

Introduction from our Chairman

We have already had lively discussions about our 2010 Conference which will follow a similar pattern to previous conferences but with a new feature: to encourage further delegate participation we will have three panels of experts on Thailand, Singapore and Japan dispersed between talks. We expect to have international speakers covering themes including V-scheme,

civilian internment; medical aspects; evacuation and repatriation, Japan camps and either Borneo or Hong Kong. As in previous conferences, we will also have a short FEPOW address. I hope you enjoy our latest newsletter and don't forget to visit our website

www.researchingfepowhistory.org.uk.

Jonathan Moffatt, Chairman

Captured – The Extraordinary Life of Prisoners of War

This is the title of a new exhibition that will open in the main gallery at Imperial War Museum North on 23rd May 2009 and will run until January 2010. It is being billed as the first major exhibition ever held by the Imperial War Museum dedicated to the experiences of prisoners of war during conflict. It will include the experiences of British and Commonwealth prisoners and civilian internees in Europe and the Far East. It also features stories of Italian and German prisoners in the UK and their relations with their captors. This is a huge area to cover in a relatively small exhibition space but the IWM North is very good at staging thought provoking and visually stimulating displays so I think we should be confident that it will be well worth a visit.

According to their press release, more prisoners were taken during the Second World War than in any other conflict. Millions of soldiers, sailors and airmen found themselves behind barbed wire. What happened to them depended on when and where they were captured – and sometimes their nationality or race. Many of us, it goes on, know something about prisoners of war through films which romanticise daring escapes. But there is another story. It is one of extremes – from courage, comradeship and compassion, to hunger, boredom, deprivation, cruelty and neglect. Civilians, including women and children, were caught up in the total war and were thus also interned, simply because of their nationality. Either they were people caught in enemy territory when war broke out, or they had

escaped persecution and were rounded up and interned by the very countries in which they had sought refuge.



Prison Camp in Thailand after peace ©IWM

The exhibition organisers claim that visitors will be able to uncover the truth behind stories that have since become legends such as *The Great Escape*, *Colditz* and *The Bridge over the River Kwai* and find out what everyday life was really like as a POW, from experiences of capture, food, welfare, work, recreation and illicit activities to liberation. Given how well the organisers did when they mounted the First World War exhibition, albeit with input from the Horrible Histories team, I think they will try very hard to recreate as best they can the POW camps. However, I do not think anyone will ever be able to imagine what it must have been like to be locked up without any knowledge of how long

it would last, so that will be perhaps the tallest order for this exhibition.



Dysentery Hut by Stanley Gimson

Nevertheless, through hands-on displays they hope to attract children as well as adults, and that can only be a good thing. There will be crawl-through escape tunnels, try-on disguises and audio allowing the visitors to listen to illicit messages. Highlights include the first public display of the bed sheet embroidered by Daisy Day Joyce in Hong Kong, a dress made of mosquito nets used in Changi theatre productions and Ronald Searle's slouch hat. From Germany there are magazines, a handmade loom constructed by prisoners in Oflag VIIb, the cap worn by Jimmy James at the time of the Great Escape and other exciting everyday objects that have achieved almost mythical status because of their use or their owners in the Second World War.

If you have not yet had the opportunity to visit the Imperial War Museum North I would strongly recommend you make a visit. Not only is it situated in one of the most dramatic of locations for a museum, right on the waterfront of the Manchester Ship Canal at Old Trafford, but the building itself, designed by Daniel Liebeskind, is well worth experiencing. For an experience it is. Nothing is on the level and the building has the character of a splintered world, so very in keeping with the contents of the displays.

Facts you need to know: Imperial War Museum North is open 7 days a week from 10am to 6pm (Nov to Feb closes 5pm) with free admission. It is at The Quays, Trafford Wharf Road, Trafford Park, Manchester M17 1TZ. Car parking is easy but there is a £4.00 charge at a meter so you need change. Public transport is possible but requires a bit of a walk. There is an over-ground tram line that runs from Piccadilly and Oxford Road to Old Trafford. The café is good with spectacular views and the food very edible and fresh— sandwiches, soup and a hot buffet most days. The shop is small but has a relatively good selection of books. We often moan that there is nothing on the Far East but they have promised to rectify this during the exhibition so fingers crossed they will keep that promise.

