worldwide conflict but there were reports that the Nazis were “pressing Japan to enter war.”

Early on, the QCT linked women to this international theatre of war in ways that might surprise today's

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reader. Historian Ruth Pierson has described how Canadian media tried to soothe anxiety about women's place in wartime by emphasizing they would remain ladylike no matter what. A QCT example was a cartoon linking the Japanese conflict, which meant reduced importations of silk by the USA, and what this meant for women: "no more silk stockings."

The saddest Christmas

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked both Pearl Harbour and the British colony of Hong Kong. Two days later, the QCT reported that the Hong Kong garrison included Canadian troops and that Britain and the US had declared war on Japan.

Quebec City knew that some of its men were stationed in the Asian colony, but not much more than that. Its citizens were on tenterhooks waiting for news. Based on a cable sent home by one RRC man, the QCT stated, "Quebecers serving in Hong Kong [were] 'safe and well.'" It also admitted that since the Japanese attacks, "Quebecers have been on the 'qui vive' for any word on the Canadian troops in Hong Kong."

Early reports were encouraging enough, talking about Imperial forces in Hong Kong "holding out" with casualties "lighter than had been anticipated." Pictures and captions reinforced a positive message of the colony as the "Gibraltar of the Orient" with "new and modern fortifications."

On December 23, the QCT revealed that its native men, the Royal Rifles, were stationed in the colony. Up until then, regulations had restricted the paper to identifying them as troops from the Province of Quebec. The Christmas Eve edition ran stories and pictures of the RRC in the "epic defence of Hong Kong."

But the defence was in vain and Imperial forces in the colony, including 1,975 Canadian troops, surrendered to Japan. News came to Quebec City the day it happened, Christmas. It was a terrible home front holiday.

Watchful, fretful waiting

The QCT said that the suspense was over, since readers now knew the battle results. However, RRC families faced another, more excruciating wait: finding out the fate of their loved ones. All they knew was that

Hong Kong survivors were likely to now be POWs. The QCT reported contacting RRC families on December 26. At that point, they had received no confirmation.

Casualty lists were delayed because Japan had not signed the Geneva Convention requiring quick release of prisoner information. A first list was published in January 1942 with the names of only seven RRC men wounded in action. The QCT explained that it had been compiled from pre-surrender documents and further lists would not be forthcoming for a while. Newspapers spoke of the "anxiety of relatives" and "watchful, fretful waiting."

Meanwhile, QCT readers received bad news about what was going on in Hong Kong. They learned that, at the time of the battle, some equipment destined for Canadian troops had not arrived, and Canadian reinforcement troops had landed with little training. They also read that after the surrender, Japanese troops committed atrocities against the colony's POWs and civilians alike.

It was not until late in 1942, months after the battle, that Canada issued substantial casualty lists for Hong Kong including the Royal Rifles. The home front wait to learn the fate of RRC men at Hong Kong was over at last.

Those who learned their loved ones had died now had to mourn. Families of men who had survived had a new and dreadful task: waiting and hoping for the best for the POWs. As a QCT editorial put it, "this, for members of their families, was perhaps the worst period of all. Little or no news, either way, plus too many disturbing rumours of all kinds added to the mounting and all too long tension." It would last for years.

Fighting back on the home front

Quebec City's English-speaking community did much more than watch, wait and mourn. Hong Kong galvanized the home front to action.

One form was by fighting back. Canada's National Defence moved quickly to reconstitute the Royal Rifles battalion through new recruitment drives. The QCT reported in February 1942 that Quebec City men were "flocking to join" and "keen to avenge the capture of the first battalion." Mayor Lucien Borne declared the

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week of February 2 to 9 “Royal Rifles of Canada Week.” Businesses backed the drive and used the advertising slogan “Remember Hong Kong.”

Fighting back also involved demeaning the enemy and glorifying the RRC. For instance, one QCT editorial described Japan as “a savage, blood-crazed beast” and an advertisement featured a grotesquely caricatured Japanese soldier. In contrast, RRC men were routinely called heroic and gallant, and even “martyrs who have given their lives as atonement for Man’s sin.”

As this passage suggests, religion was also mobilized to the cause. It helped people make sense of tragedy. Special services were held where Quebec City people prayed “for their sons fighting alongside other Imperial troops.”

Buying war bonds was another way to fight back. In January 1942, an English-Speaking Citizens’ Committee convened for the second Victory Loan. The campaign featured the “Remember Hong Kong” slogan and an ice monument to Hong Kong heroes.

