



William Rose

William Rose

After Sergeant William Rose was captured in March 1942, he was a prisoner of war for four long years. First he was taken to one of the most brutal camps in Japan near Mitsushima to build a dam. William was then sent to Kanose camp to stoke furnaces. This hard work was more difficult because the prisoners were badly treated.

'In 1945 it was the furthest thing from my thoughts that I would ever have any contact with Japan again.' Years later William's second son Graham married Takako from Japan who convinced William to go back. In 1999 he and his son Malcolm visited the site of Mitsushima camp which is now a school. This visit changed William's life.

William Rose

Nov. 20th Night. Another Dutchman & hermit (Rai) died. Still no sunshine since we anchored there
 about five rain. Left Formosa 18.00 hrs. A Fryer died. Two buried this
 evening. I do some dyes at long last but am really in need of some 'Pencil'. No. of
 sick cases still increasing.

21st Sat. Last night six Dutchman fell over boardwards from upper hold down into our hold.
 He died early this morning. He was left where he had fallen. The med. orderlies
 did not worry and neither did anyone else. No one seemed to care about anything
 these days. Buckets for use by diarrhoea & dysentery cases were lined around the bottom
 of our hold & often were knocked down into our hold during the night. But
 as I have said we were at that time where nothing seemed to matter very much!

- Bless - Berkalim
- Blue - Birae
- Board - Papan.
- Boat - Praoe
- Body - Toelboe
- Boys - Hoempou.
- Boat - Pelveroe
- Book - Kueboe.
- Boat - Sepaloe tinggi
- Boat - Dvea Dvea
- Bottle - Botol.
- Box - Peti.
- Boy - Anak Kelal
- Bracelet - Pelay kangan
- Brave - Brani.
- Bread - Roti.

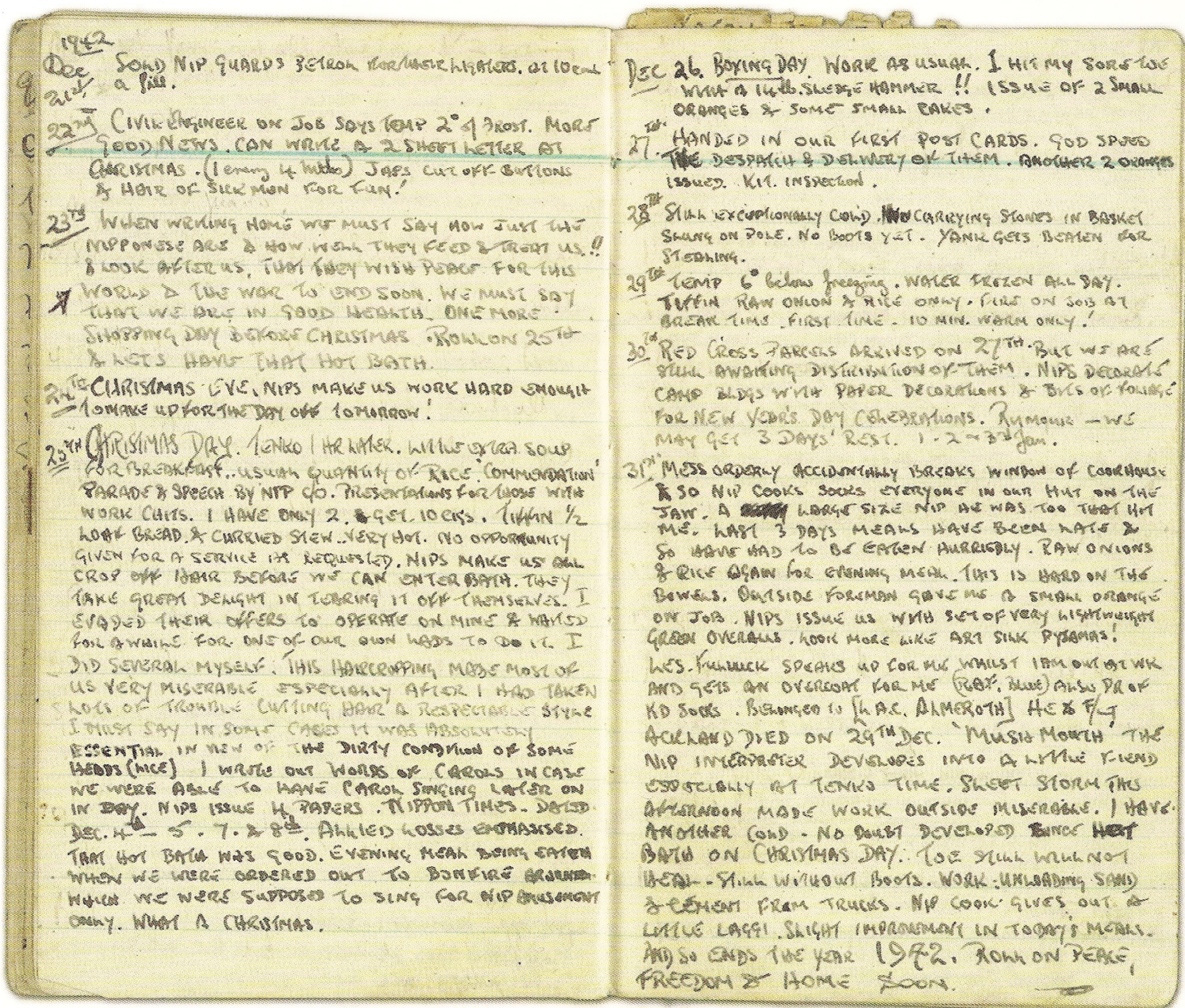
Diary pages for November 1942, about the sea voyage to Japan

