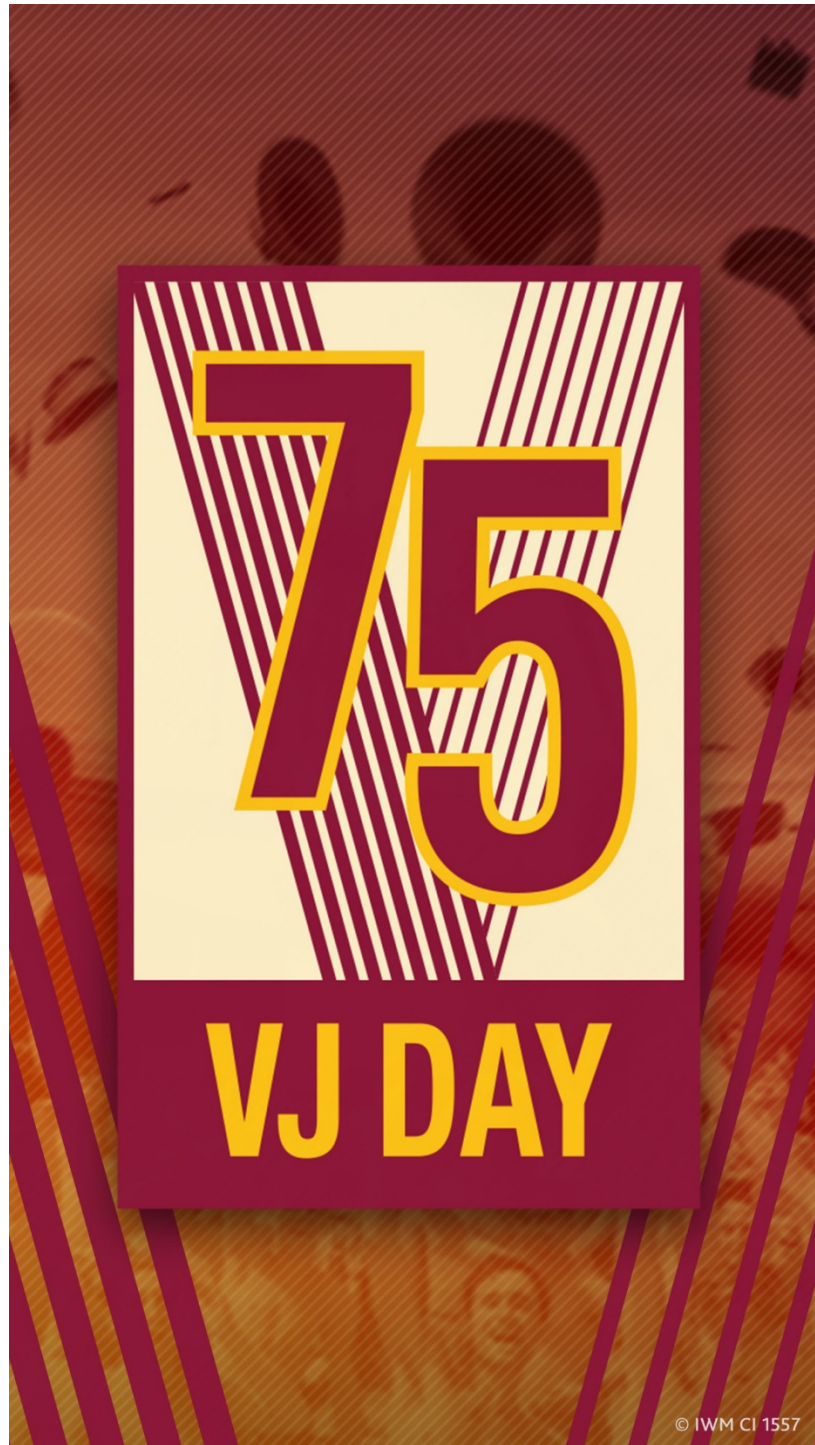


Nottinghamshire Remembers

Victory in Japan Day

Stories of Nottinghamshire Veterans



Japanese War – VJ Day (15th August 1945)

It was not for nothing that the 14th Army was called the Forgotten Army. Until Germany was defeated in May 1945 all eyes were on Europe which was near at hand, posed the threat of bombs and Britain was full of troops from all nations. By contrast, the war in the Far East was miles away in countries that most Britons hardly knew about and had never visited. The fact that our Empire had lost much of what made us prosperous and powerful rang few bells.

In December 1941 Japan had taken advantage of our anticipated defeat in Europe to gain control of the raw materials which they lacked to invade Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Burma all of which they quickly over ran. They also unwisely attacked Hawaii and many other Pacific islands, perhaps relying on the known American unwillingness to involve itself with other people's wars. They already occupied much of China and were a formidable enemy with an experienced army. However, in June 1944 the Japanese were stopped at the gateway to India at the battle of Kohima – a turning point in that war. In this the 14th Army was much helped by the success of the Chindits, led by the maverick General Wingate. These were bodies of troops dropped behind the enemy lines in 1943 and '44 and supplied by air and controlled by wireless. They learned how to fight a jungle and guerrilla war and cut across the Japanese lines of supply and control. In short, they took the war to the enemy and proved that the Japanese were not invincible.

With the Germans beaten attention was now switched to the Far East and all was set up to invade Burma and drive the Japanese out. But suddenly it was all over with the dropping of two atom bombs in August.