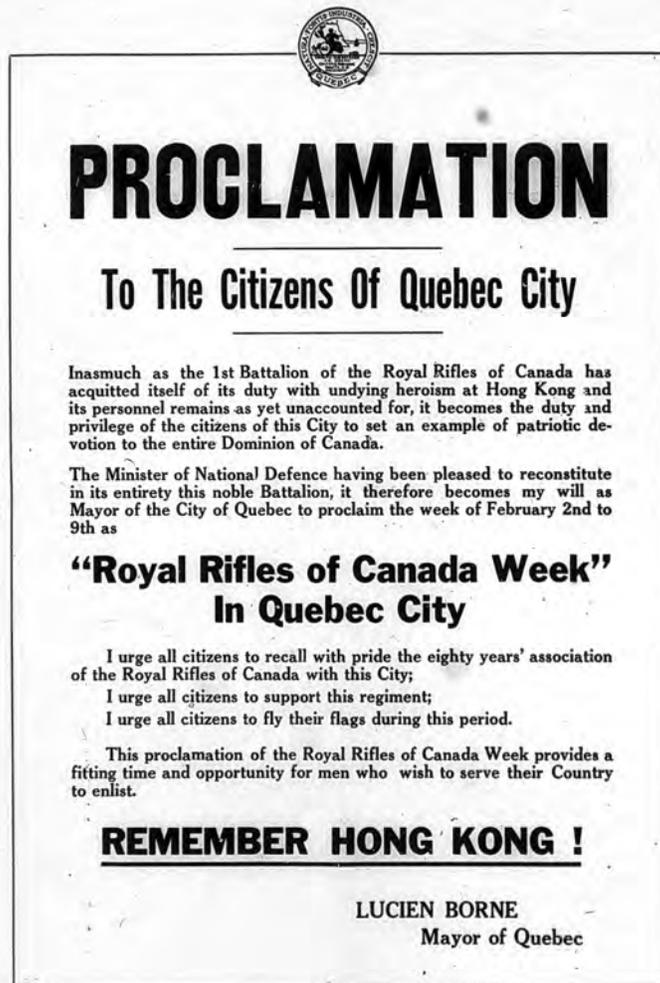
Quebec City’s English-speaking women threw themselves into war work and the QCT supported this through its reports. Mrs. Arthur J. Price of Quebec City, whose family included two RRC POWs in Hong Kong, urged all women to mobilize for the war effort through their traditional roles of wife and mother: to “fight for sound homes [and] schools that will produce

the best possible citizens.” Members of the Quebec City branch of the Imperial Order of the Daughters of the Empire met in the Morrin College building to knit warm clothes for troops overseas. The Morrin College building was also used by Red Cross women, who raised funds and packed parcels for POWs. By January 1942, the Red Cross was sending parcels to Royal Rifles POWs. The QCT periodically published articles, clearly aimed at women, on how to choose items for parcels and pack them properly.

They also wrote many letters to their loved ones in the prisoners’ camps. One POW, Capt. ACM Thomson, kept a list while in the prison camp of dozens of letters he received. It names his wife, children, the Jeffery Hale Hospital, friends and his cousin Rex Meredith.

Unfortunately, the Japanese started accepting Red Cross parcels only in September 1942. Even after this date, many parcels were pilfered by the guards. Some prisoners never received a single letter that their parents sent to them.

Meanwhile, despite extra work, worry or grief, Quebec City had to carry on with regular life. QCT pages are a striking mix of horrible war news juxtaposed with stories of boxer Joe Louis’s exploits, and regular local or national coverage, and, every day, the “women’s pages” showing what was expected of women in the Society Notes, fashion ads and so on. In December 1941, for instance, at the height of local worrying about the fate of the Royal Rifles in Hong Kong, the QCT was running a serial story called “Lady by Request.”



A little over a month after the fall of Hong Kong, Quebec City mayor Lucien Borne proclaimed a “Royal Rifles of Canada Week” (QCT)

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Welcoming the Rifles home

World War II dragged on for years, ending only with Japan's 1945 surrender. In October of that year, Quebec received exciting news: its Hong Kong veterans were coming home.

The men's return involved several stopovers and QCT editor A.G. Penny went to Vancouver to meet them and report on their progress. A few days later, a QCT editorial reflected on how hard the war had been for both POWs and their families. It advised readers to "think of the happy present, plan for a promising future and relegate the painful immediate past to its rightful place."

