

JAPP George Irvine

Name: George Irvine Japp

Born: 14 September 1915

Rank: Sergeant

Service Number: 883393

Unit/Regiment: 137th Field
Regiment, Royal Artillery

Died: 1 October 2005



Pre-War:

George was born in Scotland to Matthew and Margaret Japp and they moved to Blackpool when he was a child. He enlisted on 8 May 1938.

Wartime experience:

Around 30 September 1941, George, together with his Regiment boarded the QSMV (Quadruple Screw Motor Vessel) Dominion Monarch at Liverpool and set sail as part of Convoy WS12, calling at Capetown and Colombo before finally arriving in Singapore on 28 November 1941. George became a Sergeant in the 137th Field Regiment, which became part of the 11th Indian Division and consisted of 24–25 pounder field guns in three Batteries but, by 30 September 1941, after fighting down the Malaya peninsular, they were re-equipped with 8.75mm howitzers. During the fight down the peninsular, their Commanding Officer, Lt Col G D Holme, lost his life in the Battle for Malaya.

George was captured at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942, he was initially held in Changi POW Camp before being moved to the Birdwood camp area, under Lt Col Owtram. He left Singapore on 20 June 1942 as part of the First Mainland Party, Train 2 (11th Division and Medical) under the command of Major W E Gill, bound for Thailand, to work on the Thai/Burma railway. He arrived at Ban Pong, the transit camp which was the start of the Railway and was allocated to Work Group 1 (Camp 1) at Nong Pladuk (the Railway HQ). This was a major camp with railway sidings which also included Hashimoto's railway workshop.



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From the information provided by his Liberation Questionnaire, it appears he remained in No. 1 Camp. If so, he would have been there when the RAF bombed the sidings, destroying three ammunition trains and, sadly, hit the camp as well.

On 15 September 1944, he left Nong Pladuk as a member of a party of 415 men, under the command of Major W E Gill, arriving at the River Valley Camp in Singapore on 17 September. At the time this camp was being used as a transit camp for Parties bound for Japan. On 2 February 1945, it is thought that he would have embarked on a ship, believed to be the Haruyasa Maru, as part of Party 4. Of the three cargo ships in Convoy HI-88, the Haruyasa Maru was the only ship carrying POWs that made it to Saigon, Vietnam. He was transferred to a Work Group (Camp) 10, Long Thanh (later known as Fiume 1) until May 1945, under Warrant Officer Bradstreet, and then moved to Lien Khang Camp, still under Warrant Officer Bradstreet. In September 1945 George was transported to Phenom Penh, Cambodia until August 1945 from where he was liberated and returned home.

Civilian life after return:

When George returned to the UK, he married the girl he was going out with before the war, Nora, on the 15 August 1946. He received a war pension for injuries received during his captivity for the rest of his life. George returned to work in 1946 and went to work as a store-man for a local firm. He went on to have two children, a girl, and then a boy, in time, this was followed by several grandchildren.

George suffered all his life with the effects of being a POW but lived to be 90 years and sadly, passed away on 1 October 2005.

The above information and wording has been provided by Barbara Eaves (daughter) with additional information provided by Keith Andrews, COFEPOW Head of Research



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