



## THE WAR CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS IN HONG KONG

### The War of 1914-1918

There are a little over 100 Commonwealth burials of the First World War in Hong Kong, located in five different cemeteries, and just over 1,000 further casualties of that war commemorated on three memorials. The graves are mostly of soldiers who died in Hong Kong and Kowloon Military hospitals, which received the sick and wounded from the German-leased territory of Tsingtao, on the peninsula of Shantung in north-east China. The capture of Tsingtao in November 1914 and the expulsion of the Germans from the area was the work of the Japanese, but British ships supported their fleet at sea and a small British contingent backed their army on land. Details of the cemeteries and memorials, and of the casualties commemorated on the latter, are given later in this information sheet.

### The War of 1939-1945

A considerably larger number of Commonwealth casualties buried or commemorated in Hong Kong fell during the Second World War. Of a total of about 5,300 or 1,700 lie in identified graves and nearly 3,600 are recorded by name on four memorials. The graves are mainly those of servicemen who died in the defence of and subsequent withdrawal from the territory following the Japanese invasion and occupation in 1941.

The Battle of Hong Kong in 1941 followed one of several attacks made simultaneously and without warning by the Japanese on key points of the Allied Far Eastern and Pacific defences on 7-8 December, enabling them to gain a hold on the area which could only be loosened at the cost of several arduous campaigns. By early October of that year the aggressive mood of the Japanese government was becoming apparent and danger to Hong Kong seemed imminent. A decision was made to reinforce the garrison with nearly 2,000 Canadian soldiers of the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada, who arrived there in mid-November. The existing British forces were also already supported by a number of Indian and local units, making a total Commonwealth defence force of nearly 12,000 under the command of Major-General C M Maltby MC.

The initial attack came from mainland China on 8 December. The Commonwealth troops had insufficient time to establish their defences and the advancing Japanese swiftly overran many of their positions, despite spirited resistance during which the Winnipeg Grenadiers became the first Canadian infantry to see action in the 1939-1945 War. It was therefore decided to evacuate the mainland and this was carried out satisfactorily by 13 December.

Heavy bombing and shelling of Hong Kong island by the Japanese ensued, but a first attempt to land on the island was repulsed. However, backed by severe air raids, the Japanese finally made a landing on 18 December and within two days had occupied a considerable area. By this time, both Naval and RAF detachments had joined in the fighting on the Commonwealth side in an infantry role.

The Japanese advance continued and it was obvious that surrender could not be long delayed, the whole population being reduced to minimal supplies of food and water and the troops suffering exhaustion. On the afternoon of Christmas Day, Major-General Maltby advised the Governor that further effective resistance was impossible, and the Commonwealth forces were ordered to lay down their arms.

Over 1,000 Commonwealth forces were killed or died of wounds in the Battle and about the same number were missing. Some of the 2,300 wounded died later in Japanese hands. Those who lost their lives in Hong Kong during and after the campaign are buried for the most part in Sai Wan War Cemetery, with a smaller but significant number in Stanley Military Cemetery. Further small groups of burials are to be found in other cemeteries on the island and in Kowloon.

## Sai Wan War Cemetery



The cemetery before construction .....



. . . and as it is today

Here are located the graves of more than 1,600 Commonwealth casualties of the Second World War, of which well over 400 are unidentified. They served with the armed forces of the United Kingdom, Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand and other Commonwealth countries. In addition to those buried here who fell during the fighting in Hong Kong in 1941, or died subsequently as prisoners of war of the Japanese, the remains of Commonwealth prisoners of war who died in Formosa (now Taiwan) were removed to this site in 1946, and special memorials commemorating 12 casualties of the First World War and 28 of the Second, buried in Kowloon (Ho Man Tin) No 3 Muslim Cemetery and Kowloon (Ta Sek Ku) Mohammeden Cemetery, whose graves are now lost, are also located here. Details of all these casualties are contained in the cemetery register available on site.

The cemetery, designed by the architect Colin St Clair Oakes, is in the east of the island of Hong Kong, in the Chai Wan area, about 11 kilometres from the business centre. It is long and narrow in shape and descends in terraces towards the sea from its entrance in Cape Collinson Road.

The alter-like Stone of Remembrance, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and common to all larger Commonwealth war cemeteries, stands just inside the cemetery. Upon it are carved the words chosen by Rudyard Kipling from the Book of Ecclesiasticus: THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE. At the lower end is the Cross of Sacrifice, also a feature of most Commonwealth war cemeteries. It was designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield and is set upon an octagonal base and bears a bronze sword upon its shaft.

