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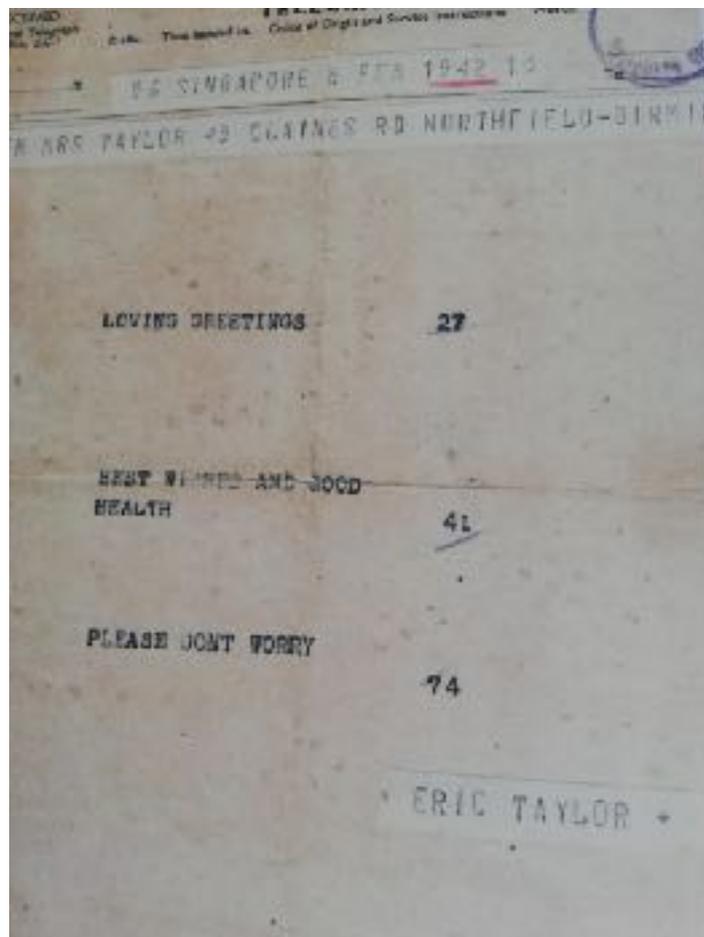
BAFEPOW NEWS SHEET, FEBRUARY 2021

And so we continue in lockdown and sadly miss again our visit to St Martins in the Bullring which is usually where we would make our way to after the February meeting at the Holiday Inn. Although our visit to this beautiful church is only a short one to honour the FEPOW on or near the anniversary of the Fall of Singapore on 15/02/42, this, and the second visit that we make in September, are very special to our association. In the absence of a visit again this month, let's take a look at the events that are linked to our commemorative visits.

THE BEGINNING AND THE END

Families and friends of those fighting so far away in the Far East would have had few means of hearing directly from their loved ones unlike it is nowadays with modern technology. Few homes had the luxury of television although they may have had a radio. Newsreel from distant battle areas may have been shown in cinemas but it must have been an extremely worrying time while they waited for news.

Below is a photo of a telegram that my dear Dad, Eric Taylor, sent home to his parents just eight days before Singapore was surrendered by General Percival to the Imperial Japanese Army. As controversial as the surrender was - the worst in British history - judging by my Dad's words "PLEASE DON'T WORRY", I think that our troops were not expecting this to happen!



The main news coming from the Far East had been the Pearl Harbour attack on December 8th 1941 which brought the Americans into the war against Japan. That was just the start as attacks commenced which finally led to the fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941. Although many of the prisoners taken there were British, we have to recognise that a large number of them were Canadians who had not long arrived there. However, even before Pearl Harbour, the Japanese had been involved in conflict in China and the region throughout the 1930s.

And so the warning bells had begun to sound:-

Churchill had said that Britain could afford to lose Hong Kong but it could not afford to lose Singapore – very much the 'jewel in the crown' of the Far East. The capitulation of Singapore would have brought about the largest number of captives compared with anywhere else and this may be the main reason why Singapore seems to have taken precedence for defence over other places and it was thought that the Japanese would attack from the coast and not overland.