On October 8, the first two RRC men arrived home: Cpl. A.J. Russel of Quebec and Rifleman W. Cyr of Rouyn. Hundreds of people were at Palace Station to cheer their arrival, along with the RRC band, military leaders and members of the Red Cross and Canadian Legion.

On October 11, over 100 Royal Rifles arrived in Quebec City on "the Hong Kong Special train with 'we don't like rice' written on many of the cars." Thousands of well-wishers greeted them at the decorated train station, cheering, waving flags and throwing confetti. There was no ceremony, just happy reunions and the presence of the "highest state and military officials." Many businesses put out advertisements welcoming them home.

Stories published after their return confirmed how difficult POW life had been, especially because of lack of food, and the importance of care packages. "By common consent the Canadian parcels were easily the best," stated a QCT article. At one point, a diphtheria epidemic had raged through a Royal Rifles prison camp: "Then the Red Cross parcels arrived, the general health improved and the feeling spread that those who had survived this crisis would get through anything for the future." Ex-POWs Lt-Col. Jack Price and Lt. Frank

Power of Quebec City said such parcels "saved their lives."

Quebec City continued to support Royal Rifles men even after the war. In 1947, Jack Price presented a shooting competition trophy in memory of Hong Kong and the battalion. Two years later, the Rifles mounted a plaque commemorating the 262 RRC men who died in Hong Kong. In unveiling it, Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent spoke of "bloodshed and broken hearts." He remembered not only of those who died but "their relatives, fathers, mothers, wives and children whose cross has to be borne every day and whose bereavement is without consolation." In saying this, he recognized the connection of Hong Kong and Quebec through the tragedy of battle.

Welcome Home

Members of the 1st Bn. Royal Rifles of Canada



Congratulations on a tough job well done. We're proud to add our voice in saying

WELCOME HOME

BROOKSIDE DAIRY

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Ad welcoming the Royal Rifles back home to Quebec City (QCT)

The Legacy

Returned Hong Kong veterans still hold reunions with banquets, meetings and social events. The Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association organizes these and runs a

website that is a treasure trove of information (<http://www.hkvca.ca>). The Association also built a memorial wall unveiled in Ottawa in 2009.

Over the years, though, support by the broader community appears to have dwindled. The battle of Hong Kong is largely ignored in the media. A three-part documentary called "Lost in error: the Hong Kong story" came out in the late 1960s but is now forgotten. As a *Montreal Gazette* letter writer complained, Pearl Harbour is commemorated in the news each year, but not Hong Kong. Perhaps Quebec City's English-speaking community, so supportive to its Royal Rifles in the past, will keep this sad story alive as part of its heritage. ■

Lorraine O'Donnell is a Historian and Coordinator-Researcher of the Quebec English-speaking Communities Research Network (QUESCREEN) at Concordia University.

TRANSACTIONS

THE CITY THAT NEARLY FORGOT THE LEGACY OF WORLD WAR II IN HONG KONG

By Christopher DeWolf

When there is a bomb scare in Hong Kong, it usually doesn't have anything to do with modern-day terrorism; it's more often a reminder of World War II. In February 2014, construction workers in Happy Valley unearthed an unexploded 2,000-pound American bomb that had been dropped on Hong Kong during the final days of its occupation by the Japanese.

Police superintendent Jimmy Yuen arrived to find a potentially disastrous situation: the bomb was surrounded by hotels, schools, a hospital and a Sikh temple. Moving it was out of the question; so was a controlled explosion, because the bomb was so powerful. Yuen and his team decided they would need to make two small holes in the bomb to defuse it. They worked through the night, carefully cutting through the bomb's shell, stopping whenever their equipment made the surface too hot. They finally succeeded after nine hours of work, defusing the bomb just in time for the morning rush hour.

Though its size was unparalleled, this was hardly the only World War II bomb discovered in Hong Kong. In 2015 alone, police discovered four unexploded grenades, three Japanese bombs, a mortar and 54 rounds of ammunition. Another bomb discovered by construction workers in Victoria Park—the city's largest urban green space—took three days of preparation to destroy in a controlled explosion.

Hong Kong is a city that constantly remakes itself: in many parts of town, each plot of land has been redeveloped three, four or even five times over the

past century. The frenzied street markets and glossy shopping malls don't offer many opportunities to reflect on the past, let alone the time in 1941 when Hong Kong was the site of an intense battle between Allied forces and Japanese invaders. Like the bombs, the history of the war has long been ignored and forgotten — but it is finally coming back to the surface.



