

"C" Force - The Hong Kong Story

THOSE THAT NEVER CAME HOME

After 18 days of fighting in Hong Kong, the Commonwealth forces surrendered on December 25, 1941. Over 1,000 Commonwealth soldiers died in battle and some 2,300 wounded died later while in Japanese confinement. There are two main cemeteries in Hong Kong, Sai Wan War Cemetery is the main cemetery for those who died in battle and after in the hands of the Japanese. The Stanley Military Cemetery located on the Stanley Peninsula and is smaller than the Sai Wan Cemetery.

Another cemetery is located at Yokohama, Japan, those buried here, were mostly those who died at the hands of the Japanese as POWs.

These three cemeteries are administered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) which oversees the administration and maintenance of Commonwealth War Cemeteries throughout the world.

Sai Wan War Cemetery



Plaque with the story of the Cemetery

Sai Wan War Cemetery is the largest CWGC in Hong Kong, being the resting place of more than 1,480 Commonwealth military personnel of which 483 are unidentified. After the Second World War was over, many graves from Formosa were moved here and there are special headstones for those buried in Kowloon whose graves could not be found. Buried here are 283 soldiers of the Royal Canadian Army which includes 107 remains that could not be identified.



Entrance to Sai Wan War Cemetery



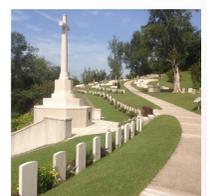
The Canadian section of the Cemetery

Sai Wan Memorial at the entrance to the cemetery bears the names of more than 2,000 casualties who died in the defense of Hong Kong, of these are 228 Canadians who died with no known grave. The Sai Wan Memorial Cremation Memorial contains the names of 144 casualties who were cremated according to their religious beliefs.



Tombstone of an unknown Canadian soldier

Stanley Military Cemetery



Stanley Military Cemetery

The Stanley Military Cemetery was originally a military cemetery where members of the Hong Kong garrison and their families were buried. Under Japanese occupation the Stanley Jail and village were used as a prisoner-of-war camp and a civilian internment camp and the cemetery which had not been used for over 70 years was re-opened for the burial of those who were executed by the Japanese or died while being a prisoner of war.



Stanley Military Cemetery



Stanley Military Cemetery

Yokohama War Cemetery



Stanley Commonwealth War Graves Commission plaque

The Yokohama War Cemetery in Hodogayaku, Yokohama, Japan was constructed by the Australian War Graves group after the end of World War Two. The burial grounds hold the remains of over 1500 soldiers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India and the United Kingdom, also the Netherlands and the United States. The grounds are broken down into four sections, the British Section, the Canadian and New Zealand Section, the Australian Section and the Indian Section (Yokohama Memorial).



Cross of Sacrifice, Canadian and New Zealand Section



Graves of the Canadian and New Zealand Section



Graves of the Canadian and New Zealand Section

Photos of Yokohama War Cemetery – Courtesy of Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association

Medals

Members of "C" Force were presented with various medals as to their service in Hong Kong. These medals are show here.



The 1939-1945 Star

The Star was awarded for six months service on active operations for Army and Navy, and two months for active air-crew between 02 September 1939 and 08 May 1945 (Europe) or 02 September 1945 (Pacific).



The Pacific Star

The Star was awarded for one day or more of operational service in the Pacific between 08 December 1941 and 02 September 1945



The Defence Medal

Service overseas or outside the country of residence, providing that such service lasted for one year, except in territories threatened by the enemy or subject to bomb attacks, in which case it was six months prior to 02 September 1945. Under the terms of this last condition, Canadians serving for one year in Newfoundland were eligible and persons serving for six months in Hong Kong were also eligible.

The conditions for the awarding of this medal as it applies to 'C' Force soldiers are: between 03 September 1939 and 08 May 1945, the exact terms were: Service overseas or outside the country of residence, providing that such service lasted for one year, except in territories threatened by the enemy or subject to bomb attacks, in which case it was six months prior to 02 September 1945. Under the terms of this last condition, Canadians serving for six months in Hong Kong were also eligible.

The condition that applied to service in Hong Kong was put in place after 1985. Those soldiers who served in Newfoundland (The Royal Rifles of Canada) and the British West Indies (The Winnipeg Grenadiers) from the day they arrived to the day they returned to Canada would have been eligible to receive the medal under the original terms.

Those who arrived while the regiment was overseas would not have been eligible.

All members of 'C' Force Brigade Headquarters would probably not have been eligible for the medal.

Canadian Volunteer Service Medal

The Canadian Volunteer Service Medal is granted to persons of any rank in the Naval, Military or Air Forces of Canada who voluntarily served on Active Service and have honourably completed eighteen months (540 days) total voluntary service from September 3, 1939 to March 1, 1947.



The Hong Kong Bar

The Hong Kong Bar is awarded to those involved in the Battle of Hong Kong during the period December 8 - 25, 1941. It was awarded to all members of 'C' Force. Some veterans who died prior to the date of awarding the bar may not have received the bar.



The War Medal 1939-1945

The War Medal was awarded to all full-time personnel of the armed forces and merchant marines for serving for 28 days between 03 September 1939 and 02 September 1945. In the Merchant Navy, the 28 days must have been served at sea.

Many thanks to the Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA) for providing this information.

Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA)

The Hong Kong Veterans Commemorative Association (HKVCA) exists to ensure that Canadians never forget their 1,976 fellow Canadians who fought in the Battle of Hong Kong in December 1941. Nearly 300 of them perished in the battle, and a further 290 died as prisoners of war – under brutal and inhumane conditions – during the 3 years and 8 months of internment that followed. Many of the survivors of this ordeal suffered from significant physical and mental health problems for years after their repatriation.

Our mission is education: we develop educational materials for teachers; we operate a web site and Facebook presence which contain a wealth of information about the Battle, its aftermath, and the Canadians who served in the conflict; our members make presentations to schools, service clubs and Legion branches about the Battle; we offer descriptive plaques for installation in Legions, museums and other sites to help educate the public.

We have built a Hong Kong Veterans Memorial Wall in Ottawa which lists the names of every Canadian who served in Hong Kong, and we hold commemorative ceremonies there each year.

The HKVCA is a registered charity, and we welcome donations to help further our work.

You can learn more about the Battle of Hong Kong and the HKVCA or make a donation at our web site, www.hkvca.ca.



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