

Frederick Keith Slaughter



Rank: - Corporal

Number: - 628781

Service: - Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, 211 Sqdn.

Died: - Died on Board Japanese Ship Maros Maru; 11 Nov 1944.

Memorial: - Singapore Memorial, Column 437.

Frederick Keith was born in Rotherham in 1921 son of Arthur and Gertrude Anne Slaughter (nee Kirby, m. 1906, registered Beverley) of Scarborough,

Edith Barbara was born in Welton in 1906 followed by John Kenneth in Elloughton in 1909 and Frederick Keith in 1921. Arthur was a police officer and worked in various towns in Yorkshire. In 1939 he was a Police Inspector living at Hartington Street, Keighley. Before he enlisted Frederick had moved to Scarborough with his parents.

The 211 Squadron was in Greece in early 1941, moving to Palestine and Sudan where they trained RAAF pilots on Bristol Blenheims, the 211 Squadron re-formed in December 1941 and moved to the Far East.

Frederick Keith was taken prisoner when Java fell on 8 March 1942. In 1944 Allied aircraft began raids on the Spice Islands and in daylight raids scattered warning leaflets of the destruction to come. The Japanese began to retreat taking the POWs with them no matter what condition they were in so that they could not be rescued. The 600-ton Dutch vessel the "Maros Maru" was bound for Surabaya on the North Eastern coast of Java when parties of Japanese and 500 POWs boarded her at Ambon in the Moluccas on 17 September 1944. The POWs were British and Dutch. Over 150 were picked up on the journey. The Dutch vessel was sunk in 1942, refloated in 1943 by the Japanese and was hardly sea worthy.

During the journey, the ship suffered engine failure and called in for repairs at Macassar in South Celebes. She was stuck for 40 days during which time the POWs were not allowed to leave the ship and many died due to the horrific conditions they were forced to endure. During the 67 days on board in blistering heat with very little water, around half a pint a day, and even less food, 325 men out of 650 died.

Prior to the retreat from Ambon, the prisoners had worked long days in the heat, building roads and air strips for the Japanese transportation. With poor diet and little medication, they were weak and ill from malnutrition and constant ill-treatment. Dysentery, beriberi and many other tropical diseases had claimed many lives and on board they were in a far worse state than they could have imagined.

Frederick Keith died of chronic colitis on the 11 September and was buried at sea.

Frederick is remembered with Honour on Batley War Memorial and Batley Grammar School. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star and the 1939-1945 War Medal.



Researched by members of
Batley History Group

