

HOUSDEN Arthur

Name: Arthur Housden

Born: 24 October 1906

Rank: Sergeant

Service Number: 5950039

Regiment/Unit: 5 Beds and Herts
Regiment

Died: 17 October 1993



Pre-War:

Arthur was an only child, born and raised in Gamlingay, Cambridgeshire. He worked on the land but his main interest was football and, before the war played for Cambridge United, known in those days as Abbey United. He also had trials with Arsenal. Arthur eventually married Elizabeth Cooper and settled in Stewartby in Bedfordshire and by the time he joined the territorials, in October 1938, he and Elsie had 3 young girls. Arthur worked at the London Brick Company until he was called up on the 2 September 1939 - just in time for Briton to declare war on Germany on 3 September.

Wartime experience:

Arthur joined the 5th Beds who spent much of their time improving the defences on the north Norfolk Coastline and, by the following September Arthur had been promoted to Sargent. On 22 October 1941 the 5th Division joined the 18th and sailed out from Liverpool, Landing in Singapore on 29 January. Arthur was captured at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942.



On 24 October 1942, he was sent to Thailand to work on the Thai-Burma railway, included in a trainload of 650 British men from the South Singapore station (80 from Adam Park camp, 200 from Changi Village camp & 370 from Sime Road camp). The train journey to Ban Pong (Thailand), took four and a half days under extremely dire conditions.



COFEPOW is a registered charity, number 1074474. Reproduction of the COFEPOW Album Pages without the express consent of COFEPOW, or reproduction of all or any of the information contained herein without the express consent of the family of the FEPOW concerned, is prohibited. For further information, contact www.cofepow.org.uk

From Ban Pong he was allocated to a work party and despatched up country to Wang Pho for railway construction work. In early 1943 he was transferred to Group 4 which was based at Tha Sao. His working areas and camp locations on the railway during 1943, based on his notes, include Kannyu, Tonchan and Kinsaiyok.

The railway was finished in October/November 1943 and at the end of 1943 or early 1944 he would have been transferred back to Kanchanaburi.

From there it seems he was transferred to the large holding camp (established for the transfer of Group 4 men) at Tha Muang, around 12 klms south of Kanchanaburi. He was subsequently selected, along with many others, for work parties destined for Japan. On 4 September 1944 he left Singapore in a convoy of ships, HI-72, two of which carried PoWs – Kachidoki Maru and Rakuyo Maru. Arthur was with 900 British PoWs on the 'hellship', the Kachidoki Maru, which was torpedoed by the US submarine the 'Pampanito' at 22.40 hrs on 12 September 1944 and subsequently sunk off Hainan Island. Some 400 of the men on board were lost. Arthur was subsequently 'rescued' with others by a Japanese vessel and continued on the journey to Japan.

His Index Card simply refers to this event as having "transferred him to the 22nd Branch of the Tokyo PoW camp on 12 September 1944". This has been established as transferring to the Sakata camp in Tokyo, Japan as described below:

Sakata Camp (later Sendai 9-B)

Established as "Tokyo No.22 Dispatched Camp" at Honmachi, Sakata City, Yamagata Prefecture, on 20 September 1944. Transferred to the jurisdiction of Sendai POW Camp known as "No. 9 Branch Camp" on 14 April 1945. The POWs were used by Nippon Express Company.

294 POWs (248 British, 26 Australian and 20 other nationality) were imprisoned here at the end of the war. 18 POWs died during imprisonment.

After the surrender of the Japanese, Arthur was handed over to a Major Price of the Allied forces at Siogama Port (near Sendai) on 14 September 1945 for repatriation and arrived home, in Southampton, on 5 November 1945.

Civilian life after return:

Arthur spent a further 3 months in hospital, before going back to his family who had moved back to Gamlingay, while he had been in the Far East. Arthur and Elsie went on to have 2 more children - Joan and Paul.

Sadly, Arthur died on 17 October 1993, at the age of 86, just 7 days short of his 87th birthday.



The above information and wording has been researched and provided by Paul Housden (son)



COFEPOW is a registered charity, number 1074474. Reproduction of the COFEPOW Album Pages without the express consent of COFEPOW, or reproduction of all or any of the information contained herein without the express consent of the family of the FEPOW concerned, is prohibited. For further information, contact www.cofepow.org.uk