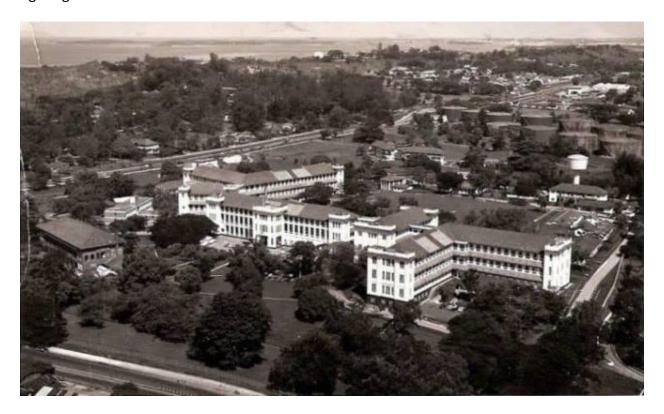
The Alexandra Hospital Massacre, 14-15 February 1942

February 15, 2020

johnbroom1970

One of the most despicable acts of inhumanity committed in the Far East theatre of war occurred on 14-15 September 1942.

Dozens of medical staff serving at the British Military Hospital, known as Alexandra Hospital, in Queenstown, Singapore were massacred, along with their patients. This facility, housed in an imposing white colonial-style 1930s building, had a normal capacity for 550 patients, but recent fighting had swelled this number to 900.



Alexandra Military Hospital, Singapore, taken in the 1970s

On 14 February, the hospital found itself caught between Japanese and British troops advancing towards each other. Due to the rationed supply of water and electricity, men from the 32nd Company of the RAMC were struggling to treat patients and corpses were being wrapped in blankets, remaining unburied.

At 1.00 pm on 14 February, the first Japanese soldier approached the building. Captain J.E. Bartlett RAMC walked out to meet him, his hands in the air, and indicated the Red Cross brassard on his arm. The soldier ignored this and fired at him at point-blank range. Amazingly,

Bartlett survived and ran back into the building. For the next hour, three groups of Japanese soldiers went from ward to ward, shooting, bayoneting and beating up medics and patients indiscriminately, killing about fifty people.

Captain Lance Parkinson, who had been posted posted to the Alexandra Military Hospital, having lost the toss of a coin with Captain Bill Frankland, was anaesthetising Corporal Holden of the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire). Holden was bayoneted while on the operating table whilst Parkinson was bayoneted through the abdomen and gravely injured. He escaped to a nearby corridor but collapsed and died less than thirty minutes later.

Captain Tom Smiley, who had been operating on Corporal Vetch — another victim of the Japanese bayoneted on an operating table — was lined up against a wall with several other men. He pointed to his Red Cross brassard and told the Japanese troops that the building was a hospital. In response, one soldier lunged at his chest with a bayonet, striking a cigarette case that had been given to Smiley by his fiancée. This deflected the blow onto his chest. A second soldier bayoneted him through the groin whilst a third attacked him, causing a hand injury. He collapsed onto Corporal Sutton and both men feigned death. Remarkably, both were left alone and survived.



A light and spacious ward at the Alexandra Hospital, December 1941

Around 3.30 pm, 200 men were rounded up, tied into groups of eight and forced to march towards a row of outhouses some distance from the hospital. The gravely injured were not spared and were killed if they fell along the way. Upon reaching their destination the men were divided into groups of fifty to seventy and crammed into three small rooms. Here they were kept without ventilation or water, with no space to sit or lie down, and many died during the night.

The following morning, 15 February, the remaining men were told that they would receive water. By 11.00 am, the Japanese captors allowed the prisoners to leave the rooms in groups of two on the pretext of them fetching water. However, as the screams and cries of those who had left the rooms could be heard by those still inside, it became clear that the Japanese were executing the prisoners when they left the rooms. The death toll numbered approximately 100 prisoners.

