



GUNNER EDGAR HAROLD

SERVICE NO. 1443424

78 BATTERY, 35TH LAA REGT. ROYAL ARTILLERY

DIED 12TH FEBRUARY 1943 AGED 45

Edgar Harold was born in Diss, Norfolk on 14 February 1897¹. His parents were George Frederick, a carman, and Mary Ann Harold. He had an older brother, Frederick. In 1911 Edgar was still living in Diss with his family and was employed as an errand boy for a boot shop². When and why he moved to Odiham is not known, but in January 1919 he married a local resident, Gertrude Mileham³, in the Basingstoke Registration District. They subsequently lived in 5 Council Houses, North Warnborough⁴. Their entry on the 1939 Register gives details of the family at that time. Edgar was a 'Labourer General', Gertrude a housewife and their two children, Reginald, aged 17, a builder's labourer and Dorothy, aged 11, who was at school.

According to his attestation Edgar re-enlisted in to the Army in February 1940 and was posted to the 78th Battery, 35 Lt. A.A, Regiment of the Royal Artillery⁵. This unit's preparations for service abroad started in Middlesbrough that year. The Commander of this unit, Lt. Col. John Bassett, recorded the Regiment's movements in a log, which is available on the internet at www.cofepow.org.uk/armed-forces-stories-list/35th-laa-regiment-royal-artillery.

The Regiment sailed from the Clyde on the Empress of Japan on 13 November 1941 and arrived in Durban on 19 December 1941. On 24 December they left Durban on board the Narkunda en route for Singapore. They arrived in Singapore on 13 January 1942.

It is thought that the men of the regiment were probably captured when Singapore fell, but no war diaries exist after this date. Edgar was recorded as missing on 1st February 1942⁶ and was captured on 8 March 1942, becoming a prisoner of war⁷ in Java PoW Camp⁸. The Japanese Armed Forces captured nearly 140,000 Allied

¹ Source - Details provided by Royal Artillery Museum

² Source - Army records, Forces War Records

³ Source – General Register Office, United Kingdom; Volume 2c; Page 495

⁴ Source – Information provided by Royal Artillery Museum

⁵ Source – Royal Artillery Museum

⁶ Source – Forces War Records – Record details for E Harold (Royal Artillery)

⁷ Source – Royal Artillery Museum

⁸ Source – www.findmypast.co.uk – Prisoners of War 1715-1945





military personnel in Southeast Asia and the Pacific areas during the war to engage in hard labour – constructing railways, including the infamous Thai-Burma ('Death') Railway, roads and airfields. Of these 140,000 circa 36,000 were sent on to Japan where there was a shortage of labour to work in the coalmines, mines, shipyards and munitions factories, etc. Death rates were high, not only because of the hard labour and working conditions, but through lack of food and poor living conditions. According to a list held in the National Archives "Harold, an Englishman, died January 1943 at Shimonoseki Camp. Japan. Cause of death was recorded as - Chronic Ulcerative Colitis, Starvation, Avitaminosis. Believed cremated. Lt. Eppley was an eye witness of his death". As he had no grave, he is commemorated on the Yokohama Cremation Memorial in Japan. He would have been awarded the War Medal 1939-1945 and the 1939-45 Star.

