

CORPORAL DOUGLAS ARTHUR WOOD

Service Number: 5051796

Enlisted: 1st Battalion Northamptonshire Regiment

Born: 1918

Died: 22nd February 1945, Aged 27

Memorials: Taukkyan War Cemetery, Myanmar, Burma
Plot 27, Row H, Collective Grave 1-17

Burbage War Memorial

Wesleyan Memorial



Douglas Wood was born in the last year of WW1 in 1918. In 1939, at the age of 21, he married local girl Kate Hill, whose parents were stewards at the Constitutional Club, at the Wesleyan Church in Burbage.



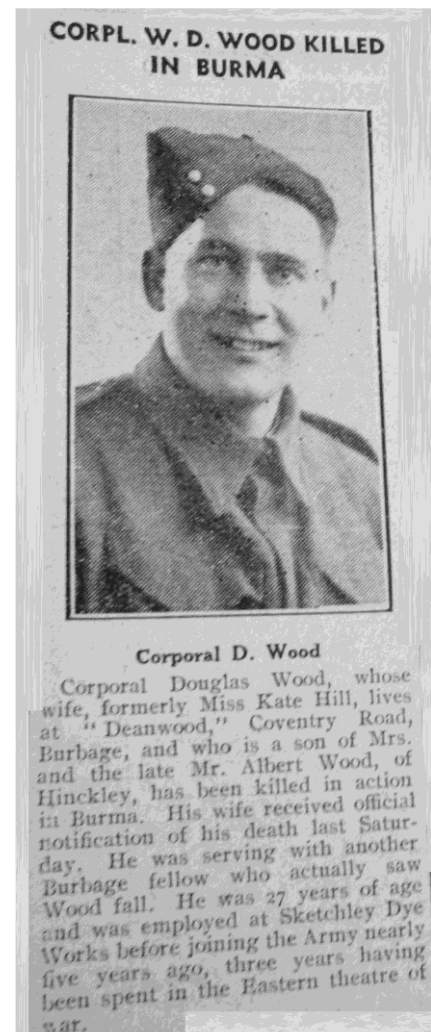
Kate was a nursing auxiliary at Hinckley Hospital and Douglas worked at the Sketchley Dye Works. Just eight months after their wedding Douglas was called up in 1940. After two years' service at various postings, Douglas was sent out east in 1942. In late 1944 and early 1945, the allied army launched offensives into Burma intending to recover the country including Rangoon the capital from the Japanese before the onset of the Monsoon in May.

The Japanese Burma Area Army attempted to forestall the main allied attack on the centre of the country by withdrawing their troops behind the Irrawaddy River. They hoped the allies lines of communications would be overstretched trying to cross this obstacle. However, the advancing British Fourteenth Army switched its axis of advance to outflank the main Japanese armies.

During February and March, the Fourteenth Army secured bridgeheads across the Irrawaddy on the abroad front. On 1st March units of IV corps captured the supply centre of Meiktila

throwing the Japanese into disarray and turning the tide of the war in Burma.

Unfortunate Douglas did not live to see this as he was shot walking through the jungle by a Japanese sniper and killed instantly on 22nd February 1945.



Douglas was buried at the largest of the three war cemeteries, Taukkyan in Burma. Some years after the war, Kate his widow married Fred Chandler who had been with Douglas when he died. They had two sons the eldest named Douglas.



In 1985, Kate was selected along with a hundred other war widows and veterans to tour around Singapore and Burma and visited many of the war cemeteries. The visit was organised by the Royal British Legion.

Some forty years after he had died Kate finally visited her husband's grave where she saw the inscription she had chosen for his stone 'Worthy of everlasting remembrance'.

In 1996, the Burbage War Memorial Gardens were replanted and Kate contributed to the fund. In 1999, the actual memorial was renovated and new gates added.

Throughout her long life, Kate never missed a Remembrance Day Service and always laid a wreath. After her death in 2003, the family have carried on this tradition.

There are two memorials to Douglas in the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Burbage. One a large copper plaque attached to the communion table with the names of the four Methodists that were killed in WWII, F Holyoak, H Letts, H Howkins and D Wood. Kate rescued this from a skip when the church was being renovated and was eventually reinstated in the Church in 2004



Kate Chandler (formerly Wood)



Wesleyan Methodist Church Memorial

MY PILGRIMAGE TO SINGAPORE AND BURMA by Kate Chandler

We flew out from Brize Norton RAF Station on a Tristar, after spending overnight there, where we were made very welcome, and introduced and mingled with all the war widows, war veterans, British Legion, Medical Staff and the support party, who all made us most welcome and were magnificent in every way.

