



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 CELEBRATES VJ 76 AUGUST 15TH 2021



'On 28th August 1945 Liberator bombers flew low over Changi and let fly a stream of small sheets of paper. The war was defiantly over and a surrender had been signed'. Prisoners of War, at Changi look up in wonder as a symbol of impending Allied victory flies over the camp in the form of a stylised Boeing B17 bomber. Interestingly, Des has remembered the rare early model with narrow fin and rudder, some of which were used by the RAF in the early years of the war.

The above is one of the many wonderful paintings of FEPOW Des Bettany (used with the kind permission of his son, Keith Bettany) and it illustrates the date that many FEPOW learnt of the end of WWII and their liberation - there is a great variation among the different camps but, post war, the FEPOW agreed to use 15/08/1945 as VJ Day and this is what we are commemorating in their memory.

Last year, 2020, should have seen big commemorations for the 75th Anniversary of VJ Day and the end of the War in the Far East. As we know, not all POWs were freed on that day and their repatriation back to the UK varied from days up to months and we must also remember that many had not survived and remained buried in the earth of a far distant land.

We, the members of BAFEPOW remember those to whom we have a connection, be it our father, uncle, brother, friend - no matter, the important thing is that we remember them all and we hope that they will always be remembered by those who follow on from us. When the POWs returned home it was to a very different place from the one that had remained with them in their memory, the order had been given that they should not speak of their experiences and many of them adhered to that order but then, having been through what they had, many did not want to talk about it, they wanted to put it

behind them and move forward - and who would have believed what atrocities they had witnessed and endured at the hands of the Japanese who had failed to ratify the Geneva Convention!

For some the challenge of returning to civilian life was difficult and they found help and support through the FEPOW groups that sprang up throughout the UK. Here they were able to get some financial support but, mostly, they were in the company of those who had been through a common experience, that understood the medical problems that they were still experiencing including Malaria, worms, and most often what we now recognise as PTSD. In Birmingham we were very lucky to have a special group of POWs who came together and established BAFEPOW and let us pay tribute to them here - taken from the final edition of the BAFEPOW Newsletter that was sent last year along with the BAFEPOW VJ75 badge, there was a little bit about them all as individuals - here we will just remember them by name and after that will be the names of those who have present day members of the group that keep in contact. Many groups around the UK have closed or amalgamated with other groups as, sadly, the numbers of FEPOW has dwindled but BAFEPOW continues and We Will Remember Them!

REMEMBERING FOUNDING MEMBERS OF BAFEPOW AND ALSO LATER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Jim Lane,	Tom McKie	Billy Brain	Fred (Pat) and May de Paeztron
Edwin (Ted) Coy	Walter Pearce	Alfred (Alf) Hunt	Alexander (Alex) Bourne
Edward Milward	Stanley Leslie (Les) and Pam Stubbs		
Rev Leonard Wilson, Bishop of Birmingham. - Patron to BAFEPOW from 1953 - 1969 when he retired			

REMEMBERING THE FEPOW LINKED TO OUR OWN PRESENT BAFEPOW MEMBERS

James Goode	Samuel Meadows	Wally White	Horace Withnell
Edwin Coy	Reginald Holden	Frederick Camp	Eric Taylor
James Whiskens Snr	Robert Andrews	Kenneth Truett	Malcolm Ingleby Scott,
Herbert Lester	Victor Horwell	Sydney Jowett	Joe Horrobin
Sidney Lees	Alfred Hall	Albert Green	Harold Rogers
William Wheale	George Wills	Fred Brown	Edwin Overall
Douglas Murray	Alex Murray	Arthur Stanyard	Owen Cross

HONOURING RON MOCKFORD, BAFEPOW HONORARY CHAIRMAN

For some time after BAFEPOW Members voted at the EGM in 2016 to keep the group going, we were very fortunate to have FEPOW Ron Mockford as the chairman of the committee. He has always been there at our regular monthly meetings at the Holiday Inn and also kept us in order at our committee meetings too! When it became difficult for him to attend our quarterly committee meetings, we were very lucky to be able to keep him as our figure head and he accepted the role of Honorary Chairman and, up until the Covid Pandemic halted our meetings, Ron and his daughter, Maggie, had continued to travel into Birmingham to join us and he would talk with us about his time as a POW - some wonderful stories and some not so pleasant experiences too!