William Rose

William describes Christmas Day 1942 in his diary. Prisoners did not have decent shoes or winter clothes. They never had enough to eat and were often sick. Red Cross food parcels were precious.

Christmas 'celebrations' at Mitsushima Camp, 1942. William (centre back) and fellow prisoners of war put on a smile for the photographer.

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Page from diary (actual size), Christmas 1942
Christmas 'Celebrations' at Mitsushima Camp

24th CHRISTMAS EVE. NIPS MAKE US WORK HARD ENOUGH
TO MAKE UP FOR THE DAY OFF TOMORROW!

25th CHRISTMAS DAY. TENKO 1 HR WATER. LITTLE EXTRA SOUP
FOR BREAKFAST. USUAL QUANTITY OF RICE. COMMENDATION
PARADE & SPEECH BY NIP GO. PRESENTATIONS FOR THOSE WITH
WORK CUTS. I HAVE ONLY 2. & GET 10 CIGS. TIKKIN 1/2
LOAF BREAD & CURRIED STEW. VERY HOT. NO OPPORTUNITY
GIVEN FOR A SERVICE IF REQUESTED. NIPS MAKE US OIL
CROP OFF HAIR BEFORE WE CAN ENTER BATH. THEY
TAKE GREAT DELIGHT IN TOBBING IT OFF THEMSELVES. I
EVADED THEIR OFFERS TO OPERATE ON MINE & NAIKED
FOIL & WHINE FOR ONE OF OUR OWN HEDDS TO DO IT. I
DID SEVERAL MYSELF. THIS HAIRCROPPING MADE MOST OF
US VERY MISERABLE ESPECIALLY AFTER I HAD TAKEN
LOTS OF TROUBLE CUTTING HAIR A RESPECTABLE STYLE
I MUST SAY IN SOME CASES IT WAS ABSOLUTELY
ESSENTIAL IN VIEW OF THE DIRTY CONDITION OF SOME
HEDDS (NICE) I WROTE OUT WORDS OF CAROLS IN CASE
WE WERE ABLE TO HAVE CAROL SINGING LATER ON
IN DAY. NIPS ISSUE 4 PAPERS. NIPPON TIMES. DATED
DEC. 4 - 5. 7. & 8th. ALLIED LOSSES EMPHASISED.
THAT HOT BATH WAS GOOD. EVENING MEAL BEING EATEN
WHEN WE WERE ORDERED OUT TO BONFIRE BRUNNEN.
WHICH WE WERE SUPPOSED TO SING FOR NIP BRUNNEN
ONLY. WHAT A CHRISTMAS.



Page from William Rose's diary, Christmas 1942
Christmas 'celebrations' at Mitsushima Camp