It is wrong however to focus only on Singapore, after all, as well as the fall of Hong Kong, Borneo fell on 16th December 1941, Sumatra fell on 14th February 1942 and Java fell officially on 8th March 1942. The Philippines finally fell in April 1942. The Thailand government, originally neutral, was attacked by Japanese troops in December and was pressured by the Japanese to form an alliance with Japan on 14th December 1941. French Indochina was given over to Japanese control in 1940 after the fall of France to the Germans.

So, when did war involving Britain, its Empire and America break out in the Far East? The notorious date is Saturday 7th December or Sunday 8th December 1941 depending on differing time zones. It can be confusing to envisage time using different zones so putting the times in terms of Singapore time brings it into a better context :-

On Sunday 8th December : -

At 30 minutes past midnight, North Eastern Malaya was invaded by Japanese and Thai forces.

At 2.30 am on 8th December Pearl harbour was heavily attacked by the Japanese.

At 4.30 am Singapore was bombed by the Japanese.

At 8.00 am Hong Kong was attacked by the Japanese.

At 12.30 pm the Philippines were attacked by the Japanese.

All of this commenced within a twelve hour period, amazing by any standards of armed conflict. It was Japan's form of blitzkrieg (or lightning war), after all Japan seems to have modelled its approach to warfare based on that of Germany, just as it modelled its Kempeitai on the Gestapo.

And so, bit by bit, the Japanese spread their hold over the Far East and found themselves with more prisoners of various nationalities than they really knew what to do with. They subjugated the civilians and treated them with unimaginable cruelty and, as Japan had not signed up to the Geneva Convention, they did not have to treat prisoners in accordance with its rules.

It had begun - the cruelty, the enslavement, torture, deprivation, starvation, rape of women, murder, beatings, medical experimentation - no one was safe - not the civilian Internees, the Romusha or own dear FEPOW! This is why we would go to St Martins in the Bullring in February - to remember THEM.....

On 08/05/1945 Germany surrendered and the War in Europe came to an end but the war in the Far East was far from over and the Japanese vowed to never surrender. The Americans were fighting valiantly across many areas and the 'Forgotten Army' were making slow progress in Malaya and Burma in horrendous conditions. In an attempt to bring the Japanese to their knees, the Americans launched fire bombing raids on mainland Japan, reducing Tokyo to ruins but still they (the Emperor and his Generals) refused to give in. One of the most controversial plans was then put into place and I am very grateful to Margaret Walton who has researched the following and has very kindly shared it with us. Thank you, Margaret, it is really interesting!

The Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

No matter whether reading a book or watching a film, I always come across information that was unknown to me before. Hiroshima and Nagasaki the dropping of the atomic bombs being one of these subjects. I happened across a film by Dr. Mark Felton 'Hiroshima 1945 – The British Atomic Attack', which tells of the lead up to the dropping of the bombs on Japan and how it very nearly was the British flying Avro Lancaster's who got to carry out the deed. It was very informative and worth watching. It can be viewed on the web <https://theboardgamingway.com/mark-felton-productions-hiroshima-1945>

I remember Keith telling me that the second bombing which was scheduled to be Kokura, which housed one of the largest arsenals still standing in Japan, due to the extensive cloud cover the B29's

couldn't get a clear view of the city so the bombers diverted to their secondary target Nagasaki, which due to it being in a valley, didn't have the full effect that they hoped. This led me on to research further and found that there was a third bomb that was due to be dropped on 19th August 1945, which was ready and waiting to be shipped to Tinian, an island in the Mariana Islands, in the Pacific Ocean, Tokyo being its intended destination, though whether there was much left of the city to bomb is questionable after the fire bombings that the city endured.

