

Memorandum – Surrender of the Japanese – 15th August 1945

15th August 2025, marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Pacific war, the 'forgotten' war, when so many allied soldiers were killed and many suffered terrible treatment by the Japanese as POWs.

Two of my mother's brother-in-laws died during the fighting: one executed after surrendering and the other sent out to attack the Japanese after the actual surrender of Hong Kong had been announced by the Governor.

My mother's elder brother died in Japan as a POW in March 1945, after being transferred from the Military Internment Camp at Shamshuipo, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Our family, father, mother, elder brother, younger sister and I resided at "Bellemere," my father's first personally owned home in the New Territories, Hong Kong, 10 miles from the Kowloon ferry terminal. We had to depart hurriedly on Monday, morning 8th December 1941, when the Japanese attacked Hong Kong, taking only what my father's Willy's 7 could carry. The intermediary bridges were to be destroyed to delay their advance.

If you can imagine leaving your fully furnished home on a Monday and finally returning after an absence of 1379 days, to find on 17 September 1945, only the walls and roof remaining. Everything had been looted, including the steel-framed windows and parquet flooring – and there was NO COMPENSATION for our parents!

Our father George A V Hall, Sergeant, Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps ('HKVDV') was interned in the Military Camp at Shamshuipo, Kowloon, while my mother Mabel, elder brother Michael, younger sister Sheila and I (Peter) were interned in the Civilian Camp at Stanley on the southern end of Hong Kong Island, for the duration of the war.

In my father's war-time diary he stated in 1945:

August 14 – *"Working party at Grampian Road (near Kowloon City), saw Ed Lee and his wife and George Lee on both outward and inward march and they were equally definite with the 'V' sign. I am quite convinced peace has been declared."*

August 15 (Wednesday) – *"about noon the Japs and Formosans listened to a radio broadcast. Working parties returned with the emphatic statement that the war is over, the Japanese have surrendered. I'll be with Mabel and children by Saturday."*

August 16 – *"Surrender of Japan confirmed in local newspapers."*

August 18 – *"Mabel's 41st birthday. 8:00 am hoisting of the Union Jack. Ruby arrives in camp (George's elder sister), one of the early ones."*

August 20 (Monday) – *"Re-union with family. Mabel grown a little older with lines of care and anxieties written clearly on her face. Michael same height as Mabel, 1st in class. Peter full of life and Sheila non-stop talker, seedy – all grown."*

September 2 – *"Entered name for leaving colony with wife and children. Ultimate destination UK."*

George visited Stanley another seven times, then on September 10 met Mabel in town.

In Stanley, we also heard rumours about the surrender of Japan, but for some time could not find out anything definite. The Japanese were still in charge, but there were no more weekly Parades and we didn't see any Japanese about the camp.

Before the Pacific war and during the battle for Hong Kong, Mabel was working for the Special Intelligence Service, an overseas branch of MI6, as a morse code operative. Sending and receiving message from the UK via Singapore.

I can only presume that George found out via one of these later messages from a friend that as the UK was still on rations, it might be better to go to Australia.

September 10 - *"Empress of Australia" left with most POWs for the UK.*

September 22 - *"Called at HKVDC HQ and signed up to go away to Australia."*

September 25 (Tuesday) - *"All left Stanley camp on minesweeper HMS "Strahan" for Holt's Wharf, boarded escort carrier HMS "Striker" for Sydney, Australia."*

October 9 (Tuesday) - *"Berthed 8:30 am Pyrmont, Sydney. Afternoon arrived at Red Cross home "Glen Mervyn" with family."*

My sister Sheila was unwell, and at the Children's Hospital in Sydney. On November 2 she was diagnosed as suffering from tonsillitis, beri beri and glandular fever. She remained in hospital until December 23, 1945.

In Jack Edward's book, "Banzai you Bastards," pages 263 & 264 he stated:

*"Without the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, I and my comrades would have been their slaves and victims for years only to be murdered * as the allies landed."*

* After the war on a return to Kinkaseki, a Japanese written order was found stating all POWs would be killed if there were any allied landings.

"I feel no remorse for what the Americans did to Japan. I only regret they did not do it sooner. Where are the annual messages of condolences to the dead and my comrades and their wives, children and relatives of those who died stopping the monsters. Why do you not thank the men and their leaders who saved the lives of your fathers and brothers, and many of your mothers and sisters, by quickly ending a war wrought by an insane and blood-thirsty war machine?"

The Japanese of today should not be punished for the wrongs of their ancestors. The allies rebuilt Japan, Germany and Italy. Nobody rebuilt our lives. I am willing to forgive. None of us should forget."

Jack was serving with the Royal Corps of Signals when he was captured in Singapore in 1942. He was then sent with many other service POWs to the infamous Kinkaseki POW camp in Taiwan, one of the worst camps in the whole of Asia - working down a copper mine.

Peter was working as company secretary with The Hongkong Land Co., Ltd. in the 1970s, when Jack joined the company, and they became good friends.