

This is a diary, which was kept by my Uncle Gerry McGonnell after he was taken prisoner by the Japanese in the Second World War.

When my aunt Agnes died (Gerry's wife) my mother was cleaning out her flat and came across what looked like tissue paper rolled tightly up and held with elastic bands.

She was just about to throw it out but something made her take a look at it first.

What she found on these fragile pieces of paper was writing in pencil, which turned out to be a diary, which he somehow managed to keep throughout his captivity.

Agnes (her sister) or Gerry had never told her about the diary, perhaps he just wanted to forget.

I am afraid that some parts of it were illegible but as much as was legible has been put into this document.

When he went off to War Agnes was about 6 months pregnant.

He was sent to Java and was captured almost as soon as he landed.

The Japanese would not allow any contact with home, they did not even let anyone know who they had captured, so Agnes must have been frantic not knowing if he was alive or dead.

Gerry was quite religious as can be seen as you read the diary; his Catholic faith sustained him throughout captivity.

I hope this will give you an insight into what life must have been like for those captives of the Japanese in the Second World War.

After you have read this I am sure you will wonder (as I do) if we found it all.

Paul Fletcher.

P.O.W. 209 April 1942 - The First Month Of Captivity

It has been a bad month for me, first of all the camp was in a very dirty state when we arrived but as the month ends it's a bit more shipshape.

The food is not so bad, rice and stew being the principal meal. I look forward to it, sometimes we get a pasty, rice and sugar for breakfast.

Yesterday the 28th April 1942 I went working on the docks for the Japs, it was hard work.

I look forward to the month of May (Our Lady's month) for good news and news from home from Agnes, Dad and all.

Thank God my health is good, some of the boys are ill with diarrhoea etc. I pray every day for release and to get home for Christmas 1942. Please God my wish will be granted.

The first day of May dawned. I got a bit of meat in my stew, thanks to Our Lady it was good.

On Saturday the 2nd a chap died in hospital, he was buried in the evening. My thoughts are always turned towards home. 2 years ago this month I lost my mother R.I.P.

Last year I lost my home and now I am in a prison camp, I wonder if I shall be home next May?

As the month of May ends the news is not very good it s all against us. 2 years ago today (31st) my mother passed away from this weary world, it was a big wrench and loss to me I pray for her night and day, I am sure she is watching down on me and all at home.

We have buried 11 men up to date including one officer all have died from dysentery and diarrhoea. The food is not nice but we have to make the best of it. I hope and pray to be home for Christmas 1942. I am sure that Our Lady and the sacred heart will not let me down.

Today the first Wednesday of June my mind goes back 2 years to the day I buried my mother (R.I.P.) it was a sad day but she is at rest.

The news for the past few days has been very good. I often wonder how Agnes and the baby are keeping these days, no doubt she will be nearly out of her mind with worry through not having heard from me all this time, tragic to think we can't write home, we have just got to wait and have patience and trust in the Sacred Heart who alone is my only hope in this world.

Tomorrow is the feast of Corpus Christie, a great day in the year for the Church, the one day we must all pray for peace.

The dry season has begun and it is very warm with plenty of mosquitoes about at night. Thank God I still have my net to place over me in bed.

30th June 1942

Today is the last day of June, Dad's birthday. I hope and trust in God he is well and not worrying over me.

The first part of June I was confined to bed with fever but thanks to God I am now well and on my feet again.

I have been very lucky, Major's Johnstone and Whiting got some cocoa and I have been getting a mug full three times a day, it's great, sugar and milk too, I boil a can over a wood fire in the camp.

Last night I had a few potatoes, things we have never had for months and on Thursday I had a fried egg (5 cents).

Our captors are very quite of late in that they are treating us rather well, no slappings etc.

I hope John is alright in the Middle East these days. No doubt Agnes must be passing through anxious times worrying over me, if only I could get a letter through to her it would make a world of difference to me. I don't think she knows I am a prisoner but I still pray to be home with her and the baby for Christmas.

The Sacred Heart and Our Lady will help me.

I have had several dreams of home lately, I hope it's a good sign.

We hear plenty of rumours about what is happening in the world.

31st July 1942

As July ends my thoughts are turned towards home, 2 years ago I was all excited about getting married and hoping to make Agnes happy, well so far I have failed in my task.

Last year I was away in Workswirth and am now in a prison camp, and to make matters worse poor Agnes does not know if I am dead or alive.

She won't know until September seven months after capitulation, it's simply terrible.

Where will I be on the 3rd anniversary of the greatest day of my life, will I be home or abroad?

God only knows the answer.

I still feel that we shall be free soon and am always praying for that day to dawn and am praying for all at home.

On Sunday 5th July 42 we were forced by our captors to sign an allegiance of some sort to the Japs, they came with an armed guard to scare us, they also showed us a letter from Major General Sitwell (which was identified as his writing) advising us to sign.

Well so far, thank God nothing has happened to harm us.

The first part of the month our rice ration was cut down but it's not so bad now.

I am an expert at cooking rice cakes with a bit of fish or corned beef, they are nice and tasty if fried well.

I hope August 3rd will bring us good news.

I wonder how Agnes and the baby are getting on and Dad and Eileen.

I expect they are worried stiff, they must be praying for me night and day.

Thanks to almighty God we have gone two weeks without a death in the camp, it's grand, the dysentery seems to have been checked.

A few nights ago I dreamt that Agnes had a nice baby girl, it's not the first time I have had the same dream so it must be so.

It's 2 years since John left for the Middle East, I hope he is well and not in captivity like myself.

