



Burma 1942: Memories of a Retreat: The Diary of Ralph Tanner

R E S Tanner, D A Tanner

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In December 1941, a Japanese battalion of 143rd Regiment of 55th Division crossed the Burma-Siam border and siezed Victoria Point, heralding the invasion of Burma. The first air raids on Rangoon were opposed by only two fighter squadrons - 16 P40s of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) and 16 Buffaloes of the RAF. What followed was a fighting retreat as the British forces struggled to the Indian border, harried by an experienced Japanese force which was supported by at least 200 aircraft against the Allies' meagure fifty. 'Burma 1942' is a unique assessment of this disastrous episode in British military history, taken in part from the diary and maps kept by Ralph Tanner, who served with 2nd Battalion The Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry during the retreat, and from the official Battalion war diary by Major Chadwick. It includes background to the mobilisation of the Battalion in 1941, who they were, their equipment and what they were trained for, and considers the series of disasters at Moulmein, Sittang, Toksan and Yenangyaung which left them increasingly unable to fight as a unit. It also addresses the factors which prevented optimum military performance, includes discussions with the author's one-time enemies, and serves as a tribute to the strength of the men of the battalion - most of whom were conscripts - and of whom a fifth were killed and have no grave.

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