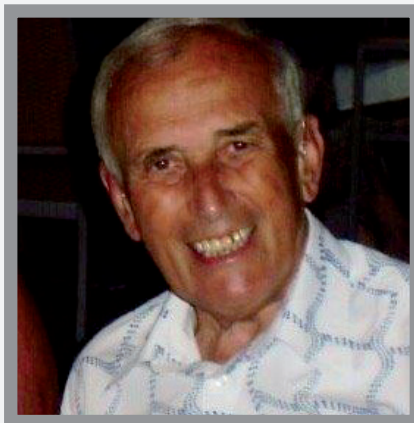




# COFEPOW *Quarterly*

The Official Newsletter of the Children of Far East Prisoners of War and FEPOW Associations • Issue 69 • July 2015

## RON COOPER LIFE PRESIDENT 24.10.34 - 7.5.15



It is with deep sadness that COFEPOW Quarterly reports on the passing of Ron Cooper, husband of 55 years to former COFEPOW Chair and founder of the charity, Carol Cooper.

Ron, who was 80 and Honorary Life President of COFEPOW, and a tireless supporter of his wife's work in increasing the awareness of the suffering of thousands of FEPOWs during the war with Japan, had endured a long and debilitating illness, which finally overwhelmed him on the 7th May. He was at home, surrounded by his loving family and died peacefully.

Ronald George Cooper was born in Reepham, Norfolk, one of six siblings.

The family moved to Gorleston, near Great Yarmouth, when Ron was very young. During the war, he was evacuated to Nottinghamshire, and returned to Gorleston in 1948 to train as a motor mechanic. After two years' National Service in the RAF, Ron embarked on a career which saw him work as a motor mechanic in a number of major garages, and as Garage Manager, with his final appointment as Service Engineer for fork lifts at Birds Eye, before retiring to a long

and happy life at home.

Ron and Carol married in 1960 and had three children, Adele, Leanne and Adam. Keen caravanners, the Coopers spent many happy weeks joining caravan rallies throughout Europe, and after retirement took many long holidays to the USA, Canada, Australasia, Africa, China and the Far East.

Ron's interests and hobbies included a profound love of his garden, spending endless hours throughout the year putting his green-fingered skills to use.

He loved cricket, music, and in later life, wood-turning and meticulous DIY, and the joy brought to him by his three grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

Perhaps one of his lasting legacies as Honorary Life President and former Treasurer of COFEPOW, is the wholehearted support he gave to his wife, Carol, travelling across the country to accompany her at various events, always the quiet, thoughtful and reflective man, even through the six long years of his illness. Determined and resilient, Ron managed to get the very most out of life, particularly in the time spent helping COFEPOW to create the Memorial building at the NMA.

Carol would like to take this opportunity of thanking everyone for their messages of condolence, and has written the following:

"Sadly, my dearest husband and soulmate for 55 years, died on the 7th May at home. Myself and our children were with him. He was 80 last October.

Ron was diagnosed with prostate cancer and secondary bone cancer over six years ago. Apart from his regular hospital treatments, we lived a normal life and he stayed well enough for several more holidays, both in the UK and abroad. Inevitably during the second half of last year his condition deteriorated. We, our children and grandchildren, spent a wonderful few days over Christmas at the home of our youngest daughter and her husband. In our hearts, we all knew it would be Ron's last. By our 55th wedding anniversary on the 20th February, Ron

was barely able to walk, but we went out with the family for a celebration dinner, as we have done every year.

During April, Ron was in the constant care of the Macmillan Nurses, the 'Hospice Nurses working in the home'. It was his wish to remain at home. It is difficult to put into words the wonderful work these nurses do. They gave Ron tremendous comfort, love and care in his final days and I can never praise or thank them enough.

We were overwhelmed to receive 86 sympathy cards, many letters and even more emails and I am sure Ron would have been amazed that so many of our old caravan friends of years ago from all over, plus previous neighbours from years back, all got in touch, with wonderful tributes and several of them attending the funeral. A big 'thank you' to those members who sent cards and those who travelled some distance to be with us. It was so heart-warming to read how much Ron was loved and thought of, and myself and our family were truly blown away by the number of cards and letters arriving every day, many from unexpected quarters.

