

# TURNER Ronald

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**Name:** Ronald Turner

**Born:** 6 June 1921

**Rank:** Lance Corporal

**Service Number:** 2074366

**Unit/Regiment:** 288 Field  
Company, Royal Engineers

**Died:** 13 December 2016



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## Pre-War:

Ron Turner was born into a large family in Kempston, Bedfordshire. He excelled at sport, especially cricket, table tennis and football. Being so young and fit was a great advantage to him in order to survive what was to come. He joined the Territorial Army and was called up three days before War was declared.

## Wartime experience:

288 Field Company, Royal Engineers were posted to Sheringham in Norfolk where they placed beach mines and expanding barbed wire from Cromer to Great Yarmouth in case of invasion. They also put explosives on the lock gates and cranes at Kings Lynn dock in case of invasion. They boarded the boat SS Orcades in Liverpool in October 1941 bound for Nova Scotia, where they transferred to the USS Westpoint. Ron, together with the 288<sup>th</sup>, eventually arrived on 29 January 1942 in Singapore, via Nova Scotia, Cape Town, Mombasa, Trinidad, Bombay and Ceylon. They docked at Keppel Harbour where the troops disembarked. On 15 February, 1942 when Singapore fell, each soldier armed with just one Royal Enfield rifle surrendered.

Ron was sent to work for three and a half years on the notorious Thai-Burma Railway and had his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday whilst in captivity.

Ron often spoke about the time they were transported by railway, up the Malayan peninsular to Ban Pong, Thailand. They were put into cattle wagons, 25 men to a wagon, where they travelled for five days and nights in the heat and humidity. The conditions were inhumane, with very little food, drink and no toilet facilities. There were also long marches between camps so, when he returned home, Ron hated going on walks. He lived in two main Prison camps, Nong Pladuk and Khao Din, but was also briefly in Changi, Ban Pong, and Tamuan.



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Times were exceptionally desperate, deaths, hard labour, malnutrition, disease and beatings, from both the Japanese and Korean guards. Luckily, Ron managed to avoid the areas where cholera was rife. One of the highlights was when they came across a green mango which they buried in the hot sand for a day, then managed to enjoy that evening.

The Japanese made the POWs dig huge trenches and told them that if the Americans came they would be shot and put in there. Although the War ended on 15 August, it was two days before they found out. The 17 August was the birthday of Ron's best friend, Jimmy Farrer from Blackrod, Lancashire, to celebrate they managed to kill a duck, fry it and eat it together!

Red cross parcels were eventually dropped and the ex-POWs were flown to Rangoon. There they met General Bill Slim and Lord Mountbatten who said that they should be given peaches and custard to eat because after such malnutrition, normal food was too rich for them. They returned home to England via the HMS Worcestershire and were issued with winter clothes. On arriving in Liverpool, via the Suez Canal, they found that the dockers were on strike, so they had to unload their own baggage.

### **Civilian life after return:**

Following his return, Ron trained as a heating engineer and started his own business. He was offered a trial with Nottingham Forest Football Club but, unfortunately, could not go because he had an operation in Bedford Hospital for kidney stones. It wasn't all bad as he married the young Ward Sister. Once again, he excelled at sport, this time playing cricket and bowls.

Sadly, Ron passed away on 13 December 2016 at the age of 95.

'He was a real gentleman and is very sadly missed.'

*The above information and wording has been provided by Sue Fluhrer (daughter)*



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