

# Personal Stories

from World War II



## Arthur John Bray

Sixth Heavy Ack Ack Regiment

Royal Artillery

Arthur moved to Winterslow with his father, a widower, having lived and been schooled in Farley in his childhood. After six years as a regular soldier he left the military and married Rose in 1934 settling in Winterslow. Having gained employment in the Parish and later Southampton, as a reservist, he was recalled to the military in June 1939 joining the Sixth Ack Ack Regiment, Royal Artillery and posted to France as part of the British expeditionary Force. Having been rescued from the beaches at Dunkirk he was posted to the South west and Midlands then being granted leave in 1941 to see Rose and his four year old son David before he left for Singapore.

Following the rapid advance down South East by Japanese forces Singapore surrendered in February 1942.

Having heard nothing from Arthur for over one year Rose received a notification that Arthur may have made it to Java, however, he was formally posted as missing in February 1943.

After months of uncertainty news came in the summer of 1943 that he was a prisoner of the Japanese in Java, which was confirmed by a postcard from Arthur just before the year ended stating "my health is excellent and I am safe". This was followed by another postcard in mid 1943 expressing the same sentiment, however, he was not in Java having been transferred to the notorious Changi Jail in Singapore

Rose then received a notification from the War Office identifying Arthur was on a ship bound for the Japanese mainland. Unbeknown to the family in Winterslow the day after the postcard was received the ship was sunk by an allied submarine. However, details of this were not conveyed to the family until February 1945 when they found out he may have been rescued as the ship sank and been taken to Fukuoka Camp in Japan; confirmed by a postcard from Arthur.

In May 1945 Victory in Europe was declared, but the conflict still raged in the Far East.

Then Rose received a postcard wishing her and David a happy New Year, having taken six months to arrive, which cautiously lifted their hearts after another long period of silence because it was from Java. Expectation was high when in July the war in the Far East came to an end. It was not until October that further news came indicating Arthurs unit was coming home, being due to dock in Southampton on 31st. Rose went to Southampton Docks to be told disembarkation was complete and a sergeant indicated Arthur was back safely.

Nothing was heard until just before Christmas when a personal letter was received from a close friend of Arthurs from his unit. A letter of condolence followed by confirmation Arthur died from malnutrition on 16th January 1945. He was laid to rest with 1700 of his comrades in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Yokohama.

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