

Transcript

00:00:00 Speaker 1

This is Andrew Hemmings talking to Jill Gore at Porthcawl Museum on the 11th of July 2023.

00:00:12 Speaker 2

What what what I have here is a document that was picked up by my father, who was a Japanese prisoner of war. On the top of the document. He's written in pencil, 'Dropped by B29 on our camp. August 29th, 1945. Ikuno.' And I know that's in Osaka and I think the camp was labelled 4B. And the approximate time that he dad picked it up was 1300 hours.

00:00:47 Speaker 2

And it's a letter saying that the Japanese government has surrendered and that prisoners will be evacuated by Allied nations for Allied nations as soon as possible.

00:01:03 Speaker 2

There are bits of information about the packs that were going to be dropped onto the prison camps, and what I found really interesting was the caution that said, 'Do not overeat or over medicate', which considering these men had been in prison for 3 1/2 years under terrible conditions, that was a bit rich really, wasn't it?

00:01:28 Speaker 2

What was interesting, apparently, that my father, Ivor David, was quite near to one of the drops that came down and when he opened it, it was jam and toothpaste, which he mixed and ate and said it was the best meal he'd had for 3 1/2 years.

00:01:49 Speaker 3

Thank you. Did he say anymore about his time as a prisoner of war of the Japanese?

00:01:58 Speaker 2

Not an awful lot. You will know that the government of the time had issued instructions to all the prisoners not to talk about it. And the reason they gave was it would be too upsetting for the relatives of those who had come back to hear the stories, and also too upsetting for those who've lost men out in Japan.

00:02:26 Speaker 2

But it's only little snippets that I heard. I do know that when my father was ill, and he was ill from the age of 47 until his death when he was 58, he'd had several coronary thromboses and other problems. And whenever he was ill, in his mind, he was always back in Japan, and that was very distressing for me as a teenager and a young girl to to listen to him shouting and using some Japanese phrases as well.

00:03:05 Speaker 3

So why do you think it was important to share your story and objects with us?

00:03:11 Speaker 2

Well, if you don't share the stories and and show what you've got as a as a memory, it's going to be wiped from people's memories and they won't know about it. So I do feel quite strongly about this, that people should know what was happening at at certain times.

00:03:32 Speaker 2

For example, I was told that in Japanese history, the time of World War 2 and what happened with the Japanese to the Allies, that that was wiped from the history books. There might have been a sentence literally just saying 'we did what we did for our country' or something similar.

00:03:59 Speaker 3

Feel when you think about this?

00:04:02 Speaker 2

I'm I'm in horror. I I cannot believe how cruel people can be to one another and it gives me immense, immense sadness, but horror more than anything, that this could happen. And we know this sort of thing is still happening worldwide, so lessons really haven't haven't been learned, but man's, I've often said, man's inhumanity to fellow man is is something else.

00:04:39 Speaker 3

OK.

00:04:42 Speaker 3

So how did you, next question, how did you learn about the the story and the objects?

00:04:49 Speaker 2

Ohh well.

00:04:52 Speaker 2

Bear in mind, my my dad died 50 years ago in 1972, and I was just nine years of age when he was first ill and then he died in 1972, just after my 21st birthday, I had a period of time where I could I could find out various things, but most of what I found out has happened after his death, by doing research, by looking things up. With the small amount of information we have, I've been able to pierce some things together.

00:05:29 Speaker 2

The National Archives have given me his liberation questionnaire, which I didn't even know existed, and I I belong to an online group called COFEPOW (Children of Far Eastern Prisoners of War).

00:05:35 Speaker 3

Let me just write that, 'Children of'.

00:05:47 Speaker 2

FEPOWs, Far Eastern Prisoners of War. And they have a lot of information.

00:05:57 Speaker 3

So, slight sort of change of emphasis here, but similar sort of thing. What 3 words or phrases come to mind when you think about the wartime generation?

00:06:12 Speaker 2

Brave, resilient.

00:06:19 Speaker 2

I've got I've got to think of the third one, brave, resilient.

00:06:26 Speaker 2

Can I think about that?

00:06:31 Speaker 2

Yes, it's up for public discussion because it should be because I really fervently believe that what my father's generation and others went through should should not be forgotten. I mean, we remember, every November particularly. I always remember on August the 15th, which is VJ day. And obviously VE Day and I'm quite sad that VJ day is very often swept under the carpet. Not many people tend to know about it. It's all focusing on VE Day and I understand that. But one mustn't forget that the prisoners in Japan were still in prison, in captivity for another few months. I I've I've got some photographs that obviously my dad had with him and on the back he's written things like 'I wish I could have heard Winnie's speech.' He's written, 'How much longer can this go on?' He's written something like 'Ohh to be home again.'

00:07:39 Speaker 2

And they they were just waiting to be liberated.

00:07:41 Speaker 3

Yeah, very poignant. OK, thank you. Did you want to go back for your third of three words?

00:07:47 Speaker 2

Ohh, I've got, yeah, I've gotta think about that now.