



Edward Peter Heath

1914-2003

BIRTH 6 JUN 1914 • London, England

DEATH 12 JAN 2003 • Albury, Surrey, England

Facts

Age 0 – Birth

6 JUN 1914 • London, England

Age 20 – Employment

1934 • Borneo Company, Bangkok

Age 20 – Occupation

1934 • BORNEO Company BKK
shipping director

Age 28 – Civilian prisoner of the Japanese

1942 • Thamasat Univ POW camp

Age 29 – V Organization

1943-1945 • Bangkok
provided clandestine assistance to Allied POWs with
help from the British Red Cross

Age 39 – Marriage

1953

Christian Peek

Age 39 – Occupation

1953-1963 • BORNEO Company BKK
General Manager

Age 49 – Blessing

1963

O. B. E. Order of Orange Nassau Order of White
Elephant

Age 49 – Occupation

1963-1967 • BORNEO Company LONDON
Managing Director

Age 53 – Occupation

1967-1975 • INSCAPE LONDON
Managing Director

Sources

Ancestry sources

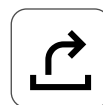


Ancestry Family Trees



England & Wales, Civil Registration
Death Index, 1916-2007

Web links



O B E

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/peter-heath-mkdq9827jvw>

Age 62 – Occupation

1976-1979 • INSCAPE LONDON

Deputy Chairman

Age 64 – Occupation

1978-1979 • Anglo-Thai Company LONDON

Chairman

Age 88 – Death12 Jan 2003 • Albury, Surrey, England

Notes

When the Japanese entered Bangkok in December 1941 Peter Heath was a junior of 27 in the shipping department of the Borneo Company. He had been ordered to remain in Thailand by his managers: the firm acted as Lloyd's agents and the outbreak of war had increased responsibilities in the Far East. But Heath's job and the agreeable life he had enjoyed for seven years centred on the Royal Bangkok Sports Club were brought to an abrupt end by the arrival on the Borneo Company's wharf of Japanese soldiers brandishing fixed bayonets. For the duration of the war Heath remained in the civilian internment camp in Bangkok. For the first three years the internees were housed in university premises overlooking the Chao Phraya River, but after the Allied bombing began in earnest they were moved to a less prominent building, more spacious but lacking the absorbing view of river life. The internment camp was under the command of the Thai Army, with only occasional inspections by the Japanese. The regime was less rigorous than that for civilian internees administered by the Japanese and there was no shortage of food. Heath was able to conceal a radio and to issue news bulletins to a limited circle of trustworthy internees. From June 1942 onwards news reached the civilian internees of the thousands of British and later Dutch, Australian and American prisoners of war being transported by train from Singapore to a station approximately 40 miles west of Bangkok to construct the Thailand-Burma Railway. The recipient of this news was an elderly British businessman, K. G. Gairdner, who invited Heath to assist him in raising clandestine funds to aid the prisoners of war. At first Heath co-operated, but he soon disengaged himself on the grounds that Gairdner's lack of discretion among the other internees posed an unnecessary threat to an extremely hazardous undertaking. Heath's fears proved groundless. Gairdner's organisation provided invaluable aid to the prisoners and became an important conduit for military intelligence from them to the Allied governments. Heath had not opted out of the scheme, but to ensure greater secrecy he and a fellow internee, R. D. Hempson (of the Anglo-Thai Corporation), set up their own aid organisation involving French, Danish and Swiss nationals in Bangkok, "old-school Thais" (Anglophile Thais, some of whom had been educated in England) and a network of Chinese, Thai and Eurasian assistants. Heath and Hempson were able to draw on a wider circle of acquaintances than Gairdner, and the sums of money raised were more substantial. Heath, as quartermaster, had unrestricted freedom within the c Hempson, as purchasing officer, was able to leave it on occasions to supervise the marketing. The internees were allowed to receive visitors in the anteroom of the camp commandant's office and it was here that Heath for the first time met Elizabeth Millet, who became the most important link outside the camp and to whom Heath would later pay generous tribute. Betty Millet, the daughter of a distinguished British surgeon, was married to Pierre Millet, a diplomat at the French Legation in Bangkok. A woman of forceful character dismayed by the contrast between her own freedom and the state of her compatriots in the internment camp, she presented herself to Heath as a willing accomplice. Having previously accompanied her husband to China en poste she was able to draw on her knowledge and experience to make contact with the Chinese pharmacies in Bangkok to supply the medicines so desperately needed by the prisoners of war. [more follows in another

message] 04:01 PM AW [obit continued] As the purchasing of drugs was subject to strict controls, Madame Millet was obliged to buy on the black market. She would arrive on her bicycle at the internment camp to receive the money and instructions from Heath, with her airedale in attendance, her pose as an eccentric Englishwoman giving her the freedom to circulate in Bangkok without arousing the suspicions of the Japanese. Most of the money raised by Heath and Hempson was spent on medicines. At first these were stored in minute packages in the Millet house or with friends. When this became too dangerous Madame Millet would take the packages to Heath to secrete in the camp until emissaries could smuggle them to the prisoners. The money raised was personally guaranteed by Heath and Hempson on the assumption that the debts would be met by the Allied governments. Heath commented at the time (and frequently thereafter) that he knew the outcome would either be a medal or prison, and there were anxious moments after the war when these debts were disowned by the governments concerned. But in the case of Heath and Hempson the British Red Cross Society came to the rescue, financial disaster was averted and not one but two medals were received from grateful governments. Whereas Hempson was motivated by a sense of duty, Heath's participation was underpinned by his Christian faith. The pleas for help coming from the prisoner-of-war camps moved him profoundly and he treasured the remark of a senior PoW officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Philip Toosey, that without this external assistance "the death rate in the camps would have at least been double". Edward Peter Heath was born in London in 1914, the second son of Edward Heath, a civil servant, and his wife Elizabeth Wright. He was educated at St Lawrence College, Ramsgate, followed by an unprofitable year at London University. In 1934 he accepted an offer to join the Borneo Company in Bangkok. His career in the shipping department, interrupted by the Japanese occupation, was resumed after the war and he served as general manager of the company in Bangkok between 1953 and 1963. In the latter year he was offered the position of managing director in London. By now married with children, Heath decided his future lay in England and he had a distinguished career as a managing director of the company until it was taken over by Inchcape in 1967. He remained as a managing director of Inchcape until 1975 and a deputy chairman 1976-79. He was chairman of the Anglo-Thai Corporation, 1978-79, and a director of many other companies which reflected his experience of the Far East or his passion for motor racing. Heath married Christian Peck in 1953, and after their return from Thailand they settled at Albury, Surrey, in a rambling house which rapidly filled with children and friends. Heath had a passion for speed whether in boats, cars, light aircraft or on water-skis. In 1961 he won the Macau Grand Prix in a Lotus Eleven. In later life he confined his sporting activities to following hounds on foot. For his services to Allied prisoners of war he was appointed OBE and made an officer of the Order of Orange Nassau. In 1963 he was awarded the Order of the White Elephant for his services to trade and industry in Thailand. He is survived by his widow, a son and three daughters. Peter Heath, OBE, businessman, was born in London on June 6, 1914. He died on January 12, 2003, aged 88. Obituary from 'The Times' 28 January 2003