

POW survivor Don Lomas's Japanese occupation of Burma one rupee note, bearing 33 signatures of POWs (31 known to be air force men) liberated from Rangoon Jail on 3 May 1945 [Version 15]

(Donated by the Lomas family in 2010 to the Imperial War Museum, London, UK)

1360083 F/Sgt **John Donald LOMAS** was an RAF 159 Sqn B-24 Liberator wireless operator/air gunner from Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire, UK. On 29 Feb 1944 his bomber, BZ926, was illuminated at night by searchlights over Rangoon, Burma and then shot down by a tandem of trailing Oscar fighter aces of the 204th Sentai, Hiroshi Takiguchi and Bunichi Yamaguchi. He was captured the following day.

Names shown in black are as they were written on the rupee (as best I can interpret).

These men were freed in Rangoon; they were left behind in the jail when the Japanese force-marched over 400 of the more able-bodied Rangoon POWs out of the city on 25 April 1945 and abandoned them on the 29th, near Pegu, Burma.

Names shown in **yellow tint** are also found on a signed five rupee note kept by ex-Rangoon Jail POW **Dick Corbett** RCAF (who signed the one rupee note and added a doodle).

Only one signature out of 33 is illegible. It is assumed that he was an air force POW, though this remains unsubstantiated. He also signed Dick Corbett's five rupee note, but a study of both signatures still has not resulted in a positive ID.

One signer was a Rangoon Jail doctor in the Indian Medical Service, but his date of capture is unknown.

All 31 other signatures are known to have been air force. The date of each airman's aircraft loss (which sometimes was earlier than his capture date) is indicated for each of these 31 men.

Scans of the entire rupee note, front and back, are found at the end.

The note may have been signed on one day or over several days in late April and/or early May 1945. The last of the Japanese personnel disappeared from Rangoon Jail on the night of 28/29 April; on the 29th, then, the POWs left behind realized they were "free" and on their own, unbeknownst to their own forces. These signers (not counting the one unknown, whose details are unclear) were officially freed on the 3rd. The identified signers boarded the hospital ship HMHS Karapara on the 4th, excepting one, W/Cdr **Lionel Hudson**. The ship departed Rangoon Harbour on the 5th and docked in Calcutta on the 9th. The Americans on the 5th, or the following day, were then transported to their separate hospital.

W/Cdr Hudson, the last to sign the rupee, had voluntarily stayed behind in Rangoon on further duties (with eight others, the names of whom do not match the one unknown signer) and was flown to Calcutta on the 7th to be briefly admitted – for a few hours only – to No. 119 Hospital. His hospital arrival was still two days before the Karapara docked in Calcutta. When and where Hudson signed the Lomas rupee after liberation is unclear; it had to have been either before the Karapara departed Rangoon on 29 April or else when Hudson crossed paths with Lomas again in India after the Karapara's 9 May Calcutta arrival.

Hudson and Lomas did not meet again until 1993, when Lomas and his wife were on holiday in Sydney, Australia.

Front side, from top to bottom:

Jack Harris

1315284 F/Sgt **Jack HARRIS**, B-24 air gunner, RAF 159 Sqn, from Ynysybwll, Wales, UK. Illuminated at night by searchlights over Rangoon, his bomber was shot down from behind on **29 Feb 1944** in a duel attack by 204th Sentai Oscar aces Hiroshi Takiguchi and Bunichi Yamaguchi.

R. Montgomery

7022868 M/Sgt **Richard A. "Monty" MONTGOMERY**, B-29 radio operator, US 25th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Over Rangoon on **14 Dec 1944**, a massive explosion under the B-29 formation occurred immediately after bombs were released. A plausible cause: the mid-air collision, then premature detonation, of a controversial mixed load of 500 & 1000 lb bombs. One B-29 (42-24726) went down with no survivors. From another (42-93831), six of eleven bailed out and were captured. A third B-29 (42-24457) crashed "20 miles northeast" of Rangoon; its crew of twelve, including Montgomery, bailed out and became POWs. A fourth B-29 (42-24574) was abandoned by its crew "100 miles west of Rangoon", with all eleven falling into captivity. The seven planes that returned from the mission were damaged to such an extent that an estimated 18,000 man hours would be required for repairs. Montgomery's arm was amputated in prison.