Chinese shrine in the ruins of the British battery on Devil's Peak, 2016
(Christopher DeWolf)

“In general, wartime heritage has been almost totally ignored,” says Ko Tim-keung, a historical researcher and the co-author of *Ruins of War*, a guide to Hong Kong's military relics. When Ko published the book in 1996, along with local

historian Jason Wordie, it was the first time anyone had attempted to document all the pillboxes, batteries and other battlefield remnants that litter Hong Kong's hillsides. To find what was left of British defences, Ko pored over aerial photographs taken in 1963, before a reforestation campaign covered Hong Kong's barren hillsides in greenery.

Hong Kong was an important military hub from the time it was ceded to the British in 1842. Over the next half-century, the British navy and army built barracks, shipyards, explosives facilities and a network of coastal batteries designed to ward off attacks by the Russians and other potential maritime invaders. By the time the Japanese launched a surprise attack on December 8, 1941, Hong Kong's military importance had declined, and it was ill-equipped to deal with an attack by land and air. The British and their allies defending the territory surrendered after just two weeks of fighting.

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Japan took over Hong Kong and occupied it until 1945, the end of World War.

Though some of Hong Kong's military landmarks have been preserved, including the Lei Yue Mun Redoubt, which is now part of the Museum of Coastal Defence, most of the physical traces of the Battle of Hong Kong have been ground down through time and neglect. Researchers have counted 150 pillboxes and 75 batteries throughout the territory, but only a handful are still intact after decades of being left abandoned in the bush. Some were dismantled by scavengers looking for bricks; others have been used as shelter by squatters. More recently, wargames enthusiasts have used the ruins for paintball sessions.

New ruins are still being discovered. "There's old stuff around that nobody knows about," says Stephen Davies, a naval historian at the University of Hong Kong. In late 2015, a group of students stumbled across a previously undocumented naval boundary stone not far from the Museum of Coastal Defence. It turned out to be 172 years old, making it the oldest of the stones used by the British to chart their new colony – the first time Hong Kong had ever been mapped in a detailed way. "Concern with the past has simply not been on anyone's radar," says Davies.

For most of its history, Hong Kong hasn't been a place that dwells on the past. "Hong Kong was and still is a place for making money, and you can't make too much money from knowing history," says Ko Tim-keung. Born in 1963, Ko is the embodiment of Hong Kong's peculiar relationship with history. His family moved to Hong Kong not long after it became a British colony, settling in a village near the quarries in East Kowloon. "My ancestors were all stonecutters," he says. His grandparents and parents lived through the Japanese

occupation, but it was rarely mentioned. "My dad would sometimes tell stories of American bombers raiding Kai Tak Airport," he says. Ko remembers when he and his father took a walk up to Devil's Peak, where they found the remains of a sprawling British battery. "I asked my dad what this was and he only knew it had something to do with the war," he says.

In a particularly Hong Kong twist, it was Japanese television that sparked Ko's interest in history. "Japanese TV programs were popular in Hong Kong in the early 1970s," he says. He was fascinated by how they depicted the Meiji Restoration and Japan's role in World War I. "As a kid I was interested in Japanese history more than Chinese history or Western history," he says. He learned Japanese, worked as a translator for Japanese media in Hong Kong and began doing part-

time historical research.

It wasn't until the late 1980s that Ko became interested in Hong Kong's wartime history. After he read *Lasting Honour*, a 1978 account of the invasion of Hong Kong by Oliver Lindsay, who fought in the battle with the Winnipeg Grenadiers, Ko set out to find the Shing Mun Redoubt, one of the sites mentioned in the book. "I tried three times to get there," he says. "The government maps were hopeless." He finally made it up past a dam and around a reservoir, where he found the stone and concrete remains of the redoubt. "I was so overwhelmed. Why was there such a massive structure and not even a signboard telling you what it was?"

It's a question whose answer stretches back to the Japanese occupation. Japan saw itself as liberating Hong Kong from colonial rule, a perspective it broadcast through propaganda aimed at local residents. "Shake hands with us!" urged one poster. Another leaflet



Japanese propaganda leaflet dropped during the siege of Hong Kong

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portrayed a fat, top-hatted Englishman whipping the Chinese coolies pulling his rickshaw. “Knock out the evil English coachmen!”

