

FINLAY Norman McCandless

Name: Norman McCandless Finlay

Born: 4 April 1919

Rank: Private

Service Number: 6141440

Regiment: 2nd Battalion, East
Surrey Regiment

Died: 25 May 1996



Pre War:

Norman was born in Elswick, Newcastle then shortly after the family moved to Crook, County Durham, where his father was an engineer in the fire service. He had two younger sisters and after, his mother died when he was eleven years old, his father remarried and had a further two sons, his half-brothers. Norman did various labouring jobs then in 1937 he ran away to London to join the army where he joined the 2nd East Surrey Regiment.



Above: Norman with his sisters, Doris and Irene

Wartime experience:

Norman was posted to the Sudan before he was sent to the Far East, Shanghai, Singapore, then Malaya and then returned to Singapore in January 1942. His story is one of those told in the book 'A Cruel Captivity' by Ellie Taylor. Norman was captured at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942 and interred in Changi. He was later transported to Thailand to work on the Thai/Burma railway – he was in several camps: Bang Pong, Kanchanaburi, Chunkai and Wang Po. In 1943 he was moved to Kanburi hospital where, like many of his comrades, he was suffering from - tropical ulcers, beri-beri, dysentery and malaria, which contributed to his ill health after the war.



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He was on the Hell Ship – Kachidoki Maru when it was torpedoed by the USS Pampanito, he was rescued, then later was on the Hofuku Maru, which was also torpedoed.

He was recaptured and taken to Bilibid prison, where he remained for the rest of the war. When he was liberated by the Americans, he weighed 98lbs and was unable to walk or see and taken to a hospital in Manila. He was shipped to the USA where he spent several months in hospital before he returned to Southampton in January or February 1946. He was discharged from the army on 19 February 1946.

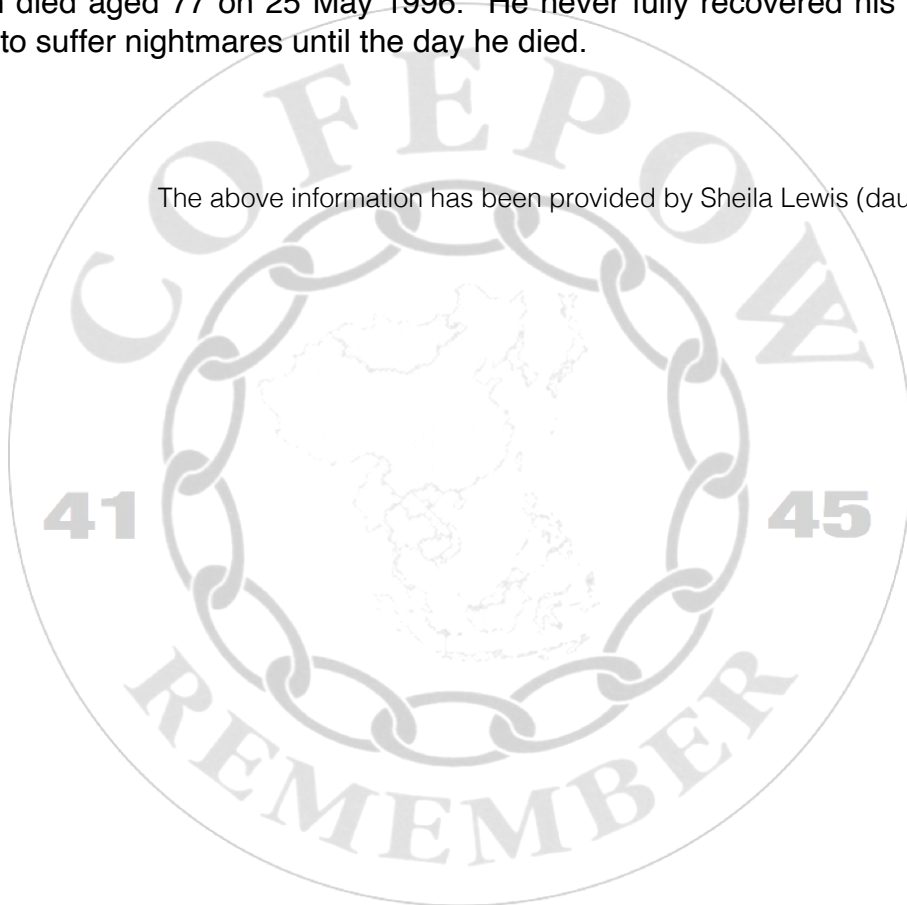
Civilian life after return:

Initially Norman was too ill to work. When he was fitter he took on several labouring jobs and eventually secured employment at an engineering company Reyrolles in Hebburn where he worked as a progress clerk, he stayed there for 25yrs until he was made redundant.

In July 1949, Norman married Kathleen, they had met originally at a local dance hall 'The Oxford' in Newcastle the previous year. They had two children – Alan, who was born on 16 October 1952 and Sheila, who was born 28 June 1954. Alan and Sheila provided Norman and Kathleen with three grandchildren, all boys, and three great grandchildren two boys and one girl.

Sadly, Norman died aged 77 on 25 May 1996. He never fully recovered his health and continued to suffer nightmares until the day he died.

The above information has been provided by Sheila Lewis (daughter)



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