We could all forget about the War. The 14th Army was denied the acclaim of Victory and General Slim, its architect, was overshadowed by the likes of Eisenhower, Monty and Patten. He is now best remembered as the author of the memorial prayer "They gave their todays for our tomorrows".

We should also remember that the 14th Army was largely made up from the Indian Army – entirely volunteer and over 2 million strong - with a few British and African brigades and commanded by Indian Army generals.

Nor should we forget the many who died as Prisoners of War or who survived after inhuman treatment, particularly those of the 5th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters, captured at the fall of Singapore and used as slave labour on the Burma railway. It was a beastly war and hard won.

Colonel James Gunn OBE TD DL

On VE Day I was an officer cadet at the Indian Army School of Artillery, Deolali. My job was to play the hymns on a piano missing 3 keys. On VJ Day I was on commissioning leave and greatly relieved at not having to fight the fanatical and cruel Japs.

I spent the next two years in the Indian Army as PT and Sports Officer of the Mountain Artillery Training Centre, Ambala training some 4000 recruits of all Indian races with a staff of 60, much better than being junior subaltern in a Mountain Battery where everyone else had fought the Japs. I left India on Independence Day 1947 – all peace when I left – All Hell when I was in the Indian Ocean. More than sad.

James Gunn 7th May 2020

Colonel James Gunn OBE TD DL was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire on 29th January 1979 and served as High Sheriff of Nottinghamshire in 1984/1985.

After war service in India he joined the South Notts Hussars in 1951 and commanded the Regiment between 1962 and 1966.

On promotion to the rank of Colonel he was appointed TA Colonel for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and subsequently became Commandant of Nottinghamshire Army Cadet Force and Honorary Colonel of the South Notts Hussars.

He was also Chairman of the Nottinghamshire Reserve Forces and Cadets Association and a member of the national Army Cadet Force Council.

With thanks to Tim Richmond OBE TD DL

The Sherwood Foresters

In 1941 the Japanese began to attack Allied locations in the Far East and the Pacific. This included Pearl Harbour in the American State Hawaii. America then declared War on Japan & Nazi Germany. Next was the Island of Singapore (a British Territory). British Forces landed on 31 January 1942 this included the 1/5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters). Within two weeks the British surrendered. All of the Sherwood Foresters were taken as Prisoners.

Taken as Prisoners the Sherwood Foresters were forced to work on the Burma-Siam Railway. Conditions were harsh; the Japanese treated their prisoners badly. The punishing climate, lack of food meant that diseases like cholera were rife.



Singapore, 1942

The prisoners were used to build the Burma-Thailand Railway, known as the Railway of Death. The Japanese split up the prisoners into groups of 500 to build storage sheds. The Commanding Officer, Col H.H. Lily always managed to make sure there was a Forester Officer in any party where there was a Forester. The Prisoners stayed in huts (600 to a hut). The Railway opened in October 1943 and covered 1,250 miles and cost the lives of over 15,000 prisoners of war and 80,000 native labourers.

450 Sherwood Foresters died as a result of being held captive.

ConvoyHI-72

ConvoyHI-72 sailed from Singapore for Japan on 4th September 1944. Two of the ships, the Rakuyo Maru and Hachidoki Maru was carrying prisoners of war, 1317 British and Australian on the Rakuyo Maru and 900 British on the Kachidoki. On 12th September the convoy was attacked by US submarines; both ships were hit and sunk. The

Americans believed that the ships were cargo ships and as a result, there were no Red Cross symbols on either of the ships. The Japanese rescued some of the POWs from the ships and continued their journey on the Kibitsu Maru. Today it is known that 136 soldiers from the Rakuyo Maru survived and 520 from the Hachidoki Maru.

The Foresters lost 95 men in the sinking.

Below are some of the stories of the Sherwood Foresters of Nottinghamshire who were on that ship.

Private William Barker

Private Baker lived in New Basford and was a Labourer by Trade. He enlisted December 1937 into the 5th Battalion and went with the Battalion to Singapore. He was taken with the rest of the Battalion as POWs, Private Barker was sent to Japan by ship in 1944.

Private John Abbott of the 1/5th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters



Lived in Marlpool Nottingham and a Labourer by Trade. Private Abbott enlisted into the 5th Battalion in 1941 before transferring to the Army Catering Corps. He served with the BEF in France and evacuated at Dunkirk. With the rest of the Battalion, Private Abbott was taken POW on the fall of Singapore on 14th February 1942. Together with his battalion, they were put to work. Private Abbott was evacuated from Pratchai on 2nd April 1945.

Private Cyril Burch



Having been born in Nottingham, Private Burch enlisted 15th July 1939 into the 5th Battalion. In civilian life, he was a Motor driver and as a result was in the MT section of the battalion. He was declared as missing at sea. This postcard was donated to the museum by the family of Private Burch, who lived in Newark.

The 12 & 13th Battalions

The 12th Battalion formed on 5th July 1940 at Thorsby and after a period of training were deployed to coastal duties in East Anglia. They were sent to India in October 1942 and went via Bombay on the 25th November before moving to Delhi, when in Delhi the Battalion were employed on Internal Security duties. The Battalion moved to Delwari Camp, Bhopal State and went through intensive jungle warfare training. Then much to the discontent of the Commanding Officer the Battalion became a jungle training battalion. It trained reinforcements for the British Regiments in Burma in the war against Japan. By the time it was disbanded in 1946, the battalion had provided reinforcements to nearly every British Infantry Battalion in South East Asia.

