

MURRAY George Archibald

Name: George Archibald Murray

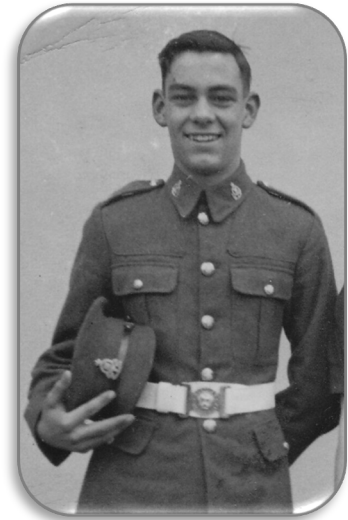
Born: 9 December 1922

Rank: Lance Corporal

Service Number: 7595210

Unit/Regiment: RAOC

Died: 31 May 1997



Wartime experience:

George joined the Army Boy Service and started at Arborfield, Berkshire on the 5 May 1939. After completing the training, he was transferred to RAOC based at Redford Barracks, Edinburgh. On the 13 November 1941, he sailed from Gourock, on the Clyde, aboard the Empress of Japan, a requisitioned Canadian Pacific liner, bound for Iraq. By the time the liner had reached Durban, South Africa, the Japanese had invaded Malaya and the Company were diverted to Singapore.

Singapore Island was a significant outpost of the British Empire at the time. It was considered essential to defend the 'City' from invasion. However, the area was soon taken by the Japanese forces and the troops became Prisoners of War. George was defending Singapore for 9 days before the surrender. From 4 February 1942 until 30 September 1942, George was assigned to the RAOC Malaya. From, 1 October 1942 until 20 October 1945, he was in the REME Malaya. He is recorded as being a Prisoner of War from 15 February 1942 until 2 September 1945.

The Japanese forced the troops to build the Burma Railway. Illness from tropical diseases were rife and he had several attacks of beriberi and Black Water fever. When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, he was very ill and was reduced to 5 stone (31 Kilograms). After being flown out of Burma to Calcutta, for immediate medical treatment, he sailed home to Great Britain. He then underwent extensive hospital treatment and was discharged from the Army at Derby (REME Home 21 October 1945 until 21 November 1946).



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

A Prisoner of War

On February 15 all Allied forces surrendered and we became Prisoners of War. So started three and a half years of Hell.

This started two days later when we were forced to march to Changi, a distance of 13 miles. All the way we passed bodies of Chinese people mutilated by the unbelievable atrocities carried out by the Japanese troops.

Eventually, we arrived at Changi barracks and within days I was in hospital with a serious attack of bacillary, dysentery, beriberi and avitaminoses, weighing at one time five and a half stone.

For months I lost my memory completely and only the devotion of one doctor, Captain de Wardener, saved my life. After I recovered, he told me that they had a stretcher waiting to take me to the mortuary, but in his words, I was "too bloody stubborn to die". In fact three photographs saved my life, one of my family and two of the girl who is now my wife.....

Returning Home

Everything now happened very fast. Our own officers and NCOs took charge. A train was commandeered and we were taken back to base camp. Unfortunately, on arrival I contracted Blackwater Fever, a build-up of all the Malaria, and hovered between life and death. Luckily, medical supplies were dropped in and after some days I was flown out to Rangoon, on a stretcher suspended from the roof of a Dakota transport plane.

While in hospital in Rangoon, we were visited by Lady Mountbatten. There were about 60 of us in this hospital and she spoke to all of us individually and gave us the impression that she was a marvellous person who really cared.

From Rangoon, we were transferred by train to the main hospital in Calcutta for intensive care. Here we had a visit from Lord Louis Mountbatten. He also spoke to us individually and shook hands without any fuss or pomp. (He was worshiped by the army in Burma). He then jumped up on to a table and gave us a pep talk.

He promised that red tape would be cut and all the stops pulled out to get us home as soon as possible. Although we had the choice of flying home or coming by sea, he advised the sea trip and promised it would be a recuperative cruise with no ships duties; a promise kept in full. Command by this time was under Lord Louis Mountbatten and South East Asia Command. These were troops parachuted in. After a few weeks, I was transferred to Bombay and from there joined the Dutch hospital liner, Oranji, for the journey home. This journey, in October 1945, was through the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, Suez Canal and Mediterranean was very pleasant and certainly helped our recovery. We eventually reached Southampton and were rushed through disembarkation.

George Murray

Civilian life after return:

After discharge from the Army, he took up employment with R. Drysdale & Co. Ltd, an Edinburgh coffee and tea merchant. In April 1946, he married Jeannie and they purchased a tenement house in Edinburgh.



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

Employment in the south of England seemed more secure, so in 1948, they moved to Bournemouth. The early years were punctuated by stays at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton due to the effects of his tropical health problems, including psychiatric treatment, which was a direct consequence of his captivity, and which he continued to experience.

Over his working career he had various employment, including as a Transport and Despatch Manager. In all these jobs he was well respected and received glowing testimonials.

They had two children and four grandchildren. Family life remained very important for them both. In April 1996, they celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary. In later years he suffered from Parkinson's disease. However, he tried to remain mobile and did not let it curtail his driving. By 1997 he needed a heart bypass operation; unfortunately, he died a few days after the operation.

Sadly, George passed away on 31 May 1997.

Although he had been through many terrible experiences, like many, he was reticent to talk about them until very much later in life.

*The above wording (in black) and information has been provided by Alan Murray (son)
The wording (in blue) was written by George Murray – in his own words.*



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