

## **LIEUTENANT COLONEL H. H. Lilly OBE**

Harold Lilly was commissioned into the Sherwood Foresters in 1915 and joined the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Belgium. He served with that Battalion in France and Flanders until July 1916, when he was captured by the Germans on the first day of the Somme at Gommercourt. He remained in captivity until the end of the war in 1918.

He continued to serve with the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a Territorial Battalion, between the wars and as Commanding Officer took the Battalion to France in 1939. Following the fall of France in 1940, the Battalion was evacuated back to England.

In October 1941 the Battalion left England for the Far East, but when Japan entered the war in December, the Battalion was directed to Singapore to defend the city. When the British Forces surrendered on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1942, the Battalion went into captivity as POW of the Japanese. During this 3½ years of captivity the men of the Battalion were used as slave labour on Japanese building projects, most particularly on the notorious Burma—Siam railway. 430 men of the Battalion were killed or died of disease. During this time Harold Lilly stood up against the Japanese in support of his men, taking as much care of them as he was able to. Consequently he was greatly admired and respected.

He and the remnants of the Battalion were repatriated at the end of the war, and he left the army in 1946. He was awarded the Order of the British Empire in recognition of his outstanding achievements and service whilst a Prisoner of War. He died 8 years later, in October 1954, whilst living in Spondon.

*Eulogy given by Major Paul Gilby, of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Mercian Regiment, at Spondon Cemetery, on the occasion of the dedication of Col. Lilly's renewed grave stone. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion had received the Freedom of Derby that morning, as had the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Sherwood Foresters in earlier years.*