For further information visit www.north.iwm.org.uk or call 0161 836 4000

Julie Summers

The Stanley Henson Diaries

Stephen Rockcliffe charts an extraordinary adventure that began over a digestive biscuit and ended with Imperial War Museum approval.

Having finished a rather busy day interviewing candidates for a teaching post at the village school where I am a governor, it was time for the traditional cup of tea, chat and digestive biscuit. Conversation came around to how I had become involved in a BBC Radio 4 Broadcast for Armistice Day, following the publication of *Stranger in the House* in which my mother's story is told. My father was a FEPOW who suffered for the whole of his post-war life with severe psychological symptoms, which these days would almost definitely be recognised as PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The conversation continued for a time, and I was

somewhat saddened to realise how little the teaching professionals know about the building of the Thailand-Burma Railway, let alone other matters about captivity in the Far East. However, there was a lot of interest in the subject and I spent some time describing my father's life in the POW camps of Singapore (Changi), Thailand and Japan. Eventually the jangling of the caretaker's keys signalled that it was time to go home.

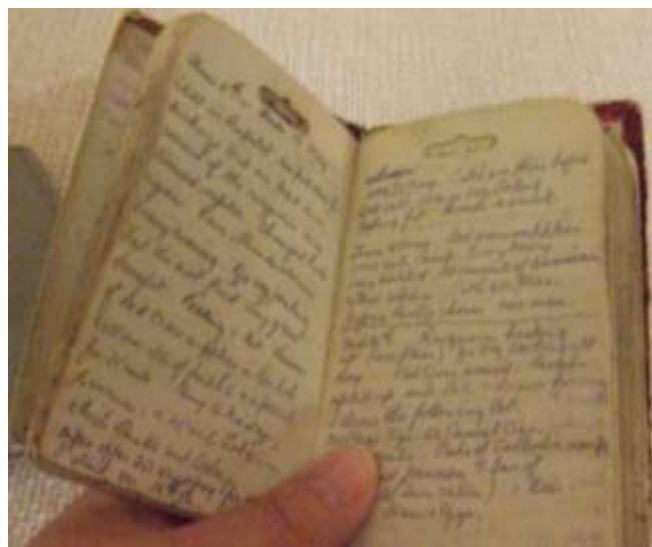
Two months passed and it was time for another governors' meeting at school. This time it was for a rather boring "Finance and General Purposes Committee". After three hours, formal business done, we spent half an hour catching up on village gossip, the current price of beef cattle and the credit crunch, until it was time to call it a day. Just as we were leaving, the head teacher casually said to me, "Oh, by the way Stephen, I

was talking to a friend at the theatre the other night about your father and the book (*Stranger in the House*) and she was really interested. Her father was a Japanese prisoner as well.” The friend, she explained, did not know an awful lot about her father’s experiences, but when he died a few years ago she had discovered, amongst his papers, a tiny diary with writing so small she could hardly read it. From the dates and contents it was obviously written during his time as a prisoner. Her older sister had told her, “It was his secret diary and he had had to hide from the Japanese, which is why it is so small.” At this point I think my jaw hit the floor, as I knew exactly what it was.

I can not remember exactly what I said, but there was no way the Head was getting home without agreeing to ask her friend, Pauline, if I could possibly see the diary. Sure enough, within the week, I received an email giving me Pauline’s telephone number, address and a note to say she would be more than happy for me to pay her a visit. Nervously I telephoned Pauline and explained who I was. She was obviously expecting my call and kindly invited me to her house to see the diary. As we were both busy this was arranged for about ten days later. The allotted time came and I drove the 4 miles to the village where Pauline lives with her husband. I did not have to ring the doorbell as she swung open the door as I walked down the drive and beamed at me. After the usual introductions I was soon seated in a lovely conservatory, and supplied with tea and biscuits. After about twenty minutes or so talking about our fathers Pauline produced not one diary but two, covering 1943 -1945. The two diaries appear to have been hand made from parts of an Army record book and a note book obtained in Thailand. The paper inside had been cleverly hand sewn to the covers with cotton thread. The paper is greying but the text, written in pencil, was surprisingly easy to read and I was immediately engrossed. After a few minutes Pauline produced what she described as “a few cards but they are nothing much.” I was then shown Stanley Henson’s service book, and several official post cards stamped in Japanese, together with some letters addressed to POW Camp 1, Thailand, that had been returned unread. Also a report written by Stanley soon after his return that seemed to list all the camps he worked in, and an album with about 50 photographs, some of himself working on the railway, which begs the obvious question: who had the camera?