When it was Ron's 95th Birthday, we celebrated it at the Holiday Inn with him and here is an extract from the tribute that was written for him in May 2018:-

Ron and his fellow prisoners were then taken by blackout train to B.Glodok prison in Batavia where over 100 of them were packed into a very small space. Working for the Japanese on the airfield at Batavia a piece of metal was taken off a crashed American Buffalo fighter plane and this was made into a 21st birthday key by Alex (surname unknown). It was presented to Ron on 2nd May 1944 in Changi prison camp. The names engraved on the key are; Alex, Oscar, Doughy (surname Baker), Ginger, Harry (surname Onions) and Blondie. They also fashioned the presentation box into which the key fits perfectly. The case is probably made from teak and is lined in green felt.

Recently, one of our members tried to find out more about those POWs named on the key and here is what has been found so far :-

Alex - is possibly 507901 Corporal Alexander Pate, 84 Squadron - HI (This refers to the group they were in in H Force) He lists his camps in Singapore as Sime Road, Changi and Kranji

Oscar - no definite trace but could be an Oswald

Doughy Baker - possibly 539675 Corporal H. C. Baker RAF HQ Seletar - H1 He lists his camps as the same as Alex Pate

Ginger - unable to identify

Harry Onions - 940196 Joseph James Henry Onions - 211 Squadron (no Harold or Harry Onions listed) -H1 He lists his camps as Changi and Blakang Mati

Blondie - unable to identify

Maurice Smart -1141233 Frederick Maurice Smart, AHQ - H1 - he only listed Singapore, no named camps

All of the men that are named above returned to Singapore and the camps that they were in are listed above too.

Ron's time on the Railway would have been around Hintok and on his return to Singapore he lists the following camps - Sime Road and Kranji - Kranji being under the command of Major Bradshaw, as confirmed also by Alex Pate. Ron had talked about working in 'the tunnels' and Major F. W. Bradshaw RA was in charge of Party X2, one of the tunnelling parties in Singapore in 1945.

As for Ron's friend who died of Cholera, I don't think there is any way of identifying him for sure, or what branch of the services he was with. In a conversation with Ron he spoke of his desperate sadness of losing his friend who had looked after him during his time on the Railway and to whom he owed a great deal of gratitude to for seeing him through it. Cholera was such an awful disease to encounter, and especially when so many prisoners were so emaciated and already suffering from other conditions - it was a quick death usually and the Japanese were terrified of catching it and left the POWs to cope as best they could on their own.

Ron, we have been so fortunate to have your company over time and we have spent many of our meetings listening to you recounting your POW experiences. We were so lucky to have seen the 21st Birthday gift that your friends made for you ,so, on this VJ76 commemoration, we honour you and remember them too - God Bless and thank you from all of your fellow BAFEPOW Members - it has been an honour to have spent time with you, Sir!

VJ76 SERVICES WILL GO AHEAD AROUND THE UK

Fortunately, now that the Covid Restrictions are easing, it has been good to learn that VJ Day services will be going ahead this year plus a very special service of dedication in Leicester on 10/08/21 for the new FEPOW memorial that was placed there last year for VJ75. COFEPOW will be holding their VJ76 (VJ75+1) Service at Lichfield Cathedral on 14/08/21 and their service at the FEPOW Hut at the NMA on 15/08/21 will also go ahead. BAFEPOW will be laying a wreath at both of these services. Ken Coy will be laying a wreath on our behalf at the Royal British Legion Club in Shirley and Tony Truett will do the honours for us at the Madingley American War Cemetery.

