

Rutherford Robert John

Name: Robert John Rutherford

Born: 6 May 1919

Rank: Sergeant

Service Number: 4270863

Unit/Regiment: 9th Battalion
Royal Northumberland Fusiliers

Died: 5 February 1992



Pre-War:

Bert as he was known, was born and brought up in the tiny village of Mindrum in North Northumberland, with his older brother Tom, where their parents worked on the local farm. In 1936, they joined the Territorial Army then, following the outbreak of war, they were called up to serve in Z Company of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (RNF).

Wartime experience:

In April 1940, both Bert and Tom, as part of the 9th Battalion RNF, joined the British Expeditionary Force in Northern France. They were involved in action against German troops before being evacuated from Dunkirk at the end of May.

On 30 October 1941, after a period of training for desert warfare, the brothers set sail for the Middle East on the MV Warwick Castle. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, on 7 December 1941, the destination changed and, on the 5 February 1942, they arrived in Singapore on the SS Felix Roussel. Bert and Tom were captured by the Japanese 10 days later on the 15 February when Singapore fell. Bert was taken to Changi prison and was forced to do building work for the Japanese. In May 1943, Bert and Tom were put on the 'Hell Ship', the Wales Maru, which took them to Japan where they were imprisoned in Fukuoka Camp 15B (later renamed as 9D, then 6D). This camp was located near Mizumaki on the southern island of Kyushu. Until liberation in August 1945, the brothers were made to work in deep, dangerous mines for the Takamatsu Coal Mining Company. They both survived their captivity and returned home safely at the end of the war, although their mother barely recognised them when they arrived in Mindrum.



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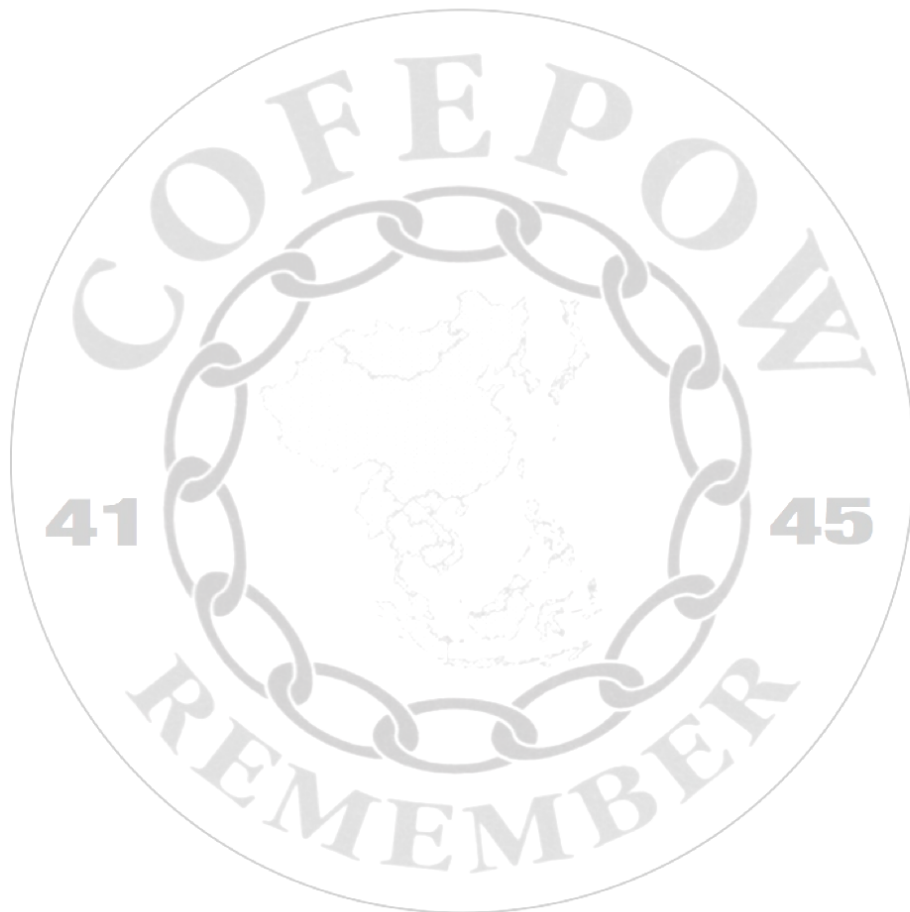
Post War:

Bert married Hazel in 1948 having met her at a homecoming dance for the Far East Prisoners of War. They settled in Belford and had a son John. Bert worked as a skilled stonemason until his retirement in 1984. John, enjoyed working with him during university holidays, but there was never any talk about his time in Japan.

Sadly, Bert died on the 5 February 1992, at the age of 72 - exactly 50 years to the day after he arrived in Singapore.

Towards the end of his life, he was still having night terrors and screaming out in his sleep because of what he experienced as a Japanese Prisoner of War.

The above wording and information has been provided by John Rutherford (son)



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