



BAFEPOW VJ75 1941-1945 -2020

Honorary Chairman - Mr Ron Mockford

Vice Chairman - Mr Kenneth Coy

Treasurer - Mrs Margaret Walton

Secretary - Mrs Barbara James

Committee Members - Mr Keith Andrews, Mr James Whiskens

BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET - LOCKDOWN EASING - JULY 2020

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE BAFEPOW COMMITTEE!

Just to confirm that the Holiday Inn has been in touch with Margaret (Treasurer) about our events that we were to have held in July and August this year and both the AGM and the VJ75+1 lunch have been rescheduled for 2021. By then, hopefully, we will be in a better situation with the Covid-19 crisis and we will be able to travel and meet up without concerns.

As we have been unable to hold committee meetings since January and have also postponed the AGM, please do not feel that we aren't keeping in touch. I am aware that there maybe 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.

NEED YOU TO CONFIRM YOUR ADDRESS !!!!!!!!!!!!!

As we have postponed the VJ75 lunch, it would be appropriate for us to still be able to wear the BAFEPOW VJ75 badges that have been made. I need, therefore urgently for you to send to me confirmation of your postal address so that I can post a badge to you.

I would also really like to include in the August news sheet a tribute to our FEPOW (it goes without saying!) Please, therefore, when you send me confirmation of your address, would you also send me, if you can, your FEPOW's name, which final camp they were in plus the date of their release and the date that they returned home and I will include them - it will be interesting to see the variation in the dates.

If you have a suggestion for something else for inclusion, please do let me know.

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. It may be possible for us to arrange to meet up at the NMA as the site has now re-opened but it requires pre-booking and payment of the parking fee. (*George and I booked and visited the NMA on 17th June which would have been my Dad's 100th Birthday. I left a FEPOW memorial cross for him on the FEPOW memorial - an emotional visit that evoked many memories. We paid tribute to all our dear FEPOW and it was also a very pleasant visit to this beautiful site*)

Sadly the Secret Art of Survival Exhibition closed due to the Pandemic lockdown, however I came across this email from Meg Parkes which I think you might be interested in. The book that was released to accompany the exhibition is a superb book and is on offer at a reduced price to FEPOW families

Hello,

I hope that this finds you all well and keeping out of harm's way, for as long as this takes...

Despite the disappointment of the pandemic causing the premature closure of the exhibition, staff at the VG&M have been busy building up their Secret Art of Survival webpages in preparation for a big launch to mark VJ Day75. You can see what is already online now at:

<https://vgm.liverpool.ac.uk/exhibitions-and-events/special/fepow/>

VG&M are launching a new online project next Tuesday, inspired by the exhibition, called The Secret Art of Lockdown! You will find all the details at:

<https://vgm.liverpool.ac.uk/exhibitions-and-events/special/fepow/lockdown-stories/>

Please help us to generate interest in the Lockdown project as it links directly to the new online Secret Art of Survival gallery and to VJ Day75. Please circulate the link and encourage people of all ages to get involved.

And also, while not all the images from the exhibition will go on the VG&M website, later in the year LSTM's Captive Memories website will have all the VG&M material and much more.

Finally, may I also remind you that Captive Artists, the unseen art of British Far East prisoners of war is available at a discount to FEPOW families – £18, plus £3 p&p – if purchased direct from LSTM, please email me for details.

With very best wishes to you all, stay safe and stay well,

Meg

HOW IS LIFE WITH YOURSELF?