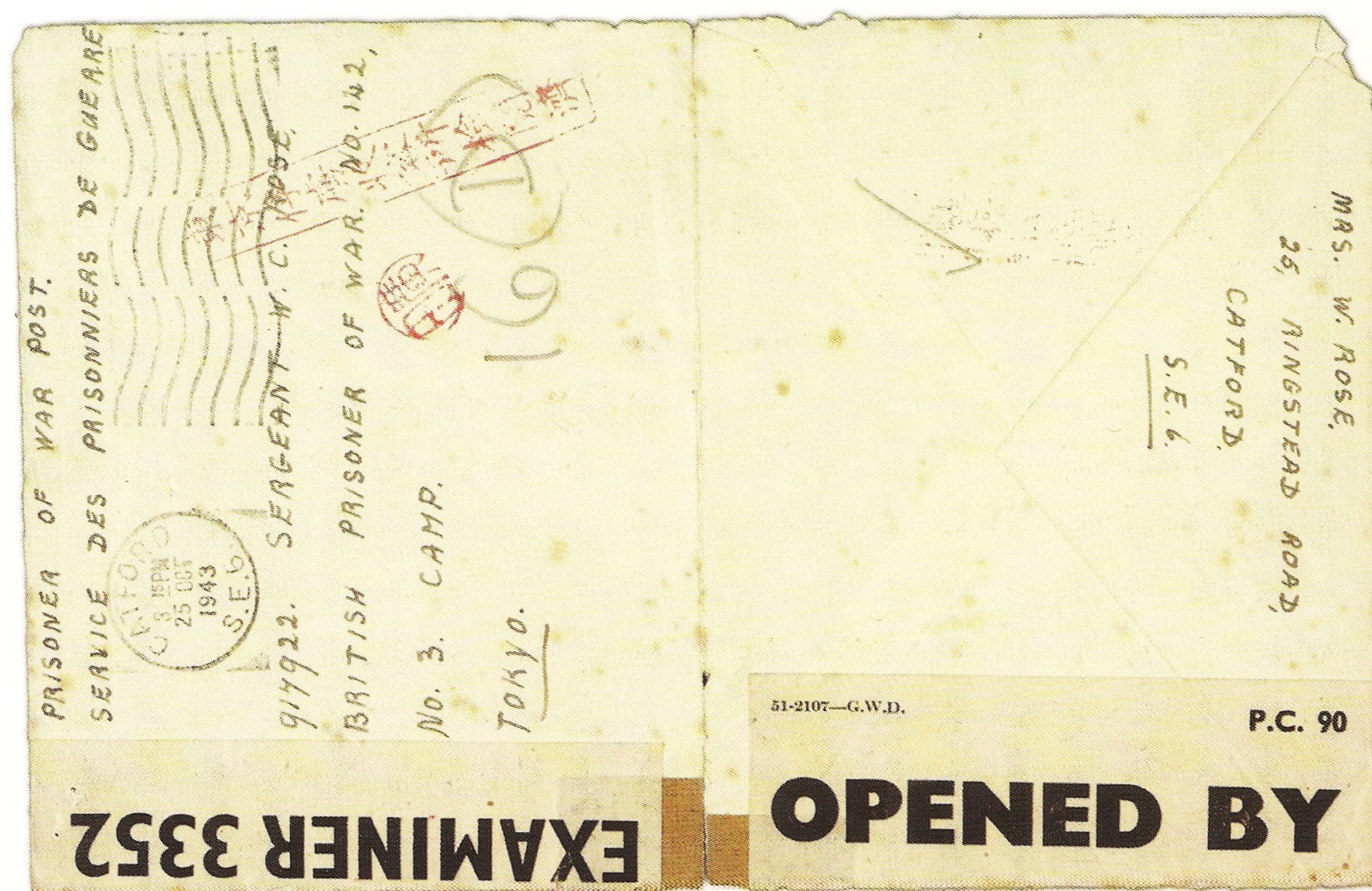
William Rose

William's first son Malcolm was born in May 1942. William did not know this until May 1944 when this letter, posted in October 1943, finally reached him in the camp.

He wrote; 'I felt like a real Dad at last. I longed for a photo of him. I wanted to know all about him. I felt on such a high that I started telling the lads how much they had to live for. I think the whole camp knew I had a son. I couldn't keep that news to myself.'

He wrote notes on the back for a religious talk he gave to his fellow prisoners of war to help keep their spirits up.

RoseWC 013186 5; RoseWC 013186 6 © Imperial War Museum



First letter from home

Food for thought, whenever possible provided that you
do not think me too presumptuous in addressing you,
I will endeavor to bring to you some sayings
of (the) apostles which will give us food for
thought during the week. Experimental Christianity
often we get into discussion & sometimes on
least argument re Christians generally with someone
who simply has no love for religion at all
least of all attending services of worship. Well is
not this would appear to be their misfortune or
loss & our good fortune & gain. But this
we must bear in mind when we profess to
be Christ. Do we practice what we preach? Do
we endeavor to follow the simple fundamental
of Christ in life? Do we aim at making a
set standard or strive to better ourselves in
our everyday actions? A scholar usually has
a lens in some contemporary spokesman or
fellow that a maybe Ruler of a state
to consider or imitate. That is the characteristic
The same applies to that life professes to call themselves
Christians, we have our standard
of model life to strive for & that being
the life of Christ. Here then is a guide
which should give us food for thought
being doing page 298.

~~...~~
Lovingly
yours

Sermon notes on first letter from home

William Rose

Mitsushima was one of the most brutal POW camps. More guards (nine) were convicted and executed for war crimes than any other camp in Japan. This photograph shows Japanese prison guards with POW officers.

William was made to sign an oath of obedience to the Japanese, along with all the other prisoners of war.

