

Peter finally wins fight for fairness

EXCLUSIVE
By KEVIN CORE

SIXTY-ONE years after being held captive by the Japanese, Peter Hall's debt of honour has finally been paid.

The Heswall 71-year-old has campaigned since the government told him he was ineligible for a £10,000 payment to internees which was announced by Tony Blair in November 2000.

The War Pensions Agency rejected his claim on the grounds that a British citizen had to have been born in the UK or have had a parent or grandparent born in the UK.

Wirral News Group highlighted the injustice because, while Mr Hall's grandparents and parents were born in Hong Kong, they all held British passports and were classed as British subjects until the British Nationality Act of 1949.

The government moved the goal posts yet again when they said recipients had to have been resident in the UK for 20 years between January 1, 1945 and November 7, 2000, when the award was announced.

Despite working abroad, Mr Hall has now proved his resi-



● Peter Hall with some of the 60 letters sent during his long campaign

Code ph110906k2

ency and his payment was received last week - final recognition for the four years he spent as a child prisoner along with his family who lost everything.

He said: "I eventually had to send them my employment contract which showed that Hong Kong Land Company, which I worked for, had paid for my family's passage back to England, and these were not simply holidays in the UK.

"The dates clearly added up

to more than the 20 years they had stipulated.

"On October 14 they phoned me to say I now qualified and they were sending the cheque, but I was careful not to say anything to anyone until the money was in my bank!

"I've no plans for the money, but we did buy a new fridge and at the time I thought 'thank you Veterans Agency'.

"The letter referred to the 'unique circumstances of my

captivity' - but other than that it was the same as the letter my brother received.

"Now I'm going to make sure my sister gets paid - three of us were interned together so why is one of us not receiving the payment?

"I'm asking them to show a bit of humanity and compassion. Not everyone keeps paperwork the way I do, and I'm hoping she doesn't have to jump through the hoops that I did."

'Odd to have your Britishness questioned'

THE government of the day had no doubts as to the citizenship of the Hall family during the war.

George Hall, Peter's father was a sergeant in the Hong Kong Defence Force and fought in the Battle for Hong Kong in 1941, only to be imprisoned separately from his family.

His wife Mabel was even employed by MI6 as a code transcriber.

Until the British Nationality Act of 1949, British subject status extended to all those who owed allegiance to the Crown - including the colonies.

Announcing the award in 2000, Tony Blair said: "It's hard for someone of my generation to understand your suffering.

"You saw the very worst of human nature, and yet I think you showed the best of human nature."

Speaking earlier this year, Peter Hall said: "It seems odd to have your Britishness questioned when you hold a British passport, your father fought the Japanese and your mother worked for MI6."



● Peter Hall and Ben Chapman at the cenotaph in Port Sunlight

Code HA

MP's support appreciated

PETER Hall this week paid tribute to his MP for his help in his campaign.

He said: "It has taken six long years to argue the case to the Ministry of Defence to make good its debt of honour.

"Mr Chapman has worked hard on my behalf and I would like to pay tribute to his efforts, which I am sure were instrumental in keeping the issue uncomfortably near the top of the MoD's agenda.

The MP added: "This is fantastic news for Mr Hall and his brother - albeit the campaign I conducted should never have been necessary.

"Myriad qualifications and caveats to do with the qualifying criteria cannot diminish the fact that Mr Hall and others were interned precisely because they were British.

"That this was in effect denied for years was wrong. But we seemed to have reached a satisfactory conclusion, and I like to think my efforts helped this."

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The Right Honourable Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1A 2AA

13 August 2002

Dear Prime Minister

Re: Ex-gratia payments to Far East ex-civilian POWs

I went into Stanley POW Civilian/Military Internment Camp in January 1942 with jaundice, having been left behind with a doctor and nurse in rat-infested quarters in Victoria, when my mother, brother, sister and other POWs were initially transported to Stanley on the southern part of Hong Kong island. During our period of internment I had malaria six times; suffered from asthma and chronic bronchitis (with no suitable medication). In fact, my mother with two of her friends sat with me, taking turns, for 24 hours of the day with their warm hands on my chest, to help to relieve my wheezing and breathing difficulties. Occurrences of my breathing difficulties will remain with me for the rest of my life due to the damage to my bronchial tubes during internment.