W.R. Lentz

34433023 S/Sgt **Walter R. LENTZ**, B-29 right gunner, US 45th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Stony Point, North Carolina, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Lentz was aboard aircraft 42-24574.

L.W. Sommers

35589579 S/Sgt **Lewis W. SOMMERS**, B-29 radar operator, US 45th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Martins Ferry, Ohio, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Sommers was aboard aircraft 42-24574.

B.B. Mearns

1550374 P/O **Bernard Brodie "Barney" MEARNS**, Beaufighter navigator, RAF 211 Sqn, from Aberdeen, Scotland, UK. Force-landed in central Burma from engine trouble after a low-level attack, **12 Aug 1944**.

J.L. Russell Jr.

11069380 Cpl **John L. RUSSELL**, B-25 rear gunner, US 83rd Bomb Sqn, 12th Bomb Gp, from Dedham, Massachusetts, USA. Bomber shot down in the Meiktila, Burma area by Oscars of the 64th Sentai, **6 Oct 1944**.

H.C. Edwards (NZ)

413171 W/O **Howard C. EDWARDS** RNZAF, P-47 pilot, RAF 30 Sqn, from Wanganui, NZ. Inbound on a fighter sweep of Mingaladon airfield near Rangoon, **3 Nov 1944**, the aircraft developed engine trouble and caught fire. Edwards chose to force-land and was ejected before the aircraft overturned upon hitting waterlogged ground northeast of Pathwe, Burma.

J. I. Thomson

776104 W/O **James Ian THOMSON**, Hurricane pilot, RAF 20 Sqn, a Scotsman living in Moshi, Tanganyika Territory (now Tanzania, Africa). Strafing sampans near the mouth of the Mayu River in the Arakan area of Burma, Thomson noticed high radiator temperatures. With the engine rapidly losing power, he force-landed near Foul Point, **20 Feb 1944**.

Herbert Ivens F/Lt

J.10649 F/Lt **Herbert A. IVENS** RCAF, P-47 pilot & flight commander, RAF 146 Sqn, from Wilkie, Saskatchewan, Canada. Aircraft hit by machine gun fire while attacking target (either Meiktila or Thedaw airfield, Burma), crashed north of the target, **11 Dec 1944**.

R. Corbett (with "made it" written below a cartoon face drawn by Corbett)

J.133930 W/O **Richard "Dick" CORBETT** RCAF, Hurricane pilot, RAF 11 Sqn, from Toronto, Canada. Shot down by fighters, force-landed in paddy field in enemy territory, close to Allied lines, **5 Feb 1944**. (The cartoon face of an exhausted man was typical of his doodlings, according to his daughter.)

Lt. G.E. Johnson

O-682483 2nd Lt **Gostaf E. "Gus" JOHNSON**, B-24 bombardier, US 436th Bomb Sqn, 7th Bomb Gp, from Miami, Florida, USA. Already severely crippled in a running battle with 64th Sentai pilots after bombing Rangoon, Burma shipping on **26 Oct 1943**, the B-24 was rammed near the coast in western Burma by a green pilot, Cpl Tomio Kamiguchi, after his guns jammed. The B-24's fuselage was cut in half. Johnson was his crew's sole survivor. Kamiguchi, who bailed out and survived, became a hero, but Lt. Naoyuki Ito, who was part of the attack, said decades later that the bomber was doomed and the ramming was unnecessary.

Lt. M.B. Burke

O-731456 1st Lt **Marion B. BURKE**, B-29 navigator, US 25th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Tampa, Florida, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Burke was aboard aircraft 42-24457.

Karnik Thomasian

12183215 Sgt **Karnik A. THOMASIAN**, B-29 left gunner, US 45th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Manhattan, New York, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Thomasian was aboard aircraft 42-93831.