25% of UK prisoners of war held in Japanese camps died in captivity during the war. 5% of UK POWs held in German or Italian camps died in captivity during the war.

Camp guards and POW officers
Oath of obedience



The bearer 917922 Sgt Rose W. G. on 24th. August, 1942
signed under duress, a written oath of absolute obedience to all
orders of DAI NIPPON GUN.

G. S. Alexander
Wing Commander.

Camp guards and POW officers
Oath of obedience

William Rose

Two children from the school at Mitsushima stand next to the memorial to those who died in the camp. Work on the memorial began after William's visit in 1999 and it was finished in September 2000.

William describes the moment when he arrived at the school:

'Then we went to the school. This is where the camp had been. If there was any emotion left it would have been here. But this was where all the hurt and tension faded away. This is where I finally came to terms with my time as a prisoner of war. I thought I had forgotten them

but I realised then, I had merely hidden them. These children... they knew nothing of the war. They, like everyone else I met, were offering friendship. They wanted to know everything. Where had I slept? What was in the Red Cross parcel? And I found I could answer without any feeling of hurt or hatred.'

His wartime diary is now used by the school at Mitsushima in Social Studies lessons.

'I have so many letters they have written me – these children – it's just staggering how much they want to know...'

Mr. Rose revisits Mitsushima, 1999



In April 1943, we did not have a supply of Red Cross medicines but it was insufficient for our needs and due to the lack of medicines the lives of the prisoners were endangered and many prisoners died due to lack of medicines. The following prisoners died as a result of the behavior of the Japanese camp staff in withholding food and medicines. (From the original report by Yukihiko Chai, Band 1, No. 10, June, 1943)

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Col. E. Cross | Cpl. 571871 | Sgt. S.B. Frantz | Sgt. J. Yau | Pfc. 340514 |
| P/O J.C. Bruce | E.N. Slaughter | Sgt. E.C. Hunter | Sgt. 311845 | Pfc. 377709 |
| Cpl. 836765 | 1st Sgt. J.M. Smith | Cpl. 418267 | Pvt. J. Linn | E. Hahn |
| G.R. Skellion | Pvt./Lt. 78340 | A.L. Taylor | Cpl. C.E. Soren | Pfc. 325514 |
| Cpl. 1183253 | S.L.D. Ackland | Pfc. Davis | P/O 15851 | E. Yonason |
| A. Williamson | LAC 617329 | Cpl. 521215 | Marine 5 | Pfc. 341117 |
| R/Lt. H. Dane | A.A. Almeroll | G.H. Atkinson | Gunner 10557 | Cpl. 340514 |
| Gunner 1826601 | Cpl. 632091 | Gunner 173504 | Chaplain | Pfc. 377 |
| A. Mackie | W.C. Street | H. Chandler | P/O. E.I. Cook | Pfc. 340514 |
| AC2 785799 | W. Richardson | C.H. Hewittson | Pvt. Bates | Pfc. 340514 |
| Yeedal | Sgt. 551029 | AC2 78195 | Sgt. S.A. Jones | Pfc. 340514 |
| Gunner 1634007 | Holmes | Tan Tan Tan | Sgt. A. Permann | Pfc. 340514 |
| A. E. Casey | 2072032 | Pvt. A.H. Ebert | Cpl. 78221 | Pfc. 340514 |
| A. C. J. G.A. Nash | Krause | Pvt. A.H. Smith | Cpl. Tan Tan | Pfc. 340514 |
| Sgt. 522249 | AC2 786293 | PFC. A.G. Smith | Pvt. S.A. Nash | Pfc. 340514 |
| H. D. Standard | Nd. Hoar Seal | Gunner 185408 | Pvt. E.E. Lane | Pfc. 340514 |
| T/Sgt. A. J. Burke | Gunner 1826700 | L.L. Coe | Sgt. 1133504 | Pfc. 340514 |
| Cpl. 572130 | R. Mitchell | PFC. E.G. Tou | Gevate. East | Pfc. 340514 |
| S.C. Wake | Pvt. R.G. Derr | Pvt. G. Gauder | | Pfc. 340514 |

POW memorial at school in Mitsushima

William Rose

‘Welcome back Mr William Rose’

This photograph shows William and his eldest son Malcolm being welcomed to the school in Mitsushima in 1999. He was welcomed by people who had lived near the camp during the war, the family of one of the Japanese camp guards and the school children.

William returned to Japan in 2004 with Graham and his wife Takako. They visited Mitsushima and Kanose and were warmly welcomed in both villages.

Children from the school in Mitsushima have visited the UK as part of an East Meets West exchange scheme, hosted by Bridge village in Kent.

‘Truth is stranger than fiction; this is what reconciliation is all about.’

Mr. Rose revisits Mitsushima, 1999



Mr. Rose revisits Mitsushima, 1999