I think the Japs will have a shake on very soon, at least I hope so, they are busy raising small ships and tugs etc. they should have been blown sky high.

31st August 1942

Monday the last day of August.

The month has passed very well, plenty of work dock parties etc.

The food has not been up to much, dirty rice and small rations, no tea at lunchtime.

The early part of the month (10th) I started with diarrhoea very bad, but thank God I am now alright. I had no food for week and they could not do anything for me.

The news has been very good. I think we shall be free men by Christmas, please God.

I wonder how poor Agnes is getting along these days, she must

be out of her mind over me.

I have been the cause of a lot of trouble to her, my dad must feel the same way.

As for myself I am near grey with worry over them all at home.

The Nips could easily let us right home. I shall never forget them for this, it's torture for us.

The later end of the month an epidemic of malaria has broken out, three deaths in 24 hours. It's bad, the poor chaps are just about browned off.

Two fellows got out the other night and were caught by the Wog police, they had two eggs each on their person and they caused a lot of trouble, roll call at midnight, anyhow they are still in the Japs hands.

We enter (in a couple of day's time) the 4th year of this horrible war and I hope it's the last.

I would not join the boy scouts after this lot, our own people are not much class out here.

I pray hard all the time to get home to Agnes and the baby as soon as possible.

I know the Sacred Heart and Our Lady will not let me down, so it's a case of roll on freedom as quick as you can.

Monday August 3rd 1942

My thoughts today are turned back 2 years ago when Agnes became my wife, what changes have taken place since then.

I am happy in my thoughts, but miserable and depressed through being in a prison camp so far away from home and those I love, it's a terrible feeling, I am broken hearted.

I hope and trust in God that we shall get released very soon and get home, or even get some word from home and be able to write to them.

Yesterday the Japs gave us some cigars (25) and I hear today that we are going to get chocolate and cigarettes, they seem to be getting generous all at once.

I wish the food would improve, life would be more tolerable.

I suppose they are having a hard time getting food at home nowadays, rations will be cut down.

The regatta will be on in Rathmullen today as usual.

I had some very good times there, especially when I took Agnes with me.

With God's help we shall go back again once more.

I hope that a second front will be opened today or very soon and end this nightmare of war.

19th September 1942

On this day last year I was getting ready to go back from my leave, what a change 12 months has brought.

How well I remember!

Agnes and I went to the Gainsborough to see "City For Conquest" and after that we went along to St. Joans to see Father O'Neill who gave me his blessing which has helped me along.

Poor Agnes broke her heart that day, it was terrible for her.

I hope and trust in God that September 19th 1943 I shall be home with Agnes and the baby, all I can do is pray hard.

31s* September 1942

So ends September.

There has been great changes in the camp throughout the past weeks.

First 500 men were moved on the 14th from camps 7 and 8 and on 22nd 500 more were moved from camps 1 and 2.

I was down to go but was taken off the list.

Rumour has it that they have gone to Borneo to work the oil wells and tin mines.

Then a new guard took over and they are devils, in fact they are rookies and they watch every move, why we can't have a concert without them butting in.

Lights out at 10 instead of 11, they are queer.

I hear that 500 Australians are to arrive in camp tomorrow.

We now get 10 cents a day for work on the docks, it helps us to buy an egg and some cigarettes and some sugar.

It makes life worthwhile.

I average 3 to 4 days a week.

We have started a society to St. Jude, he may help us to freedom.

We have no priest yet, some day one may come.

The Nips made us shave our hair off, no doubt it's healthier but we all look very funny.

We have now a first class band, even a piano thanks to the old guard. Violins, trumpet, guitar and drum (all made from nothing) I am to sing tonight.

I look forward to the month of the Holy Rosary for a change in the world, God knows we need it out here.

I haven't given up hope yet, please God we may get home early next year.

The Sacred Heart and Our Lady haven't forsaken us yet, we must pray hard.

We have now been a little over 6 months or 187 days behind the wire here at Preok.

On the 1st October the Australians arrived from Timor after a rough passage (9 days don the hatch) and amongst them was a priest.

His name is Kennedy, he is a great boy.

Well today we had Mass, the first time in Preok for 7 months, our prayers have been answered thank God, so with God's help we won't be prisoners for very long.

We are going to have Mass and Communion on Tuesday 6th, it will be grand.

Our Lady has sent us a priest at last, thanks to her during the month of the Holy Rosary.

Wednesday 14th October 1942

Today is the birthday of Agnes, I can't let this pass without mention of her, the girl I love so sincerely all I can do is to pray for her to have courage until she hears from me (and that won't be long now).

Last year I was in Rochdale and I sent her a card, now I am in a prison camp, next year HOME with God's help.

The rains have started to fall.

I have been very busy this past week, blinded with sweat, it's been hard work.

I shall stick it for the sake of Agnes and the baby.

Tuesday 20th October 1942

We are under orders to move, so far as we know we are going on a ship but we don't know where.

I trust in the Sacred Heart for a safe journey and better treatment.

We have new numbers, I am now number 91 instead of 209.

October - December 1942

On Wednesday 21st October we left the camp at Tandjong Preok and marched in the heat of the mid day sun to the docks. We spent the night aboard ship (down the hatch) and sailed at 10.30 a.m. on Thursday 22nd we arrived off Singapore on the Sunday 25th.

So far the trip is not so bad.

We docked in Singapore on Tuesday 27th on the quayside for a bath from a hydrant and a jab off a glass tube.

On the Thursday we went ashore again to get fumigated and join another ship that night, this next ship was to be the death of us later on.

We sailed for Japan on Friday 30th October and on 1st November the first man died from dysentery and from then onwards until we reached Tyvan in Formosa (10th) we lost 17 men.

