

STOBART William Edward

Name: William Edward Stobbart

Born: 12 February 1920

Rank: Private

Service Number: T190365

Unit/Regiment: 55th Company
18th Division, Royal Army Service
Corps

Died: 2 February 2011



Pre-War:

Eddie, as he was known, was born in Wallasey, Cheshire.

Wartime experience:

On 16 May 1940, Eddie enlisted in the R.A.S.C and was assigned to Wilmslow, Cheshire where he was taught the skills of a coppersmith. On 28 October 1941, he left Avonmouth on board SS Oronsay arriving in Halifax, Nova Scotia on 8 November 1941. Then on 11 November 1941 he embarked on the USS Leonard Wood, leaving Halifax via Trinidad, Cape Town and Bombay. On 23 November 1942 his journey continued leaving Bombay on board Felix Rousell and arriving in Singapore on 5 February 1942 - just as the harbour was being attacked by the Japanese. The lifeboat next to his was bombed and he said he thought he was lucky to have survived at the time - only to be captured 10 days later at the fall of Singapore on 15 February 1942. In the early days of their captivity, the conditions were okay because they were left to govern themselves. He was part of a working party that went down each day, dismantling lorries and cars returning to Changhi camp each night. They lived on the outskirts of Changi gaol, where they even had their own concert party called The Coconut Grove. On 9 May 1943, Eddie joined a working party that was transported by train up country. Arriving in Ban Pong on 15 May 1943, they were then marched about 100 miles to begin work on the start of the Thai-Burma railway at Camp Kanu. Here he was very rarely with anyone he knew and became part of 'H' Force which were the back up for 'F' Force. They were working on the cutting, later known, as Hellfire Pass and were working in very bad conditions.



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During his time there Eddie's health was not good, suffering from, beri beri, malaria and dysentery which was not helped by an outbreak of cholera in the camp. After several months they got together the 100 most sick men and sent the 10 worst cases back to Changi, Singapore, at this point Eddie was lucky, as he was one of the ten! On 21 November 1943, he arrived back in Singapore and was sent to Sime Road Camp. He stayed there until 5 May 1944 when he was returned to Changi Gaol. On 17 June to 17 September 1945 he was sent to Kranji to work on the tunnels. He was liberated on 18 September 1945 and boarded SS Nieuw Holland arriving in his home port of Liverpool on 16 October 1945 – where his family were waiting on the dockside.

Civilian life after return:

Eddie was one of the original members of F.E.P.O.W.

He married Ellen in 1951. Eddie utilised the skills of a coppersmith, taught him when he was in Wilmslow, by becoming a plumber. This enabled him to pursue a successful career in plumbing until he retired at the age of 75.

He visited Singapore in 1990 and Thailand in 2004, when he walked, once again, through Hell Fire Pass!

In May 2009 Meg Parkes interviewed Eddie as part of an ongoing project for her book 'Captive Memories'. In it he makes an amazing quote: ***"I don't regret it all ..I'm glad that I didn't miss it to be honest, sounds ridiculous doesn't it ?***

Well, some people go through their lives with nothing happening and they go to a job in a bank or something like that, and they come home and nothing's happened, but this is something different"

The book was finally published in 2015, 4 years after Eddie's death.



Eddie and Ellen were together until his death in 2011. They had 3 children and 10 grandchildren.

The above information and wording has been provided by Christine Waldron (Daughter) with wording quoted from Eddie, himself.



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