

Isaac Sykes



Isaac was born on 3rd July 1893 and baptised at Batley Parish on 16th August 1893 the son of Joseph Albert and Annie Sykes nee Brearley. The couple had married at Batley Parish Church on 19th September 1889.

Hilda was born in 1891 followed by Isaac, Agnes 1895, Lily 1897, Herman Brearley 1900 who sadly died in April 1902 aged 17 months, Marian 1904 and Albert 1907 who became a farmer in New South Wales, Australia.

In 1901 the family was living at Occupation Lane, Staincliffe but had moved to live at 8, North Parade, Mount Pleasant, Batley before 1911. Isaac attended Batley Grammar School and was a choir boy at Batley Parish Church and later a soloist at Lichfield Cathedral. Joseph Albert was employed as an insurance agent in 1911 and Isaac started his career at the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, later Martin's Bank, under Mr. J. J. Butler, J.P. and left there before 1915 to join the Charter Bank in London.

His father was a believer in educating his children because 15 year old Agnes was still a scholar which was unusual at that time for girls. Agnes became a textile clerk whilst Hilda was a headmistress at an elementary school and Lily a

bank clerk living at 25, Talbot Street in 1939 with their widowed father. His mother had died in June 1935.

In 1915 Isaac joined an Artist Battalion and prepared himself for a commission. He became a Second Lieut. in the Gloucester Regiment. Later he became attached to an Entrenchment Battalion and went missing on the 23rd March 1918 when the Germans overwhelmed a post where he was in command all being either captured or killed. He was slightly wounded and taken to Festubert near Mayence, Germany where he was held prisoner.

After the war he went to work abroad for the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China. He served the bank in Penang, Calcutta, Hong Kong, Shanghai and New York and at the outbreak of war was in Yokohama.

Isaac was a first class musician and whilst he was in Yokohama he was the organist at the English Church and musical director of the Musical and Operatic Society.

On 29th July 1933 he married 25 year old Agnes Isabel Ross in Shanghai Cathedral.

In early 1940 his wife escaped Japan for safety and his daughter, who he never saw, was born in late 1940. His wife and child were in Calcutta in 1942.

Isaac was interned along with many more British subjects.

It was reported in London on the 28th July 1942 that a report had been received from Lourenco-Marques, Portuguese East Africa, where exchanged British and American nationals had arrived the previous week, 12 Britons had been driven

BATLEY BANK MANAGER DIES IN JAPAN.

We sincerely regret to record the death in Japan, under unknown circumstances, of Mr. Isaac Sykes, manager of the Yokohama Branch of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China, and elder son of Mr. J. Albert Sykes and the late Mrs. Sykes, of East View, Talbot Street, Batley.



The late Mr. Isaac Sykes (on right).

The sad news has been received at the Head Office of the Bank in London, via the Argentine Government to our Foreign Office in London.

Mr. Sykes had a charming disposition and his loss will be keenly felt by his family and friends. He had been on Foreign Service for the Bank continuously since 1919 and had held appointments in branches of the bank at Penang, Hong Kong, Calcutta, New York and Shanghai and lastly at Yokohama.

He commenced his career at the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank, now Martins Bank, under Mr. J. J. Butler, J.P., and left there before the last war to join the Chartered Bank in London. He joined the Army after the outbreak of the war and obtained a commission with the Gloucester Regiment, serving with them in France and during the March, 1918, offensive he was wounded and taken prisoner.

Mr. Sykes was particularly fond of music and was a skilled pianist. As a boy he sang in Batley Parish Church choir under Mr. John Fearnley, and left there to become soloist at Lichfield Cathedral. He had always taken a keen interest in music at home and abroad. He broadcast piano solos from Calcutta and whilst in Yokohama was organist of the English Church and musical director of the Musical and Operatic Society.

He was married in 1933 at Shanghai Cathedral, to Agnes Ross, and nearly two years ago his wife went to India, where her baby daughter was born.

Mr. Sykes never saw the child.

He is survived here, by his father and four sisters. His brother Albert, who was a farmer in New South Wales, Australia, is now serving with the Australian Forces.

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to suicide after internment by the Japanese. These included Mr. E.W. Stagg the manager of the Hong Kong-Shanghai Bank in Yokohama, Mr. Sykes manager of the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China in Yokohama,



and Mr. John Watson, manager of real estate interests in Harbin and father-in-law of the British Vice-Consul. In addition Mr. K. F.H. Kruger marine adjuster died in prison as a result of exposure and the Rev. J.A. Hewitt died in an insane asylum after imprisonment.

The correspondent of "The Times" adds that Indian Guards in Hong Kong delight in slapping British internees who are required to take off their hats and bow to the Japanese Guards and officers.

Isaac had survived the Great War but sadly died because of the Second World War never having seen his daughter.

Thanks to Philip Wheeler and Val Mitchell.
Photo Yokohama branch 1949