

CURLETT Gavin

Name: Gavin Curlett

Born: 1 January 1919

Rank: Driver

Service Number: 313074

Regiment/Unit/Station:
Royal Army Service Corps

Died: 24 December 2003



Wartime experience:

Gavin was born in Stevenson, Ayrshire, Scotland. He was called up on 3 September 1939 and completed his initial training with the Royal Scots Fusiliers and was posted to the RASC as a Driver. He went from the UK to Singapore in late 1941 and from there to Java in the Dutch East Indies. Gavin was captured on 15 February 1942 when the Japanese invaded and was moved to Kuching in Sarawak, a province of Borneo. His parents were informed that he was missing in action but later, on 24 March 1943, that he was a POW. Gavin survived the horrors of his captivity which many of his fellow POWs failed to do.

As the end of the war loomed, rumours of the death marches taking place in Borneo were rife. POWs were marched until they collapsed through exhaustion and then were bayoneted



Following his liberation - Gavin on left
unknown Australian soldier on right.

to death by the Japanese. His camp was informed that they were to be relocated, which was the pretext used for a death march. At this stage in the war, the 2nd atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, which brought the war to an end. Gavin and his fellow prisoners were liberated by the Australian Army on 2 September 1945. The POWs were asked to single out any guards who had committed atrocities on the prisoners, all were executed with the exception of two. These two guards were spared, as in the early 1900s a typhoon had destroyed their village and they had been rescued by sailors from a Royal Navy war ship, so they never abused any prisoners and helped when possible.

Gavin was moved to Singapore and from there to Australia where he spent 6 months being built up. He returned to Scotland in 1946.



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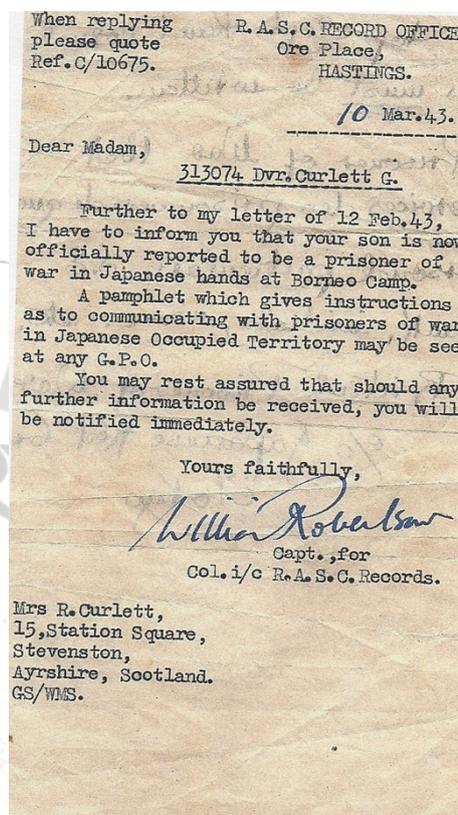
Civilian life after return:

Later in life when Gavin's health was failing he fought against going into hospital – 'in the camps you never came out'. He never lost his sense of humour and when bedridden down stairs he said 'you can't beat the view' (it was his drinks cabinet displaying his malt whiskey). He died at home aged 83 a gentle and wonderful man. His wife said that, as he died he shouted that 'they were coming for him'. What demons did he carry all those years?



Left: Initial training with the Royal Scots Fusiliers (RSF)
Gavin is sitting first right.

Right: The letter received by Gavin's mother, informing her that he was being held a prisoner of the Japanese



Left: Picture was taken in Singapore 1942 before moving to Java and capture. Gavin is in the middle the other two soldiers are unknown.



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