We spent so many happy, treasured times together during our marriage and there are many memories of COFEPOW events over the last few years. I have been told that time is a great healer, but no-one can tell me just how long that time will be.

Ron, my 'other half' as I so often called him, was loved so much and will be terribly missed forever."

Carol

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- New fund-raising initiative, supported by Book of the Year part-proceeds, to raise upkeep monies for FEPOW Building
- Last call for invitations to 70th VJ-Day events
- Bournemouth weekend away news
- New COFEPOW medallion struck
- Features, books, art, new members, officer elections, trips, recollections and much more...



## Art therapy, ahead of its time

COFEPOW Quarterly received this article via Graham Robertson, from member Keith Bettany about artwork produced by his father whilst in captivity.

"My Dad, Des Bettany, after seeing action in Europe in WW2, was evacuated from Dunkirk and posted to north Malaya.

He was eventually imprisoned by the Japanese at various camps on the Changi Peninsula with some 100,000 other POWs. How did he make it through all of this? He painted to keep his sanity.

From out of the misery, starvation, exploitation and brutality that resulted in so much loss of life and serious injury (physical and mental), a series of artworks that helped Des and his mates survive the ordeal has now come to light in a family collection. This artwork of his service life before and after the capitulation of Singapore includes a range of fascinating illustrations, often produced with humour.

However, while painting to keep his head, he nearly lost it, as he was also painting political cartoons of the Japanese and hiding them. They were found and after some quick talking and who knows what else, Des was warned by Colonel Saito, that if he ever painted like this again, he would get a short haircut (be beheaded). We are sure he was punished, but he, like so

many other ex-POWs, chose not to share the horrors they went through with others. I guess in telling of the horrors, they had to relive them again.

A new website has been put together by Des' family as a tribute and to help raise awareness of what the POWs went through, as seen through the eyes of one man. It also gives a rare insight into how others kept 'sane' by looking forward to such things as the Changi University; the Library; theatre and musical programmes; working to help others i.e., making rubber soles for boots or limbs for amputees; getting up to mischief: sabotaging their own work; or partaking in events of Faith.

After 70 years in a cupboard, at last, this artwork is available to all who have access to the internet and can be viewed at [www.changipowart.com](http://www.changipowart.com).

Click on the hyperlink 'Channel 7 Today Tonight Program': [www.changipowart.com/](http://www.changipowart.com/) exhibitions and a brief video summarising Dad's work is half way down the page. Please share this site with your contacts, members, family, other organisations etc., so the message gets out to as many as possible, of what these men went through and some of the strategies they used to keep sane."

**Keith Bettany**

## Garden goes ahead for VJ70 Day

Paul Watson has reported on progress being made with the construction of the FEPOW Memorial Garden, to be located alongside the FEPOW Memorial Building at the NMA.

"Simon Roberts, the landscape gardener, has recently been away, and I have now managed to meet with him to discuss progress.

There are minor issues about plants indigenous to the Far-East, (concerns over the roots interfering with services) that the planners need to resolve in due course. Hopefully the meeting has clarified everything and we can now move forward with the process.

There are still costings to be done for name plates and engraving but Simon has been instructed to get on with the construction.

Work is due to commence late June, therefore, with completion mid to late July 2015."



## Donations

IF YOUR NAME IS BELOW, THANK YOU... Here is the list of members who have sent in donations during this quarter. On behalf of COFEPOW and its members, thank you enormously for your kindness.

### £10 to £100.

Diane Gracey, £10.00. D. Everett, £10.00.  
Daphne Shaw, £15.20. Nigel Golding, £20.00.  
Mr & Mrs C. Davidson, £20.00.  
James Scott, £50.00.  
St. Faiths Ladies Group, £50.00.  
W. Boyce, £20.00 and J. Gould, £100.00.

### Donations in memory of...

Received via funeral directors, were donations in the names of Robert Martin Driver, for the sum of £86.36, and of Roy William Ravenshill, for the sum of £249.15.  
£255.00 was received from Mr A.E. Scott, in memory of Mrs Diane Scott (formerly Hatchard).  
£25.00 was received from Carol Barrett, for Christine and Roger Everett, in memory of father Stanley Everett, on what would have been his 100th birthday.