As it was my first time on a plane, let alone going to the Far East, I was very nervous, but I put my trust in God and the RAF Plane Crew and settled down to enjoy the flight.

We travelled over France, where we had some turbulence over the French Alps, then over Egypt where we had a good view of the River Nile at 35,000 feet up, the Co-Pilot taking a photograph for me from the cockpit.

Afterwards, flying round the coast of India, the Pilot told us we couldn't fly over India as it was an RAF plane.

Our first stop was at Bahrein, where we were allowed off for about 1½ hours. Our next stop was at Bangkok, where the Thailand party disembarked for their pilgrimage; we were allowed off for an hour.

Getting on the plane again, this time for Singapore.

We all disembarked at Singapore and were taken to the "Oberoe Imperial Hotel" which was a lovely Hotel with all modern conveniences.

We stayed at Singapore for 2 days, being taken round the shops, with a tour round the Island and a meal at "Raffles Hotel".

On Friday morning, we were to be up early for "The Burma Party" to be taken to Burma, about two hours flying time. Arriving at Rangoon Airport we had a bumpy descent, as an RAF Tristar had never been to Rangoon before, as it was such a small air field. After an hour or so, we were allowed out of the airport and met by the British Embassy Staff, who took us to our Hotel for our stay in Burma, which was the "Inya Lanke Hotel".

Burma is a very poor country, unlike Singapore, and we were not allowed to stay any longer than 4 days, it being a communist country, and trying to be self-supporting, but the Embassy staff said they were trying to westernise them, but it would take a very long time, as the Burmese were quite content to live like that.

On Saturday we had a Memorial Service at Rangoon War Memorial, where the weather was very hot and sticky, afterwards being taken to HM Consul & Mrs. Smallman's residence for a reception, then on the Taukkyan War Cemetery (They told us this was the largest cemetery in the Far East) for a private visit, so we could find where our former husband's graves were "War Graves Commission" always at hand to help you.

Such a beautiful cemetery, with shrubs and bushes at each grave, 26,000 in all, with thousands with no names, just "A Soldier, known only to God". I found my former husband's grave (Cpl. D. A. Wood), and placed on it 2 crosses, one for myself and one for my late husband Fred, who I know would have wished it, as he would have been eligible to have gone had he lived, as Fred was along with Doug all the way through the Burma Campaign, and with him when he was killed.

Sunday

Today, we had a lie in, Breakfast being 8.30.a.m. and able to choose which place of worship to attend. Four of us went to the British Methodist Church, by special bus, from the Hotel. It was a lovely little church, the service being organised by the Burmese boys and girls, as it was International Youth Year.

After lunch, we were taken again by bus, to the Schwebegon Pagoda where we had to take off our shoes, and walk up 98 steps to get to it. It was like a small village, I understand it was the Burmese religion to give all their money to pay for the gold which over the years is used for keeping the Pagodas in good repair.

In the evening it was our Memorial Service at Rangoon Cathedral, 7.30.p.m. It was filled to overflowing with a lot of Burmese people there, as well as Mr. Michael Hesseltine and all the Heads of State. The service coincided with the service at Burbage Methodist, as we were 8½ hours in front of British time, so now I would like to thank Rev. D. Cooper for remembering me in his prayers on that day.

Monday 11th November

Up at 5.30.a.m. (woken up by Buglers playing Reveille) for our service at Taukkyan War Cemetery at 8 a.m.

This was a lovely service but very emotional, afterwards we were able to place a wreath on our husband's grave with the words ringing in our ears, as the Burma Star War veteran recited the epitaph on the Kohima Memorial

When you go home
Tell them of us, and say,
For your Tomorrow, we gave our Today

So after a sad, but memorable journey and also feeling at peace, knowing now where they are buried, I walk up the steps to the plane for home with the hymn

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform

And I thank God and all the support staff, for me being well and able to make it such a memorable pilgrimage, one which I shall never ever forget.



Taukkyan War Cemetery