

BIRMINGHAM ASSOCIATION OF



Honorary Chairman - Mr Ron Mockford
 Treasurer - Mrs Margaret Walton
 Committee Members - Mr Keith Andrews, Mr James Whiskens

Vice Chairman - Mr Kenneth Coy
 Secretary - Mrs Barbara James

BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET - IN LOCKDOWN - JUNE 2020

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE BAFEPOW COMMITTEE!

It is with great sadness that, in view of the current Covid-19 crisis, the committee has taken the decision to cancel the BAFEPOW AGM that was scheduled for July and to also cancel the VJ75 lunch that was to be held in August. We wish to be able to meet together without concern about contracting this awful virus and we are also still not confident that we could use public transport safely, so we have made this difficult decision as we feel it to be the right one to safeguard everyone.

The AGM will be held in 2021, date to be confirmed and the commemorative lunch will be known as VJ75+1 and will be held in August 2021, subject to the current crisis being over by then of course.

We are very sad to have to postpone these meetings but we are sure that you will all agree that it is the right thing to do.

As we have been unable to hold committee meetings and have also postponed the AGM, please do not feel that we aren't keeping in touch and I am aware that there might be someone who is interested in joining the committee but will now not be able to stand for election until 2021. So please get in touch with myself if you are interested, and as soon as we are able to arrange a meeting, then I will invite you to join us to see if you would like to take part and possibly be co-opted on to the committee. Otherwise, in the absence of the AGM 2020, the committee remains as shown at the top of this page but do let me know if you have any comments on this - in the light of the Covid-19 situation we are doing our best to keep the group going and to commemorate our FEPOW until we can meet up again.

THE ANNUAL BAFEPOW TRIP

At present we have not made any plans for this year's BAFEPOW trip, again because of the current crisis and we will just have to wait and see if it will be at all possible to arrange one.

News from the Researching FEPOW History Group - as the Secret Art of Captivity exhibition was forced to close due to the Corona Virus Pandemic, a video is being made of the exhibition which will be available later in the year or in 2021. It will also include some new additional items that have not as yet been seen publicly. I will let you know when the video is available online.

HOW IS LIFE WITH YOURSELF?

Well who would have believed we would still be going through all this uncertainty after all this time! I don't know about you but I felt safer when we were in tight lockdown because now I feel quite unsure about what I can do or shouldn't be doing, so I'm carrying on as before and keeping safe.

The recent unrest in the States over the death of George Floyd has brought back memories of 'long hot summers' when there were spells of racial unrest and also the very sad assassination of Martin Luther King. I also dread the return here of riots like those in Brixton, Toxteth and not all that far from us, in Handsworth. The history of Black troops in WWII, especially American soldiers, gives an interesting insight into how they were treated but we owe them so much for their contribution especially in Burma.

As far as the FEPOW community goes, I have been amazed at the number of people who have been using Facebook to find out about their own FEPOW's captivity history. Ronnie Taylor has worked every day to add new names to the FEPOW Family Roll of Honour and it has been extremely interesting to learn about all of these new histories. Good also to see so many grandchildren now taking an interest and getting involved. This interest has, of course, been spurred on by the coverage of VE75 and especially by the



wonderful fund raising of Captain Sir Thomas Moore and the coverage of his WWII service, especially his time in Burma. As the majority of VJ75 events have now been cancelled for this August, I do hope that the BIRMINGHAM ASSOCIATION OF

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coverage of this in the media will help to establish VJ Day as the real end of WWII and increase awareness of the Far East War.

If you do have anything that you would like to share with our group, please do get in touch with me and I will put it into next month's News Sheet.

REMEMBERING EVENTS MONTH BY MONTH IN THE FAR EAST 1941 - 46

Continuing the timeline of events in the Far East in WWII (plus any events of interest in Europe in italics), I will point out that I have taken this information from Wikipedia. In a recent FEPOW Charity video conference, Keith Andrews added more important events during our group discussion, so I will point out that Wikipedia does not include all the events that should really be here. If you have some personal history for June 1942-46, please let me know, and also for all of the coming months and lets get this story told and shared.

