

WALLWORK Eric

Name: Eric Wallwork

Born: 10 January 1917

Rank: Lance Corporal

Service Number: 3859081

Unit/Regiment: The Loyal
Regiment (North Lancashire)

Died: 14 August 2008



Wartime experience:

Below are extracts from Eric's Diary – Written during his captivity

Sixty Loyals left Liverpool on August Bank Holiday the 27 August 1941 (Destination Top Secret). Traveling on the ship PO Orion, the route taken was via Cape Town and Bombay. In Bombay transferred onto the ship "Strathaden" and onto Colombo before arriving at the final destination - Singapore.

Returning to the journey on the Orion this proved to be both enjoyable and profitable. The majority of passengers were civilians returning to India, some second class, some first class, with no entertainment until we discovered a part set of drums and a few other musical instruments. As a semi pro dance band drummer this proved a godsend as amongst the troops were a number of Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders that included a pianist and an accordionist, so the three of us got together and played for the entertainment of the troops in the second class lounge.

But trouble – the second class entertained the first class not. Result, alternate evenings with a combined get together on the eve of our arrival in Bombay.

As the weather got warmer children's tea dances were also arranged on the upper deck. We did not ask for money but a collection was taken at the end of each session. On the 8 December 1941 war was declared in Malaya. The first serious news was to hear of the sinking of HMS Prince of Wales and the Repulse whilst in Malayan waters and Singapore was invaded by Japanese forces landing in the North of the Island at Kata Bahru. Singapore fell to the Japanese on the 15 February 1941.

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The following message was received from Major General Keith Simmons...

"After weeks of anxious and steadfast watching, you have taken your turn in the fighting on Singapore Island. Some of you have done your part most gallantry on the mainland.

Throughout the operations on Singapore Island I can only thank you for your gallant efforts to stop the attack. You have had little support from the air and you have been outnumbered and outgunned; not withstanding this you have borne yourselves magnificently.

Remember this, in your hour of trial – you have done your best and you haven't any need to blame yourselves. Keep your spirits up, good times will come again."

After Capitulation – POW Camps: Changi, Singapore / Keijo, Korea / Omori, Tokyo 15/2/42 – 15/8/45

Remember these Lads

About this time our next of kin are learning
That we are alive and Prisoners of War.
Let's lend a thought to those who aren't returning
The men who died to keep home fires burning
So far from home in Singapore.

Their bleached remains in swamp and jungle lying
Without the crudest raiments or shroud
For future generations testifying
That when it came to duty - and to dying
Our "Mob" was just as good as Nelsons crowd.

And back at home wives and mothers waiting
Like womenfolk of twenty years before
Are in anguished fancies re-creating
The world before this tragic separating
That glowing pipe, that laugh they'll hear no more.

Things to remember and study....

Two Prisoners look through Bars
One saw mud the other saw stars.

Never try to kill time
Or time may kill you.

The Japanese marched those captured some sixteen miles to Changi Prison, Singapore originally built to house five hundred prisoners; immediately housed five thousand. Within weeks there were over 1,000 cases of dysentery with an average of 2 per day dying.

On the 16 August 1942 came the Hell ship Fuhai Maru a 6,000 ton ship comprising of four holds each housing over 200 prisoners, many others housed on deck. Via Formosa arrived in Keijo, POW camp in Korea on the 25 September 1942.



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WALLWORK Eric (cont . . .)

Amongst all the hardships and atrocities, the only respite came by way of occasionally providing some music when allowed, with instruments sent either by the Red Cross or the YMCA.



Above: Drum skin signed by fellow prisoners

We were further shocked to see more members of the Royals peacetime band brought from other camps on the same mission.

It was at this point I had my diary taken from me and given to a Japanese civilian interpreter, named Onishi, for translating into Japanese and for censorship.

He promised to return it after the war. To his credit he did so, twelve months later. Consequently, the last twelve months of captivity in Omori the diary was written from memory.

Civilian life after return:

Eric wrote a letter to a Japanese soldier who he befriended and received the following reply: Translated letter from Yutaka Trading Company

15/04/1949

Dear Eric

It was really a joyful surprise to have heard from you. I have received your letter of the 22 December 1948. It took nearly half a year for your letter to have reached me but all the same you cannot imagine how glad I was to have your letter.

