

WALKER-TAYLOR Basil Patteson

Name: Basil Patteson Walker-Taylor

Born: 14 November 1901

Rank: 2nd Lieutenant

Service Number:

Regiment: FMSV ('A' Support Battery)/22nd Mountain Regiment, 11th Indian Division

Died: 14 August 1983



Pre-War:

Basil was born in Redfern, Sydney, Australia. He became a District Surveyor based in Alor Star in Northern Malaya.

Wartime experience:

Basil and his wife, Pat, were woken on 7 December 1941 by the bombing of the aerodrome nearby. They evacuated a few days later to Kulim and then Ipoh, where they had to part and he signed on with the FMSVF. He was posted to a Machine Gun unit billeted on the racecourse. They moved to Kampar on 22 December, where he met a friend, Tony Willis, of 22nd Mountain Regiment, (an Indian artillery regiment with three batteries) and they discussed a transfer, as he felt his skills could be better used. On 31 December, the orders were that Kampar was to be defended at all costs - last man, last round, and trenches were dug. They came under fire and returned it, but on 2 January 1942 all forces were ordered to withdraw and that was achieved expeditiously. A splinter in his arm became infected and he had to go to a Casualty clearing station about 15 miles from Kuala Lumpur. When he returned to his unit at Batu Berjuntai, he happened upon Major Guy Cowie, acting commander of the 22nd Mountain Regiment, who agreed Basil's transfer with the adjutant of the British Battalion, Clive Wallace, who was nearby. He was soon put to use to 'recce' suitable harbours for the regiment, as his knowledge of the terrain and the Malay language proved to be useful. There were several moves over the next three weeks - to Rawang, Kluang, Laku, Tangkak, Segamat, sometimes under fire by Japanese dive-bombers.

On one occasion, on 16 January, he was asked to go with another officer to Singapore to arrange reinforcements, and he was able to meet up with his wife Pat that evening and go to a dinner dance at Raffles.



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He recalled it was crowded and everyone in high spirits, but there was an air of unreality over the whole scene. He eventually managed to persuade Pat to leave Singapore. She left on 'The Gorgon' on 10 February, which luckily reached Adelaide safely.

Basil and the 22nd crossed the causeway into Singapore on 30 January and harboured in Thompson Road, before moving on 12 February to Newton Road. His commission came through on 31 January. On 15 February, there was the shameful order to ceasefire and to assemble at the Polo ground. With two other officers, he decided on an escape attempt by boat and they drove to the Kalang River. Having no success in finding a boat there, they drove on to the Yacht Club - with no success once again. He finally gave up and got to the polo ground on the morning of the 16th and reported to Colonel Hughes who made no comment. The first Japanese to arrive was on a motorbike with a rifle slung over his shoulder, followed by others in cars. Basil was asked to act as interpreter at the meeting as one of the Japanese officers spoke Malay. The following day the move to Changi began. His diary ends there, but his mess for the next three years was to be 'Mountain City' a 2-storey Malay house in a chiku (fruit) orchard off the main road leading to Changi.

Civilian life after return:

In September 1945 he was reunited with Pat in Australia, but he soon returned to survey work in Malaya with Pat. His son Paddy was born in 1946. In June 1948, he was appointed Acting Chief Surveyor Selangor, but for 9 months was attached to CID there for intelligence duties during the Communist Emergency (mainly interrogating suspects). A move to Penang in 1951, when daughter Cecilia was born. A visit to Ireland to get Paddy settled in prep school there. His last job was in 1956, as Chief Surveyor Singapore, based in the Fullerton Building and he enjoyed working in his spare time as a judge at the Singapore Turf Club. He retired when Singapore achieved independence.

They moved to Dublin in 1959 and then around County Wicklow. He had a good eye for property and made money on house moves. He was also a keen gardener. They eventually moved to England - first Maidenhead, then Sonning and finally Pangbourne.

Sadly, Alzheimer's took hold and Basil died on 14 August 1983, at the age of 81.



The above information and wording has been provided by Paddy Walker-Taylor (son)



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