We then sent some of the bad cases ashore, 21 in all,

suffering from diarrhoea and dysentery.

We next sailed for Japan on the 15th November and I then contracted diarrhoea myself, I shall never forget it.

I went through hell with pain and was left very weak. The men were now dying at the rate of 10 a day. One day 14 died.

And up to the time of leaving the ship 70 men died. One bloke threw himself over the side while in dock.

We reached Japan on the 24th and disembarked on the 26th. By now I was much better.

I prayed that God would help me and send us to good place where we would get good food and a good bed.

Well my prayers have been answered for we have come to a place to work.

We have new, clean huts and beds, plenty of blankets for it is very cold here and very good food.

We are now getting a loaf of bread every day, it's a Godsend.

The Japs have placed Major Johnstone in charge of all cooking, it's grand, better than the food on the ship.

We can have a hot bath each night, and we have a week's rest before starting work.

It looks like a coal mine district.

God has been good to us.

When I get home I shall go to daily Mass in thanksgiving for

the help I have received.

I think next year will see us home.

This time last year I was home before sailing for this lot.

It has been a long 12 months and a lot has happened, so next year pleas God, we shall be home.

Sunday December 6th 1942

The name of this place Ube it's an industrial centre, factories and coalmines, we are to work down a mine.

This past week we have been doing drill and PT in Japanese fashion, learning Jap words of command and attending lectures on our work.

Today we went down the mine and believe me it 's not too pleasant.

It's under the sea and it's going to be hard work for us as we are all in a week state.

We start work on Friday 1 1th at 7 a.m. until 3 p.m. and change over in 10 days that is the 20th (Eileen's birthday) and work from 1.30 p.m. until 9.30 p.m.

Almighty God will protect us from any harm while we are here.

3 men have died this week since we have been here, of course we have had no meat for 3 weeks.

Last night we had lovely fish and potatoes and of course rice.

I hear we are getting meat tonight but no bread because the

forgot to get double last night (Saturday).

I wonder when I shall be able to hear Mass again?

I hope and trust in the Sacred Heart and Our Lady that it won't be long.

Poor Agnes must be nearly out of her mind with worry and the baby will be nearly 12 months old by now. God bless them both.

254 days since the capitulation on March 9th

December 13th 1942

Today is Sunday and I prayed very hard for release to come in the spring of 1943.

My thoughts are all of home which I shall see (if God spares me) very soon.

I have had a heavy cold and lost my voice for a few days but now I'm getting O.K.

We haven't started work yet, I don't know when we shall start.

Since we arrived here we have had 7 deaths, they are cremated here.

We are getting good food, 2 loaves a day now and potatoes, mashed and in their jackets. No meat but plenty offish, thank God.

I hope and pray that Agnes, the baby, my Dad and Eileen and all I love at home are well and safe from air raids etc.

Last Christmas was bad enough but this year it will be worse, in a prison camp, but with God's holy will I shall see it through.

Roll on 1943 and freedom.

Wednesday 16th December 1942

On Monday we started work in the mine, it's very hard work.

I was on the second shift from 1 p.m. until 8 p.m.

We have to walk about one and a half miles under the sea stooping all the way.

I was rubbed out at night.

We got 2 bread rolls when we got back, butter as well so I made toast!

We take a meal with us, spuds and rice, cold.

Last night's tea was very good, we got prawns and Major Johnstone done them in batter and fried them, they were great.

I pray hard for things to improve in the way of food and conditions because I want to get home fit and well, please God, so I can work for Agnes and the baby. I am sure they are praying for me at home.

I wonder if they know I am a prisoner and not missing?

It's a long day for us as we rise at 5.30 a.m., breakfast at 6 a.m., dinner at 12 o'clock, tea 6 p.m.

I get hungry so I have to try and save a bit of bread and it about 10 a.m.

If I was home know (Wednesday) I would be going into town to buy Christmas presents etc.

Perhaps next Christmas I will be going.

It's almighty God's will and I am sure he hears my prayer as the food has improved and I am thankful for that.

Sunday 20th December 1942

My thoughts are turned towards home this festive season. I suppose things are quiet at home, not like the old times. It's Eileen's birthday today, I remember her being born.

I hope she is looking after Dad well and making him comfortable as he will be worried about me.

We had prayers this morning. There are only about 8 Catholics here including Colonel Brigden.

We prayed hard for our release.

The food is getting better thanks to the Sacred Heart and major Johnstone.

Last night we had salmon and mash, bread etc. and of course not forgetting rice. No doubt we have earned it, my back is broken and sore but I will pull through for Agnes and the baby's sake as I want to get home fit and well.

Christmas Day 1942

We have the day off from work so we slept in until 7 a.m. instead of 5.30 a.m. It was a nice change.

We had sugar on our rice for breakfast, a rissole and stronger tea.

For dinner we had steak and roast potatoes and cabbage followed by peaches and duff.

It was a big surprise to have European food in a prison camp, at last a dinner free from rice.

I was broken hearted first thing this morning.

I prayed ever so hard for all at home and to be united with them next year.

At 10.30 a.m. we had prayers, I miss the Mass very much. It's terrible Christmas and no Mass.

We had our 10th death this morning (Major Cuthbush) he had been ill since we arrived here.

We are to have a bit of a concert tonight.

I am getting used to the work, my hands are getting hardened we start again at 7 a.m. tomorrow.

I pray to the Sacred Heart for protection while down the mine, if we work well the Japs treat us alright. They don't like slackers.

They are going to pay us soon and they say that if we work well they will send in the food, so we must have worked good last week.