The web page [British Nuclear Program | Atomic Heritage Foundation](#) states that 'The outbreak of World War II was a catalyst for the development of the atomic bomb. Alarmed by Hitler's mention of a "secret weapon," the British government began taking the bomb project much more seriously'. Whilst looking further into the story was astounded to read that Birmingham University was involved in the initial research. Mark Oliphant the Poynting Chair of Physics at the University of Birmingham reorganized research at the University, bringing together Otto Frisch and Rudolf Peierls, whose work determined that an atomic bomb could in fact be built. British research continued under high security with the code name of Tube Alloys. In 1940 Winston Churchill in response to a memorandum written by Rudolf Peierls, created a uranium subcommittee, code named MAUDE, who advised on how to move the project forward. In 1941, President Roosevelt contacted Churchill suggesting that they join forces, the British being far more advanced at that time, with the US not being involved in the war, were concerned about security. This was rather ironical as by that time the British project was already infiltrated by several Soviet spies including Klaus Fuchs, Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess. By 1942 the US had outstripped the British with their progress in the research and after a scientific mission lead by Wallace Akers, the director of Tube Alloys together with members of the universities where the basic research had begun, it was realised that the organizational abilities and scientific resources the Americans had built up were impressive and that the US would completely outstrip the British research and application of nuclear energy, making it advantageous to merge. The MAUDE Committee concluded that a bomb could be built and recommended collaboration with the United States to do so. The project transferred to Los Alamos, US, with many of the Tube Alloy scientists following. Thus the Manhattan Project was born.

...and where does the 'Hiroshima 1945 – The British Atomic Attack' come into the story? At the start, when it was the British who determined that an 'A' bomb could be produced, the RAF had a secret squadron of 6 Lancaster's, painted black, with no identification marks, whose pilots were in constant training for such a mission stationed at Enstone, Oxon, originally set up to deal with Hitler's 'secret weapon' and later in the war, Japan. The Lancaster's were the only allied bombers with a large enough bomb load capacity for such large bombs, they would have to fly from Burma over the Himalayas to reach their destination but their fuel load was insufficient for the planes to do the round trip, which brought about the invention of the in air refuelling that we know today. Whilst this was going on the US decided that it was their bomb and they would build new B29 Super Fortress' with larger bomb load capacities, whose fuel load was much larger than the Lancaster's flying from Tinian to Japan ... the rest we know.

Margaret Walton



And so we reached the end of WWII - recognised as FEPOW Day, 15/08/1945 but many were not freed on that date (my Dad was in Saigon and freed on 12/09/45) Many of the FEPOW had become aware of the plans to execute them all if Japan was invaded and some camps had even had prisoners making preparation for their own executions so they would have been extremely relieved to be freed by friendly forces. Repatriation commenced and the FEPOW returned to a very much changed Great Britain. Many brought the physical and mental scars back with them including many tropical diseases never before encountered over here. We, as a group, have chosen to commemorate the date of the signing of the official surrender by the Japanese as the date we would pay our second visit of the year to St Martins in the Bullring where there is the plaque that commemorates the FEPOW who did not return and that was placed there by our former FEPOW members. We know of and recognise that those who returned lived their lives under the shadow of their experiences and we do our best to acknowledge that and to ensure that they are remembered too!

NEWS FROM THE RESEARCHING FEPOW HISTORY GROUP

The RFHG has announced that it has started a new weekly blog on Wednesdays. These should be well worth taking a look at and below is the info about the blogs and where to find them:-

NEWS, SHARING RESEARCH

NEW BLOG SERIES

JANUARY 20, 2021 FEPOWHISTORY LEAVE A COMMENT

New for 2021 is our Sharing Research series on this blog. Starting next week you can expect a new post every Wednesday at 10:00am from an author sharing their latest research with the group.

Keep your eyes out for more soon!

<https://fepowhistory.com/tag/blog-series/>

FEPOW GALLERY OF HEROES

The Facebook gallery that is dedicated solely to the photographs of FEPOW is continuing to grow slowly but there is room for many more photos for it to reach the target of 1000. Please do not confuse it with the previous gallery which included members of the Forgotten Army and that was completed in time for VJ75. Let's see if we can help by getting it up towards the target of 1000 FEPOW by VJ75+1. Just go to Facebook and join the FEPOW Gallery page and submit a photograph along with his name and basic info on the FEPOW's captivity and the rest will be done for you.