Whilst the 13th Battalion, who had formed on 4th July 1940 at Norwich. After moving around the UK for most of 1940-1941. In May 1942 the Battalion deployed to India and was based in Rawalpindi, where it became an armoured Regiment with the title 163rd Regiment of the Royal Armoured Corps. By December 1943 it was reverted back to the 13th Battalion The Sherwood Foresters. The Battalion was disbanded in September 1945, after VJ Day.

Acknowledgement

Jennifer Brookman-Moore

Curator and Archivist Museum of the Mercian Regiment

Nottinghamshire's Wartime Polish Legacy and the VJ-Day Connection



During the dark days of 1940, after Poland had been invaded both by Germany and later by the Soviet Union, when Blitzkrieg had burned through France and the Low Countries, Britain stood alone, but a new, unfamiliar language was soon being heard on the streets of Nottingham, Newark and Lincoln – Polish, being spoken by pilots and groundcrew whose miraculous journeys through occupied Europe had brought them to what they referred to as 'The Island Of Last Hope'

Many Polish Air Force personnel trained at RAF Bramcote and RAF Newton, before moving to operational bomber squadrons, such as 300 and 301 Squadrons based at RAF Winthorpe, Syerston and Swinderby during the first years of the Second World War

Of these brave men, and women, many never lived to see victory, or indeed to return home after the Iron Curtain descended over Eastern Europe. Newark's Polish Military Cemetery holds the graves of 3 Presidents and over 440 Polish personnel, including many who died as aircrew, along with a number of Polish paratroopers who died in a tragic mid-air collision over Stamford when preparing for battle. The Cemetery was General Sikorski's resting place after his death in 1943 until his remains were returned to Poland in 1993.

Those of you visiting Watchwood Plantation at Calverton will find a poignant memorial cross to 3 such airman, whose light bomber crashed whilst returning from bombing Boulogne.



Por Adam Grzywacz D and X Companies Por Wieslaw Bulkowski Mortar Platoon Kpt Jan K Zeleznik

The Polish Forces fought alongside the Allies by land, sea and air. Although the Battles of Britain, Of Arnhem, Monte Cassino and Normandy resonate within the Polish contribution, it is also a little-known fact that in the Far East, Poles fought too.

A number of Polish pilots and navigators flew in British squadrons in Burma and India, ferrying troops and supplies to the battlefield in Dakota transport aircraft. Similarly, a number of Polish Officers served in the 81st West African Infantry Division, fighting the Japanese on the ground. Their bravery and sacrifices in a distant campaign must not be forgotten.

After the war, many Polish personnel did not wish to return to Communist Poland and remained, after 'demob', in the Nottinghamshire

area, working hard in local trades and industries. Their ready adaptation to a new country, despite being tinged with the sadness of exile, laid the foundations of the County's Polish community which carries the proud traditions of its homeland close to its hearts.

Here, today, we remember them all.



Fot. 43. Afryka 1942 r., A. Bobula (drugi od lewej) w mundurze Strzelca Brytyjskiego



Fot. 42. Lata 1941-43, umundurowanie Strzelców Brytyjskich w Afryce. W najwyższym rzędzie pierwszy z lewej stoi ppor. A. Bobula



Acknowledgement
Text and images supplied by Simon Elmer

**Albert Cast of RAF 2739 Squadron
(as told by his son Peter Duncan Cast)**

ONE MAN'S STORY OF THE WAR IN THE EAST



Figure 1 Albert Cast in September 2008. Taken at Bradwell Bay

It all began in Blackpool in November 1941 when Albert Cast, recruit 1738518, was being harshly drilled on the promenade and an outraged elderly lady berated the RAF drill sergeant whilst flourishing her umbrella, demanding that he should “desist from screaming at those boys!” It was the first, and the lightest, of many future conflicts that this conscript was going to endure.

Albert had been recruited to become RAF crew and was being trained as a W.Op/Gunner (wireless operator and gunner). He progressed well, rising to the rank of Leading Aircraftman because of his aptitude for aircraft recognition. However, he failed to achieve aircrew status due to his inability to decipher Morse code messages at 8 words per minute. Unknown to him at the time, this was actually good news as, at only 5'5", he would almost certainly have been quickly killed as many rear gunners were in aircrafts such as Lancaster bombers. His training and capabilities as a gunner meant that he was then quickly stationed to defend various airfields around southern England to be ready to attempt the shooting down of incoming Luftwaffe aircraft.

In 1942 he was assigned to 2739 Field Squadron within the newly forming Royal Airforce Regiment and sent to Castle Toward at Dunoon for training for combined operations, this area being a good match for the Normandy beaches. Prepared now for beachhead landings, Albert was surprised to be mustered with his 2739 Squadron members and escorted by military police to the railway station to take a waiting train to Greenock where they were put aboard the “Athlone Castle” with destination unknown – at least, not until they had traversed the Mediterranean and docked at Suez, there to be issued with tropical pith helmets! Next stop Bombay (Mumbai)! The journey from east to west, crossing the sub-continent to Calcutta (Kolkata) at 2000km was hot and arduous, continued to the British military base at Secunderabad and thence to Chittagong, a port city on the Bay of Bengal – and now part of Bangladesh.