At the entrance to this cemetery stands the **Sai Wan Memorial**, set high above the sea. It is over 24 metres long and 5.5 metres wide. Also designed by Colin St Clair Oakes, the memorial provides shelter for visitors and is constructed in local granite with a copper roof. A crusader's sword in bronze relieves the bareness of the wall facing the approach to the cemetery. From the semi-circular forecourt, two side openings with square lintels lead to the interior of the building. The names commemorated here are engraved on panels of Portland stone and represent over 2,000 Commonwealth land forces who fell in the Battle of Hong Kong, or subsequently in the long years of captivity, and have no known grave.

One panel within this memorial bears the name of approximately 140 casualties who, in accordance with the rites of their religion, were cremated. They served in the Hong Kong and Singapore Royal Artillery, the Indian Army and the Hong Kong Police Force.

The northern side of the memorial is open, with four granite piers supporting the roof. Its commanding position over 300 metres above sea level affords a fine view of the cemetery.

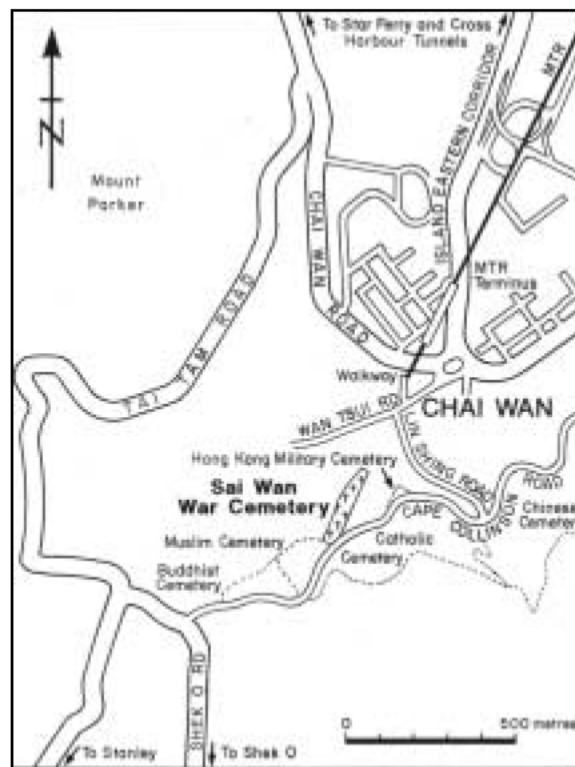


## Travel directions to Sai Wan War Cemetery

SAI WAN WAR CEMETERY is most easily reached by first taking the mass transit railway (MTR) Hong Kong line to Chair Wan Terminus. From there one can either

1. Take a taxi from the stand located at ground level, following the route outlined in (3) below;
2. Board public light bus number 16M, which runs to Stanley from the ground level bus terminus. En route the bus will pass Sai Wan War Cemetery, stopping only on request.
3. Take the pedestrian walkway leading from the MTR Terminus across Chai Wan Road to Wan Tsui Road (see map), turn into Lin Shing Road, then turn right into Cape Collinson Road, up which a ten-minute walk leads to the cemetery. A CWGC indicating the War Cemetery is fixed to a wall at the junction facing down Lin Shing Road.

Note: The Cape Collinson area has many cemeteries. Walking up this narrow one-way traffic road, one will pass the Catholic Cemetery situated on the hillside to the left and the Hong Kong Military Cemetery on the right. Sai Wan War Cemetery is about halfway up Cape Collinson Road.



## Stanley Military Cemetery

This was originally the military cemetery in which were buried members of the Hong Kong garrison and their families from 1841 to 1866, no further burials taking place there until the two world war. It is situated just beyond the fishing village of Stanley, on the Tai Tam Peninsula in the southern part of Hong Kong island.



The Cemetery is roughly triangular in shape and stands on ground rising sharply from the road side. It is approached by a flight of steps leading up to the Cross of Sacrifice (described in the section of Sai Wan War Cemetery), with steep grassy slopes on either side. The Commonwealth graves of the Second World War in this cemetery total nearly 600, of which approximately 170 contain unidentified burials. These casualties served with the forces of the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Canada and India. The cemetery register available on site records details of the war dead. The names of civilian internees buried in this cemetery and referred to below are recorded in the Civilian War Dead Roll of Honour in Westminster Abbey, London.

During the Japanese occupation, Stanley jail and village were used a prisoner of war and civilian internment camp and the cemetery, not used for more than 70 years, was re-opened for the burial of those who were executed by the Japanese or who died while prisoners of war. After the war, it was extended on its northern side for the re-burial of the men who fell during the fighting of 1941, or who died during the occupation, and

*A corner of the cemetery showing the Cross of Sacrifice*

were buried in civilian burial grounds or in isolated graves in the surrounding country. These graves lie in terraced plots divided by stone retaining walls. In the older southern part service graves and those of civilian internees who perished during the Japanese occupation are intermingled. A number are still marked by the original headstones erected by the prisoners of war, who collected the granite from the 100 years old fortifications and carved the inscriptions themselves.

