

HUDSON Walter W

Name: Walter W Hudson

Born: 6 June 1916

Rank: Sergeant

Service Number: 1546081

Regiment/Unit: 89th Battery, 35th LAA
Royal Artillery

Died: 23 December 1965



Pre War:

Walter, known as Wally, was born in 1916 in Conisbrough, a small mining village on the outskirts of Doncaster, South Yorkshire, where he lived with his family and went to school. His family moved into Doncaster and he worked at Bemberg, a German company who manufactured synthetic material. I don't know what job he had but we have a poem of when he was in the boiler room. He played for Bemberg Rovers football team and was awarded a small silver trophy, which sat on top of the television in pride of place when I was a small child.

By 1939 he was living in Oxford and working as a builder's labourer and that was where he joined up at the outbreak of war.

Wartime experience:

Wally joined The Royal Artillery 35th Light Anti Aircraft unit 89th battery in December 1939. Initially posted to areas in the south of England and was promoted to War Sgt. in 1941. He embarked for overseas on 9 November 1941 from Gourock in Scotland for an unknown destination and ironically this ship was called "The Empress of Japan". The ship was diverted *en route* and eventually arrived in Singapore on 13 January 1942. His battery was sent to Java and were eventually captured by the Japanese on 8 February 1942, although Wally's war records state he was missing in the Far East on 15 February 1942 and then later in Netherland East Indies. His Liberation Papers show he was a POW at Tanjong Priok, Java from 27 February 1942 until 25 October 1942 when he was transported back to Singapore with about a thousand other prisoners aboard the Yoshida Maru and finally to Japan aboard the Singapore Maru, both classed as Hell Ships.



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Nearly 200 prisoners, including my Dad, were loaded into a barge and headed to the small port of Ube on the island of Honshu. Here they learnt that they would be working in a large coal mine close by, called Okinoyama. The mine was on two levels below the ground and they later found out it was below the Inland Sea! What I have read about this it seems that as the war progressed the prisoners had to work for longer periods without a break and also were given less food. I can't imagine what they went through and how they suffered at the hands of the Japanese. It took sheer guts and determination to survive their capture, wondering if they would ever see their families again. On my Dad's Liberation Form it gives the name of a man who tried to escape. His punishment was one year's hard labour!

About mid-July 1945 the prisoners were told that they were to be given a swimming-pool but they would have to make it themselves. They were made to dig a hole sixty feet long by twenty-five feet wide and six feet deep. They were aware of the probable use of the "pool" if the Allies invaded the Japanese mainland and were relieved when the first atomic bomb was dropped on 6 August 1945. It was not until they were on their way home that they knew that two bombs had been dropped, the first one on Hiroshima and the second one on Nagasaki. They saw an official account of the second bomb which said that it was to be dropped on Ube (1/4 mile away from the camp) but due to cloud obscuring the primary target, it was dropped on the alternative target, Nagasaki.

Wally was rescued from Hiroshima 7B (Ube) Okinoyama, formerly Fukuoka #7B then #2D Ube and he was listed as a WO1, which I assume is Warrant Officer. I did read that everyone was given one rank higher, due to being POW's.

Because I had a list of all the people that were rescued from this camp I could trace other stories on the Far Eastern Heroes website and realised that they were also my Dad's story. One story is called Hell-Ship by A.G. (George) James who was documented as being Detachment Leader on my Dad's Liberation documents. The other story is called Freedom Loosens the Memory but the author of this document is not known.

Since joining COFEPOW I was lucky enough to contact someone who's Father, Lieutenant Cecil West, was in the same camps as my Dad. I don't know the odds for being so lucky, as Lieutenant West wasn't even in my Dad's regiment. Phillip West, who now lives in Australia, has given me permission to quote from his Dad's debrief document.

The record states: "I wish to bring to notice the exemplary conduct of Sgt. W. Hudson No 1546081 89th Battery 35th Regt. LAA.RA. while POW at Ube camp Japan. Although the Japanese refused to recognise non-commissioned officers (NCO) ranks and placed every obstacle in their way; Sgt Hudson carried out his duties as an NCO to the benefit of men and officers. His service and good conduct were a fine example to all". The above was written in Lieutenant West's own handwriting. The next piece was typed.

9. AWARD DATA - OTHER PERSONNEL

"I would like to recommend Sgt. Hudson, No. 1546081, 89 Btn. 35 Regt LAA for his organisation of the work in the mines and his general behaviour toward the men. NCOs were generally disregarded entirely but he retained the authority and respect of his rank with both the POWs and the Japanese". Paragraph 12 also stated that Sgt. Hudson was in charge of the fund with which foodstuffs were purchased for the sick through the Japanese civilian guards. This was under the supervision of Captain A T Greenway RAOC.



It's very difficult to express how reading the above made me feel, as I have always been proud of my Dad as any child would be. To me he was extra special and obviously Lieutenant Cecil West thought that both his strength of character and exemplary conduct were worthy of praise. I am so glad that I decided to pursue my Dad's war journey and after a lot of detailed research this was the "icing on the cake" for me!