The war in the Far East was about to begin for Albert and his comrades, being now on the fault line between allied forces from East Africa, India and the UK and the determined combined resistance of both the Japanese and Indian National Armies straddling the border between India and Burma. The allied counteroffensive, begun in the spring of 1944, was now gaining momentum. Critical battles at Imphal and Kohima had been won and now the push back into Burma was about to begin and the “Road to Mandalay” – and ultimately to Rangoon – was calling. 2739 Squadron were there to defend the airfields which were needed to keep the army supplied and to then move

forward, taking and securing Japanese airfields as the advance continued from Maungdaw.



Increasingly brought into forward action and meeting the enemy head-on, 1738518 established a lifetime friendship with Duncan, his Bren gun partner from Dundee. Always at the sharp end, the two were welded into a survival pairing, each entirely dependent on the other as they advanced as the “point of the arrow” made by the rest of their flight coming behind and on either side. Complete familiarity with the weapon was essential as was carrying all the spare ammunition – even a spare barrel in case of jams – before firing in short bursts to left and right to protect their compatriots behind – especially so in the action at Ngakyedauk Pass.

Albert had married Dorothy whilst on leave on June 6th, 1943. It was with much delight and excitement that, whilst in Burma and reading a letter from her the year after their wedding, he discovered that he had become a father, at which point he went wild around the camp shouting “I’m a daddy! I’m a daddy” and from that point on he was always known as “Daddy”. One of the first words son Michael said was “Burma!” in response to his mother’s question “Where’s Daddy?”

Unfortunately a serious misfortune fell upon him when, having just washed his hair in petrol (as was the practice at the time) and laid down on his camp bed, one of the group thought it would be funny to drop a lighted match on to his head which, of course, immediately set his hair alight. At first, he tried to douse the flames with his hands and arms to no avail so, grabbing his blanket, he rolled himself in it. He was badly burnt on the face, hands and arms and he was rushed away and smothered in bandages, to be flown out on a Dakota for further treatment, fully expected to need plastic surgery. Fortunately this proved unnecessary and, just as he was expecting to be returned home, and as the war was ending, he was staggered to discover that he was to be posted to the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) to flush out the remaining fighting Japanese, free the many Dutch and Allied prisoners (think Tenko) and to detain captured and surrendering Japanese in their own POW camps.

He left Madras (Chennai) on the troopship Largs Bay in January 1946 and sailed via Malaya and Singapore to Sumatra where he was stationed at Medan. This episode proved to be a worse trial than being in Burma as the Indonesians had joined forces with the remaining Japanese to resist a potential reoccupation by the Dutch. Now he was fighting a very determined combined resistance in the jungles of Sumatra, intent on making life as uncomfortable as possible. His only relief from the pressure of this warfare were the regular letters from Dorothy and the life-long companionship of his

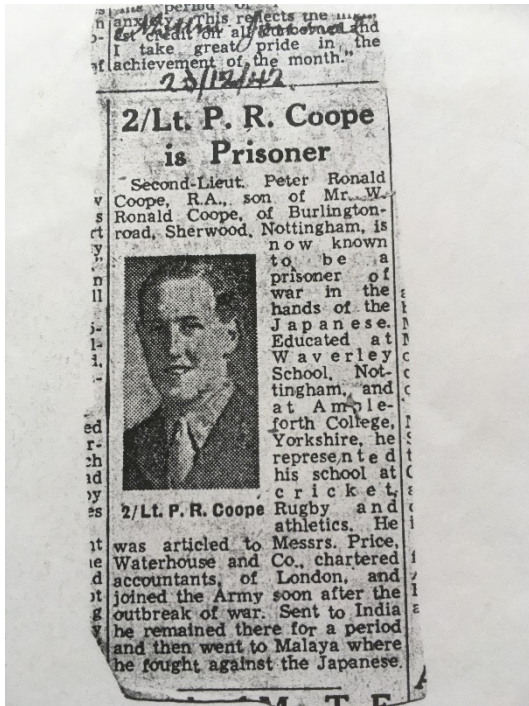
other comrade-in-arms, Peter the “Kid”. Peter, as a fresh young recruit, had initially acted as an officer’s batman and, having been thrust on to the frontline of action, was taken under Albert’s wing, and they were then linked together in their almost daily battle for survival.

On the fateful night of Monday, 10th June, 1946, whilst guarding a radio station outside the airfield perimeter, they were attacked by rifle fire to which they replied with sufficient force and confidence to discourage any further action and so settled down to sleep in their tent whilst one stood guard. However, at about 1.30am, following an initial grenade blast, the flight found themselves being attacked by 40 knife and sword wielding Indonesian “Black Panthers”. In the hand-to-hand fighting in and around the tent the seven fought for their lives, killing 4 Indonesians and eventually by their sheer courage drove off the insurgents - but at their own cost – two of their group had been killed and another two seriously injured. Airmen Higgs, Lawrence and Cast survived with minor injuries, bringing Peter “Kid” Lawrence and Albert “Daddy” Cast of the 14th Army even closer through adversity. Just two crosses in Albert’s diary mark that day – it was Whit Monday and a Bank Holiday in England – in Britain people were enjoying the holiday and still celebrating the end of the war - ten months or so before! Thank God Albert Cast survived or I would not be here.

Acknowledgement

We thank Peter Duncan Cast for telling his father’s story so vividly and allowing us to share it with you.

Captain Peter Coope deceased A VJ day veteran and POW



From Nottingham Journal 23rd December 1942

My father was born 5th July 1919. He was articled at Price Waterhouse before he joined up and was sent to Catterick Garrison in Yorkshire to train. He 'celebrated' his 21st birthday there.

He was selected as an officer in the 155th Lanarkshire Yeomanry, Field Regiment, Royal Artillery.

