

HOLLIS Samuel Joseph

Name: Samuel Joseph Hollis

Born: 7 October 1920

Rank: Private

Service Number: 5955588

Unit/Regiment: 5th Battalion,
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
Regiment



Died: 16 October 1997

Pre-War:

Sam was the third of nine siblings (4 boys and 5 girls) born in Liverpool to Robert and Margaret Hollis on 7 April 1920. His family were very poor and he grew up with little in the way of material possessions, typical of many families at that time. On leaving school he worked as a painter for the local council and then moved to Bedfordshire to work as a painter and decorator when he was around 18 years old.

Wartime experience:

Sam was called up to the army whilst working in Bedfordshire in 1942 and joined the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment 5th Battalion. He was shipped out to Singapore to the conflict in the far east but was captured within days of his first battle on 15 February 1943, and was transported by train to Malai Camp 4 (Adam Road). He never spoke about his experiences until after his wife died but subsequently described the train journey to the camp as being very difficult, having to stand up all the way due to overcrowding and there being no place to sit or lie down and very limited food or water. He laboured on the railway with the other POWs but had frequent attacks of malaria during the time at the camp and was extremely emaciated when liberated on 4 September 1945. He spoke about the constant daily struggle to find enough food and safe water to drink. He witnessed many terrible atrocities of torture and violence carried out by his Japanese captors on his fellow POWs but also on the local population in the surrounding jungle close to the camps which left him significantly traumatised.



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Civilian life after return:

Sam's family had been told that he had died 12 months before he was able to return home to them so it was a profound shock when he arrived at his home unexpectedly sometime after he was liberated!

He found work as a labourer after the war and then as a caretaker in a block of flats. He met and married his wife Ivie soon after he returned and they had 2 children together, Daphne and Justin. He went on to live quietly in Liverpool and he always stayed close to his family but remained very thin and gaunt for the remainder of his life. He never spoke of his wartime experiences to his wife and only began to share his story with his children after she had died. He returned to his place of incarceration 2 or 3 times during the 1990s and described meeting with some of the Japanese prison guards which allowed him some closure and sense of reconciliation. He died on 16 October 1997.



Above: Samuel with his daughter

The above information and wording has been provided by Sheila McNeil (Niece)



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