Not wanting to outstay my welcome, I asked Pauline’s permission to photograph a few

pages of the diaries. I took just a few as it would take hours to photograph the entire contents. Realising the importance of what I was looking at I asked if Pauline would allow the information to be transcribed for historical research by the IWM. Pauline and her husband were both agreeable to this but thought that they should discuss this with Pauline’s sister first. I promised that I would do nothing without their permission and explained that I had contacts who could advise on how best to do this. Strangely my first viewing of the diaries had taken place on 15th February 2009, exactly 67 years after Stanley Henson was captured on Singapore Island.



Stanley Henson’s POW diary

On 18th February I received a phone call from Pauline giving me the go-ahead to contact the IWM “if you think it is important”. I was also invited to meet her sister who would be visiting her in a couple of weeks so that we could have a talk about our dads “ Oh and my sister has a few other things including some medals”. Meanwhile I had been exchanging emails with Julie Summers as I really needed to discuss the discovery and figure out what the best plan of action should be. Julie sent me Rod Suddaby’s email address and suggested that he was the best person to deal with so I immediately contacted him at the IWM. Sure enough, I received a reply from Rod Suddaby confirming that the IWM would be very interested in either recording the contents or obtaining the diaries. He also gave me some valuable advice on the best way to approach the owners, as these diaries are very precious and represent a lasting memory to the bravery of their father.

March 1st arrived and I found myself back at Pauline’s talking to her and her sister, Elizabeth, who, having driven some 100 miles, confessed

that she had forgotten to bring her Dad's medals to show me! Trying not to show my disappointment we discussed events surrounding the Thailand-Burma Railway, as I had already worked out that my father had spent some time in the same camps as their father. We wondered whether it was possible that they had known each other. I then learned that Elizabeth had her father's kit bag, with a "few things he had brought back." These included a tobacco pipe made from bamboo, and what Elizabeth described as a "Japanese purse with really nice patterns sewn into it."

A few days later, following several emails between Pauline, Elizabeth, Rod Suddaby and me, arrangements were made for us all to meet at Pauline's home, and to see the diaries and other items in April 2009.



Pauline Goodall (l) and Elizabeth Wharton with Rod Suddaby, April 2009

I collected Rod Suddaby at the local railway station on 16th April and we drove the short distance to Pauline's home where we were greeted by the family. After a quick cuppa we were ushered into the conservatory where the diaries and other items were placed. Rod's attention was immediately focused on the diaries and within seconds he was totally absorbed. The rest of us spent some time talking about the FEPOW experience.

Rod, looking like a man on a mission, started to piece events together. The diaries contain many references to places and other POWs, some of whom Rod already knew about so this allowed him to elaborate on events described in the diaries and make references to others. During the next couple of hours Rod managed to read both diaries, and after enjoying a rather grand "tiffin", turned his attention to the other items. The most important item being the report that Stanley Henson wrote on his return to England, which adds detail and references to

places and people, helping to explain his experience as a FEPOW when read in the context of his diaries.

I was fascinated by the small purse - more likely a man's wallet - made from soft leather and elaborately embroidered with a scene that is quite obviously Japanese. In the foreground is the image of a Japanese lady being conveyed in a rickshaw drawn by a rather grumpy looking Japanese servant. As Stanley did not spend any time in Japan this must have been obtained from a Japanese soldier, but it must now hide the secret of its original owner for ever.

The visit took almost 5 hours, and as I drove Rod back to the station we had a quick chat about the value of his journey from London, needless to say Rod had obviously had a good time - despite almost missing the train.

Rod has made arrangements for the diaries to be scanned immediately so that the contents can be made available at the IWM in London. He has asked the family if they would consider donating the diaries to the museum so that they can be preserved for future reference work, as they are an immensely important primary source, documenting the personal experiences and reflections of Stanley Henson every day from the 1st January 1943 until the final days of the war. Clearly Stanley was very ill many times during the two and a half years covered in his writings, but never once did he fail to record events. However there are omissions: for example, no details are given about the atrocities he must have witnessed. He only records the deaths of colleagues without explaining how or why. He gives much information about his own feelings and physical state without directly condemning those responsible. Stanley was an insurance agent by profession, and although this background is obvious in the meticulous and methodical manner of his writing, there is a remarkable sense of humour that filters through many of his comments, but the strongest impression remaining with anyone who is privileged enough to read these diaries is that they were written by an extraordinary man who had that iron will so necessary to surviving the adversities of the FEPOWs.