Strangely, most of this propaganda was in English, with only perfunctory Chinese translations. Ultimately, Japan’s propaganda efforts in Hong Kong were half-hearted. Though it attempted to impose a sense of normalcy—radio stations continued to broadcast Cantonese opera, along with Japanese and Indian music designed to inculcate a sense of Asian brotherhood—Japan soon gave up trying to manage the city and instead began a program of mass deportation. In 1941, more than 1.6 million people lived in Hong Kong; by 1945, this number had plummeted to 500,000, as Japanese forces sent ethnically Chinese residents back to their ancestral villages in mainland China.

“It was a really feeble effort to win the population over,” says historian Kwong Chi-man, the co-author of *Eastern Fortress*, an overview of Hong Kong’s military history from 1840 to 1970. “They really relied on violence by the military police, the Kempeitai. Their rule was not very effective.”

That said, many local Chinese, Indians and Eurasians collaborated with the Japanese, some out of practical necessity, others out of resentment for their poor treatment under the British. Even some British were inclined to work with their new overlords: in his book *Race War*, historian Gerald Horne describes how British colonial administrator Sir Franklin Gimson proposed working with the Japanese to establish a Vichy-style collaborationist government. “The Japanese refused his offer to become their lackey,” Horne notes.

Before the war, Hong Kong’s wealth was disproportionately controlled by its colonial masters; when the Japanese interned the territory’s European elite, Chinese stepped into their place. Robert Ward, the US consul in Hong Kong after the war, reported that while the local Chinese hated the Japanese military, they found “easy camaraderie” with civilian Japanese.



View of Hong Kong Island from the ruins of the British barracks on Devil’s Peak, 2016 (Christopher DeWolf)

“There are thus no deep loyalties, no sound historic or political bases, from which the desperate underground activities which characterize Yugoslav or Greek resistance could spring in Hong Kong,” he wrote. Horne notes that, whereas the Nazis overthrew sovereign states in Europe, “in Hong Kong a corrupt colonial state was overthrown. This state was unable to

inspire the kind of fervent loyalty that drove the antifascist resistance in Europe.”

This proved a revelation to the British. When Japan surrendered in 1945, they moved quickly to reassert control over Hong Kong, thwarting a potential invasion by China’s Nationalists. “They thought of ways to buy the hearts and minds of the local population,” says Kwong. “It was pretty much an opportunity to start from scratch.” Mark Young, who had been sworn in as governor of Hong Kong just six months before the invasion, and who had spent the war being shuffled between Japanese internment camps, returned to the colony with an ambitious plan to introduce representative democracy. This was shelved when the Communist Party took control over mainland China and London worried that democracy could make Hong Kong vulnerable to a Communist fifth column.

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Still, the postwar colonial government took a more active role in building a civil society in Hong Kong, including a massive public housing scheme, an expanded educational system and the adoption of Cantonese as a second official language. In this new forward-looking, increasingly prosperous society, there was little appetite to examine what had happened between 1941 and 1945. “The British were indifferent for ideological reasons,” says Stephen Davies – they didn’t want to dwell on one of their most dramatic failures in the war. And for many Chinese, the attitude was, “There’s our history and there’s theirs,” he says.

There was also a sense among many Hongkongers that the war was something that had happened elsewhere. In the decades after 1949, Hong Kong was flooded by millions of mainland Chinese refugees fleeing famine, economic hardship and political persecution in Communist-controlled China. “After the war, Hong Kong became a mostly immigrant society,” says Kwong. For these newcomers, World War II was just one in a long line of calamities. Hong Kong offered them a chance to start anew.

That is reflected in what young Hongkongers learn about the war in school, which doesn’t amount to much. “As a secondary school student I had no idea about it,” says Rusty Tsoi, who is now a high school history teacher and the co-author, with Kwong, of *Eastern Fortress*. Even today, the government’s curriculum requires teachers to explain only the broad outline of the war, touching on important points like the Nanking Massacre, but not the Battle of Hong Kong or its aftermath.

Tsoi says he is working with the government to expand the history curriculum to include more detail about the Battle of Hong Kong and the Japanese occupation, but

those changes aren’t likely to be implemented until 2019. “Some students don’t even know the war happened in Hong Kong,” he says. That ignorance extends even to university students. “Some of my students went to Winnipeg and people told them, ‘We sent Canadian troops to Hong Kong,’” says Kwong. “They were like, ‘What?’ And these are history majors!”

But things are changing – and quickly. “When I arrived in Hong Kong, there seemed to be very little interest

except from those who had specific family involvement in the events,” says historian Tony Banham, who has spent years collecting war stories on his website, *Hong Kong War Diary*. “I would meet people when I was out in the hills looking at relics who knew very little about it, and in some cases didn’t even know Hong Kong had been invaded in World War II. Today that has changed – there is a lot of interest, a lot from expats like myself but especially from younger Hongkongers who are interested in their roots.”