May 1941 Coope's regiment was sent to India to train in preparation for a North African desert war against Rommel's Afrika Corps. However, the regiment was sent to Malaya to fight the Japanese. He became seriously ill and when his unit retreated he was left behind in a military hospital as it was thought he would not survive.

Christmas Eve 1941 arrived at British forces hospital in Singapore (Alexandra Hospital).

February 14/15 1942 Japanese attacked the hospital and massacred both patients and staff. My father was on an upstairs floor and too ill to obey the order to go downstairs. He decided he wasn't going to try anyway as he was attached to various tubes etc. He was fortunate to be one of very few survivors. From there he eventually joined his unit in Changi Jail as a P.O.W.

June 1942 British P.O.W.s sent from Changi to work on the Siam/Thai- Burma railway.

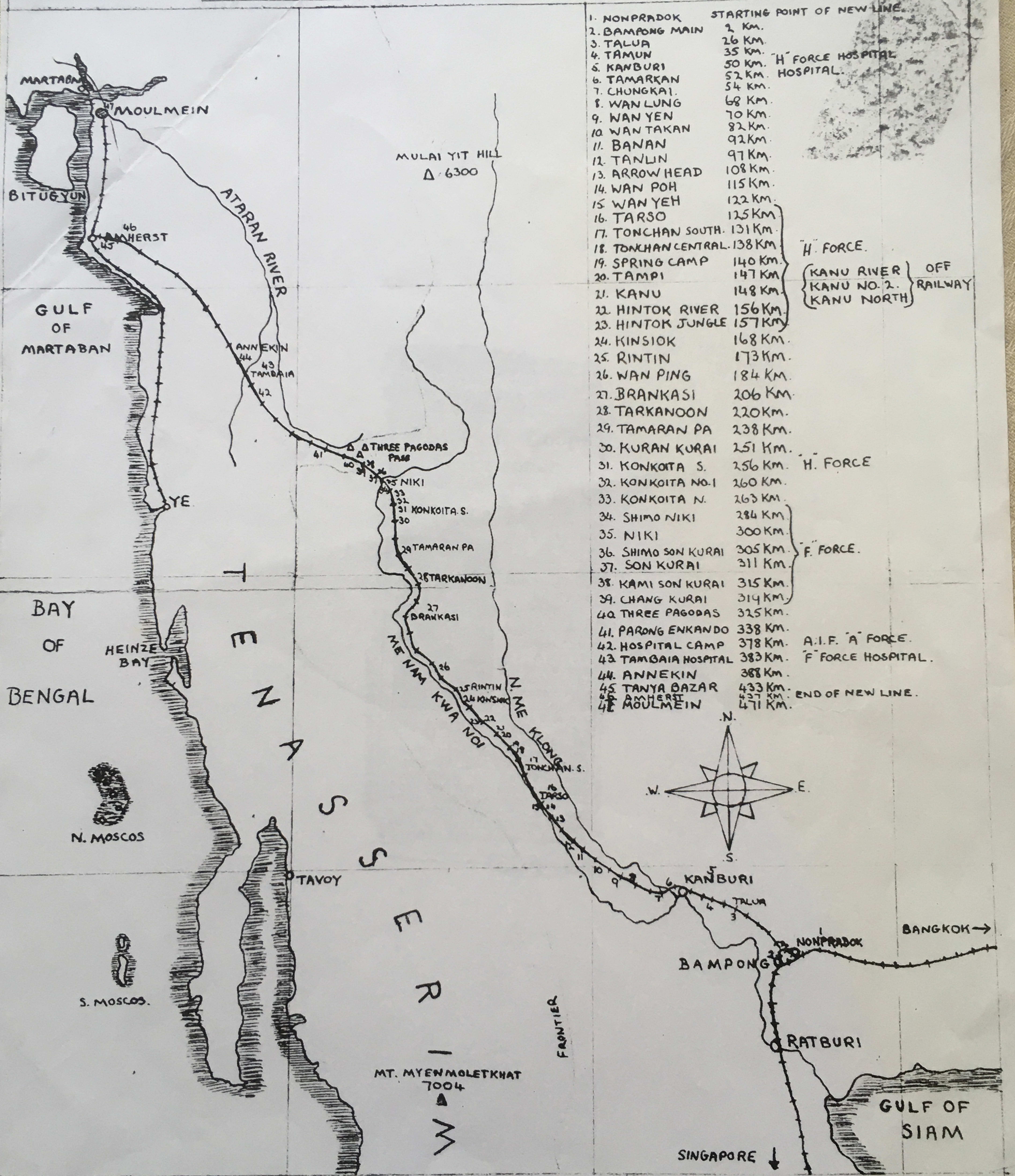
March 1943 more British P.O.W.s sent to what they were told would be a "rest camp", which turned out to be the railway. At this stage when the Japanese were in a hurry to get the railway completed officers were expected to work as laborers as well - including my father.

He and other survivors of the 'Death Railway' returned to Changi until Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Japanese surrender.