I hope Agnes, the baby and all at home are well and have plenty of food I miss them so much.

Next year with the help of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady I shall be with them, we shall have a happy y Christmas.

This evening the guards were drunk they were shaking hands with us.

We had some "Sarkay" (Nip beer) it's very sharp.

We had a good tea, salmon and mash, rice and stew and peaches.

Work tomorrow, it will be the first Boxing Day I have ever worked and I hope it is the last on.

I hear the French have been busy scuttling their Navy and A.H. has been getting sore about it, lets hope Vichy turn on him.

31st December - New Years Eve 1942

(298 Days)

At last we reach the year's end and it's been the worst year I have ever known.

I won't be sorry that it's come to a close.

I believe that the New Year (1943) is the year of peace and our release, please God.

My thoughts are turned homewards, I think of the good times I have had in the past, they will come again with the help of Almighty God.

My prayers have been heard up till now as God keeps me safe in the mine and he also gives me the strength to work as well, so that's a blessing.

We have 2 days off, one for the shift change and one for New Years Day and believe me it's a great rest.

We start the afternoon shift on Saturday 2nd January.

I am getting used to the hard work, my hands were sore at the start but now they are getting quite hard.

My health is pretty good just now but I have still got the rash.

I look forward to 1943 and home, Agnes, the baby and all those I love who are praying very hard for me night and day.

God keep them safe and well.

January 1st 1943

The day didn't start well, the Jap guards hitting some of the lads over their boots, we were up at 8 a.m.

I had gone to bed last night at 8 p.m. after my little bit of toast and I lay awake thinking of home, what they would be doing etc.

God bless them all and keep them safe. We have only had meat 3 times this month.

From the food point of view I think that things are not too good for the Japs either apparently we have to wait until the 5th to get fish, potatoes and food in general.

A big lot is going to happen this year and prayers are going to play the most important part of it all.

The weather is very cold, it's terrible.

We have 2 charcoal fires and one steam pipe but the place is very draughty and we are actually glad to get down the mine where it is warm.

We are 9 hours and 20 minutes ahead of English time so when we get up at 5.30 a.m. it's only about 8.20 p.m. at home (last house at the pictures, which I hope to see very soon.

Sunday 10th January 1943

This time last year I was with Chris Leech in Durban.

What a nice time we had.

I suppose he got home safe and was able to tell them all how he left me.

A great change has taken place since then, he is probably at home and me ... while I'm in this dump with such low spirits.

But with God's help I will get over it and get home safe and well in spite of this hard work.

The food has been poor of late, we getting these potato shavings.

We call them peelings and we get very little fish. We had a bit of meat the other night but not much. This last

couple of days the weather has been warmer.

Wednesday 13th January 1943

A queer birthday for me this year, in a prison camp.

Last year was bad enough, but this one ...!

Well never mind, with the help of the Sacred Heart and Our Lady I will get over it and will be alright.

I am getting used to the mine now but I just can't get used to the weather.

The last couple of days have been very cold, we have had a big fall of snow.

On Monday we drew our pay from 13/12/42 until 3/1/43. I received 2 yen 75 cents and I bought some soap. We have to buy our cigarettes now.

I wonder how Agnes is. I hope she is well and all at home are the same.

Perhaps by my next birthday I shall be home, all I can do is to pray hard for the War to end and to get home this year, prayers are the only consolation I have.

My health is pretty good, thank God that's a great thing, up to now 12 chaps have died here.

We will now only get butter once every 5 days. We have now been in captivity for 309 days.

Friday 15th January 1943

After another hard days work we received some good news which is as follows, our names have been sent to the Geneva Red Cross and our people will be informed by now that we are prisoners.

Thank God for that.

Further more we may be able to write home in the near future.

My prayers are being heard.

The news is a great birthday present to me and I know that Agnes and all at home will be relieved.

Sunday 31st January 1943

And so the month ends, we have today off, so thank God for the rest, we get 3 days off per month.

Of late the food has improved but still no potatoes.

Today we were told we can write home, letters have to be in as soon as possible. Thanks to God again my prayers are being answered.

I am able to manage the hard work, in order to keep fit and get

sound in wind and limb and then be able to work for Agnes and the baby.

The weather is very cold at present but it's warm down the mine.

I look forward to the spring and a reply from home to the letter I am going to write today.

And I look forward so much to the end of the War.

February 3rd 1943

This time last year we landed in Java full of hope to end the War, little dreaming that within a month we would be prisoners of War.

What a tragedy and now we have to work in a cola mine.

Well my prayers seem to get answered as my health is good and I seem to manage the work.

