

Towards the end of 1937, Robert was due 9 months leave. A colleague of his, Fred Winterton, had recently arrived back in Hong Kong with his new bride Florence. Robert thought that Florence was very pretty and asked if had any sisters. She had. So Robert (who was now nick-named Roy for some reason) arranged to stay with Florence's family, in London for part of his leave.

He applied for his first passport (more later) from which we can see he sailed from Hong Kong in November 1937 to the UK via the Suez Canal



Mr & Mrs. C. Leadbeater
request the pleasure of

company at the marriage
of their daughter

Constance

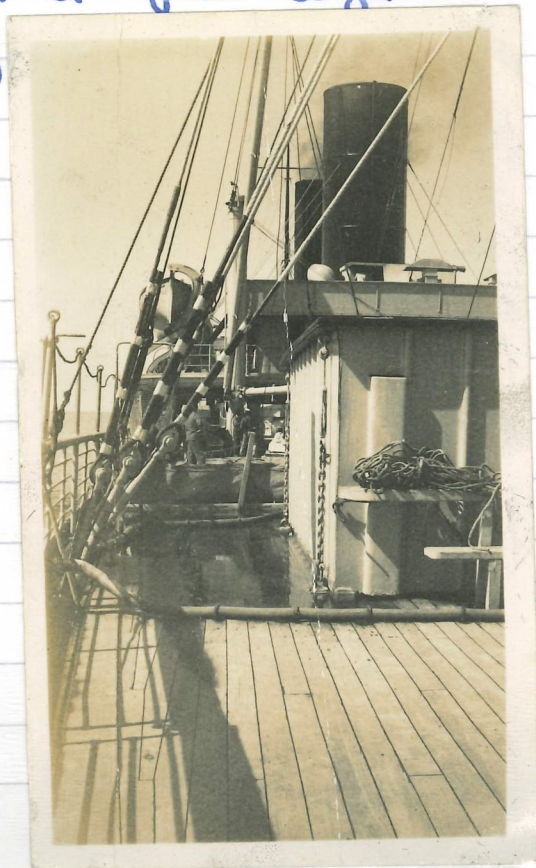
He immediately fell in love with Constance, Florence's younger sister and they were engaged ten days later. The wedding invitations were sent out and they were married on 5th June 1938.

P.S. only found

After a short honeymoon in South Wales, Connie and Robert sailed on the P & O liner CHITRA (Grandma told me that) to Hong Kong, arriving in August 1938.

It should be remembered that Japan had been in control of China since 1933 and Japanese troops were stationed on Hong Kong's border.

The UK declared war on Germany in September 1939. Life in Hong Kong went on much the same as before, but early in 1940 the Government decided to evacuate all British women and children to Australia. Single women and married women without children were allowed to stay. However, Connie was pregnant with her first baby and was evacuated along with her sister Florence, who by that time had two daughters, by sea. First to Manila in the Philippines and then on to Sydney where they rented a flat together. Robert remained in Hong Kong.



On 7th December 1941 Japan attacked Pearl Harbour, the American naval base in Hawaii without a declaration of war. The next day Japanese troops poured across Hong Kong's border from China and Hong Kong surrendered on Christmas Day 1941.

Robert was captured in Stanley along with his brother-in-law Fred Winterton, who had had his right hand blown off by a hand grenade. They were imprisoned in Stanley Prison - the very prison they were warders at. Connie and Florence had no news at all on the fate of either Robert or Fred. In March 1942 Connie received a letter from the Red Cross (see over) giving no news at all.

Eventually a letter came through from Robert (see over). He had to sound cheerful and had to write in capitals so that his Japanese captors could read it. Connie then wrote two letters (which have not survived) which are acknowledged in Robert's next letter from the internment camp (following letter)

He says he has heard from Beat (his real mother). Her letter is included after Robert's.