My elder brother Michael nearly went blind with trachoma. After a successful scraping operation with very basic surgical equipment, his eyesight was saved by our late mother's diamond engagement ring! Through the camp black market, she exchanged it for 30 ducks eggs. The nutritional value in these eggs gave my brother the necessary calories to recover. He also suffered from severe sinusitis and during an operation was held down by nurses (there was no anaesthetic), as the doctor broke through to the inflammation with a metal tube. He now suffers from 'white coat' syndrome - his blood pressure soars if he has to attend any hospital.

My younger sister Sheila suffered from rheumatic fever, scurvy, malaria and nearly died from dysentery. Immediately after the war after our repatriation to Australia, whilst my father, mother, brother and I were billeted in a Red Cross camp west of Sydney, my sister went straight into hospital suffering from rheumatic fever, beri beri and tonsillitis. She had been poorly for a long time through lack of proper nourishment in the internment camp.

Yes, we did suffer, and YOUR GOVERNMENT is still trying to deny us your promised DEBT OF HONOUR.

Yours sincerely

* Sally Merriman and Elsie Murphy.



PETER A HALL

* According to Sheila, I offered her prized collection of cowrie shells in the knowledge I would get them back after she died!

Please ensure the Prime Minister reads this letter.

One of the numerous letters I wrote to the P.M. and Chris Booth, and continued to write each month (Wof August 2001).

Peter Arthur Hall, FCA

Peter Arthur Hall was born in Hong Kong on 16 January 1935, the younger son of George A V Hall, FRIBA and Mabel Hall (nee Gittins).

He was educated first in Hong Kong and then in Sydney, Australia, after internment in Stanley POW Camp, Hong Kong during the Pacific war.

After a year at Mowbray House School, Chatswood, he attended Sydney Grammar School from 1947 to 1952.

In Peter's final year at Grammar, he only managed passes in History 'A' and 'B's' in English and Economics in the leaving certificate.

In 1952, he was a school prefect, house captain (boarding house at Randwick); 1st XI 1951 & 1952, winner of the Gunning Shield 1952; 1st Tennis team 1951 & 1952, captain and school singles champion 1952; 1st XV 1952, and member of the Games Committee.

Peter completed his secondary education in Hong Kong in 1954, then headed for England to study accountancy.

In 1955, he was articled to John Foster Allan, FCA., partner in W E & H R Stacy in Liverpool and passed his final examination in 1962; married his fiancée Elizabeth Ann Williamson, SRN., SCM., on 17 November 1962, and left for Hong Kong to start work with Lowe, Bingham & Matthews, chartered accountants on 1 January 1963.

While in Liverpool, he played cricket in the 1st XI for the Sefton Cricket Club in the Liverpool Competition from 1955-1961.

On 1 July 1967, Peter joined The Hongkong Land Co., Ltd., as assistant secretary, the first chartered accountant to work for this public property company since its incorporation in 1889. On 1 July 1970, he was appointed company secretary and remained as such until he retired on his 55th birthday on 16 January 1990.

In Hong Kong, Peter had been a member of the Kowloon Cricket Club since 1953; played cricket and tennis for the club until he retired in 1990. Vice-President 1986-89.

Played cricket for Hong Kong 1963-1971; chairman of selectors 1976-1990; President Hong Kong Umpires & Scorers Association 1988-89.

Member of the following cricket clubs:

Life Member	Kowloon CC
do	Sefton CC
do (paid)	M.C.C. (Lord's)
do. (paid)	Cheshire CCC
Hon Life Member	Hong Kong CC
do	Hong Kong Cricket Association
President, Merseyside Cricket Society, 2009-10 & from 2016-07 to 2022-23.	

Member of the Society of Genealogists from 1 October 1981

Author of the following:

A History of the Kowloon Cricket Club, 1979
In the Web, Hong Kong Eurasian History, 1992, updated 2012
150 Years of Cricket in Hong Kong, 1998
Sefton CC, President's & Captain's 1860-2003
300 Old Sydneians who died WW1, brief histories. (SGS Archives)

Peter and Betty had two married sons, David & Lee and Peter & Rhian and a daughter Sarah & partner Tony, together with two grandchildren, Kirsten and Megan, and great grandson Arthur, son of Kirsten & Liam Rowley.