Well, things are gradually starting to come out of lockdown but, personally, I am still being extremely careful as this virus is lurking out there and has disastrous consequences. When the time is right I look forward to meeting you all again, however, if you would like to meet up at the Holiday Inn and wish to see if anyone else would like to meet up, let me know and I will put the details in the news sheet. It would still be on the second Tuesday of the month unless you state otherwise.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Dame Vera Lynn passed away on June 18th , aged 103. I have to include Dame Vera in our Roll of Honour as she was truly ‘The Forces Sweetheart’ and her determination to visit the troops out in Burma when other entertainers turned that area down, just shows how she wanted to entertain and “Bless ‘em all” no matter how risky it was. The BBC news showed her out there with the men and I wonder how many people searched the faces of the men for a possible loved one (I was contacted by someone on Facebook whose Dad had met Vera out in Burma and, despite throwing away his service medals that he received (he didn’t want medals for killing people) and not speaking about his experiences, he would speak fondly of Vera and she sent me a photo of her Dad just behind Vera in a throng of men surrounding her) The BBC also showed Vera being presented with an honorary Burma Star medal at a post war Burma Star gathering and I found it really emotional to see all the smiling faces of the men applauding her as their president pinned the medal to her dress. I do hope that a statue to her will be erected to commemorate her and it would be appropriate for it to be in Dover perhaps. RIP, Vera xx

Vic Pugh - Shropshire survivor of Japanese prison camp horror died at 98 on 29/05/2020

It’s not often that we get to hear much about a FEPOW and their lives, so when I saw this article in the Shrewsbury News, I thought that it would be nice to share it:-

One of Shropshire's last survivors of the hell and hardship of the Japanese prisoner of war camps, Vic Pugh, has died at the age of 98.

Vic was an award-winning model maker.

Vic and his wife of 73 years, Elsie, 96, died within two weeks of each other.

Captured serving in the RAF in Java, he was a prisoner for three years and returned home haunted by his experiences.

He found that the intense concentration required in making highly detailed working models – he had caught the model-making bug as a youngster growing up in Birmingham before the war – helped him shut out that nightmare.

His models won six gold awards from the Society of Model Engineers in London.

In 2018 his precision engineered models, including steam locos and fire engines, were showcased as a collection for the first time in a display at Shrewsbury Museum & Art Gallery in an exhibition titled *Miniature Marvels – Celebrating One Man’s Passion for Model Engineering*. Another lifelong passion for Vic, from Hanwood, was amateur radio.

Born in Kington, Herefordshire, and brought up in Great Barr, Birmingham, with the outbreak of war he had wanted to go into the RAF as a radio operator, but was turned down because – of all things – colour blindness.

So he went on to aircraft instruments instead and in 1941 was sent to Singapore. Within months Britain was at war with Japan, and as Japanese forces closed in, they were evacuated on the ship *Empire Star*, which made it to Java despite being hit several times by Japanese bombs.

Vic was to recall: “We had an army officer come to us. He divided us up into four and we were given rifles and a Tommy gun between the four of us. They turned round and said ‘just do what you can’ and left us to it. We couldn’t do much. I had the Tommy gun – it was the first time I had ever had one.”

With the fall of Java and Sumatra, they were taken prisoner and used as forced labour.

The prisoners were brutally treated, poorly fed, and riddled with disease. Vic narrowly escaped certain death when he secretly acquired some bits and pieces of radio equipment, although not enough to make a radio.

“One day I was recovering from malaria and put it to sort it out when a Japanese guard walked in. I thought ‘Christ, that’s it.’ I lay on it and started moaning, and he didn’t notice it.”

Had it been discovered he would have, in his words, got “the chop” – that is, been beheaded.

“That is if you were lucky. If you were unlucky they bayoneted you.”

In the final part of the war they were taken back to Singapore to dig tunnels in the hills. At one point he was in the notorious Changi jail, but says: “We thought it was relatively cushy in there.”

The Japanese guards made it clear to the prisoners that if the Allies landed on Singapore they would be “disposed of.”

“We were digging these tunnels about mid morning one day when they lined us up and stuffed us on the back of lorries. We thought: ‘Bloody hell, that’s it. We’re going to be done in.’”

“They took us to the camp and shut the gates behind us. We got in there and our officer said the war had ended. And that was it. The reaction was quite muted. It didn’t register.”

By this time Vic weighed less than six stone. He returned to Britain through RAF Cosford, a reception centre for returning RAF prisoners of war.

He married Elsie, from Walsall Wood, on March 22, 1947, and they went on to have daughter Janet. The couple came to Shropshire in 1982. He was a member of the Java Far Eastern POW Club 1942 and he and Elsie took part in its annual reunions.