Civilian life after return:

Wally returned to Doncaster to live with his father and brother. He was admitted to the Military Hospital in York in February 1946 and discharged 16 days later. When I enquired about records, I was told that they must have been destroyed.

In March 1946 Walter was granted 104 days leave and in June 1946 he married my Mum, Doreen Panks in Doncaster. Unfortunately, I don't know how they met, but assume it was during the 104 days leave. They had a son and a daughter.

In 1951 Wally moved back to the Oxford area to help his friend run a public house, taking his family with him. The pub was called The Grapes in Abingdon, Berkshire. I decided to find out the name of this friend through the electoral registers, as I was too young to remember if I had been told. The name of this friend turned out to be Harry Neale. Something struck a chord here, as my brother's middle name was Neale, and I always wondered where it came from. I checked the list of POW's in Hiroshima 7B with my dad and lo and behold I found Harry Neale. This must have been some friendship, to move to a different part of the country with a young family which, ultimately, shaped our lives. I traced Harry's daughter who had unfortunately died but I managed to find his granddaughter. Unfortunately, her granddad died the year that she was born, she never knew him.

Wally applied for his own pub, The Vine in Abingdon and eventually moved to The Crown, Abingdon. He seemed to enjoy the role of publican and with one of his publican friends formed the Abingdon & District Aunt Sally Association, of which Wally was Chairman until 1964. At this time, he was appointed Entertainment Secretary of Abingdon & District Licensed Victuallers Association.

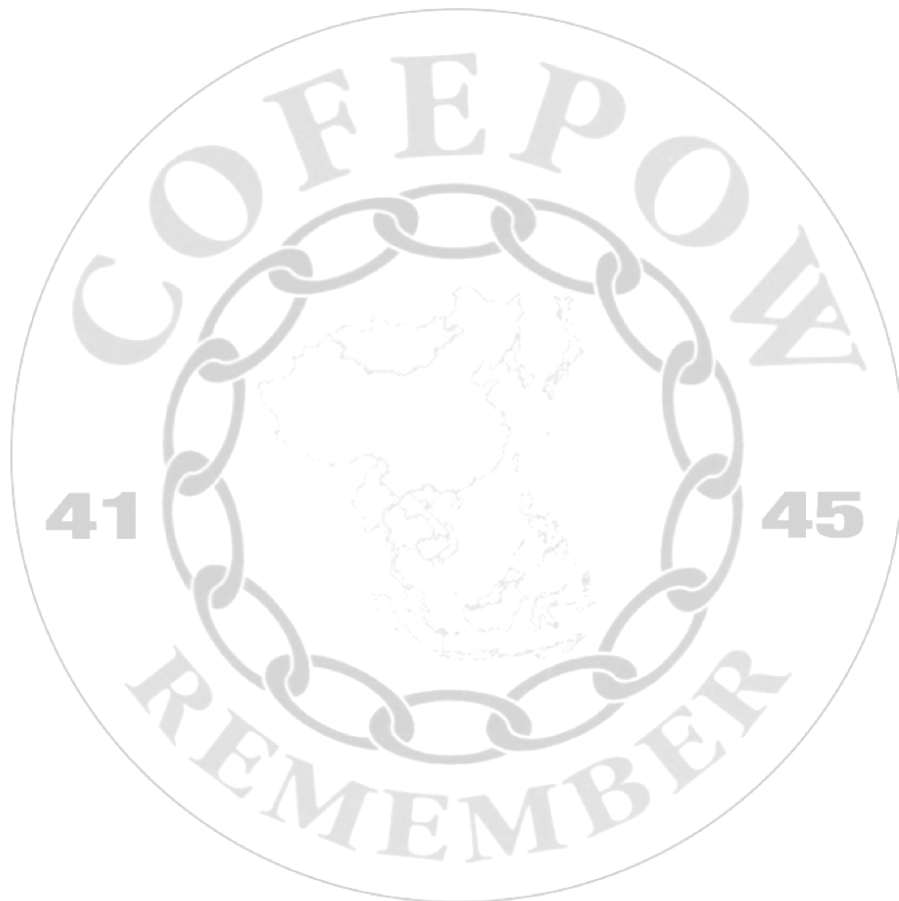
Wally travelled back to Doncaster every September for the St. Leger horse race with his friend Ronnie and always returned with some Parkinson's butterscotch, which was renowned and made in Doncaster.

He left The Crown and moved back to Doncaster in 1965 where he had a job with International Harvesters. It was at their Christmas Dinner on 23 December 1965 when Wally, died suddenly whilst dancing to the song "March of the Mods". He was 49 years old and is buried in Arksey Cemetery Doncaster.



I was given the name of an association called "Agape" who arranges trips of reconciliation to Japan. On this website I read a testimony from someone who had made a trip to Japan and actually went to the site of Nagasaki and I cried over that. I didn't realise that over seventy thousand people were killed when the bomb dropped on Nagasaki and many more were severely injured. I know that it saved my Dad's life and the lives of all the other prisoners, but what a price is paid for war. Unfortunately, it seems that even today the world still hasn't learnt that lesson.

Written by Jenny Ellis, daughter of Wally W Hudson



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