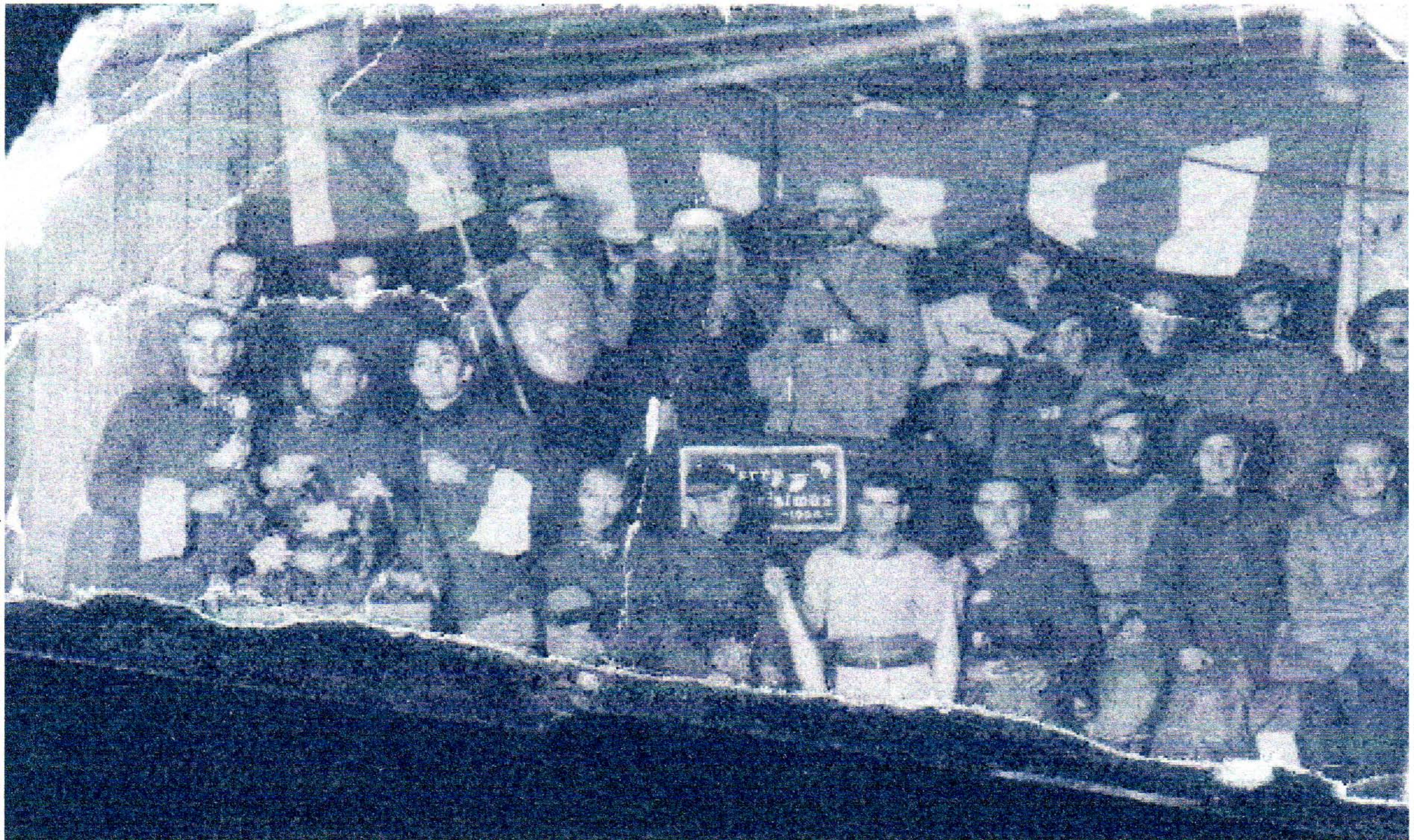
Last month I earned 11 yen and 80 cents.

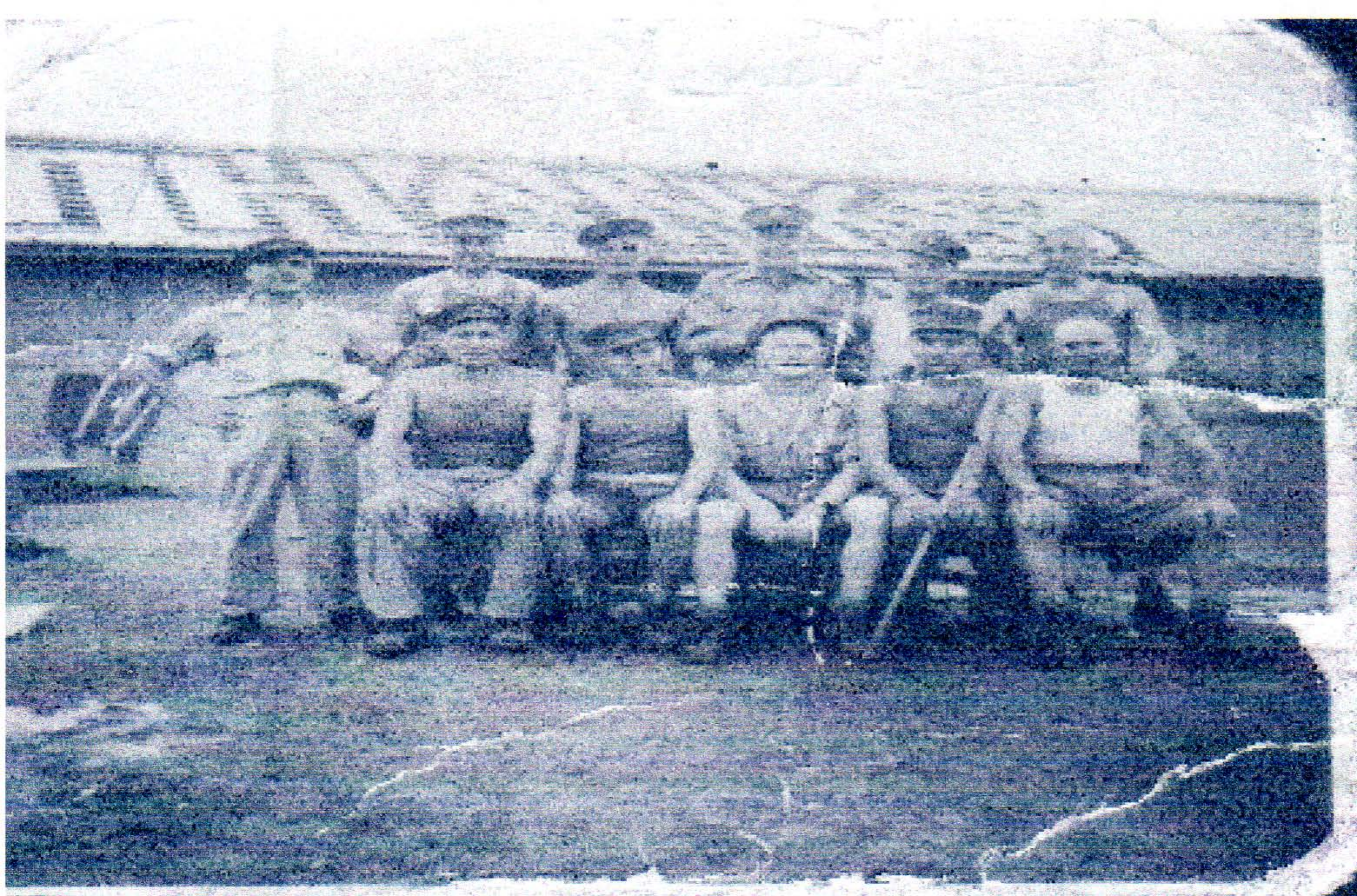
We have now got a canteen started where we can patent medicines and oranges. THE DIARY OF Gerry McGonnell

