

Douglas Ford GC

1918-1943



Douglas in Junior school in 1929



Douglas in the 1st Cricket XI, 1936



In the uniform of a Captain in the Royal Scots in 1939

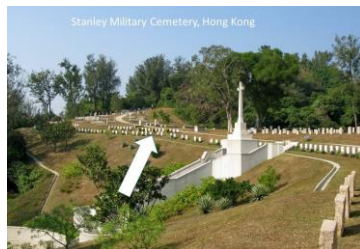


At the 2003 Remembrance Day service at the School, Rector George Smuga recounted a tale of valour involving a former pupil. The 1942 Easter edition of Schola Regia listed 'Capt. Douglas Ford (leaving year 1936), missing – Hong Kong'. Douglas was School Captain, and a member of the first rugby XV and first cricket XI. Douglas had been taken prisoner by the Japanese on Christmas day 1941 when Hong Kong surrendered. In captivity, much against the rules, he organised the distribution of medical supplies and drugs which safeguarded the health of his fellow prisoners. Later, Douglas was involved in a mass plan of escape, but was arrested, tortured, and finally sentenced to death. On 19th December 1943, his captors led him to Big Wave Beach overlooking the South China Sea. After Douglas had expertly dug his own grave in the true Homeric way, and those of two fellow prisoners who were too weak, he was shot. He was posthumously awarded the George Cross

The Photo on the right shows HQ Company, the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment) at Murray Barracks, Hong Kong in 1941. Within a short time, the Regiment would be decimated by the Japanese Army. Douglas Ford is eighth from the right in the front row (seated on chair).



Big Wave Beach, Hong Kong Island - the site of Douglas Ford's execution and initial burial



Stanley Military Cemetery - Douglas Ford grave location



Douglas Ford grave - AA visit 2011

A selection of photographs showing some of Douglas's sporting life at school are shown below. Douglas was School Captain in 1935/1936.



Junior 3 Cricket 1929



School Rugby 1935-36



School Cricket 1st XI 1936

This story was related by Jim Ford MC, Douglas's younger brother (RHS leaving year 1938) who was taken prisoner at the same time as Douglas, and was in the same camp until September 1942 when Jim was sent to Japan.

Jim subsequently (1961) wrote a series of novels, two of which were about the fall of Hong Kong and the prison. 'The Brave White Flag' recounted the story of the fall of Hong Kong, while the 'Season of Escape' was a fictional story of Douglas's period in captivity based on accounts from many sources.

Jim gave the Former Pupils address at the 1971 Royal High School Prize Giving, his title at that time being Director of Establishment at the Scottish Office.

Jim was granted an official reception at the City Chambers by Lord Provost George Grubb in May 2008 (photo on right).

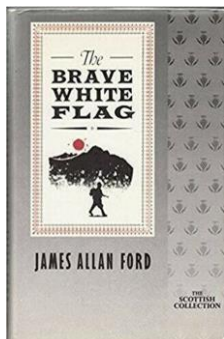


Over the course of two years between 2007 and 2009, Alastair Allanach visited Jim and his wife in Edinburgh, and read paragraphs from 'The fall of Hong Kong' to Jim, who by this time was virtually blind.

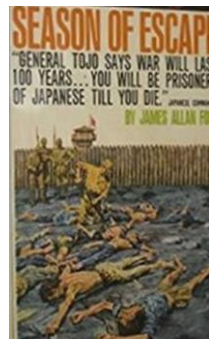
Jim died in April 2009, and his widow Isobel died aged 99 in 2023. Alastair Allanach delivered the eulogy at Jim's funeral.



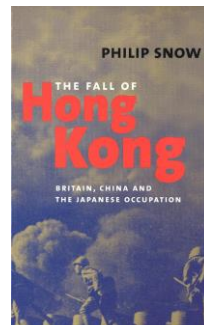
Jim Ford in his uniform as a second lieutenant in the Second Battalion of the Royal Scots in 1941.



The Brave White Flag by James Allan Ford (1961)



Season of Escape by James Allan Ford (1964)



The fall of Hong Kong by Philip Snow



Jim Ford's memorial plaque in Makars' Court, Edinburgh

Jim Ford was not only a novelist, but also a celebrated poet. In 2011, a plaque commemorating this part of his life was installed in the Makars' Court in Lady Stair's Close, off the Lawnmarket in central Edinburgh. He joins the celebrated band of Scottish poets immortalised in this very special place. The Plaque, shown above, reads 'Sing out the silence, fill for ever and ever the emptiness'.