NEWS OF A POSSIBLE AWARD FOR A FEPOW 75 CONTRIBUTOR

I keep in touch with a gentleman (Roger Townsend) in the Southampton area who has worked very hard to organise events there for VJ75 during 2020. Very sadly, the events had to be cancelled/postponed because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. I am so pleased for him that his hard work has brought him well deserved recognition and a potential award. I will let you know if he is successful - here below is an extract from the announcement of his shortlisting - I will also let you know if he is able to reschedule the VJ75+1 events in Southampton for later this year as you may like to attend.

'I am delighted to be able to tell you that Roger Townsend has been shortlisted for an 'Unsung Hero' Award by the Beautiful South Awards – 2020/21 in recognition of his work with FEPOW 75 in 2020. These awards cover the South East of England and the winners will be announced in Brighton in early March. We will of course let you know if he is successful, but we are pleased to have this already wider recognition of the FEPOW 75 website.'

TIMES REPORTER, LUCY FISHER, CHANGES HER JOB

Early in 2020 saw many of us joining ranks and encouraging people to sign the petition to get the RBL to pay equal recognition to VJ 75 to their planned VE75 commemorations, and to recognise that 08/05/1945 was in no way the end of WWII as many seem to believe. Lucy Fisher from Times was the defence journalist at the Times and she went to see Ron Mockford at his home and interviewed him about his experience as a FEPOW. Lucy wrote an excellent article that was published along with a photograph of Ron in the Times and it did much to raise public awareness of this era of WWII history and to encourage more people to sign the petition. She has now taken up a new post as the Deputy Political Editor at the Telegraph and, as she was so supportive of that story, I will continue to follow her career in case we need her support again in the future.

ROLL OF HONOUR

Dr Edward Alexander Murray, Royal Corps of Signals has passed away very recently, not far short of his 100th Birthday. He was captured at the Fall of Singapore. I have sent condolences to his family and I will be in touch with them again shortly.

Dennis Morley has passed away on 03/01/2021 after contracting Coronavirus on 29/12/2020. Aged 101, Dennis was the last remaining survivor from the Japanese warship that was torpedoed in WWII on which there were 800 British FEPOW.

In October 1942, the Lisbon Maru was carrying 1,816 prisoners that Japan had captured - after they took Hong Kong in December 1941 - to Japan without any markings indicating POWs were on board, when it was shot by an American vessel.

Carnage ensued over the next 24 hours as Dennis and the other prisoners, who were left trapped below deck, tried to escape and swim.

Japanese soldiers shot at the men in the water, only ceasing fire when local unarmed Chinese fishermen began rescuing nearly 400 of them from the sea.

Dennis, then in his twenties, spent the rest of the war in a POW camp in Osaka, Japan, where he worked in the docks and at the airport. Below is a link to an article in the Daily Mail which is very interesting and tells, not only about Dennis but about the sinking of the Lisbon Maru - well worth reading. Just copy the whole link and paste it into your browser:-

https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9147549/Last-survivor-torpedoed-Japanese-warship-sunk-WWII-dies-coronavirus.html?fbclid=IwAR2a7mVIUzvhme_eIYx3wwZqSB8wos0hcwG76Rpmd1LuoN6OE1RyqR1IyI0

Captain Sir Tom Moore passed away on 02/02/2021 aged 100 years from the complications associated with Covid-19. In WWII he was conscripted in the 8th Battalion, Duke of Wellington's Regiment (8 DWR) in May 1940, stationed in Cornwall, eight months after the beginning of the Second World War. He was selected for officer training later that year, and attended an Officer Cadet Training Unit before being commissioned as a second lieutenant on 28 June 1941.