The burials in the cemetery include nearly all the casualties of the local defence forces, such as the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Force, and also members of the British Army Aid Group. This war time creation was a military establishment which came into being early in 1942 to encourage and facilitate escapes and get information and medical supplies into the camps. Attached to the establishment was a large staff of civilian employees operating in an extensive area of enemy-held territory, and the Group gradually developed into an organisation for the collection of intelligence of military value and later into an escape network for the American Air Force. Many of the members were arrested and ultimately executed by the Japanese.

Also commemorated in this cemetery are three casualties of the First World War, buried elsewhere in the territory and whose graves are now lost.

### Travel directions to Stanley Military Cemetery

STANLEY MILITARY CEMETERY is most easily reached by taking the mass transit railway (MTR) Hong Kong line to Central Station in Central District. Cross the pedestrian walkway outside the station to the bus terminus at ground level in Exchange Square, and board Citybus 6A to Stanley Fort. The bus will stop outside the cemetery.

Or, take the mass transit railway (MTR) Hong Kong line to Chai Wan Terminus. From the ground level bus terminus take the public light bus 16M to Stanley Terminus. On arrival, a ten-minute walk south down Wong Ma Kok Road (see map) leads to the cemetery.

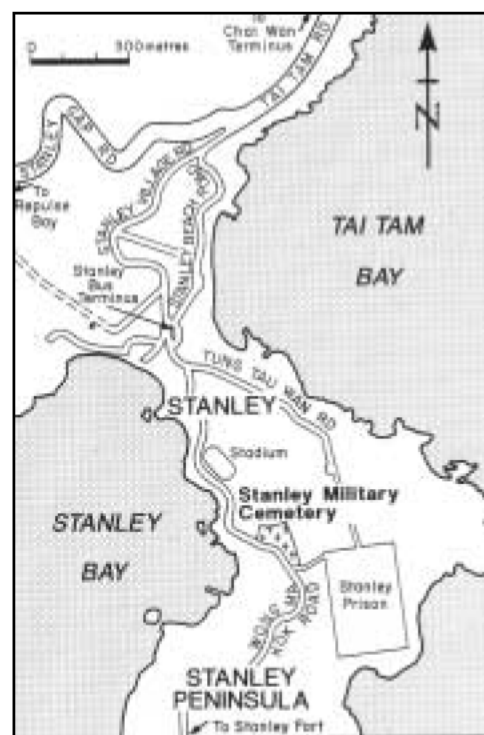
### The Hong Kong Memorial

This memorial stands at the main entrance to the Botanical Gardens. It is a granite "pailau" or arch with two granite lions at each foot. It bears the inscription "IN MEMORY OF THE CHINESE WHO DIED LOYAL TO THE ALLIED CAUSE IN THE WARS OF 1914-1918 AND 1939-1945". This appears in English on the top cross-piece of the arch and in Chinese on the two vertical sides or piers.

The memorial was originally erected by the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission to commemorate in perpetuity approximately 950 Chinese who died in the service of the British during the First World War, and have no known grave. The majority lost their lives at sea or in Mesopotamia (Iraq), and served with the Merchant Navy, the Royal Engineers and certain other British and Indian formations. Their names are not inscribed on the memorial, but are recorded in its First World War register.



Following the Second World War, an additional register was compiled containing details of nearly 1,500 Chinese casualties of that conflict who gave their lives serving with the Royal Navy, the United Kingdom Merchant Navy and the Australian Merchant Navy, to whose memory the memorial also became dedicated. It was accepted, however, that the names and last resting places of many more who had served and lost their lives in the Merchant Navies, and in local auxiliary formations of the fighting forces such as the Hong Kong Volunteer





Defence Corps, were not known owing to the loss or destruction of local records during the Japanese occupation. The Chinese community of Hong Kong suggested therefore that the existing memorial should be given the inscription quoted above, commemorating in general terms all Chinese dead of both world wars, including those men of the Chinese Labour Corps whose graves are to be found in Commission cemeteries of the First World War, mainly in France, and whose names are recorded in the relevant cemetery registers.

