

McGOLDRICK Francis Edmund

Name: Francis Edmund McGoldrick

Born: 23 August 1921

Rank: Gunner

Service Number: 11052211

**Regiment: Royal Artillery, 48th
Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment,
242 Battery**



Died: 10 April 1988

Early life:

Francis was born in Manchester in August 1921.

Wartime experience:

Frank, as he was known, was conscripted into the 48 Light AA Regiment, 242 Battery, on 17 April 1941 at Carlisle barracks. Training on Bofur guns at Stiffkey, Norfolk during June 1941. Further training in Yeovil, Somerset during August 1941.

He was stationed in Southend, Essex during September 1941 when notification of posting overseas received and embarkation leave granted. The 242 Rgt left Southend in December 1941 by train, destined for Glasgow to join convoy WS14, destination unknown.

242 Battery sailed from Gourock on board troopship SS Duchess of Athollon on 8 December 1941, the same day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. The convoy anchored off Freetown, Siera Leone on 21 December 1941. On 25 December 1941, after Christmas dinner, traditionally served by the officers, Duchess of Athollon sailed for Durban, South Africa. The 242 Battery arrived in Durban on 8 January 1942 and were transferred to the HMT Dunera. After several days of shore leave and hospitality from the residents of Durban the Dunera set sail on 12 January 1942 – again for Destination unknown. Due to the relentless surge of the Japanese across the Far East and the fall of Singapore, the Dunera was re-directed to Batavia, Java in the Dutch East Indies. The 242 Battery disembarked in Tanjong Priok harbour on 3 February 1942. The 48 LAA regiment was instructed to strengthen the defences on various airfields and the docks in Batavia. 242 Battery positioned at Tjililitan airdrome, which came under attack from the Japanese on or around 24 February 1942.

Following the invasion of Java by the Japanese in late February 1942 the British troops were forced into a rear-guard action with the intension of evacuating from the South of Java. This was aborted and eventually the allied troops were forced to capitulate to the Japanese on 8 March 1942. All the captured British troops were relocated to Batavia and set to work in working parties in Boei Gorok jail. Sickness and overcrowding was rife and in September 1942 a large draft of the 242 battery were sent to Changi, Singapore prior to being transported by Hell Ships to Borneo, from where very few survived.



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Frank, presumably due to poor health at that time, was not drafted out from Java until September 1943. This undoubtedly resulted in his survival, unlike most of the recruits of the 242 Battery who were conscripted on the same day in Carlisle 1941.

Frank left Batavia as part of Java Party 16, made up of 500 troops, under the command of Captain Peter Williams of the Royal Artillery, on board Harigiku Maru in September 1943 and landed in Changi around four days later. The draft was then embarked onto the Ussuri Maru which left Changi, Singapore on 23 September 1943. The convoy was attacked and at least one ship was sunk by Allied torpedoes but the Ussuri Maru went through unscathed and landed in Moji, Japan around 10 October 1943. The draft was split into two groups of 250 and Frank was sent to work at the Inatsuki Coal mines, known as Fukuoka Camp 19B, 11D and finally Fukuoka Camp 8B at time of liberation in September 1945.

Conditions in the mines was dangerous and under slave labour conditions. The food rations in the camp were minimal and sickness and poor health dominated. There were several deaths caused by accidents in the mine, dysentery and beri beri.

Allied air raids escalated during 1945 and eventually the Japanese surrendered in August 1945 following the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Fukuoka Camp 8 was situated about 30 miles from Nagasaki and, although the PoWs had no idea what the huge explosion was at the time, witnessed the sight of the bomb exploding.

On 21 September 1945 the camp was evacuated by train and the PoWs slowly passed through the total devastation of Nagasaki. The Americans transported the British PoWs by ship to Manilla in the Philippines, via Okinawa. Food, cigarettes and all kinds of treats were in abundance, things the PoWs had been deprived of for more than 3 years.

Frank travelled by ship to the west coast of America, then by train to Vancouver in Canada. From there the Canadian Pacific Railway carried them to the West coast and finally New York. The Queen Mary, being used as a troop ship during the war, transported the British PoWs to Southampton in November 1945.

Following debriefing, Frank was issued with his travel pass he made his way home across the UK after three-and-half years in captivity under brutal conditions, subjected to starvation, sickness and desperation beyond belief. So many of Frank's pals from the 242 Battery never returned home.

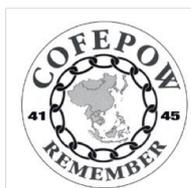
Civilian life after return:

Frank returned to his employment as a storeman at British Insulated Calendar Cables in Manchester where he worked until his retirement. He married Agnes and had four children. Sadly, Frank passed away on 10 April 1988 at the age of 67.



Above: Frank is the first on the left, back row.

The above information has been provided by Frank McGoldrick (son)



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