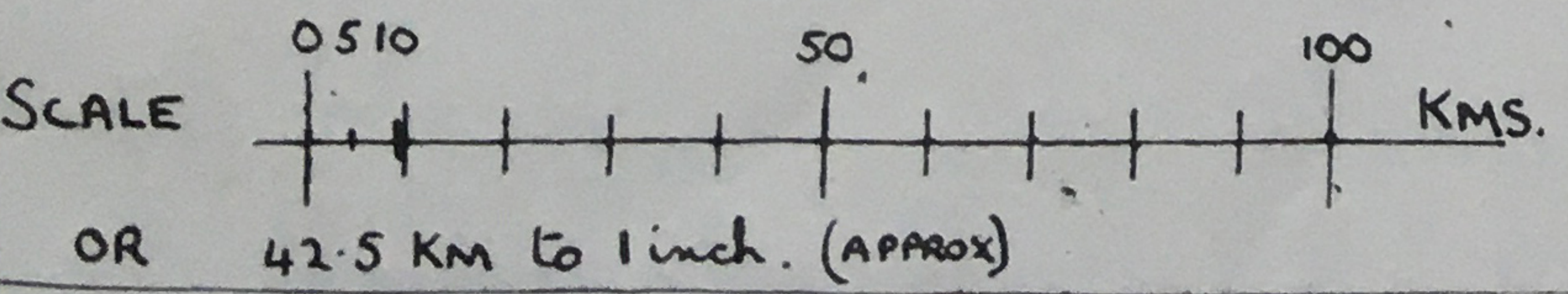
On the next page is Captain Coope's hand drawn paper map.

Acknowledgement - with thanks to Claire Coope for sharing her father's story

THE THAILAND RAILWAY



Station Number	Station Name	Distance (KM)	Notes
1.	NONPRADOK		STARTING POINT OF NEW LINE.
2.	BAMPONG MAIN	2 KM.	
3.	TALUA	26 KM.	
4.	TAMUN	35 KM.	
5.	KANBURI	50 KM.	H FORCE HOSPITAL
6.	TAMARKAN	52 KM.	HOSPITAL.
7.	CHUNGKAI	54 KM.	
8.	WAN LUNG	68 KM.	
9.	WAN YEN	70 KM.	
10.	WAN TAKAN	82 KM.	
11.	BANAN	92 KM.	
12.	TANLIN	97 KM.	
13.	ARROW HEAD	108 KM.	
14.	WAN POH	115 KM.	
15.	WAN YEH	122 KM.	
16.	TARSO	125 KM.	
17.	TONCHAN SOUTH	131 KM.	
18.	TONCHAN CENTRAL	138 KM.	
19.	SPRING CAMP	140 KM.	H. FORCE.
20.	TAMPI	147 KM.	
21.	KANU	148 KM.	KANU RIVER OFF RAILWAY KANU NO. 2. KANU NORTH
22.	HINTOK RIVER	156 KM.	
23.	HINTOK JUNGLE	157 KM.	
24.	KINSIOK	168 KM.	
25.	RINTIN	173 KM.	
26.	WAN PING	184 KM.	
27.	BRANKASI	206 KM.	
28.	TARKANOON	220 KM.	
29.	TAMARAN PA	238 KM.	
30.	KURAN KURAI	251 KM.	
31.	KONKOITA S.	256 KM.	H. FORCE
32.	KONKOITA NO. 1	260 KM.	
33.	KONKOITA N.	263 KM.	
34.	SHIMO NIKI	284 KM.	
35.	NIKI	300 KM.	
36.	SHIMO SON KURAI	305 KM.	F. FORCE.
37.	SON KURAI	311 KM.	
38.	KAMI SON KURAI	315 KM.	
39.	CHANG KURAI	314 KM.	
40.	THREE PAGODAS	325 KM.	
41.	PARONG ENKANDO	338 KM.	A.I.F. A FORCE.
42.	HOSPITAL CAMP	378 KM.	F FORCE HOSPITAL.
43.	TAMBAIA HOSPITAL	383 KM.	
44.	ANNEKIN	388 KM.	
45.	TANYA BAZAR	433 KM.	
46.	AMHERST	437 KM.	END OF NEW LINE.
47.	MOULMEIN	471 KM.	



CHANGI. 16. 10. 44.

Captain Reverend Ronald Corner (as told by Andrew Corner)



This is a photo of my late father, Captain Reverend Ronald Corner on his wedding day in 1942 three days before his deployment to India, then Burma with the 14th Army.

His war was sometimes gruesome with burial details in villages that had been subject to Japanese action. His unit being cut off and his batman killed in his trench before my father killed the Japanese soldier responsible. It was my father or the Japanese Soldier. As an ordained Minister, this played heavily on his mind in later life but he did come to accept that he had no choice.

Interestingly, Dad had signed up as a conscientious objector on the outbreak of war but soon changed his mind thinking he could be of better service on the front line so volunteered. He saw action

under General Slim and played a very active part until VJ Day. He eventually received a medical discharge due to a knee injury. On returning to the UK, in order to make a small protest, he decided to not collect his medals.



In fact it wasn't until he was in his late 70's that he actually started to talk about the war with some pride of having done his bit. I then secretly obtained his medals for him and stood at the end of his bed and read:- The Under-Secretary of State for Defence (Armed Forces) presents His compliments and by Command of the Defence Council has the honour to transmit the enclosed Awards granted for service during the war of 1939-1945: 1939-1945 Star, Burma Star, War medal 1939-1945. He was so happy. He managed to wear them with pride on Remembrance Day before he died in 2004 at the age of 89. Dad also made me promise to wear his medals on my right chest on Remembrance Day "lest we forget" and that I continue to do with pride.

Acknowledgement

Thanks to Andrew Corner for letting his share his father's experience in World War II.