A few extracts from the diaries...

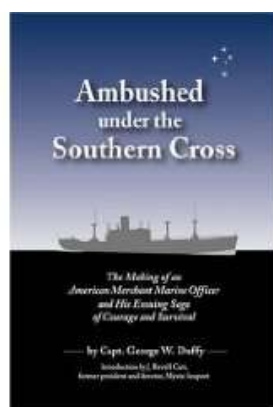
Wed 10th March, Half day's work laying extra lines for sidings. Back by 5pm. Norman Burroughs has died. We all get examined by doctor. Extra for meal, 2 eggs, sugar, peanut brittle.

Thurs March 11, Eric points out Bang Cow (our new camp) After gruelling day working on sidings back in camp 9:30 after moonlight journey. Am selected for advanced party to new camp.

Frid 12th March... make move and have a busy day stuffing Nip stores. A long day 9 AM – 8 PM... presented with biscuits and jam at end of work. Also have an omelette ... make best of things for night”

New Books & Audio

We took the view that it would be beyond the remit of our Researching FEPOW History team to review books for the newsletter. I hope you will understand that the main reason for this is one of time pressure on busy people. So what we will do is to flag up new books that are published on the FEPOW experience. And with this we announce the publication of George Duffy's eagerly awaited autobiography: **Ambushed Under the Southern Cross** *The Making of an American Merchant Marine Officer and His Ensuing Saga of Courage and Survival*



Delegates will remember Capt George W. Duffy USMM who travelled over from his home in New Hampshire, USA to join fellow FEPOW at the conferences (he was accompanied on both occasions by a different granddaughter). His long-awaited memoir is now in print, available from Amazon.co.uk. It is well researched and a fascinating read.

George tells of his training pre-war, service as a junior officer on board the American Leader, it's sinking by a German raider in the south Atlantic and his captivity, first in the hands of the Germans and then the Japanese. He spent over three years in camps in Java, Singapore and Sumatra and was unlucky enough to be sunk for a second time when on board the Junyo Maru en route for Sumatra.

But he also tells a parallel story: that of the life and career of a young German naval officer, Konrad Hoppe, who served on board George's nemesis, the *Hsk Michel*. Many years after the war the two men met and forged a life-long friendship based on mutual respect.

The book is packed full of detail: photographs, maps, charts and documents and is well worth the wait. Congratulations George on a superb publication.

Published by Xlibris, Hardback: £23
ISBN 978-1-4363-636-2 Paperback: £14 ISBN
978-1-4363-0635-5

Stu Lloyd, an Australian journalist who leads military history tours through Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, has published **The Missing Years: A POWs Story from Changi to Hellfire Pass.**

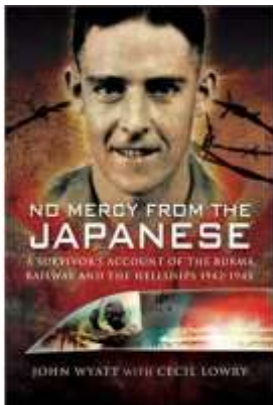


The back cover blurb reads as follows: ‘The Missing Years is a gripping story of ex-planter Captain Hugh (Pilk) Pilkington’s disastrous Malaya campaign in which he was shot by a Japanese sniper, survived the Alexandra Hospital Massacre, became a POW while still hospitalised, spent time in Changi, then – with only one good arm – was packed off to work on the Thai-Burma Death Railway at the dreaded Hellfire Pass. But he lived to tell the tale, and what a tale...’ Stu Lloyd’s book is available on Amazon price £14.99. ISBN 9781877058776.

John Wyatt has published a book with Cec Lowry, entitled **No Mercy from the Japanese**. Keith Andrews writes:

John Wyatt joined the 2nd Battalion, the East Surrey Regiment and arrived in Singapore on the Empress of Japan, in March 1941. He was with the Regiment when the Battle for Malaya started on December 7th, 1941. The book covers his time during the battle, including the Battalion’s amalgamation with the 1st Battalion, the Leicestershire Regiment, to form The British Battalion. His arrival back in Singapore and his part in the battle, where he was wounded, and

his survival of the Alexandra Hospital Massacre is all covered.