ROLL OF HONOUR

ROY HOUSDEN aged 101 years sadly passed away on 06/07/2021. He was born on 07/03/1920 and when he joined the Army he became Private Roy Housden, 5th Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regt., HQ 4 Carrier Platoon, in which he was a driver/mechanic of a Bren Gun Carrier. *Back in 2019, we were very fortunate to have our Australian member, Martyn Fryer and his lovely wife, Jann, come to one of our Tuesday meetings whilst visiting the UK. Martyn had been to visit Roy and he told us how much he had enjoyed chatting to him. Having contacted Martyn to see if he knew more about Roy's time in captivity, he very kindly forwarded to me the following that Roy's family had sent to him:-*

This is what the family sent me -Good Afternoon Martyn

Roy Walter George Housden 07-03-1920 to 07-03-2021

I am sad to advise that Roy passed away on 6-7-21. Aged 101

It was so lovely for you to visit him when you were in the UK and we learned another one of Roys amusing stories while you were here.

Roy lived here with us until summer last year when he took a fall and broke his hip, after a stay in hospital he contracted covid. Surviving covid Roy then moved to a Nursing home local to us where he spent the last 12 months of his life well cared for.

He will be cremated on the 21/7 and his ashes scattered at the crematorium with those of Cynthia his late wife. In addition - Roy Walter Housden enlisted into the Army in June of 1940. He was in the carrier platoon of the 5th Battalion the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. During the fighting at Singapore the carrier platoon was at Thomson Village at the junction of Braddell and Thomson Roads. They were involved in the withdrawal of the 53rd Infantry Brigade down Thomson Road from Nee Soon, following which the carriers were sent back to Singapore City. On 14 February, the carrier platoon commander, 2/Lt Glyn Star was killed in action at Hill 105 during a Japanese mortar attack. Following the surrender Roy was sent to Changi camp which he described as one of the biggest, where for the first fortnight he lived on just two biscuits a day. He worked to create a memorial park where he saw the biggest snake of his life, 20 foot long.

Roy was sent to Thailand with D Force, 21/03/1943 and arrived at Ban Pong where he stayed for a short time and built some huts before being transported on to Wang Pho. At Wang Pho Roy was at a camp close to the cutting and river. The Japanese would use dynamite in the river and send the prisoners in to collect the fish.

In April 1943, Roy was suffering diarrhoea and was sent back to Kanchanaburi with seven others by train, leaving many of his mates behind, some of which never came back, falling victim to cholera further up country.

Roy was admitted to the Kanchanaburi base hospital where he stayed until September, three months of lying on bamboo slats. An Indian doctor saved Roy by convincing the Japanese that he was too sick for work. He was then transferred to Nong Pladuk where again he was admitted to hospital, listed as suffering diarrhoea, malaria and food poisoning, as well as surviving the Nong Pladuk air raids, in which 98 were killed. Following the raids the prisoners were allowed to build trenches, carrying bags of cement that were solid, then bashed them to make them unusable.

With the end of the war approaching Roys last camp was at Ubon, where again the prisoners were employed in digging large trenches, which was widely thought because the Japanese planned to shoot them all. It was at this camp that Roy learned that the war was over, he had survived. Roy was then taken to Bangkok and flown in Dakotas to Rangoon where he boarded the Obita (SS). Departing Rangoon 02/10/45 he arrived at Liverpool, 09/11/45.

LEN GIBSON passed away on 31/07/21 aged 101. When captured he was in the 125th Tank Regiment and he survived the sinking of the ship taking his regiment to the Far East. The sinking caused him to lose his beloved banjo but he managed to make himself a guitar whilst in captivity which he used to play to entertain his fellow prisoners in the POW camp. After repatriation he married Ruby who had been a nurse during his recuperation in the UK and he also taught a certain Dave Stewart, a neighbour of theirs, how to play the guitar. Dave later joined the Eurythmics and never forgot his guitar teacher. Len has written his memoirs which are soon to be published and Dave Stewart has written the foreword to it.