Graham Sneath

While the dropping of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima on 6th August, with loss of over 144,000 lives on the day and in the days, months and years that followed, and Nagasaki three days later passed the Diarist by, he noted the surrender of Japan on 15th August both as world news and as an event likely to hasten the Regiment's return to Canada. Over the other side of the world, brother Graham's war had been proceeding apace. Task Force 37 with its aircraft carrier HMS Indefatigable conducted air operations against airfields in South West Honshu, the largest Japanese Island, and shipping at Maizuru, a city in South central Japan, and Nagoya Bay from where industrial products from the city were being transported. Although the atomic bombs had been dropped on 6th and 9th August, they did not immediately induce surrender and air operations continued for another week. On 12th Graham's ship transferred to Task Force 38 with which it continued to serve as part of the destroyer screen protecting two cruisers, the aircraft carrier Indefatigable and the battleship King George V. Air operations continued on 13th against Onagawa and that day the Task Force was attacked by Japanese aircraft of which its ships shot down twenty five. On 15th after conducting attacks against airfields at Hisaruki and Nobara, all further operations were cancelled owing to the surrender but a lone aircraft piloted by an airman unwilling to accept his Emperor's decision to surrender, attacked that day dropping two bombs near Indefatigable.

Graham typed and kept notes of his time aboard Barfleur during the period from 18th August to 4th September 1945. On 18th he asked: *'Is this the fourth day of peace? Japanese still delaying and fighting on most fronts after they officially accepted the surrender terms. We are still stooging out here...'* In the following days which included being at anchor in Tokyo Bay, he describes a certain ennui as the ship reverts to a peacetime modus operandi and the guns become ornaments needing the ends of the barrels burnished and brass rings fitted. One highlight, apart from the arrival of mail and fresh food supplied by the Americans, was a canvas swimming pool that he and a comrade were able to set up on deck. Just over twenty years later I remember a similar pool being set up next to the forward hold of the Machaon and filled with sea water as we entered the Mediterranean. Generally, his life revolved around watches, splicing the main brace, enjoying too much food and devising entertainments in the wardroom. In late July the General Election had returned a Labour Government led by prime Minister Clement Attlee and Graham recorded Attlee's concern about the Americans withdrawing the 'Lend Lease' scheme set up in 1941 that allowed the President to lend, lease or simply give away to any foreign government materials that would assist both that government's defence and that of the US. It meant that the UK would have to start paying at a time when it was in grave economic distress. Graham's brother officers seemed little inclined to debate the matter.

The Task Force arrived in Sagami Bay on 27th August and was in Tokyo Bay on 2nd September for the formal surrender which took place aboard the battleship USS Missouri. The proceedings were conducted by US General Douglas MacArthur with the Japanese Foreign Minister and his delegation. The surrender documents were to have been laid out on an admiral's mahogany table supplied for the purpose by the Royal Navy but it proved to be too small and a bog standard trestle table had to be

used covered with a green table cloth still bearing coffee stains from breakfast that morning. Following MacArthur's speech the Japanese Foreign Minister signed followed by signatories from all the combatant Allied nations. While there is no suggestion that Graham was aboard Missouri, the experience of service in the Far East shaped his life leading to a Government legal career in Hong Kong from 1952 to 1973.

From Tokyo Bay Graham and his ship with two American warships, USS Kitkun Bay, a small escort aircraft carrier, and the destroyer Howorth were ordered to Hakodate on 14th September where they were to pick up about 300 former prisoners of war for repatriation. HMS Barfleur arrived ahead of the two American ships that day and waited. Upon the Americans' arrival that afternoon, Japanese Harbour officials came out in tug boats to negotiate the embarkation of Allied PoWs. By 2330 that night Graham and his ship had taken on board 286 PoWs and proceeded with the help of the Japanese tugs to transfer them to the Howorth and Kitkun Bay. The transfers were completed by the morning when Kitkun Bay supported by Howorth conducted flight operations while Graham and his ship remained in Hakodate. She joined the other two ships at 1305 on 15th and the three ships sailed to Tokyo Bay and on to Yokohama to transfer their passengers. Those in need of medical attention were treated by staff of the US Army 42nd General Hospital. Meanwhile a typhoon was passing through the area forcing ships to ride it out at anchor or by using their engines.

The ships had come into the port on the isthmus that connects Mount Hakodate to the Hokkaido mainland. Given that Graham was an enthusiastic Anglican, he may well have gone ashore and visited St Johns Church as well as the Catholic and Orthodox churches nearby and the house of the British consul further down the hill, the presence of which may explain why Barfleur joined her US sister ships later. Before their release some of the prisoners had been put to work on the docks in warehouses that still stand today but now serve as shops and restaurants. Built of brick, they replaced wooden structures destroyed by fire in 1921.

One of those being repatriated was Irishman Joseph Dunne who had worked for the Gestetner Company in Singapore.¹ He had joined the Scottish Company of the Singapore Volunteers, the equivalent of an Army Reserve unit today. Married with two young children he and his family enjoyed life in what was the British colony of Malaya. But it all came to an end in December 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour and began its campaign in South East Asia. Unlike some families, Joseph had the foresight to send his family to Australia because in February 1942 Singapore finally surrendered to the Japanese and Joseph became a prisoner of war.