With the fall of Singapore, he was discharged from hospital and sent to the Changi POW Camp where he left on March 23rd, 1943 as a member of D Force destined for the Thailand - Burma Railway.

As if that was not enough, once the work on the Railway was finished John was Japan-bound: first on the Asaka Maru which was badly damaged by a typhoon and ran aground near Takao, Formosa, and from there on the Hakusan Maru to Moji, Japan. There he was in two camps, Amagasaki and then Nagoya, where he was when the war ended. Each of these periods is described in his book, as is the journey home and his arrival back in the UK.

The Colonel of Tamarkan is due to be published as an audio book at the end of May, read by actor Anton Lesser. It will be three CDs, cost £15.99. Julie said being abridged was 'a bit like having her hair cut by Edward Scissorhands: scary but the result rather unexpectedly magical and Anton Lesser's reading is wonderful'.

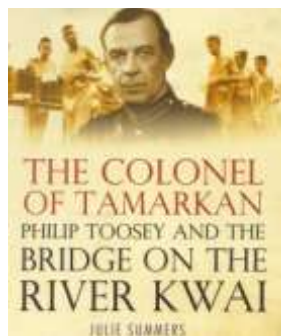
A Life Well Lived

We asked one of last year's delegates, Stephanie Hess, to describe the journey that began when, as a child, she learned about the experiences of her grandfather, Joseph Dunne, and her grandmother, Eilish, whose lives were changed forever by their experiences in the Far East. Stephanie writes:

When I was fourteen years old my grandfather gave me his POW diary. I was absolutely thrilled. Those notebooks and scraps of paper, so carefully preserved, were a tangible connection to those long ago days of Changi and Hakodate, to those 'hidden years' my grandfather had lived as a prisoner of the Japanese.

My brothers and I grew up on Gran'pa's POW stories. We each had our favourite tales

Details on www.juliesummers.co.uk or www.chromeaudio.com.



Anyone wishing to purchase a copy of Geoff Monument's *An Angel on my Shoulder* (see obit below) should contact his daughter Pamela Mayman on pamayman@hotmail.co.uk.

DVD of Conference 2008

Meg reports: After a great deal of effort on all parts we hope to have the DVD ready in the next month or so. It is a compilation of last year's conference featuring interview clips with some of the FEPOW as well as excerpts from various lectures together with some background shots around the Arboretum and the FEPOW building. It is not intended to be a detailed in-depth documentary but rather it will provide a flavour of the special atmosphere that has typified our conferences to date. We hope that it will give newcomers a real insight into the reasons for the Researching FEPOW History conferences. Keep an eye on the website for further details.

which we clamoured to hear over and again, and Gran'pa would bring them all to life with humour and drama, and a glint in his eye. He never once allowed bitterness to creep into his stories, though I learned much later just how sad those years had been for him.

My grandparents were living in Singapore when the Japanese surprised the world by coming down the Malay Peninsula to capture the island 'fortress' that looked to the sea for its enemy. Joe and Eilish Dunne had been more than a decade in the East, both their children were born there, and suddenly the life they had embarked upon together was suspended. Joe packed Eilish and the children (my aunt Eithne, aged 8, and my father, Dermot, aged 3) off to safety in Australia. That was the

last they saw of each other for nearly four long years.



Stephanie Hess, 2008 photo N Barranger

The stories of my childhood were not only of Gran'pa's adventures in the camps. I listened to Nana's reminiscences of her Australian years, and tried to imagine my father ever being that young. Their old photograph albums fascinated me and I loved browsing through those stiff, black pages filled with the sepia toned images of a world that lived on only in memory.

Gran'pa died unexpectedly, shortly after entrusting me with his precious diary. It was then that I first attempted to transcribe his fine, miniscule script into my less disciplined teenage hand, but it came to nothing – I was too young and my grief too raw. The diary was put away for another day. That day came twenty five years later. One sad January evening in 2006 I

Obituary: Geoff Monument

After a short illness, Geoff Monument died on 18th April 2009 in Lichfield, Staffordshire. Geoff was the author of the book *An Angel on my Shoulder*, published in 1996, and was an attendee, together with his daughter Helen, at the second Researching FEPOW History Conference in 2008. Geoff's book recounts his time as a POW in Japanese hands and is a highly readable account that deliberately focuses upon the more humorous and positive aspects of time in captivity and lacks the bitterness that, understandably, tends to be a feature of many of the other FEPOW authored books.

unwrapped that little bundle, read it cover to cover, and knew there and then how I would spend the next year of my life - I would transcribe the diary, have it bound professionally, and surprise my brothers at Christmas with it.