This last few nights I have been dreaming of home, I hope and pray all are well and that Agnes has been informed that I am alive and well.

I am afraid that the pieces of paper that my mother found ended abruptly here, I wonder if there was ever any more?









POST CARD

THE ADDRESS TO BE WRITTEN ON THIS SIDE.

6062

no connect

Catholic Times

83, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, W.C.2

Telegrams: Catholcus, London.

Telephone: Holborn 3644 5.

27.5.43

The following name was included in a list of British prisoners
of war broadcast to-day by VATICAN RADIO:

Mr Mc Donnell Michael

270124

Camp FUKUOKA FM Italy.

When ready please
advise Ref: 16861

U.S. AIR FORCE OFFICE
Cairo, Egypt
1945

15 10045

Dear Madam:

re T/270124 Dvr. McGonnell.

His absence to the letter sent to you on 26 AUG 48 explaining this, while it was not possible to communicate with personnel in Java, there was no reason to believe that your husband was not serving in Java with the British and allied forces still known to be fighting there; it has been decided that, in the absence of any news of his capture, it can no longer be assumed that they are still operating.

It is pointed, therefore, that your husband may be missing from the island, but that he is still alive must be assumed. On the contrary, he may eventually prove to be a prisoner of war like others, a few of whom have already been reported by the Japanese authorities - or he may still be free and at large on the island. Any information relating to him that is received will be passed to you immediately.

It may be added that selection of this category for posting purposes is not intended to suggest that the occurrence of casualties before that particular day will not be revealed in due course.

Yours faithfully,

William Robert Scott
Capt. (for

Colonel) i/o A.S.S. Records.

To:- Mrs. A.S. McGonnell,
22, Hestock Road,
Bootle,
Liverpool.

GS/XC.

Re T/270124 Dvr. McGonnell

With reference to the letter sent to you on 26th August 42 explaining that, while it was not possible to communicate with personnel in Java, there was no reason to believe that your husband was not serving in Java with the British and Allied forces still known to be fighting there, it has been decided that, in the absence of any news of these forces, it can no longer be assumed that they are still operating.

It is regretted, therefore, that your husband must be posted as missing on 1st Feb 43. This posting does not mean that hope that your husband is still alive must be abandoned. On the contrary, he may eventually prove to be a prisoner of war in Java - like others, a few of whom have already been reported by the Japanese authorities - or he may still be free and at large on the Island. Any information relating to him that is received will be passed to you immediately.

I have to add that selection of 1st February for posting purposes

Is not intended to suggest that the occurrence of casualties before that particular day will not be revealed in due course. Yours faithfully,

William Robinson

Capt. For

Colonel I/C R. A. S. C. records

No. 13261.
(In replying, please quote
above No.)

R.A.S.C. Record Office,
Hankow Station.

14 May 1943.

~~SIR OR~~ MADAM,

I have to inform you that a report has been received
from the War Office to the effect that (No.) 71270124.
(Rank) DVR. (Name) W. H. G.
(Regiment) R.A.S.C.
is a Prisoner of War IN JAPAN INDS, AT
FUKUOKA CAMP.

Should any other information be received concerning him, such
information will be at once communicated to you.

Instructions as to the method of communicating with Prisoners of
War can be obtained at any Post Office.

I am,
~~SIR OR~~ MADAM,
Your obedient Servant,

W. H. G.
Officer in charge of Records. R.A.S.C.

IMPORTANT.—Any change of your address should be immediately notified to this
Office. It should also be notified, if you receive information from the soldier above, that
his address has been changed.

FROM:

P.O. No. 155.

Name

M.G. McDonnell.

Nationality

British.

Rank

Driver.

Camp

Fukuoka War Prisoners Camp,
No. 2, Makenaho, Japan.

向英國寄

TO :

Mrs. M.G. McDonnell,
22 Instock Road,
Bootle,
Liverpool 20,
ENGLAND.

寄 往 英 國

Handwritten red markings and a faint circular stamp, possibly a postmark or administrative mark.

編岡俘虜收容所俘虜郵便

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY



Dear Agnes,

I am keeping in good health and spirits,
but I am anxious for news of you all at home.
My love to you and baby and all at home.
Please on to Dad hope you are all well and

10.11.44.

Gerrard.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to be 'Gerrard', is written over the typed name. The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized.