C.H. Bockman

19075514 S/Sgt **Clifford H. BOCKMAN**, B-24 engineer, US 9th Bomb Sqn, 7th Bomb Gp, from Lone, Washington, USA. After bombing Insein locomotive shops near Rangoon, his B-24 was set upon by fighters in a running battle. Finally shot down north or northwest of Bassein, Burma, **1 Dec 1943**.

Burt Parmalee USA

O-864755 2nd Lt **David B. PARMALEE**, B-29 flight engineer, US 45th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Guilford, Connecticut, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Parmalee was aboard aircraft 42-93831.

Freddy Gamlin P/O

175399 P/O **Frederick "Freddy" Thomas GAMLIN**, Beaufighter pilot, RAF 211 Sqn., from West Monkton, Taunton, UK. (Service number is 175329, per Block 8 POW list compiled in Rangoon Jail; probably an error.) After successfully attacking Pyinmana rail station in central Burma, Gamlin force-landed in central Burma due to engine trouble, **12 Aug 1944**.

R.C. Shanks Capt

O-1699413 Capt **Robert C. SHANKS**, B-29 pilot/aircraft commander, US 45th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp, from Grand Prairie, Texas, USA. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. See the R. Montgomery entry for more details. Shanks was aboard aircraft 42-24574.

Clifton L. Bray

O-664956 1st Lt **Clifton L. BRAY**, P-51 pilot, US 530th Fighter-Bomber Sqn, 311th Fighter-Bomber Gp, from El Paso, Texas, USA. Engine failure, on fire, during a fighter sweep in central Burma, **22 May 1944**. Bailed out at 300 ft, chute opened in tree tops, Bray's right arm and leg were tangled in the shroud lines.

K. S. [or R. S.?] Pilley Capt IMS

Capt **K. S. [or R. S.] Pilley** was not an airman, but a doctor in the Indian Medical Service (IMS) who had been incarcerated in Rangoon Jail. As an Indian, he is not listed in the document "*British PW Released from Rangoon Central Jail*" (The National Archives, Kew, UK), but he is identified twice as an IMS prison doctor in the book "*Operation Rangoon Jail*" by Col. K. P. MacKenzie, Royal Army Medical

Corps, who was the senior British POW doctor in Rangoon Jail. Both book citations misspell the surname, once as "Pillai" (pg 84), the other time as "Pillay" (pg 128). The rank is incorrect in the first case, but accurate in the second instance. Circumstances of Capt Pilley's capture are unknown.

Dudley W. Hogon

O-799184 2nd Lt **Dudley W. HOGON, Jr**, P-51 pilot, US 530th [?] Fighter-Bomber Sqn, 311th Fighter-Bomber Gp, from Augusta, Georgia, USA. Escorting B-24s to Rangoon, Burma, **27 Nov 1943**. On return, attacked and shot down in flames by 64th Sentai Oscars. Bailed out near Gwa Bay, Burma.

[Unknown ex-Rangoon Jail prisoner, presumably]

(This signature is also on the five rupee note kept by Dick Corbett. It looks like "Th", as if the first name is Thomas, followed by an upper case "S" and ending in an "m". However, so far no positive match has been made to any known liberated prisoner, and the "Th", "S", and "m" may be wrong.)

Grant W. Erwin Jr.

O-558862 1st Lt **Grant W. ERWIN, Jr**, B-24 navigator, US 9th Bomb Sqn, 7th Bomb Gp, from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. Bombing Insein locomotive sheds on **1 Dec 1943**, hit by AA and Oscars. On fire, exploded over the Bassein district, Burma. Only 2 are known to have bailed out. Erwin jumped at 300 ft.

Reverse side, from top to bottom:

A.C. Krause F/O

403459 F/O **Anthony C. KRAUSE** RNZAF, Hurricane pilot, RAF 607 Sqn, from St. Heliers Bay, Auckland, NZ. Aircraft hit while strafing a river steamer on the Chindwin River in Burma, crash-landed on river bank, **16 Jan 1943**.