Links

<https://vcgca.org/our-people/profile/154/Douglas-FORD>
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Ford_\(British_Army_officer\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Douglas_Ford_(British_Army_officer))

Three Schoolmates

The 1936 Annual Report (shown below) has, like all those until the late 1990's when the role became too large, a list of all pupils at the School. The one shown is remarkable in that three War Heroes are on the same page, two of them in the same fifth form class, and one a year ahead as Captain of School.

| FORM VA. | | FORM VIA | |
|----------|---|----------|--|
| 815 | Adam, Clifford Wallace James Anderson, Robert Sanders Baum, Dennis Jacob Beaton, James Brown, Eric Melrose Currie, Ian Stanley | | Barnetson, William Ewart, Roy Gibson Ford, Douglas |
| 820 | Donald, John Robert Fingland, Stanley James Gunn Gordon, Douglas Frederick Perry Jeffrey, Bruce Carstairs Judge, Thomas Douglas | 865 | Grant, Ian William Ballantyne King, Archibald David Morrison Kydd, Robert MacDonald, Stanley Kenneth Scott |
| 825 | Lambert, Kenneth Henderson Lomax, Eric Sutherland M'Beath, James Ian Miller, David Fleming Smith Nelson, Charles Cannon | 870 | M'Gill, James Smith, Thomas Douglas Steljes, John Ferguson Wallace, Peter Rennie Graham Wiseman, Denis Buchanan Yuille, David Tulloch |
| 830 | Nicoll, Ian Alfred Patterson, George Gordon Pearce, William Cairns Vivian | | |

Annual Report 1936. In form VA are pupils number 818 (Eric Melrose Brown) and 826 (Eric Sutherland Lomax), while in form VIA is pupil number 863 (Douglas Ford).

These three pupils made their mark on Humanity in different ways. The first two served in Europe and Singapore respectively, and lived into their mid 90's, while the latter was executed by the Japanese in Hong Kong at the age of 25 on 13th December 1943.



Douglas Ford as a Lieutenant in the Royal Scots in 1939



Eric Lomax as 2nd Lieutenant Royal Signals attached to the 5th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery



Eric Brown as an RNVR Pilot, probably in 1939

The stories of **Douglas Ford** and **Eric Brown** are told on the RHS Club website (and in this History in the 'Famous People' pages).

See http://www.royalhigh.co.uk/a_tale_of_valour.htm and http://www.royalhigh.co.uk/famous_people.htm

The story of **Eric Lomax** came into public notice when a film one of the books he had written about his wartime experiences was made into a film. 'Railway Man' recounted his life from his capture in Singapore to his reconciliation with one of his Japanese torturers while in captivity in Thailand.

The following account has been compiled from the account in Wikipedia

In 1939, aged 19, Lomax joined the [Royal Corps of Signals](#) before [World War II](#) broke out. Following time in the 152nd Officer Cadet Training Unit, he was commissioned as a [second lieutenant](#) on 28 December 1940. He was given the [service number](#) 165340. He was a Royal Signals officer attached to the 5th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery. As a [lieutenant](#), he was captured by the Japanese following the [surrender of Singapore](#) in February 1942. He, along with the other [Far East Prisoners Of War](#) (FEPOW), undertook a [forced march](#) to [Changi Prison](#). He was then taken to [Kanchanaburi, Thailand](#) and forced to build the [Burma Railway](#). In 1943 he and five other prisoners were tortured by the [Kempeitai](#) and convicted of 'anti-Japanese activities' after a clandestine radio (which he had constructed) was found in the camp. He was transferred to Outram Road Prison in Singapore for the remainder of the war.

On 12 September 1946, it was [gazetted](#) that he had been [mentioned in despatches](#) "in recognition of gallant and distinguished services while (a Prisoner) of War". He was awarded the [Efficiency Medal](#) (Militia) in 1949 and was granted the honorary rank of captain. He retired from the Army in 1949.

Lomax was the first patient of the [Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture](#). His later life included reconciliation with one of his former torturers, interpreter [Takashi Nagase](#) of [Kurashiki](#), Japan. Takashi had written a book on his own experiences during and after the war entitled *Crosses and Tigers*, and financed a Buddhist temple at the bridge to atone for his actions during the war.

The following Obituary in the Telegraph of 26th May 2017 is a flowing account of his life

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/military-obituaries/army-obituaries/9596599/Eric-Lomax.html>