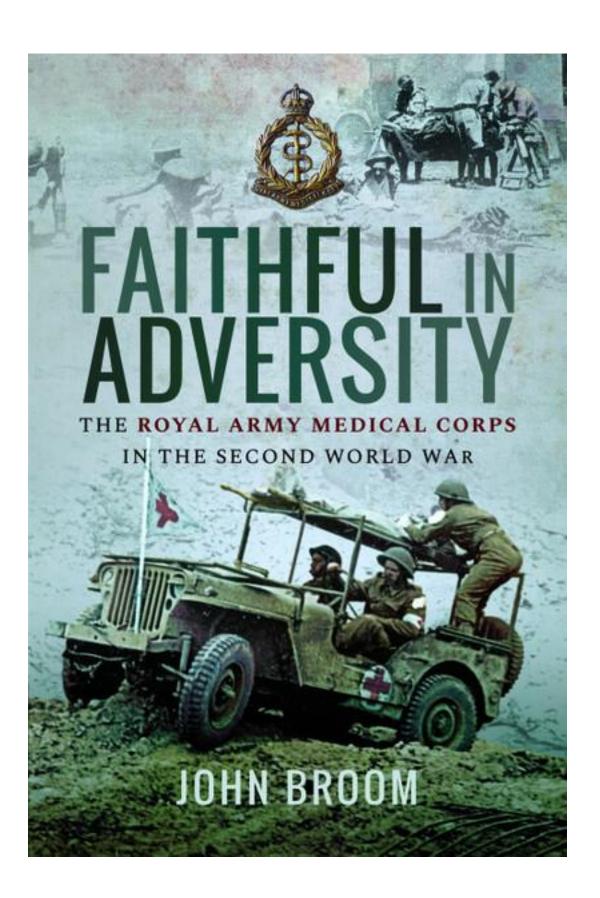


Signaller Reggie Holmes, Royal Corps of Signals. One of the many patients bayoneted to death at the hospital

Suddenly, Japanese shelling resumed and a shell struck the building where the prisoners were being held. This interrupted the executions and allowed a handful of men to escape.

Following further cold-blooded murders by his troops, a senior Japanese officer arrived at the hospital at 6.00 pm on Sunday, 15 February and ordered all movement around the hospital to stop. Pointedly, Smiley, having had his wounds dressed by Corporal Sutton, defied the order and carried on tending the wounds of the survivors, and was soon back operating. For this action, he was later awarded the Military Cross.

The stories of RAMC doctors and orderlies who served in the Far East and across the globe during the Second World War are presented in my recent book <u>Faithful in Adversity: The Royal</u> Army Medical Corps during the Second World War



THE STRAITS TIMES

"Singapore Must Stand; It SHALL Stand"-H.E. the Governor

JAPANESE SUFFER HUGE CURRENCY NOTES: CASUALTIES IN A WARNING PEOPLE in the rural areas refusing to accept currency notes issued by the Board of Commissioners of Currenery. Malaya, are warned that action will be taken against them and that they are liable to severe penalties. **SINGAPORE**

R. A. GUNNERS STICK TO THEIR POSTS

THE Japanese have suffered huge casualties in Singapore, according to W. T. Knox, News Chronicle war correspondent. Our gunners are sticking grimly to their guns, and there have been many cases of whole crews dying at their posts.

1,000,000 MEN FOR U.S. AIR FORCE

CHIANG SEES NEHRU

WHERE TO GET YOUR PAPER

ARANGEMENTS are been made for the widest possible distribution of the Free Press in the mornings and the Strain. Times in the afternoons For the present the principal distribution to the public will be made to the help and courtesy of the ARP. Department, Copies on both papers will be available a all ARP, stations free ocharge.

LIQUOR BAN NOW IN FORCE

THE public are reminded of Governor's order, which counts effect at noon to-day, the possession of intoxical liquors in Singapore is prohib. The only exception to ruling is made in the case of toxicating liquor kept for michal purcoses in houpitals. No person may after noon day have in his possession under his control any intoxical spirit.

CHINESE SUCCESS

SINGAPORE, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 1942

Air Battle Over Java Sea

4 JAPS DOWN

ACCOMMODATION FOR VOLUNTEERS' FAMILIES

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