BIGMORE, John



Lieutenant, 145394,
1st Battalion, Cambridgeshire Regiment
Place of Birth: Haverhill
Killed in Action: 15th February 1942
Cemetery: Kranji War Cemetery
Aged: 31 years



John Bigmore was born into a well-established family in Haverhill with generations of clerks and accountants going back to the 1700s.

In 1851 the Church Clerk (and Beer House Keeper) was Samuel Bigmore (snr) and his son John (snr) was a Solicitor's Writing Clerk. By 1861 John had married Eliza and had a change of career becoming a printer and stationer, a business which provided his livelihood for at least two decades. In his spare time however he was the Clerk to the School Board. John and Eliza had six children and made a home for their family at Swan House, 2 Queen Street.

One of their sons was named Samuel Austen. After leaving school he became an Accountants Clerk but by the time he was 31 years of age he was working as the Clerk to the District Council. In 1907, aged 37, he married Ruth Perry from Stoke by Clare and they made Croft Lodge, Chauntry Road their home. In April 1910 Samuel and Ruth had their second child, a brother for daughter Lily, who they named John after his paternal grandfather. They went on to have two more daughters, Doris and Ruth and another son, Frederick.

John attended the local school and when he left, an aunt paid for him to have private tuition in typing and shorthand. With these skills he found employment in a local solicitor's office, Popplewell, in Station Road, as a trainee solicitor in the firm. After completing his training he left Haverhill, moving to London where he found employment with Harrods, initially responsible for taking minutes at company meetings. He continued his studies at night school and completed a course in accounting, passing the exams that qualified him as a chartered accountant.

In 1935, still employed by Harrods, he married Ellen Bell (known as Queenie) at Brompton Oratory, Kensington and they set up home at 10 Irene Road, SW6.

With the outbreak of war he volunteered to join the Territorial Army and was soon enlisted into the 1st Battalion Cambridgeshire Regiment.



(Lt John Bigmore is seated 2nd from right in the photo taken in Lichfield prior to mobilization)

As part of the 18th Division, John found himself bound for the Middle East but of course with the attack on Pearl Harbour the final destination for the 18th Division became Singapore.

After disembarking on 29 January 1942, John's battalion found themselves defending positions in Adam Park, fighting without water and with minimal rations, under constant air attack and artillery barrage. In the days up to the surrender John, who was the adjutant attached to the Battalion HQ at 7 Adam Park took command of pockets of men who found themselves leaderless or cut off, doing excellent work under fire.



(photo: Adam Park)

Just hours before the order to lay down arms came at 4.30pm on 15 February, John was in the grounds of 7 Adam Park when he was fatally wounded by a sniper.

Killed in Action.—The sad news was learned last week that Lieut. John Bigmore, 1/Cambridgeshire Regiment, elder son of the late Mr. S. A. Bigmore, and Mrs. Bigmore, 9, The Pightle, and dearly loved husband of Queenie Bigmore, was killed in action in the battle for Singapore in the early part of 1942. No official confirmation has been received from the War Office, the information being communicated to his widow, at present living with her parents in Ireland by a fellow officer,—Captain G. N. Coulson, of Cambridge, who was taken a prisoner of war by the Japs, and has recently arrived in India.

Eighteen months later, on 6 October 1945, the South West Suffolk Echo reported that the family had received news that John had died.

John was buried in Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore and is also remembered on his parents' gravestone in Haverhill Cemetery.



Ten years after his death, his widow, placed a memorial message in the paper:

'BIGMORE – In proud and loving memory of my husband JOHN, Lieut., 1st Cambs Regt, killed in defence of Singapore Feb 15 1942. Loved and remembered always, Queenie'



BIGMORE.—In proud and loving memory of my husband, JOHN, Lieut., 1st Cambs Regt., killed in defence of Singapore, Feb. 15, 1942. Loved and remembered always, Queenie. 1962

The family had this inscription added to his Commonwealth War Graves Commission headstone:

THERE IS A LINK DEATH CANNOT SEVER

LOVE AND REMEMBRANCE LAST FOREVER

