

Memories of Wednesfield by Ray Fellows (published in the Wednesfield Magazine, 2018)

Ray Fellows looked back at events surrounding VJ Day.

Victory over Japan Day (also known as VJ Day) is the day on which Imperial Japan surrendered in World War II, in effect bringing the war to an end. The term was applied to both days on which Japan's surrender was made:- to the afternoon of August 15 1945, in Japan and because of time zone differences, to August 14 1945 when it was announced in the United States and the rest of the Americas and Eastern Pacific Islands; also to September 2, 1945, which is the date when the signing of the surrender document occurred. This was the official ending of World War II.

August 15 is the official V-J Day for the United Kingdom, while the US commemoration day is September 2. On September 2, 1945, a formal surrender ceremony was performed aboard the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay Japan. In Japan, August 15 is usually known as the memorial day and is the day for mourning of war dead and praying for peace.

During World War II, the Japanese Armed Forces captured approximately 140,000 Allied military personnel (Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, Netherlands, New Zealand and the United States) in the Southeast Asia and Pacific areas. They were forced to labour on the constructing of railways, roads, airfields and other hard labour construction. Around 36,000 were transported to the Japanese Mainland and compelled to work in coal mines, shipyards and munitions factories. By the time the war was over, a total of more than 30,000 POWs had died from starvation, diseases and mistreatment both within and outside of the Japanese Mainland.

Brenda Minors wrote to us about her uncle, John Waterhouse. John was born in Wednesfield on the 6th June 1922, son of Frederick Herbert and Ada Jane Elizabeth Waterhouse of Wednesfield. John went to St Thomas's Church School and whilst there he was a choir boy and when he later joined the RAF he sang on one of the RAF radio programmes. John Waterhouse's service number: 964788. Rank: Aircraftman 2nd Class, Regiment/Service: Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. John was a prisoner of war from approximately March 1942, dying on the 16th August 1945,



just one day after VJ Day. John is buried in Ambon War Cemetery, part of the Laitimor Peninsula on the southern shore of Ambon Bay, Indonesia. The total number of graves in the cemetery is over 2,000. Of this over half are Australians, of whom about 350 belonged to the 2/21st Australian Infantry Battalion. Most of the 800 British casualties belonged to the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force; nearly all the Naval dead were originally buried at Makasar. Some American airmen were killed with 7 Australian airmen in July 1945; all were buried in a collective grave.

John Waterhouse's name and many other brave men of Wednesfield who fought in the First and Second World Wars can be found on a plaque in Wednesfield's Memorial garden.