便郵處所收容俘虜國

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY



Dear Agnes,

I am fit, well. Hope you are the same. I
hear about baby's death, cousin Moran's. Glad
Dad's OK and all at home. Keep praying hard
and time will come when I shall arrive home.
Love,

18/8/44.

Gerrard.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Gerrard", is written below the typed name. The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the bottom.

FROM: P.O.W. No. 155.
Name: McGonnel M.G.
Nationality: British.
Rank: Driver.
Camp: Quarters for the Captured,
No. 2, Hakensho,
Fukuoka Camps,
Japan.

保身郵便

TO :
Mrs. M.G. McGonnel,
22 Ibstock Road,
Bootle,
Liverpool 20.,
ENGLAND.

RECEIVED
MAY 1945

Received
MAY 1945

County of Bootle

1939

Borough

1945

The Committee of the Mayor's
SERVICES WELCOME HOME FUND

on behalf of the Townspeople of Bootle, express
their deep appreciation of the service rendered by

The Council

during the Great War of 1939-1945 against the
Forces of Aggression, and express their Best Wishes
for future Happiness and Prosperity

on behalf of the Committee

W. Keenan

Mayor

軍郵郵便

FROM:

Name

Nationality

Rank

Camp

McCormick,
British.
Driver.
Sumner.

RETURNED IN
UNDELIVERED
MAILS FROM JAPAN.

軍がは郵便

TO :

Mrs. J. A. McCormick,
22, Westwood Road,
Bottle,
Liverpool, En.
England.



便郵處俘收容所處俘同歸

IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY



Dear Agnes,

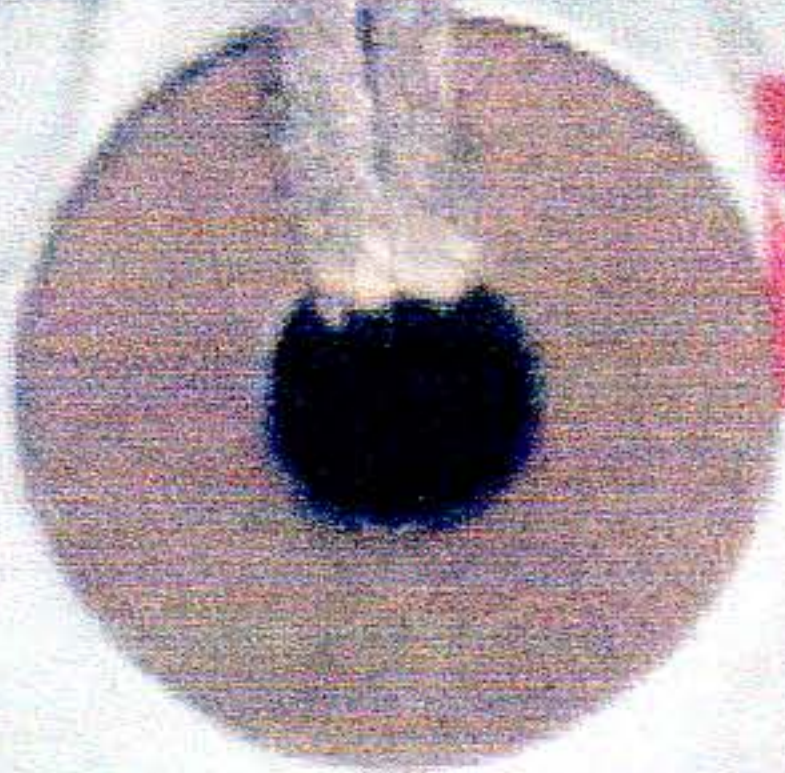
I am ill and well, hoping you are likewise. I see Chris is doing well with his boys. I hope Dad and Aileen are well. Give them my love and pray for me to return home.

Love,

Wynne, 1944.

Gerard.