Below is the link to an extremely touching tribute to Len who lead a very full and interesting life:-

[https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2021-08-01/tributes-paid-to-sunderland-ww2-war-hero-len-gibson-who-has-died-aged-101?](https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2021-08-01/tributes-paid-to-sunderland-ww2-war-hero-len-gibson-who-has-died-aged-101?fbclid=IwAR311yVwpXNHcYKB7SR924j4PPFrEzVqfrndkKJxKvODP88Gh2dbnpsIRxY)

[fbclid=IwAR311yVwpXNHcYKB7SR924j4PPFrEzVqfrndkKJxKvODP88Gh2dbnpsIRxY](https://www.itv.com/news/tyne-tees/2021-08-01/tributes-paid-to-sunderland-ww2-war-hero-len-gibson-who-has-died-aged-101?fbclid=IwAR311yVwpXNHcYKB7SR924j4PPFrEzVqfrndkKJxKvODP88Gh2dbnpsIRxY)

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM!

RAISING FUNDS TO HELP THE THAI BURMA RAILWAY MUSEUM

The current Covid 19 situation in Thailand and Myanmar continue to deteriorate and it seems unlikely that tourists will be able to return there for quite some time. Fund raising is still ongoing to support the museum and the staff who work there so that it will hopefully avoid closure which would be such a blow to those who would like to visit and follow their FEPOW's Railway experience. The museum also does so much to research the history of the Railway and to raise awareness of this part of the War in the Far East.

To raise funds for the museum, Martyn Fryer, as well as sending me the information on Roy Housden, has let me know about his involvement in the reprinting of Ken Porter's book and every purchase will raise funds to support the TBRC museum.



To find out more about the book and to purchase a copy, please contact Martyn on the following email address :-

justmartyn@westnet.com.au

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, the Java Club by email:- margaretmartin1944@sky.com

Mrs Pauline Simpson, NFFWRA by email:- enquiries@nationalfepowfellowship.org.uk

The BAFEPOW news sheet is put together and sent out to all members by Barbara James and is our way of keeping in touch with one another if we are unable to attend meetings. If you would like to submit an item or raise a topic for 'conversation' please do contact me. During the pandemic our news sheet has also been posted on the COFEPOW web site and so it only consisted of general discussion items and I sent other news added to the accompanying email. When we are finally back together, possibly after the AGM, then I shall only distribute the news sheet to members of BAFEPOW and it will become much smaller again. I do enjoy hearing from you and my contact details are:-

Email:- bmjames142@yahoo.co.uk

Phone:- 0121 258 4300 or 07954104857

NEW BAFEPOW EMBLEM - from Barbara James

At the start of 2020 we were looking forward to commemorating VJ75 but, sadly, all of the plans that the BAFEPOW Committee were hoping to hold were unable to proceed due to the Covid Pandemic - apart from sending out the final News Letter and a BAFEPOW VJ75 badge to all members across the UK to mark VJ75 in August. We received many compliments and comments of appreciation for both the newsletter and the badge and so it seemed like a good idea to have our own Baby the FEPOW emblem to use on our future paperwork etc. The design for the badge that was created for us by

Badges Plus was based on the FEPOW logo and it seemed to make the ideal basis for our design apart from the VJ 75 embellishment. Thanks go to my husband, George, for working on the design to remove this and for helping to make it possible to use it for the group. We will now be able to have this as a centre piece for commemorative wreaths and on wooden crosses - I was most grateful to the wonderful staff at the Lady Haig Poppy Factory who guided me through the process of having wreaths and crosses made bearing our emblem in readiness for VJ76. I do hope that you like our emblem and that it will be there for many years to come to show our respect to our FEPOW whenever we place wreaths/crosses in their memory.