These young Hongkongers are part of the Umbrella Movement generation – the same politically active,

locally-minded students and young professionals who in 2014 led a 79-day occupation of Hong Kong’s streets in protest against mainland Chinese suppression of Hong Kong democracy. “The sudden interest of young Hong Kong people in this kind of history is really a reaction to pressure from the mainland to create a pure Chinese identity,” says Kwong. The troops that defended Hong Kong were a motley group made up of British, Canadian, Indian, Gurkha, Macanese, Dutch and Hong Kong Chinese. For young local activists, this seems to reflect the kind of pluralistic society they are fighting to protect. “The story of [the Battle of Hong Kong] is appealing because it’s multi-ethnic, multicultural, international – it’s more Hong Kong,” says Kwong. “Sometimes my students say they are Hong Kong people, not Chinese,” says Tsoi.



Chinese bagpipers perform on the street and at military ceremonies in Hong Kong, 2016 (Christopher DeWolf)

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This new attitude is reflected online, where wartime history enthusiasts gather in Facebook groups like the Chinese-language Watershed and English-language Battle of Hong Kong. It is reflected in the classroom, too. Recent educational reforms give teachers more leeway to build their own courses; Rusty Tsoi makes a point of immersing his students in the history of the Battle of Hong Kong. He takes students on field trips to Wong Nai Chung Gap, where some of the most intense fighting occurred, and he shows them the spot where Canadian Brigadier John Lawson was killed. “They can see these are stories, not just facts,” he says. After one of the trips, a group of students told him they had made their own way to the Pinewood Battery, another military ruin, to learn more about the battle.

Preserving the physical heritage of the war has become more of a priority, at least for the public. In 2004, accountant Ivan Tse took part in a clean-up campaign on Mount Davis, an undeveloped hill that is littered with abandoned batteries and pillboxes. “We wanted to make it clean so people could go there and have a picnic,” he says. “But as we were cleaning, we found something quite strange. It was full of military heritage but the government didn’t do anything with it. When we started digging, we found it really was related to the war between Hong Kong and Japan, and behind the war there are a lot of stories.”

In 2005, Tse founded Friends of Mount Davis to promote the hill’s heritage. “Mount Davis was quite

unnoticed in the past, but now a lot of people go there to play war games, take wedding pictures, take a tour,” he says. “We get a lot of enquiries from people who want to know the history.” The group has lobbied the government to protect and restore the military ruins, but the response has been cool. “I think the government will notice sooner or later that the public wants some preservation of the past,” says Tse. “Until then, they are taking quite a passive role.”

In the meantime, Hongkongers seem to be taking it upon themselves to learn more about the war. On an unseasonably warm Boxing Day in 2015, a couple of dozen hikers lingered at the ruins of a redoubt and battery on Devil’s Peak, which overlooks the eastern entrance of Victoria Harbour. Banyan tree roots grew around a brick bunker built into the top of the hill; graffiti scrawled on the walls called for the resignation of CY Leung, Hong Kong’s unpopular pro-Communist Party leader. Inside the bunker, a middle-aged woman stopped to take a photo with her smartphone. “I used to live downhill when

I was kid,” she said. “I haven’t been back for more than 20 years. I know this was built before the war. I wanted to come back for the memory of it.” ■

Christopher DeWolf is a Canadian journalist based in Hong Kong, and a regular contributor to the South China Morning Post and The Wall Street Journal.



