

Carol managed to track down an elderly lady who lived next door to Vera (born three years before Robert) for most of her married life. She remembered very clearly that Vera told her that in 1927 when Robert was 19 he and Vera had had a violent argument which ended with Vera telling Robert about his parentage and that she was his aunt, not his sister.

Robert was very upset by this revelation and immediately left home to enlist as a bandsman in the army, joining the South Wales Borderers.

It is not hard to see how confused Robert was. The woman whom he had thought of as his mother had died eighteen months previously (see opposite). Not only that, but Beatrice, his real mother, had married Edward J. May in 1912 and they had a son Alfred. Edward had been killed in the first world war and in 1920 Beatrice married Earnest Southcott. They moved to 65 Ruskin street, Briton Ferry. (where the previously mentioned Connie Jennings nee Southcott was born in 1922) - only half a mile away.

After initial training in Brecon, Robert sailed with his regiment to Palestine in 1928.

Palestine was a British Protectorate at the time, and was then, as it always has been, a very unstable place. My father told me that my grandfather was near the King David Hotel in Jerusalem when Zionists blew it up. Not very nice for your first trip abroad.

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

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.


Mr & Mrs. C. Leadbeater
request the pleasure of

company at the marriage
of their daughter

Constance
with
Mr. Robert Sidney Rosen
at the

St. Clements Parish Church,
Ilford

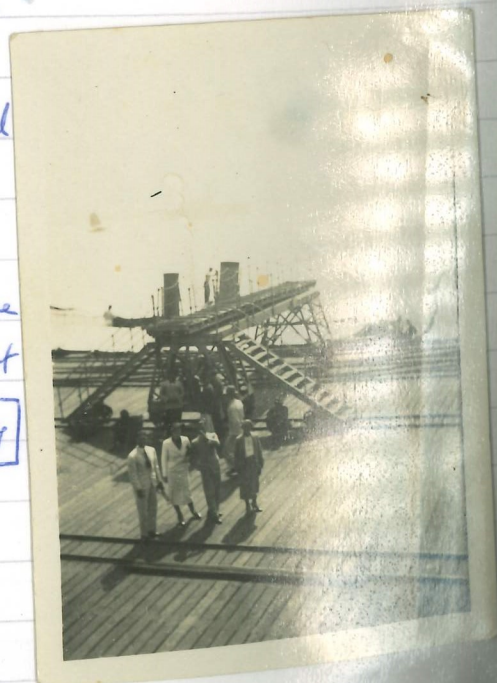
on Sunday, June 5th 1938
at 1 p.m.

and afterwards at
32, Gordon Road, Ilford.

R.S.V.P.

[P.S. only found
today, dated
13-11-37 -

Fred and Florence
waving Robert
off from 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.