



The Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group Newsletter

VJ Day 2021

Belhaven Park, Wishaw



The Commemoration in Belhaven Park began with Campbell Thomson reading a text from a former POW.

Then followed the laying of wreaths before Douglas Smith shared some memories of his grandfather, Andrew McKay of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. The Commemoration closed with Agnes Dougan reading *"In Memory of the Fallen"*.

The photograph shows L-R Campbell Thomson; Roy Kelso, son of Frank Kelso; Douglas Smith, grandson of Andrew McKay; Tom Donaldson, Wishaw Old Parish Church; Agnes Dougan, daughter of John McEwan; Angus McKenzie and John Fleming, both of Wishaw Old Parish Church.

Taking the photograph was Frank Morrison a loyal friend of the Regiment.

As well as the Lanarkshire Yeomanry wreath, a special floral wreath was laid in memory of the men who did not come home.



Roy Kelso lays the wreath for the Men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry. Roy's father, Frank Kelso, slaved at Kinkaseki and Taihoku 6 on Taiwan before he was liberated.



Tom Donaldson, a long time supporter of our work, carrying the wreath in memory of the Men who did not come home. All of the Men's names are written on the cards attached to the wreath.



Two crosses were laid at the Memorial by Agnes Dougan in memory of two old mates who slaved at Kinkaseki - Ken Pett of the 80th Anti Tank Regiment and John McEwan of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.

While working in the mine, Ken suffered a very bad injury to his hand. The M.O. advised him to keep the wound clean as there was a danger that his hand would have to be amputated if it became infected. Instead, Ken rubbed dirt into the wound, saying that, if his hand was amputated, he would not be sent back down the mine. Sadly, from Ken's point of view, the wound to his hand improved enough for him to be sent back down the mine again. He remained at Kinkaseki until May 1945 when he was sent to the extermination camp, Kukutsu.



Andrew McKay

After Campbell had spoken of the significance of VJ Day, Douglas Smith shared some thoughts of his grandfather, Andrew McKay, a dignified man who lived his life quietly. As a POW, Andrew worked on the track of the Thai/Burma Railway. Then, in May 1945, he was moved to Ubon where the POWs slaved on building an airstrip.

While speaking of his grandfather, Douglas said that, like many of the POWs who came home, he never spoke of the cruelty or of the hardships that he had experienced.

Andrew suffered from regular nightmares for the rest of his life and never regained full health. He died in 1974 from bronchial problems – a legacy of his time as a slave of the Japanese.

The Lanarkshire Yeomanry Memorial, Carluke.



At the L.Y. Memorial in Carluke, the wreath to the Men of the Regiment was laid by Robert Cunningham, the grandson of Sgt. Roy Russell of the Regiment.

The wreath in memory of those who did not come home, was laid by Anne Carnochan, niece of Andy Carmichael of the Regiment. Anne and her husband Jim made the long journey from Dumfries to be with us. It is a journey that they make each year to pay their respects to the Men of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry.



Civic Centre, Motherwell, 16th August 2021



On Monday 16th August a truncated but still poignant commemoration of VJ Day was held at the Memorial to those who served in the Far East during WW2 located at the entrance to the Civic Centre in Motherwell.

Clr. Jean Jones, the provost of North Lanarkshire opened the Service with a welcome and she was followed by Campbell Thomson of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group who told of the experience of many POWs who returned to a country largely indifferent to what had happened to them while in the hands of the Japanese. It had been a painful homecoming from which many never fully recovered.

In his address the Rev. Bryce Calder movingly recounted what had happened to those held as POWs and marvelled at the compassion and love that they had for each other in the depths of such utter horror and misery. A two minutes silence was followed by the laying of wreaths on behalf of North Lanarkshire Council, the Lord Lieutenant and the Lanarkshire Yeomanry Group. The service ended with a Benediction given by Fr. Bill Bergin.

Despite the fact that the numbers allowed at the commemoration was a fraction of the norm the families of those affected should take comfort from the fact that what was said was both poignant and relevant. Those who suffered in those dark days were not forgotten.

Canterbury

And it was not just in Lanarkshire that the Men of the Yeomanry were remembered. During the VJ Day Service at Canterbury, Pat Todd, the City's Mayor, recounted the story of Gunner Tom Gordon of the 155th who sadly died on Taiwan just days after the end of the War. Pat's late wife, Barbara, was the niece of Tom Gordon.

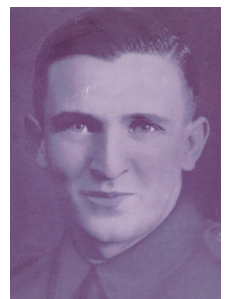


The colour party at Canterbury

When war began, Tom Gordon made the decision to fight for 'King and Country' despite being in a reserved occupation. It was a decision that would cost him his life.

As a POW, Tom slaved in the Kinkaseki copper mine. When he became unfit to fulfil the daily quotas of copper ore demanded by the Japanese he was moved to Taihoku 6. Tom remained there until June 1945, at which time he was moved to Oka, an extermination camp high in the hills above Taipei. The end of the war saved the lives of many POWs but, sadly, it came too late for Tom as he died on 20th August 1945. He is buried in Sai Wan War Cemetery, Hong Kong.

Tom Gordon



Tom in his L.Y. uniform.

Thank You We would like to offer our grateful thanks to Grierson Smith and to Anne and Jim Carnochan for their generous donations.

We are also indebted to Frank Morrison who took the photographs of the Services at Wishaw and Carluke Memorials.

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