

Hong Kong Rotarian Reginald David Walker

Railway Engineer and Volunteer Regiment Officer

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Reginald David Walker, MC, ARCS, DIC, MInstCE, (1892-1952), Chartered Civil Engineer, was in 1930-40s an Active Member of the Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社) holding the Classification “Transportation – Railway Transport” when he was Acting General Manager and Chief Engineer, Kowloon-Canton Railway (九廣鐵路).



Life Sketch of Reginald David Walker

Reginald David Walker was born on 23 October 1892, the son of Mr. Andrew Walker, a mechanical engineer, at Gillingham, Kent, England. He received his education at the Mathematical School (a grammar school at Rochester), and London University, taking his engineering at the Royal College of Science, South Kensington, and the City and Guilds Engineering College, South Kensington, and gaining the Diploma of the Imperial College of Science Technology after a post-graduate course in railway engineering.

Career Engineer

A cadet of the London University Officers' Training Corps, Royal Engineers, from 1913 to 1915, he joined the Field Company (Territorial) Royal Engineers for service overseas in June 1915, with the rank of Lieutenant, and saw service in France, Salonika, and Palestine and was mentioned in dispatches and received the Military Cross (M. C.) for his work in the last-named country, where he served as Reconnaissance Officer for the 60th Division from the operations at Beersheba to the fall of Jerusalem.

From April 1918 to May 1920 he was attached to the Railway Operating Division (R.O.D.),

Egyptian Expeditionary Force; from January to May 1920 as Officer Commanding R.O.D.

Demobilised in 1920 with the rank of Captain, he went, after a few months in England, to the Federated Malay States (F.M.S.). In December of that year, as Assistant Engineer (open lines), F.M.S. Railways. Appointed District Engineers, Tanjong Malim, in December 1923, he received the thanks of the F.M.S. Government early the following year for special services rendered and in October 1925 was Engineer-in-charge of the consolidation work of the Pass Section at Kuala Kangsar. In 1926 he was appointed Maintenance Assistant to the Engineer for Way and Works and in 1928 Special Service Assistant to this department, the appointment continuing until 1931, broken only by a short period, in 1930, of special leave to the United States, to study railway conditions there. In December 1926 and January 1927 he was in charge of the Pahang flood relief and reconnaissance work. Other important work on which Walker was engaged was an investigation, in 1933, into the possibilities of developing the access to the Prai wharves.

Life in Hong Kong

Going on leave in July 1933, Walker was transferred to the British Crown Colony Hong Kong and arrived in March 1934 to take up his appointment as Acting General Manager and Chief Engineer, Kowloon-Canton Railway (K.C.R.) British Section, receiving the substantive appointment on August 11 following.

Walker also held many public positions in Hong Kong, such as member of the Tourism Association, and inspected the Canton-Hankow Railway (粵漢鐵路) in 1935. When China and Japan went to war in 1937, the Canton-Hankow Railway and the Kowloon-Canton Railway were important routes for the Chinese Nationalist Government to import strategic materials from the outside. At that time, Walker was in charge of the operation of the Kowloon-Canton Railway, which contributed to the Chinese war effort. In 1938, the KCR also helped with the procurement of locomotives and trucks for the Canton-Hankow Railway. After the outbreak of the War in Europe in 1939, Walker also helped Hong Kong to gear up for war by serving as a member of the War Supply Board that studied ways to produce war materials in Hong Kong.

Battle of Hong Kong

Walker was a keen Volunteer, and was a Major in the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps (H.K.V.D.C.) (香港義勇防衛軍), commanding the R.O.D. cadre.

The Battle of Hong Kong (8–25 December 1941), also known as the Defence of Hong Kong (香港保衛戰) and the Fall of Hong Kong, was one of the first battles of the Pacific War (1941-1945) in World War II. On the same morning as the attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, forces of the Empire of Japan attacked the British Crown colony of Hong Kong around the same time that Japan declared war on Britain. The Hong Kong garrison consisted of British, Indian and Canadian units, also the Auxiliary Defence Units and Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps.

When the war started, Walker, who was 49 and a lieutenant colonel, was the commander of the Field Company of the HKVDC. His company assisted in the demolition of sections of the Kowloon-Canton Railway and the tunnel at Lion Rock (獅子山) as the Japanese forces invaded. It is difficult for us to imagine how he felt about these actions. After the defenders withdrew to the Island, Walker and the members of the Field Company joined the Royal Engineers sappers to reinforce Wong Nai Chung Gap (黃泥涌峽) in the early morning of 19 December 1941. Wounded in the fighting, Walker was later rescued by Canadian soldiers. After the fall of Hong Kong, Walker was then interned by the Japanese military forces at Argyle Street camp (亞皆老街中營) and later Sham Shui Po camp (深水埗集中營) until the end of the War in 1945.

Walker's health apparently did not seem to recover from the war, and he died in 1952 at the age of 60.

A KCR engine was named after him in 1957 (see photo below) and a "Walker Road" (獲嘉道) is named after him in Hung Hom (紅磡), Kowloon Peninsula (九龍半島), commemorating his contributions. The British Government awarded 11 medals of honour and commemorative medals to Walker at different times, in recognition of his various contributions. His medals and honours can now be seen at the Museum of Coastal Defense.

Hobbies

Walker was the author of various books, including 《Principles of Underdrainage》 and 《Modern Trains in Permanent Way Maintenance and Design》 and of various brochures on railway and other engineering subjects.

Walker's principal recreation is golf, which he started to play at the early age of five, under the tuition of his father, a noted golfer of his day. During his University and Army days he was a runner of distinction. He won many cups as a half-miler, including the Royal Engineers Championship event (open to all R.E.'s then in England) in 1915.



June 2000 -- Kowloon-Canton Railway 55, R. D. Walker, photoed at the Tai Po Market Station, Hong Kong.