C.C. Meyer Capt. A.C.

O-383620 Capt **Cornelius C. MEYER**, B-29 pilot/aircraft commander, US 25th Bomb Sqn, 40th Bomb Gp. USA hometown unknown at this time. His bomber went down on **14 Dec 1944**. [See the R. Montgomery entry for more details.](#) Meyer was aboard aircraft 42-24457.

AI [or] A.K. Cuddy F/O

J.16295 F/O **Alfred Keith CUDDY** RCAF, Beaufighter pilot, RAF 211 Sqn, from Sanford, Manitoba, Canada. Aircraft ditched after being hit by ground fire during attack on Thanbyuzayat, Burma rail station, **27 Aug 1944**.

C.A. Kidd

151171 F/O **Cyril Alexander KIDD**, Beaufighter navigator, RAF 177 Sqn, from London, UK. Shot down by ground fire while patrolling the Kalewa – Ye-u – Monywa area in Burma, **14 Aug 1944**.

J. Yanota

J.88914 P/O **John Joseph Stephen "Johnny" YANOTA** RCAF, Mosquito navigator, RAF 45 Sqn, from Blairmore, Alberta, Canada. Attacking Meiktila, Burma, an engine was hit by AA. Sgt Toshimi Ikezawa, 64th Sentai Oscar pilot, caught up and attacked the damaged aircraft, forcing it to crash land, **9 Nov 1944**.

J.M. McKernan

32281809 S/Sgt **James M. MCKERNAN**, B-24 gunner, US 9th Bomb Sqn, 7th Bomb Gp, from Olcott, New York, USA. Aircraft hit by ground fire, pilot mortally wounded, during a low-level attack on a Burma-Siam Railway target, **5 April 1944**. Only 4 bailed out before impact, including McKernan.

A. Sammons (SAM)

1319261 F/Sgt **Alan Bernard SAMMONS**, Hurricane pilot, RAF 20 Sqn, from Plaistow, London, UK. Rifle or machine gun fire hit the engine coolant pipeline at 1000 ft altitude, dooming the plane, **24 Feb 1944**. Sammons force-landed on a swampy island in the Mayu River, north of Akyab.

G.M. Farley

14107685 T/Sgt **Grady M. FARLEY**, B-24 flight engineer, US 493rd Bomb Sqn, 7th Bomb Gp, from Russellville, Alabama, USA. On **14 Nov 1943**, on the way to the secondary target (Pakokku, Burma), the bomber formation was set upon by 50th Sentai Oscars. With an engine on fire, Farley's B-24 dropped from formation and flew erratically before eventually pulling up, again seemingly under control. After a head-on fighter attack, however, the B-24 dropped down, turned over on its back, and dove straight in, from 10 to 11,000 ft.

E.R. Griffiths

1334202 W/O **Edward Richard GRIFFITHS**, P-47 pilot, RAF 146 Sqn, from Brighton, UK. On **11 Nov 1944**, in an attack on Meiktila airfield, Griffiths believed his fighter had been hit by machine gun fire. He reported engine trouble and crashed.

Daren Engel

19171011 Sgt **Daren C. ENGEL**, B-25 top turret gunner, US 83rd Bomb Sqn, 12th Bomb Gp, from Springfield, Oregon, USA. Bomber shot down in the Meiktila, Burma area by Oscars of the 64th Sentai, **6 Oct 1944**.

Lionel Hudson W/C [The last signature on the reverse side of the rupee]

400448 W/Cdr **Lionel V. "Bill" HUDSON** RAAF, Mosquito pilot & Commanding Officer, RAF 82 Sqn, from Kingsford, NSW, Australia. On **19 Dec 1944**, during a low-level rhuarb near the junction of the Chindwin and Irrawaddy Rivers in Burma, Hudson's Mosquito either hit the water or impacted a defensive cable strung across a waterway. The aircraft crash landed and disintegrated, but Hudson and his navigator, Jack Shortis (who signed Don Corbett's five rupee note) survived their injuries and then incarceration.

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