282 Canadians are buried at Sai Wan Military Cemetery in Hong Kong, many of them unidentified.
(Christopher DeWolf)

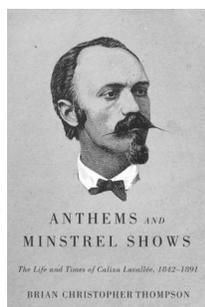
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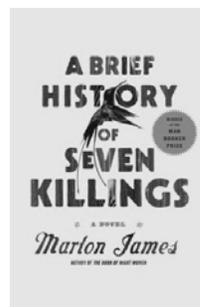
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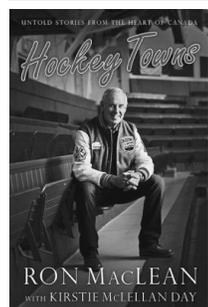
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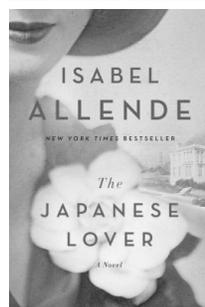
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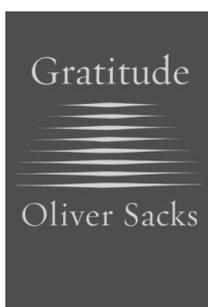
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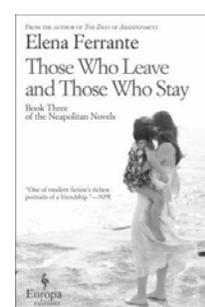
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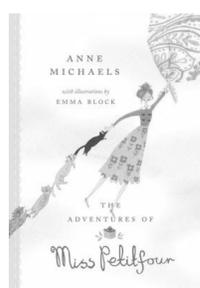
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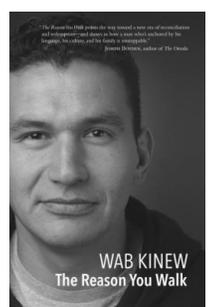
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LIBRARY PAGES

ON THE VIRTUAL SHELF

AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW E-BOOK COLLECTION AT THE LIBRARY

By Britta Gundersen-Bryden

E-Books Take Their Place in the Library

Undoubtedly, many Library readers will think it is difficult to replace the special feeling that comes with opening the cover of a new-found book but e-books (which can be read on a wide variety of electronic devices) do have their place in the 21st Century.

E-books are perfect for those readers who fly with only a carry-on, who take the train to Montreal for a few days, who spend long weekends at the chalet or who hunker down at home when winter is at its worst.

E-books are also great for those who “just can’t wait”. This writer pre-ordered Yann Martel’s new book, *The High Mountains of Portugal*. The day the book was released the system sent me an e-mail. Following a few taps of the computer keys, *Voila!* The book was on my screen, ready to be read. It was another Martel masterpiece, by the way.

New Releases and Best-Sellers Abound

Like the Library’s wooden shelves, the virtual shelves tilt towards fiction. E-books provide an easy way to read novels such as *Go Set a Watchman*, by Harper Lee, *The Girl on the Train*, by Paula Hawkins, *Animal Dreams*, by Barbara Kingsolver, *Fifteen Dogs*, by André Alexis, *The Martian* by Andy Weir or the latest

thrillers by Louise Penny, Peter Robinson or John Grisham.

Non-fiction Titles Take Their Place

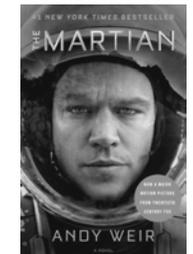
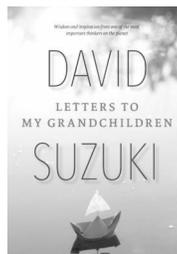
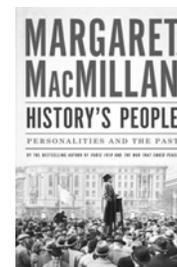
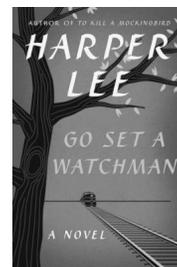
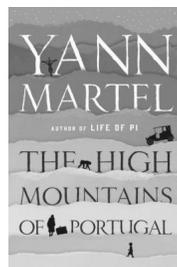
Bill Bryson’s *The Mother Tongue: English and How It Got That Way* is an e-book. So are Margaret MacMillan’s *History’s People* and David Usher’s *Let the Elephants Run* (about creativity, not wildlife). Dan Rubenstein’s *Born to Walk*, Elizabeth Zimmermann’s *Knitter’s Almanac*, David Suzuki’s *Letters to My Grandchildren*, Alex Mitchell’s *The Edible Balcony* and Jessica Walliser’s *Attracting Beneficial Bugs* are among the hundred-plus non-fiction titles.