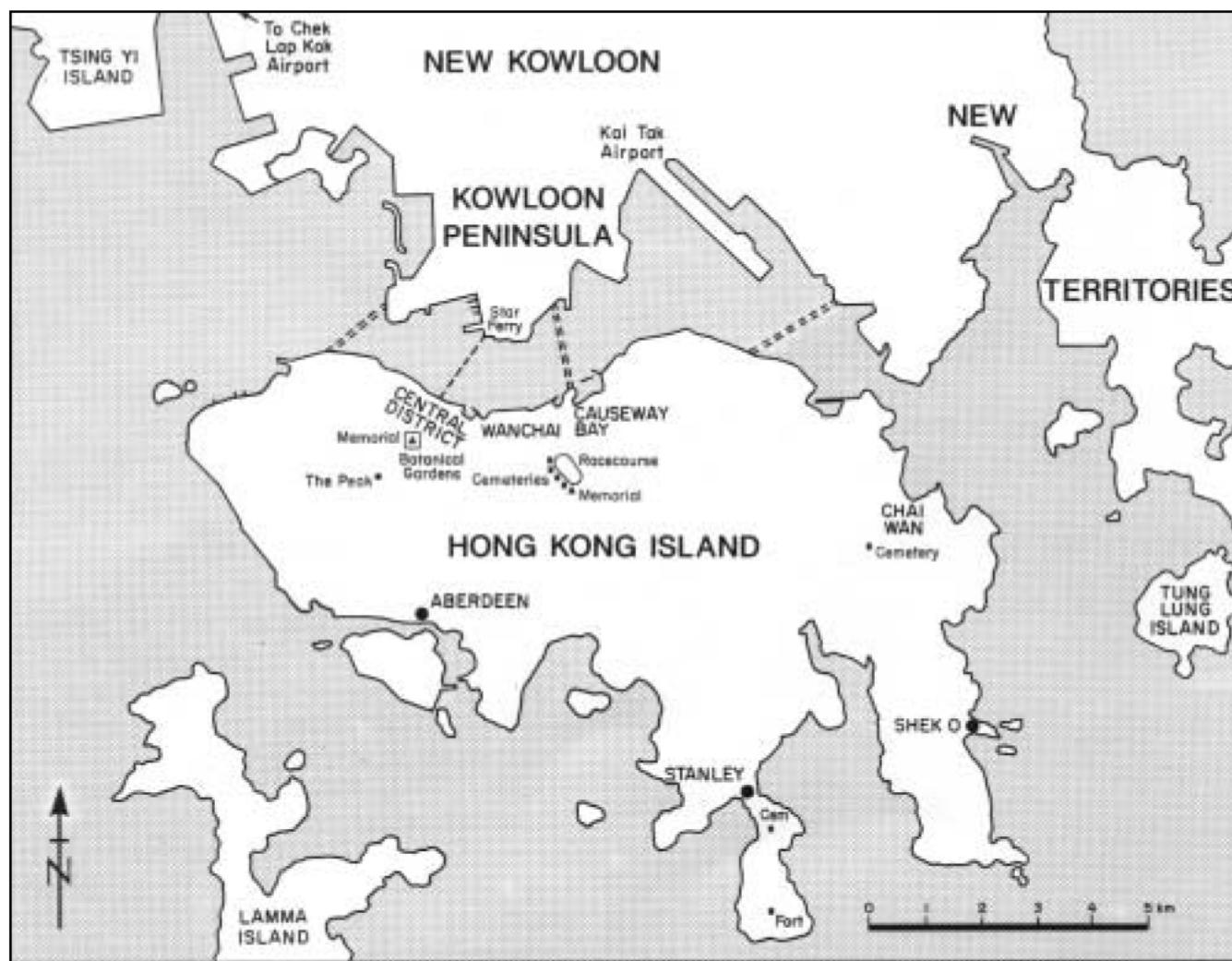
### Other War Commemorations in Hong Kong

Commonwealth graves of both world wars are also to be found in other, non-Commission, cemeteries in Hong Kong, Chief amongst these is Hong Kong Cemetery, opposite Happy Valley Racecourse and maintained by the Municipality, which contains 79 burials of the First World War and 62 of the Second.

Smaller numbers from both wars are located in Hong Kong Muslim Cemetery, at the north-western end of Wong Nei Chong Road to the west of Happy Valley Racecourse, and in Hong Kong Roman Catholic Cemetery, situated on a rocky hillside opposite the same racecourse.

Four cemeteries contain one or two graves only of the Second World War, namely Hong Kong (Cape Collinson) Roman Catholic Cemetery near Sai Wan War Cemetery, Hong Kong (Happy Valley) Jewish Cemetery (on the eastern side of Shan Kwong Road and south of Happy Valley Racecourse), Hong Kong (Happy Valley) Parsee Cemetery (opposite the racecourse) and Kowloon Roman Catholic Cemetery (on the northern side of the Wing Hong Street in mainland Kowloon).

Finally, the Hindu and Sikh Cremation Memorial, which takes the form of a white granite obelisk located on the very top terrace of a small cemetery behind the Hindu Temple adjacent to the Hong Kong (Happy Valley) Parsee Cemetery, marks the spot where the bodies of eight Indian casualties of the First World War were cremated, and records their names.



*The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for marking and maintaining the graves of members of the forces of Commonwealth countries who died in the two world wars, for building and maintaining memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown and for providing records and registers of these burials and commemorations, totalling 1.7 million and found in most countries throughout the world.*