As I said above, if you have a particular event that is linked to your own FEPOW, please let me have it for inclusion so that the list becomes more personally interesting to ourselves!

JUNE 1942:-

3rd: *The British coal industry is nationalised.*

Japan launches air raids against Alaska in the Battle of Dutch Harbor, beginning the Aleutian Islands Campaign.

The Battle of Midway opens with ineffective attacks by land-based American B-17s on the approaching Japanese fleet. Admiral Nagumo, in charge of the Japanese carrier force (Hiryu, Soryu, Akagi, and Kaga) is unable to locate any American aircraft carriers and decides to attack Midway's land-based air defences the first thing the next morning, which in any event is one of his planned tasks.

4th: In the Battle of Midway, the day opens with Admiral Nagumo's attack on the air defences of the island. A good deal of damage is done and many aircraft destroyed on both sides, but in the end the island's airbase is still functional. Nagumo plans a second attack on the island, and begins refueling and rearming his planes. Meanwhile, attacks are launched from all three American aircraft carriers in the area. Planes from USS Hornet, Yorktown, and Enterprise all find the targets, although most of the planes from Hornet follow an incorrect heading and miss this attack. Torpedo Squadron 8 from Hornet breaks and follows the correct heading. The Devastators of "Torp 8" are all shot down without doing any damage; there is only one survivor, George H. Gay, Jr. of Waco, Texas, who watches the battle unfold from the water. The torpedo attack fails, but draws the Japanese Combat Air Patrol down to low altitude, and they are unable to effectively repel the dive bombers from Yorktown and Enterprise when they arrive. The bombs find the Japanese flight decks crowded with fueling lines and explosive ordnance, and Akagi, Kaga, and Soryu are all soon reduced to blazing hulks, Akagi hit by only one bomb dropped by Lt. Commander Richard Halsey Best; only Hiryu escapes with no hits. Admiral Nagumo shifts his flag from Akagi to another ship, the cruiser Nagara, and orders attacks on the American carriers, one by a group of Aichi D3A dive bombers and a second by Nakajima B5N torpedo bombers. The Japanese planes find Yorktown (thinking Yorktown already sunk, the second attack group assume it must be Enterprise) and damage it so badly that Yorktown must be abandoned. Admiral Fletcher shifts his flag to cruiser Astoria and cedes operational command to Admiral Spruance. The attacks on Yorktown give away Hiryu's continued operations, though, and it is promptly attacked and will sink the next day, Admiral Yamaguchi choosing to go down with it. Of note, Hiryu and the other three destroyed Japanese carriers had participated in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

7th: Japanese forces invade Attu and Kiska. This is the first invasion of American soil in 128 years. Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska begins.



The Battle of Midway comes to a close; USS Yorktown sinks; four Japanese carriers and one cruiser are sunk. The battle is viewed as a turning point in the Pacific war.

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8th: A Japanese submarine fires several shells into a residential area in Sydney but with little effect.

18th: Manhattan Project is started, the beginning of a scientific approach to nuclear weapons.

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sJUNE 1943:-

8th: Japanese forces begin to evacuate Kiska Island in the Aleutians, their last foothold in the Western hemisphere. The event is almost to the year of their landing.

21st: Operation Cartwheel opens with landings by the United States 4th Marine Raider Battalion at Segi Point on New Georgia in the Solomon Islands, beginning the New Georgia Campaign. It will not be secured until August.

23rd: American troops land in the Trobriand Islands, close to New Guinea. The American strategy of driving up the Southwest Pacific by "Island Hopping" continues.

JUNE 1944:-

5th: *Operation Overlord commences when more than 1,000 British bombers drop 5,000 tons of bombs on German gun batteries on the Normandy coast in preparation for D-Day. And the first Allied troops land in Normandy; paratroopers are scattered from Caen southward.*

In the Pacific, the U.S. fleet transporting the expeditionary forces for the invasion of Saipan in the Mariana Islands leaves Pearl Harbor.

6th: *D-Day begins with the landing of 155,000 Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy in France. The Allied soldiers quickly break through the Atlantic Wall and push inland in the largest amphibious military operation in history. A Navy LCVP disembarks troops at Omaha Beach.*

12th: American aircraft carriers commence air strikes on the Marianas, including Saipan, preparing for invasion.