Gerard



13507

U. S. NAVY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT UNIT SAIL PATIENT'S IDENTITY TAG

FROM
U.S.S. CONSOLATION (AH 15) HOSPITAL

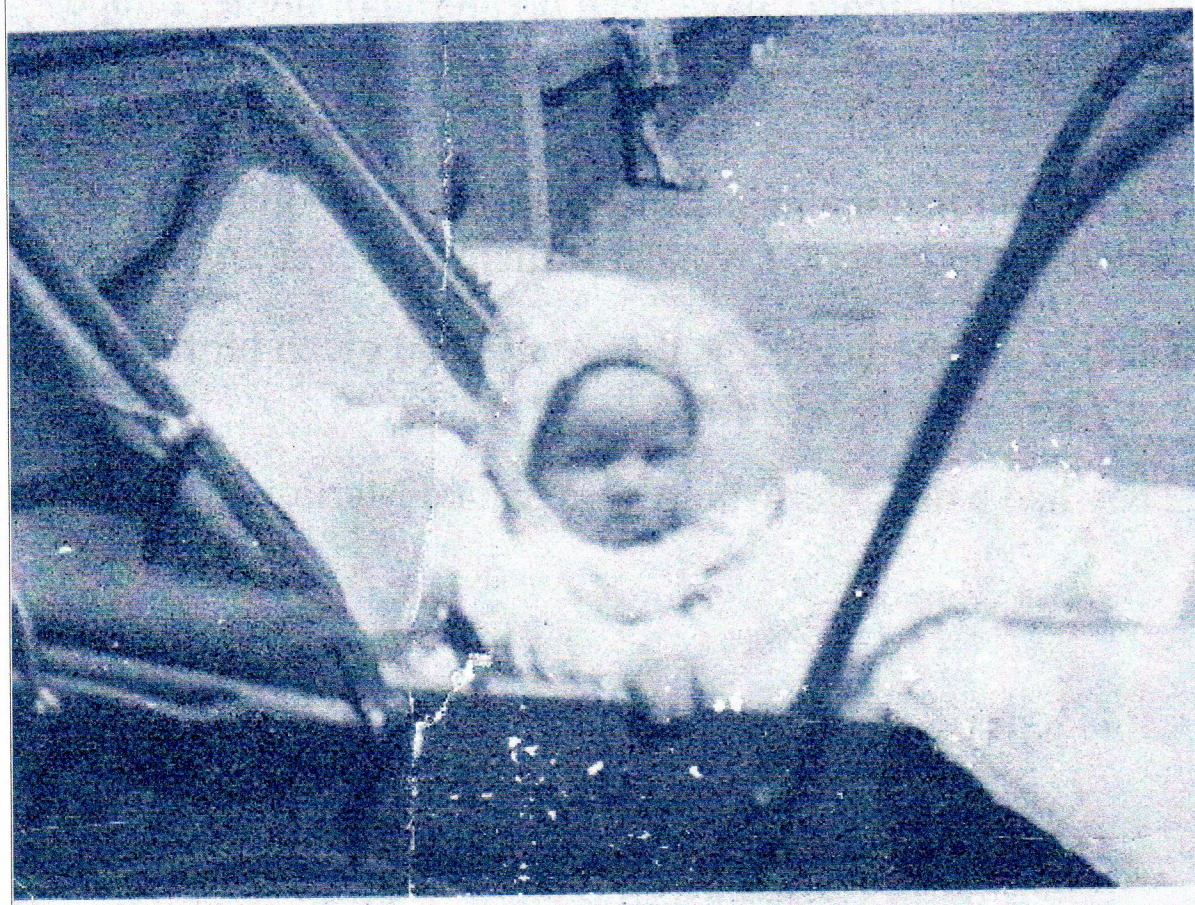
NAME
M^cGONNELL MICHAEL GERARD

| NUMBER | RANK OR RATE | BRANCH—ORG. |
|----------|--------------|-------------|
| T/270124 | DRIVER | BRITISH |

DIAGNOSIS
NO DISEASE

| CLASSIFICATION | CABIN OR COMPT. No. |
|--|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> IA <input type="checkbox"/> IB <input type="checkbox"/> IC <input type="checkbox"/> II <input type="checkbox"/> III <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IV | S.O.Q. A-2 BUNK No. 71 |

TIE THIS TAG TO PATIENT'S WRIST



Notes from John Fletcher re his uncle, Gerry McGonnell

From Aug. 10, 2013:

When my aunt passed away some years ago, we found what looked like tissue paper. My mother was about to throw it out until she noticed that it had writing on. It is a diary kept (and hidden from the japs) of his time as a POW in Ube camp.

My brother has transcribed as much as he can and there are photos and images that may of be of interest to your organisation. As there is so much info, I would have to send it on multiple e mails and you can open them all up.
John Fletcher

I hope you got all the files ok, he was my uncle and we called him by his middle name Gerry, a devout Catholic as you will see and it seems that his faith kept him going through some very enduring times. They were a different class of men in those days and I am grateful to you for allowing me the opportunity to record his time in incarceration as a tribute to my uncle Gerry and thousands like him who endured that kind of treatment so that we today can be free. A great man and although I was only six when he passed away is still cherished in our hearts today.

What a letter to receive when you are desperate for news. A few months later she finally received word from the government that Gerry was in fact alive and a prisoner of War.

I am sure that Gerry's first letter to find out how his wife and child were must have been pages and pages long. Asking what his child looked like, how his father was - he must have had so many thoughts and questions that he wanted to pour out onto paper, but the following postcard I all that Agnes received from him. It was obviously severely doctored by the Japanese.

It reads:

Dear Agnes,

I am keeping in good health and spirits but I am anxious for news of you all at home.

My love to you and baby and all at home.

Pass on to Dad hope you are all well and healthy.

Gerrard.

Unfortunately we never found any of the replies from Agnes whether they were actual letters or an abbreviated form like the Japanese post cards we will never know. All we have are the postcards Gerry sent. This one is obviously when he had news of the death of Marie (the daughter he never met). He must have been absolutely broken-hearted. It says: I am fit, well. Hope you are the same. Sorry hear about Baby's death, cousin Norah's. Glad Dad's OK and all at home. Keep praying hard for me and time will come when I shall arrive home.

Love, Gerrard.

February 1943 was the last entry in the diary my mother found, when he was praying hard to be released. Yet in December 1944 he was still a prisoner. This was the postcard Agnes received. This one reads:

Dear Agnes,

I am fit and well, hoping you are likewise. I see Chris is doing well with his boys. I hope Dad and Eileen are well.

Give them my love and pray for me to return home.

Love, Gerrard

The Catholic times must have also been looking out for any news as this postcard was received.

Once the Japanese realized that the war was coming to an end, they started to let the prisoners have some privileges and took the following photos. Notice the word thanks on the roof.

The US liberated him and gave him the following identity tag. He must have been elated when they arrived and he knew for sure he was going home. Sadly when he got back to Liverpool, this certificate was all he was given as a thank you for all of the hardships he suffered.

This is a photo of my uncle Gerry before capture and a photo of his daughter Marie whom he never saw. A truly remarkable and religious man who in my opinion has been an inspiration to me and my family despite his early death. Thank you for publishing this diary in the hope that others may see the sacrifices made by Gerry's generation and hopefully inspires other to do great things for mankind.