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ROAD TRIP RWANDA

Will Ferguson

Thursday April 7, 19:30



THE PRISON BOOK CLUB

Ann Walmsley

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Host: Peter Black



THE WINTER FAMILY: A WESTERN NOIR

Clifford Jackman

Friday April 8, 18:30

Host: Julia Caron



DAYDREAMS OF ANGELS

Heather O'Neill

Wednesday April 6, 20:00

Host: Susan Campbell



A CELEBRATION OF PAUL ALMOND'S LIFE & WORK

w/ Jay Iversen &

Danielle E. Cyr

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Host: Rachele Solomon



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EVENTS & ACTIVITIES



WRITERS OUT LOUD: MOVING INTO FICTION

Jack Hannan
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Host: Sarah Barclay

Presented by 



DEVELOPING THE CRIMINAL MIND

Jeffery Deaver
Saturday April 9, 18:30

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PROJECT ANIMAL FARM

Sonia Faruqi
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MOUNTAIN CITY GIRLS: A FAMILY HISTORY

Anna & Jane McGarrigle
Saturday April 9, 20:00

Host: Jeanette Kelly



THE DIPLOMAT POET

Matthew Henley
Saturday April 9, 14:00



BOOKS & BRUNCH: ACROSS CANADA BY STORY

Douglas Gibson
Sunday April 10, 11:00



ADVENTURES IN READING ALICE

Monique Polak
Saturday April 9, 16:00

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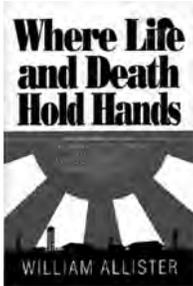
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FURTHER READING: BATTLE OF HONG KONG

By Patrick Donovan



William Allister
Where Life and Death Hold Hands (1989)

This award-winning Montreal artist wrote what is probably the best and certainly the most literary of all the POW autobiographies. It deals with the psychology of war and his post-war reconciliation with Japan.



Philip Snow
The Fall of Hong Kong (2004)

Most scholarly works on the topic have a narrow outlook that focuses almost exclusively on the soldiers. Snow looks at the broader picture, taking in Japanese and Chinese sources, and looks at the war's impact on civilians.

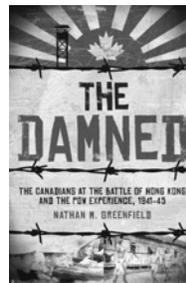


Kenneth Cambon
Guest of Hirohito (1990)

Kenneth Cambon, M.D.

Kenneth Cambon
Guest of Hirohito (1990)

Autobiography of a Quebec City boy who became the youngest Canadian Hong Kong POW. He recounts his time in Niigata, which many considered the worst camp in Japan. Cambon went on to become a doctor and died in 2007.

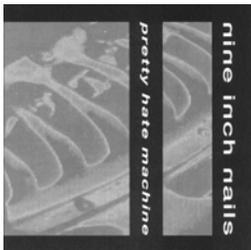


Nathan Greenfield,
The Damned: The Canadians at the Battle of Hong Kong and the POW Experience (2011)

This military historian provides a dramatic journalistic account of the war that focuses on the experiences of Canadian soldiers and is intended for general readers.

MUSIC REVIEW: NINE INCH NAILS *PRETTY HATE MACHINE*

By Barry McCullough



Usually in this space I review an album that has been released in the past few months, and I had intended to do so again. I recently found myself on a cross-country flight long enough to have the in-flight entertainment system. After watching an episode of Portlandia (no, this is not *another* Sleater-Kinney review), I decided to check out the music selection. Now, the music selection on these flights generally very hit or miss (usually miss). After roughly poking my way through the collection of mostly “misses,” I landed on the “classic pop” category where I found Nine Inch Nails’ *Pretty Hate Machine*. I’m not one for shoe-horning music into categories, but classic pop seemed like a little bit of a stretch. But regardless of category, it seemed like an interesting choice for a mile-high jukebox. I realized that the album was released in 1989(!), so I figured there must be some kind of 25th anniversary tie-in.

I came to Nine Inch Nails in the early-to-mid 90’s, around the time that *The Downward Spiral* blew up. That album and *Broken* were staples of my teenage musical diet. Those efforts are heavier, less poppy (hey, maybe Air Canada was right!) and a little broodier. I always felt *Pretty Hate Machine* was a little too “80s” for me.

Some lyrics are cringe-worthy (“That’s What I Get”) and the percussion occasionally sounds dated, as in “Sin” (though I still liked the song), but overall I enjoyed my listen. The slow piano dirge of “Something I Can Never Have” is still a standout after all these years and the album’s other singles, “Down in It,” “Terrible Lie” and “Head Like a Hole” (complete with crunchy industrial guitars in the chorus, foreshadowing what is to come) all stand the test of time.

Is it their best album? No, of course not, but, more than 25 years after its initial release, it deserves another spin, particularly if you kind of wrote it off all those years ago like I did. For once, I’m thankful for Air Canada’s questionable music selections. ■

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