**Yardley Frederick Richard**

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| **Name: Frederick Richard Yardley**  **Born: 9 December 1915**  **Rank: Second Lieutenant**  **Service Number: 14004**  **Regiment: Federated Malay States Volunteer Force attached to Royal Corps of Signals.**    **Died: 1 February 2011** | A picture containing text, outdoor, person, standing  Description automatically generated |

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Description automatically generated**Pre-War:**

Dick or Richard as he was known, joined Marconi’s Wireless Telegraphy Company in 1936 and was posted to Bucharest. Returning to the UK in 1939, he continued with Marconi’s in a reserved occupation producing wireless equipment for the British Army. Selected by the Colonial Office for service in Kuala Lumpur as Assistant Controller (Telecommunications), he sailed for the Far East in spring 1941 just after marrying his wife, Barbara, whom he was not to meet again for over 4½ years.

**Above: Richard and Barbara Yardley**

**Wartime experience:**

After Japan invaded Malaya in December 1941, he was embodied into the Federated Malay States Volunteer Force attached to the Royal Corps of Signals in Singapore. He was ordered to cut the main underground telecommunications cable alongside the causeway immediately after the last British troops, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, had withdrawn to the island of Singapore, and just hours before the ceasefire he was defending the Singapore Telephone Exchange. Following the surrender of Singapore, on 15 February 1942, he was imprisoned in Changi until the September before being transported by rail to Kanchanburi and then marched to Chungkai and Wun Lun where the prisoners learnt that they were to build a railway through virgin jungle to Burma. During 12 months in Thailand, at great risk to himself and his colleagues, he carried a wireless disguised within an Australian military water bottle usually hidden within the hollow bamboo of his sleeping quarters.

Work progressed in a north-westerly direction towards its completion at Three Pagodas Pass where he was placed in charge of 150 men for eventual return to Singapore. He embarked on a ‘hell ship’ carrying a cargo of bauxite, the Asaka Maru (nicknamed the Osaka Maru), in June 1944 for transportation to Japan via Borneo, Philippines, Manila and onwards towards Formosa managing to avoid Allied submarines and air attacks. At the height of a typhoon the ship was swept onto rocks - the prisoners were rescued the following day by the courageous crew of two Japanese destroyers and subsequently transferred to another ship, the Hakasan Maru and despite coming under Allied attack the ship reached safety on the southern island of Kyushu. Dick, with his 150 men, was then transported to Honshu and onwards by train to Osaka and Kobe to the Amagasaki camp. The men were sent to work in an iron foundry whilst the officers were separated and sent to another camp at Oeyama which contained Allied officers from assorted countries.

After the Armistice in August 1944 and liberation by American forces, he returned to Osaka to resume command of his 150 men. Repatriation began with a train journey to Yokohama followed by air to Okinawa, onwards to Luzon in the Philippines and finally to Manila. He sailed for San Francisco on the American troopship USS Yarmouth, one of only 14 British personnel. The next stage was the Santa Fe Railroad to Chicago and on to New York before Dick finally departed the States on board the Cunard liner Queen Mary arriving in Southampton in thick fog on 26 October where he was met, contrary to Standing Orders, by his wife (see photo above).

Despite the inhuman treatment by Japanese and Korean guards, he believed that most ex-prisoners eventually overcame their hatred and forgave their captors.

He considered that he owed his life to the discipline within the camps, the camaraderie between all captives and the care he received from British, Dutch and American Army doctors.

During his latter years he wrote a book detailing his experiences in Thailand and Japan – The Amonohasidate (The Gate of Heaven).

**Civilian life after return:**

Dick returned to Singapore to complete his assignment with the Colonial Office, returning to the UK again in late 1947 to join Rediffusion, the company for which he worked in London and overseas until his retirement from his final responsibility as general manager of Rediffusion (Wales) Limited. He enjoyed gardening and volunteer work, particularly with SSAFA providing support to serving personnel and veterans of the British Armed Forces and their families.

Sadly, he died in Abergavenny on 1 February 2011, at the age of 95, leaving his wife, three children and grandchildren.

*The above information and wording has been provided by Michael Yardley (Son)*