

STONES William Henry

Name: William Henry Stones

Born: 25 June 1920

Rank: Gunner

Service Number: 1115610

Unit/Regiment: No. 4 Gun, 351
Battery, 88th Field Regiment, Royal
Artillery (2nd West Lancashires)

Died: 11 April 2012



Pre-War:

William left school on 25 June 1934 at the age 14, he went to work at Sutton Colliery, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire as a Ganger. Then at the age of 18 he started as a Ripper at the same colliery.

Wartime experience:

In March 1941 William enlisted in the Army. On 25 August 1941, following his training he was transferred to 88th Field Regiment Royal Artillery No. 4 Gun Team, 351 Battery (2nd West Lancs) in Dalry, Ayrshire, Scotland. Then, on 30 September 1941 orders were received to embark overseas to Singapore on the Empress of Canada from Gourock in Scotland, the escort ship was the HMS Repulse.

On 14 October 1941, they refuelled at Freetown (West Africa) and, after resuming their journey, the ship was stalked by a U-boat but they managed to escape. The ship continued on to Cape Town for refuelling and some shore leave on 30 October 1941. After the R&R they carried on to Singapore. William and his comrades disembarked from the Troop Ship at Singapore Malaya Command, the command consisted of 3 Ind Corps, 9 Ind Div, 11 Ind Div. The Regiment travelled to Mantin about 27 miles south of Kuala Lumpur and 137 to Kajang. D'Aubuz was the commanding officer. When Singapore fell, on the 15 February 1942, William was in 351 Battery, positioned on the Serangoon Road near the wireless station, when he was taken prisoner. He was in a squad of men transported to Thailand (Siam) where it was reported they were to build a railway. After 5 days and nights he ended up at Banpong. By early 1944 the trains started running on the line and he was transported south to work on the docks.



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On 6 September 1944 William was one of 1,317 prisoners who boarded the Rakuyo Maru prison ship, being transported to Japan, and was fortunate enough to acquire a lifejacket. On the 12 September the Rakuyo Maru was torpedoed by the American Submarine "Sealion" and he ended up spending 4 days on a piece of driftwood until the "Sealion" picked up the survivors. William was lucky as 1,159 British and Australian soldiers perished. He was transported to Saipan then onto Honolulu, San Francisco, New York and finally England arriving on the 9 November 1944.

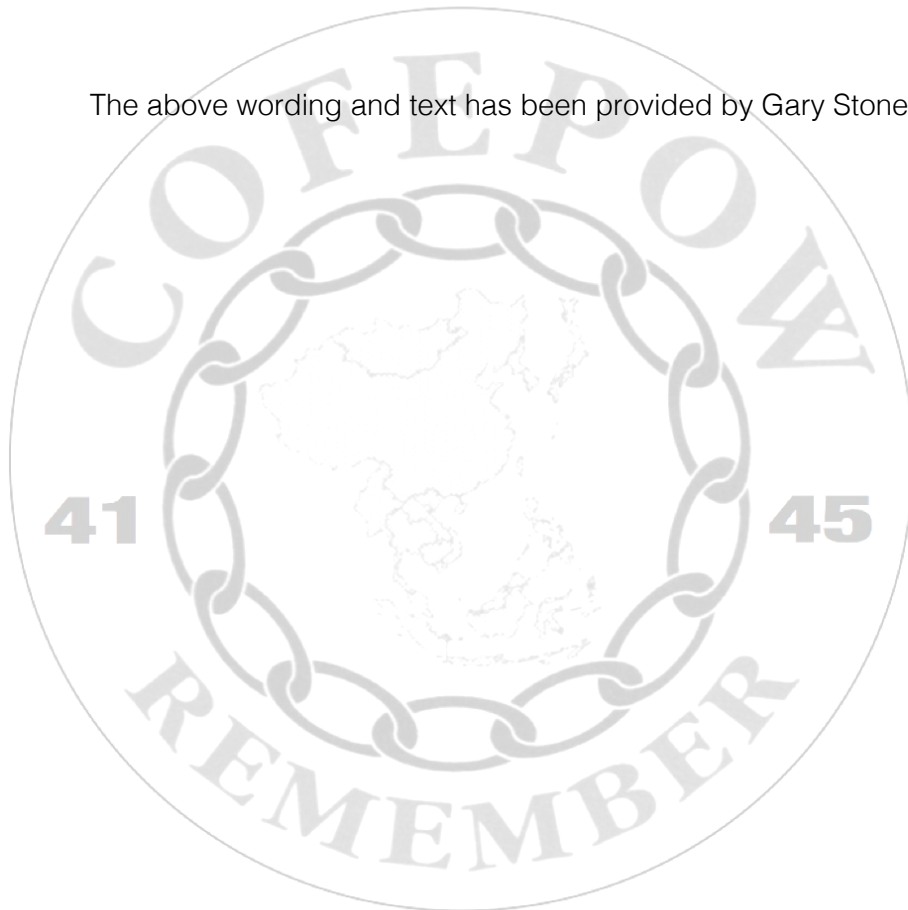
Civilian life after return:

William stayed in the army as a POW guard until 1948. He then returned to the pit as a maintenance fitter working until he retired in 1983. Married with two children he had a simple life until his death in 2012, at the ripe old age of 92.

"He never talked about his time in the war but I know he suffered and he found peace when he joined FEPOW and was reunited with some old mates."

Gary Stones (Son)

The above wording and text has been provided by Gary Stones (Son)



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