Over the next three and half years not only did Joseph suffer separation from his family but also considerable privations as a prisoner, mainly over work and lack of nourishing food, his diet in Singapore being boiled rice and hibiscus leaves. After fifteen months in various camps on the island including Changi, now the site of the international airport, he along with nine hundred other PoWs was crammed into the hold of a cargo ship, the Wales Maru, and taken to Japan, departing Singapore on 16th May and arriving in Moji on 7th June 1943. The journey took twenty two days and

¹ See <https://www.malayanvolunteersgroup.org.uk/stories.html>

the conditions aboard were appalling but he survived and ended up at Hakodate Main Camp where he was assigned to work in the Asano Cement Works. Hakodate Main administered a number of satellite camps on Hokkaido Island and held 1597 prisoners of war from the UK, US, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, South Africa and one Estonian. In all 174 died of whom 102 were British²

In the winter of 1943 he was moved to a half built new camp, the No 1 Hakodate Dispatched Camp near the cement works at Kamiiso, West of Hakodate, and had to endure the bitter cold of the winter leading to the deaths of two of his comrades, Driver Horace Brown of 288 Field Company, Royal Engineers and Trooper Raymond Fallows of the 18th (5th Battalion The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment) Reconnaissance. Both died of croup pneumonia and are buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Cemetery in Yokohama, the only one in Japan. There is a remarkable photograph of a large group of prisoners taken some time in 1944 at Kamiiso in which Joseph appeared at the end of the second row. The hardship was only occasionally relieved by the arrival of Red Cross parcels and mail from home; relatives were allowed twenty five words. In June 1944 Joseph suffered a serious leg injury and was treated in the camp hospital over a protracted period. When he was discharged he was put on gardening duties in the camp and could watch his food grow. Better prepared during the winter of 1944, their hopes arose following victory in Europe in May only to be dashed again when they were moved inland to another camp at Bibai, site of a coal mine, north of Sapporo in June 1945. By then their rations were stews of mulberry or dandelion leaves morning and evening and a bowl of rice with a teaspoon of fish flakes for lunch.

On 15th August he observed the camp guards crying over Japan's surrender and knew that liberation was on its way. His camp officially closed on the day of the formal Japanese surrender on 2nd September and he and his comrades moved south to Hakodate for repatriation under the supervision of GHQ and the occupying powers. He was eventually taken on board Graham's ship HMS Barfleur on 15th September and sailed to Yokohama. His poor physical shape and that of his fellow prisoners must have been obvious to Graham and the rest of the ship's company. From Yokohama an American ship took him to Manila and he was able to transfer to Sydney to be reunited with his family. Barfleur was then based in Hong Kong as part of the 19th Destroyer Flotilla back under Royal Navy Command and engaged in Fleet duties protecting British shipping off the coasts of China and Indo-China before recall to the United Kingdom in January 1946 arriving there the following month. Graham was demobilised in July that year.

Acknowledgment

With thanks to Colonel David Sneath TD DL

² See mansell.com

Captain James White of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME)

(as told by his son the Revd Phil White)



VJ Day is on 15th August 2020. It is the long-lost cousin of VE Day, yet highly significant. Do we celebrate, commiserate or commemorate?

First hand experiences are fast disappearing, so I remember my Dad! He was a Captain in the REME (5th Indian Division) in the Burma Campaign and was out there for 5 years. I can't say I had a great relationship with my Dad. He was highly intelligent, concerned for his children's welfare but also austere, distant and dogmatic. He loved to goad us (I had 2 sisters) into debating issues, and then when things were getting interesting he would stop the conversation and insist on having the last word!!

When he was in a good mood I would ask him to *'tell us what you did in the war Dad!'* In retrospect he told us only a few of the stories he might have done and I suspect missed out a lot of painful detail. He told us about the rats in the jungle, how big they were and how many. On rare occasions he would tell us about being ambushed by the Japanese and how he won a mention in dispatches. He told us about 'the battle of the tennis court' of Kohima and Imphal. He told us about the friendships he made and how they became lifelong. He recalled having to walk out of Burma at the end of the war, back to India and find a way home, only to be greeted with indifference and even hostility on demob. He had missed out on a probable Oxbridge degree and suffered life threatening meningitis and TB on return home. He often came out in 'prickly heat' even many years later.

He found it hard to relate to the new generation (me!), for whom his sacrifices gave freedoms and attitudes he didn't really understand and had little sympathy for. Long hair, trench coats and rock music, must have seemed a long way from the deprivations he endured in the Burmese jungle. He didn't think the Beatles would last and they were a long way from his heroes, Field Marshall Bill Slim, the 'forgotten army' and friends who never came home.

At one point he wrote his 'memoirs', which along with a Gurkha knife and a Japanese Officer's bamboo writing set, were one day deposited unceremoniously in the wheelie bin never to be seen again! He had no time for regimental dinners or reunions, no obvious desire to mark Remembrance Day, but on the 60th anniversary of VJ Day August 2005 he walked down the Mall with many others. I don't really

know why because he never said, was he proud, regretful or in need of reconciliation? Perhaps it was a mixture of celebrating survival and a successful campaign; maybe a mutual commiseration with compatriots and almost certainly a commemoration of what was lost and the peculiar world it all spawned.

VJ Day should be marked not for the appalling bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima but for the ordinary soldiers who had inflicted a massive and highly unlikely defeat on a proud Japanese Army. The forgotten army deserves to be remembered.

How does one reconcile faith with war? I can't really say how. Though my Dad did read the lesson in his local church, he hated sharing the peace, he loved a good debate and he sent me a rare letter timed for my first day on being ordained in the Church of England. Thanks Dad!

Acknowledgement

Thanks to the Revd Phil White for telling the story of his father.