

## Paweł Gazur (1916-1998)



Paweł Gazur Rawmarsh, 1990.

Paweł was born in the village of Jaworzynka, Southern Poland on 11.01.1916 where he attended school from six to fourteen. He lived at home until the age of seventeen doing farming and wood felling. At the age of seventeen, he started work as a road builder and when he was eighteen (1934), he went to work in a restaurant, before moving on to house building a year later. When he turned twenty-two (January 1938) Paweł was conscripted into the 21<sup>st</sup> Podhalańska, which was based nearby in Cieszyn, together with his cousin Władek Gazur from Istebna. They were both in Łączność (the Communications Corps).

In September 1939, following the outbreak of WWII, the army retreated and marched to Romania to escape the Germans, only to be subsequently captured by the Russians. The soldiers marched to Kamieniec Podolski and were then transported by train to Rivne and then on to Zhytomyr (Ukraine) where they stayed for one winter repairing the Lwów-Kiev road. The city is a major transportation hub lying as it does on a historic route linking several major cities of Ukraine and Poland. From there they marched to Ternopil where they built an airport. When Germany declared war on Russia, the

soldiers were transported in cattle wagons to Starobilsk (Ukraine). Many people died during this journey. In Starobilsk, another airport was constructed and that was where they stayed until the amnesty was declared. After the declaration of amnesty conditions improved overnight and the airport was soon completed by, what was now, a willing workforce.

The army was re-formed and each soldier received 500 Roubles. A train to Totskoye transported the troops into the Asian part of the Soviet Union. During World War II, this was the site of a prisoner-of-war camp for Polish prisoners and one of the places where General Anders formed his Polish Army. Paweł and Władek were allocated to the Szósta Dywizja Lwowska Łączność (the Sixth Division Lwów Communications) and were taken by train to Tashkent (Uzbekistan). From here, the soldiers could see the Himalayan Mountains as they were only 40km from the Chinese border. They were then transported to Krasnovodsk (now Türkmenbaşy, Turkmenistan) to cross the Caspian Sea by ship with 6,000 other passengers on the Kaganowicz, arriving at Pahlevi (now Bandar-e Anzali) near Tehran in Persia.

Once in Persia the division was incorporated into the British Eighth Army. The soldiers were de-loused and given new uniforms, all their old clothes being subsequently burnt. After about three weeks, the soldiers were transported to Baghdad, Iraq where they were re-armed. Paweł passed his driving test in Iraq and was promoted to Lance Corporal. Paweł and Władek were then transferred to the Jedenasty Batalion Łączności (Eleventh Communications Battalion). Paweł spent his days driving, while Władek was assigned to telegraphy. The unit remained in Iraq for several months and here Paweł contracted malaria. The battalion was subsequently transferred to Palestine, near Gaza where they were to stay for about three months before moving on to Egypt, near Cairo. The troops left Egypt from Port Said by ship and sailed to Bari (Italy) on the Adriatic Coast camping at Modena (Italy, winter of 1943) and then moving on to Campo Basso, before finally making their way to Venafro near Monte Cassino in the spring. At Monte Cassino they were subjected to continuous artillery fire and bombing raids. After the battle for Monte Cassino was over, they returned to Campo Basso then moved on to Porto San Giorgio, Rimini, Loreto, Meldola, Predappio and finally Imola – all around Italy. After the war had ended the troops returned to Ancona (Italy) where they stayed for about a year before finally departing for England. Travel was by train as far as the Mediterranean Sea and then by ship past Gibraltar and on to Liverpool.

The remaining paragraphs are available in the book.

This account has been kindly provided by Paweł's son Michael, who still lives in Rawmarsh with his family.



Pawel Gazur (on the right) in Uzbekistan, 1942.



Antoni Jałowiczor and Paul Gazur, Oulton, East Anglia, 1947



Pawel Gazur with son Michael, Leeds 1956.