

BARNES Albert James

Name: Albert James Barnes

Born: 22 November 1920

Rank: Gunner

Service Number: 1103305

**Regiment: 118 Field Regiment,
Royal Artillery**

Died: 14 December 2012



Wartime experience:

Albert Barnes was known as Jim. He originated from Bethnal Green, London and lived in Hoxton, London. He enlisted on 16 January 1941 and sailed to the Far East. He was captured at the Fall of Singapore and was sent to Changi prison camp then River Valley camp and Towner Road camp before being sent to work on the Thai/Burma railway. He marched from Bam Pong to Kanchanaburi and spent time in Tonchan and Tarsao, where he suffered a rupture and malaria. He was taken back to Tamakan hospital camp and then went on to Chungkai and Tamuang. When the railway was completed he was sent to Japan on the hell ship Kachidoki Maru which was sunk by the USS Pampanito. Jim survived by clinging to a raft for six days and was rescued by the Japanese. He was taken to Hainan then on to Moji, Tokyo and Sakata. He returned home following his convalescence in Papakura near Auckland, arriving in January 1946.

Civilian life after return:

Jim was a regular the family think he was in the Army until Dec 1947. He re-joined in February 1950 and spent most of the next three years on the Gunnery Ranges at Shoeburyness. It was there that he met his wife, Margaret MacKenzie, who was in the WRAC and outranked him!!! They were stationed there during the East Coast Floods in February 1953 and both were heavily involved in the rescue and recovery efforts of those living in the affected areas. They left the Army in April 1953 and moved to live with Jim's parents in Edmonton. The family moved to Hemel Hempstead in 1955 where Jim worked as a labourer building the houses in the New Town. He then went on to work as a lorry driver until, following a heart attack at age 55, he took early retirement. They had two children. Sadly, Margaret died in 1989 after a long battle with MS – Jim cared for her for years.



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Jim developed stomach cancer in his late eighties. Probably nothing to do with his captivity and more to do with the fact he would fry everything, even lettuce if it were possible!!

He lived with his daughter, Shirley, in Leicester for over four years and sadly developed dementia in the two years before he died. During those last two years, he had flashbacks to the camps and talked about his experiences far more. The family believe he wanted them to know what had happened so that he didn't take the information with him.

His funeral had a Union Flag on his coffin with an RA poppy wreath as the only flowers. The coffin entered to the theme from 'Bridge on the River Kwai' and the congregation, came out to 'Pack up yer troubles'. It was a very sad but hilariously funny service and he would have been really sorry to have missed it!!

He has two grandsons who are enormously proud of him and his eldest grandson was the first person to wear Jim's medals at the VJ Day 70 service.



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