Vic, who worked for the Midlands Electricity Board, recalled that on his return he had enduring nightmares. During one nightmare he grabbed Elsie round the neck and called her a “yellow *****”.

A joint service for Vic and Elsie was held for close family on June 11 at Emstrey crematorium.

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

July 1941

19th: *The "V-sign", displayed most notably by Churchill, is unofficially adopted as the Allied signal, along with the motif of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.*

26th: In response to the Japanese occupation of French Indochina, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt orders the seizure of all Japanese assets in the United States.

28th: Japanese troops occupy southern French Indochina. The Vichy French colonial government is allowed by the Japanese to continue to administer Vietnam. French repression continues. The Vichy French also agree to the occupation by the Japanese of bases in Indochina. measures necessary for carrying out the desired final solution of the Jewish question."

31st: The Japanese naval ministry accuses the United States of intruding into their territorial waters at Sukumo Bay, and then fleeing. No evidence is offered to prove this allegation.

July 1942

2nd: *Churchill survives a censure motion in the House of Commons.*

3rd: Guadalcanal is now firmly in the hands of the Japanese.

20th: After landing in the Buna-Gona area, the Japanese in New Guinea move across the Owen Stanley mountain range aiming at Port Moresby in the south-eastern part of the island, close to Australia; a small Australian force begins rearguard action on the Kokoda Track.

29th: The Japanese take Kokoda, halfway along the Owen Stanley pass to Port Moresby.

July 1943

6th: U.S. and Japanese ships fight the Battle of Kula Gulf in the Solomons.

7th: *Walter Dornberger briefs the V-2 rocket to Hitler, who approves the project for top priority.*

12th:/:13th: The Japanese win a tactical victory at the Battle of Kolombangara.

July 1944

6th: Largest Banzai charge of the war: 4,300 Japanese troops are slaughtered on Saipan.

9th: Saipan is declared secure, the Japanese having lost over 30,000 troops; in the last stages numerous civilians commit suicide with the encouragement of Japanese military.

10th: Japanese are still resisting on New Guinea.

: Tokyo is bombed for the first time since the Doolittle raid of April 1942.

18th: General Hideki Tojo resigns as chief minister of the Japanese government as the defeats of the Japanese military forces continue to mount. Emperor Hirohito asks General Kuniaki Koiso to form a new government.

21st: US Marines land on Guam.

July 1945

1st: Australian troops land at Balikpapan, Borneo in the Western Allies' last major land operation of the war.

5th: General Douglas MacArthur announces that the Philippines have been liberated.

6th: Norway declares war on Japan.

10th: US Navy aircraft participate in attacks on Tokyo for the first time.

14th: Italy declares war on Japan.

16th: *The U.S. conducts the Trinity test at Alamogordo, New Mexico, the first test of a nuclear weapon.*

17th: The Potsdam Conference begins under British Prime Minister Churchill, Soviet Prime Minister Stalin and U.S. President Truman. The Allied leaders agree to insist upon the unconditional surrender of Japan.

22nd: America and Japan engage in a small bloodless skirmish in the Battle of Tokyo Bay. The Japanese take slight losses

24th: *Truman hints at the Potsdam Conference that the United States has nuclear weapons.*

: British and Americans commence the Bombing of Kure.

26th: *The Labour Party win the British general election by a landslide. Clement Attlee replaces Churchill as British Prime Minister and immediately flies to the negotiating table at Potsdam. The Potsdam Declaration is issued.*

28th: The Japanese battleships Haruna and Ise are sunk by aircraft from US Task Force 38 while in shallow anchorage at Kure Naval Base.

30th: The USS Indianapolis is sunk shortly after midnight by a Japanese submarine after having delivered atomic bomb material to Tinian. Because of poor communications, the ship's whereabouts are unknown for some time and many of its men drown or are attacked by sharks in the next four days.

31st: U.S. conducts air attacks on the cities of Kobe and Nagoya in Japan.

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

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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.....