Nearly four years have elapsed since I saw you last and I was so keen to get in touch with you.



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However, there was no way for me to locate where you are, as I lost my address book which you had specially typed out for me in the accident which I will write about below. So, I was doubly glad to have received your letter.

Congratulations for your happy wedding. I am so glad to learn that you are well and happy now after many hard days. I can well imagine how you are happy with your wife and mother. I am glad to say that my family and I are happy as can be under the circumstances. There are so many things I would like to write and it will make reams and reams until finished. I do not know where I should begin but think I should make it as short as possible as this is the first letter; I can write many more in the future.

Do you know that I have been imprisoned for four and a half months as a war-crime suspect who committed atrocities against POW's. It happened amidst the confusion right after the war.

It took just 142 days before the investigation of the authorities found out that I was put in prison because of false identification and was released. 142 days was a long time but still think I was lucky as I was the first one among the staff of Omori to be released from Sugame prison. Quite fortunately Bartrum of the Shiodome Detail came back to Japan and he remembered me and pointed out that I should not be in prison. I was so grateful for his remembering a very small thing I did for him when he was put in the guardhouse. If you happen to know his address please let me know as I am very keen to thank him.

Whilst I was in prison, frankly speaking, I was not worrying much as I could not think of any reason which might pinch me, but my greatest regret was I was wasting very important time when I could be rebuilding my business. After all it was quite an experience to live together with ex generals and ex ministers in the prison.

Oguri-San and Itch-San were absolutely safe, as they were never called up. Oguri-San went back to his farming life and is getting along very successfully. Itch-San is working in Tokyo. Both of them drop over from time to time. They will be very glad I have received your letter.

The war crime trial has nearly finished now. I do not have a full record but as far as I can remember the following people among the staff of Omori Camp were found guilty:-

Col. Sakaba and Col. Suguki – Life imprisonment.

Capt. Nemoto – 5 years.

Lt. Ishigie – 25 Years

Capt. Uwamori - 3 Years

Lt. Nishida – 7 Years

Sgt. Mano (Suiji) – 10 Years

Capt. Mizukoshi - 25 Years

Capt. Sasazawa (remember you people called him monkey) - life imprisonment

Ffe Kuriyama - life imprisonment

Ffe Kawamara – Hung

Civ. Kimura (horse face) – 3 Years

I have forgotten the rest.



WALLWORK Eric (cont . . .)

The two big shots of Omori...

Sgt. Watanabe and Lt. Kato were not apprehended until the last but Lt Katowas was arrested about two months ago and was hanged. Sgt. Watanabe is believed to have committed suicide but this has not been confirmed.

After I came home, in early Spring of 1946, I have been trying my best to rebuild our business day and night to catch up the time I had wasted in the prison. I still found it much better than to work as a powerless soldier-interpreter in a POW Camp.

Anyway, I am glad that the silly war is now over and I can work as much as I want. Our life is still very hard but I am always full of pep.

I spent only 12 months in the POW Camp but sometimes I feel as if I stayed there more than five years. I still remember quite vividly the day I was assigned to the Camp and you were the first man I spoke to in English. Do you remember we walked around the Parade ground after Tenko speaking about English words of command?

I often thought of you and other people who I came to know in the Camp. How is Warrant Officer Page, Warrant Writer Parker getting along?. Also Capt. Badger, Major James, Major Francom, Cpl. Lyons and Gunner Turner.

When I recollect about the Camp I feel very sorry for Harry Constable. Ogurisan and Itoshan also often talk about him, and we all feel very sorry for him as he was a nice quiet man and we all liked him, as we all liked you, very much. After you came home have you ever communicated with his family? If you happen to have chance please give our deepest condolence to them.

I am afraid my first letter is getting too long so think I should close now.

Please remember I am always keen to know more about you and your family so please write to me as soon as possible.

In the meantime, if there is anything I can do for you here in Japan I shall be only happy to do so.

Hoping to hear from you in the real near future.

Very sincerely yours,
(Signature)

After all that time in captivity, coupled with the very long journey home, it was quite remarkable that Eric should arrive home on the eve of his sisters 21st Birthday party!!

The above information has been provided by Brian Wallwork (son)



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