On 22 October 1941, he became a member of the Royal Armoured Corps. This was because 8 DWR became an armoured unit designated as the 145th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps. Later that year, he was transferred to the 9th Battalion (9 DWR) in India, which had converted to become the 146th Regiment Royal Armoured Corps. While in India he was tasked with setting up and running a training programme for army motorcyclists. He was initially posted to Bombay (now Mumbai) and subsequently to Calcutta (now Kolkata). He was promoted to war-substantive lieutenant on 1 October 1942 and to temporary captain on 11 October 1944.

As part of the Fourteenth Army, the so-called "Forgotten Army", he served in Arakan in western Burma (now Myanmar) – where he survived dengue fever. Moore returned to the UK in February 1945, to take a training course on the inner workings of the Churchill tanks, learning to become an instructor. He did not return to the regiment, remaining as an instructor and the Technical Adjutant of the Armoured Vehicle Fighting School in Bovington Camp, Dorset, until he was demobilised in early 1946. For 64 years, he organised the DWR's annual reunion.

Eddie Hunn, the last Gt Yarmouth Association FEPOW passed away on 02/02/2021 aged 100. Pauline Simpson, FEPOW Chaplain, wrote, "I was able to say goodbye and read the 23rd Psalm to him. RIP such a lovely amazing gentleman who will be sadly missed by NFFWRA members and me x"

His son wrote the following about his Dad's life and I include this with his permission:-

"Sadly my Dad Eddie Hunn (Edwin Walter) died yesterday - he was nearly 101 and we were so grateful to have so many happy years together unlike so many of his comrades and their families. He was in the 5th Norfolks from Wells Next the Sea and drove the lead Bren gun carrier for his platoon and the platoon officer.

He fought bravely and rescued many in his carrier whilst up in Malaya. He was captured at the fall of Singapore sent to Changhi and worked on dock clearance and other working parties before being sent up the line to work and suffer terribly as a FePOW at several camps including Kanchanaburi where he was tree-felling.

He survived Japanese snipers and hand to hand fighting in Malaya and Singapore, starvation and beatings on the Burma death railway, near drowning, malaria, dengue fever, sunburn, parasites, ulcers, cholera, the post war suicide of his son, skin cancer and covid. He lived a wonderful 68 years of

happy married life with my mum Doris and they travelled the world together having adventures in all the continents bar America and they fully appreciated the pleasures of life.

They had three children together, 6 grandchildren, 9 great and 3 great great grandchildren. Eddie was a funny, clever and gentle man loved by so many. When 98 he was still giving talks about his life to schools and groups based on his book 'A Guest of Nippon'. He was still playing pool at 98 and winning! Always close to all his grandchildren he was an example to us all and a remarkable man. Yesterday at nearly 101 years he had had his fill and it was his time to go. What a man!! From his son Kevin xx"

After getting in touch with Kevin to ask his permission to include his tribute to his Dad, he also sent on the following list of camps that Eddie was imprisoned in:-

Non-Pladuk, Ban Pong, Kanburi, Tamarkan (bridge) Chungkai, Wampo, Tarso, camp201, Takandon, Konkuitita (2 ends of the line met) Niki, and up to the Three Pagoda Pass. After the line was completed he cut fuel for the wood fuelled steam trains and worked on food production until his health badly deteriorated and he was sent down to base camp. He told us about the grim experiences and wrote many in his book (A Guest of Nippon) but not all. He lost so many good friends and comrades. The human spirit is amazing. He maintained hope - to get back to his sweetheart, young son, family and all that he remembered.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!

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, Java Club, by phone:- 01273 424686 or by email:-

margaretmartin1944@sky.com

Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA, phone :- 07818599303 or by email:-

enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

The BAFEPOW News Sheet is put together and distributed by Barbara James. If you have any items for inclusion, please do send them to me.

(If you just want a chat, do ring me, I think we have all missed being able to meet up at our monthly meetings during the pandemic)

Secretary to BAFEPOW:- Barbara James, Tel: 0121 258 4300 or 07954104857

Email: bmjames142@yahoo.co.uk

