

READER Stanley

Name: Stanley Reader

Born: 22 September 1913

Rank: Able Seaman

Service Number:

Unit/Regiment: Merchant Navy

Died: 1 January 2000



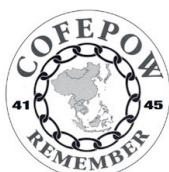
Pre-War:

Stan, as he was called, came from Barrow-in-Furness. He left school at the age 13 and worked in various jobs but, coming from a port town, soon became a seaman in the Merchant Navy. He sailed on most types of boats, whether coastal or overseas including frequent trips to Australia on the passenger liners. He was in the MN at the start of the war as were 2 of his brothers.

Wartime experience:

Stan continued to sail on merchant ships during the first few years of the war. On a voyage to India, he suffered appendicitis and was dropped off in Calcutta, to have it removed. After recovery he joined a general cargo ship, The Empire March, in Calcutta, bound for England via Bahia (Brazil). On 2 January 1943 the ship was attacked in the South Atlantic by the German raider Michelle, 150 miles NW of Tristan da Cunha. The ship went down with the loss of many of the crew either drowned or by machine gun fire when the gun crew tried to man the ship's single cannon. The raider Michelle picked up the survivors and headed to the Pacific. They arrived in Singapore on 19 February 1943 and were transferred to Changi.

Stan was sent by a "Hell" ship to mainland Japan in May 1943 and taken to a camp in the North Island Hokkaido. He was set to work in a cement factory outside Hakodate at camp Kamiiso. Towards the end of hostilities in June 1945 many of the camp's POWs were transferred to a coal mine near the centre of Hokkaido at Bibai. Stan was liberated in September 1945 and returned to England via Vancouver, then by train across Canada before being shipped to Southampton.



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In common with most of his companions he suffered malaria, dysentery, beri beri and maltreatment etc; the effects of which continued for some years after the war. He had a very fatalistic view of life with one of his favourite sayings that no matter what the problem "there are always worse storms at sea"! He had a strong spirit and in one of his Red Cross cards that he'd sent home, wrote "they will never get me down"!

Civilian life after return:

Stan married Annie in 1941 when on a home leave. She had her first son the next year so he never saw him until after the war. He continued in the MN interspersed with other jobs until the 1960s when he finished sailing and became a docker and also worked on harbour dredgers in his hometown of Barrow.

Sadly, Stan passed away on 1 January 2000 at the age of 86. His wife Annie died in 2022 aged 108.

"I have been able to visit Japan, a number of times, and visited both Dad's camps. The cement factory is still working and the management were happy to show me around. The Japan Defence Force (anti-missile), which now occupies the site in Bibai, but I was still able to arrange a visit, to the now closed coal mine and the camp, after wading through several feet of snow." David Reader

The above information and wording has been provided by David Reader (Son)



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