I could not have foreseen what an amazing journey I would be taken on as I typed with two fingers the words my grandfather penned nearly 65 years before. Immediately I was caught up in his life, but stumped by unfamiliar place names and mysterious Malay and Indian words. And the people! Who were they? What was their fate? I had to know. With a deep breath I braved the daunting world of the internet in search of clues and, with luck, hopefully some answers.

There were more than clues and answers to be found. I discovered a hitherto unknown way of communicating with people from all over the globe who share a common interest in the plight of the Far Easter Prisoners of War. Through this medium I have gathered and shared information, formed special friendships and lived adventures that would never have been lived otherwise.

I did have the diary put into book form for my family, but as I worked on that the vision of a website was beginning to take hold.

"J.B. Dunne – A Life Well Lived" is my tribute to the man whose strength, love and courage resonate to this day within the hearts of his descendants. www.jbdunne.co.za

Stephanie Hess

After capture in Singapore in February 1942, Geoff was transported on the same ship as the commander of the disastrous Malayan campaign, General Arthur Percival, to Formosa. He later spent much of his time in captivity in mainland Japan, working initially in the Mitsubishi shipyard in Yokohama and then, towards the end of the war, in the Sendai mining camp. The book describes these experiences in detail, as well as his journey home at the end of the war via the Philippines, Vancouver Island and the trans-Canadian railroad to Halifax prior to the voyage home to Southampton on the liner *Isle de France*.

Geoff was born 26th August 1919 in Norwich, the second child of William and Florence Monument. His father was transferred to Wolverhampton with his employer, the Boulton Paul Aircraft factory, in 1936 and jobs were also

offered to family members. Geoff found himself in the wages office, where he stayed until January 1939, before joining another local employer.



Geoff Monumant at the Arboretum, May 2008 photo: J Summers

He registered for military service on his 19th birthday in 1938, and was eventually called up by the Army in June 1941 to serve as a private in the Royal Army Service Corps. After the war Geoff met Jean Plant and they were married in March 1948, in Wolverhampton. He became a buyer for Perkin's Diesels and moved to Peterborough, where their children Pam, Stephen and Helen were born, and then to Meppershall in Bedfordshire. After seven years, the family moved to Leamington Spa where Geoff joined the management of Kigass (pronounced key-gas). In 1962 Geoff and Jean's fourth child, Tracy, was born at home. Geoff completed his working life in car sales with a VW/Audi dealership in Warwick. He and Jean were separated in 1975, and later divorced.

Geoff was a keen football player and referee and, during a Youth Soccer trip to Florida in 1980, he met Mildred Wilson, whom he married the following year, when he moved permanently to Gainesville, Florida. This began what he called his 'Second Life'. He loved life in Florida and continued playing recreational football and refereeing up to 2000.

Whilst in the US Geoff took up genealogy and began to explore and record his family history. Thanks to his determination and many years of detective work he was able to trace his family tree back to the 1600's.

In the 1990s, with Mildred's encouragement, Geoff decided to write down his experiences as a POW. This record became the published book *An Angel on My Shoulder*. He joined the Far East Prisoner of War Association and made contact with many old and new friends through the internet and at the Association's meetings, supporting those seeking compensation from the Japanese Government.

Mildred was taken ill in 2005 and Geoff nursed her at home for the last few months of her life. She passed away peacefully on 4th August 2006. In May 2007 Geoff decided to pack up and return to England after nearly 30 years in the USA. He moved into a flat in Lichfield and worshipped regularly at St. Mary's Church, and attended the Fellowship at Wade Street Church.

Geoff leaves behind four children, nine grandchildren, four step-grandchildren including Mildred's granddaughter in Florida, three great-granddaughters and four step-great grandchildren. He was greatly looking forward to seeing his family all together to celebrate his 90th birthday on 26th August this year. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Martin Percival

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