13th: *Germany launches a V1 Flying Bomb attack on England, in Hitler's view a kind of revenge for the invasion. He believes in Germany's victory with this "secret weapon." The V-1 attacks will continue through October, when the last launch site is taken by Allied forces.*

The U.S. Naval bombardment of Saipan begins. In response, Admiral Toyoda Soemu, commander-in-chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy, orders his fleet to attack U.S. Navy forces around Saipan.

15th: U.S. Marine and Army forces invade the island of Saipan. U.S. submarines sight the Japanese fleet en route.

19-20th: The Battle of the Philippine Sea, nicknamed the Great Marianas Turkey Shoot by Americans, takes place. The United States Fifth Fleet wins a decisive naval battle over the Imperial Japanese Navy near the Mariana Islands. Over 200 Japanese planes are shot down while the Americans only lose 29 to enemy action.

20th: The Siege of Imphal is lifted after three months.

21st: Allied offensive in Burma.

22nd: In the Burma Campaign, the Battle of Kohima ends with a British victory.

JUNE 1945:-

2nd: Air Group 87 aircraft from USS Ticonderoga strike airfields on Kyushu, Japan, in an attempt to stop special attack aircraft from taking off.

5th: *The Allies agree to divide Germany into four areas of control (American, British, French and Soviet).*

The U.S. fleet under William Halsey, Jr., suffers widespread damage from a huge Pacific typhoon.



10th: Australian troops land in Brunei.

13th: The Australians capture Brunei.

15th: Osaka, Japan, is heavily bombed.

16th: The Japanese are in a general retreat in central China.

17th: Japanese Admiral Ota Minoru commits ritual suicide for failing to defend Okinawa,

19th: *The United Kingdom begins demobilisation.*

21st: The defeat of the Japanese on Okinawa is now complete.

26th: *The United Nations Charter is signed in San Francisco.*

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ROLL OF HONOUR

Harold Pleasance, Gnr, aged 100, passed away on Saturday, May 16th.

It's not often that we have the good fortune to be able to have the details of a FEPOW's time in captivity, but, thanks to Ray Withnall's touching tribute to Harold on Facebook, I thought it appropriate to share it with you:-

It is with great sadness that we mark the passing of Harold Pleasance. Harold reached his 100th birthday last August. He was called up into the 135 Field Regiment January 1940. He landed at Singapore on 13 January 1942 and taken prisoner on 15 February. After a few months in Changi he was sent to Kanchanaburi where he worked on the bridges over the Kwai. He later moved up the railway to other camps including Kinsyok. He spent time at Nong Pladuk before going to Ubon before the liberation in August 1945.

Harold was a gentleman, always ready with a welcoming smile.

Harold will be missed by all.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!

Are you aware of the Roll of Honour that is on the FEPOW Family site or the COFEPOW files that have been restarted? If you haven't seen the site that Ronnie Taylor set up, then take a look at it on:- www.roll-of-honour.org.uk or why not consider creating a FEPOW file that can go on to the COFEPOW site so that your FEPOW's story will be remembered and seen by future generations - you don't have to be a member!

WELFARE GRANTS FOR FEPOW, WIVES AND WIDOWS

If you need help with a grant towards hospital stays, Nursing Home Costs, alterations to the home, mobility aids etc, then please get in touch with:-

Mrs Margaret Martin, 6, Stanley Avenue South, Portslade, Brighton, BN41 2WG

or by email:- margaretmartin1944@sky.com or by phone:- 01273 424686

Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA, White Rose Cottage, King Street, Neatishead, Norwich, NR12 8BW

Email:- pauline761@btinternet.com

Phone :- 07818599303. enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

Secretary to BAFEPOW:- Barbara James, 142, Winchester Gardens, Northfield, Birmingham, B31 2QB

Tel: 0121 258 4300 or 07954104857

Email: bmjames142@yahoo.co.uk.

STAY SAFE AND KEEP WELL!



WE'LL MEET AGAIN.....
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