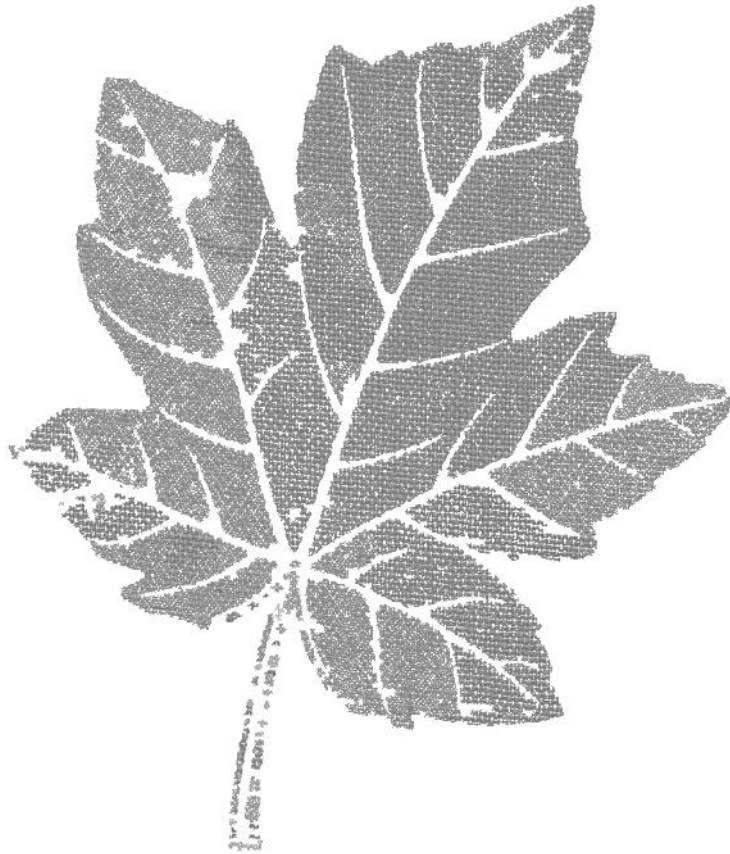


## PART B

# A Wartime Log: Written Entries



# A Wartime Log

- C. V. Richardson

*“I have prayed for thee  
that thy faith fail not.”*

This Book Belongs To:  
Tpr. C. V. Richardson  
14<sup>th</sup> Army Tank Bn.  
Calgary Regt.  
P.O.W. No.25252  
Reg. No.M26913

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AIDE AUX PRISONNIERS DE GUERRE  
JEUNES GENS  
KRIEGSGEFANGENENHILFE  
JUNGER MANNER

ALLIANCE UNIVERSELLE DES UNIONS CHRETIENNES DE  
WELTBUND DER CHRISTLICHEN VEREINE

GENEVE  
postaux I. 331

G E N E V E (Suisse)  
CENTRE INTERNATIONAL  
37, Quai Wilson

Adresse Telegraph: FLEMGO-  
Compte de Cheques

November 15, 1943

Dear Friend,

When the folks at home ask us to choose and send you something special on their behalf, they confront us with a not-too-easy problem. The "War-time Log" is one solution – others may be coming your way before long.

These blank pages offer many possibilities. Not everyone will want to keep a diary or even a journal – occasional notes on the story of his war-time experiences. If you are a writer, here is space for a short story. If you are an artist (some people are) you may want to cover these pages with sketches of your camp, caricatures of its important personalities, whether residents or authorities. If you are a poet, major or minor, confide your lyrics to these pages. If you feel that circumstances cramp your style in correspondence you might write here letters unmailable now, but safely kept to be carried with you on your return. This book might serve to list the most striking concoctions of the camp kitchen, the records of a camp Olympic, or a selection of the best jokes cracked in camp. One man has suggested using the autograph of one of his companions (plus his fingerprints?) to head each page, followed by free and frank remarks about the man himself. The written text might be a commentary on such photographs as you may mount on the special pages for that purpose. The mounting-corners are in an envelope in the pocket of the back cover. Incidentally, this pocket might be used for clippings you want to preserve, or, together with the small envelopes on the last page, to contain authentic souvenirs of life in camp.

You might want to do something altogether different with this book. Whatever you do, let it be a visible link between yourself and folks at home, one more reminder that their thoughts are with you constantly. If it brings you this assurance, the Log will have served its purpose.

Yours very sincerely,

WAR PRISONERS' AID OF THE Y.M.C.A.

## **Time And Future**

Time hangs heavy on the idle hand,  
 You've heard that said before.  
 By thinking not, and caring less,  
 Because it really matters not.  
 We lived our lives – enchanted,  
 Loved – were loved – Drank wine from priceless pewter  
 And troubled not to recon with the future.  
 And then one day we tasted of the other sort  
 Of vintage, not so pure or proven  
 The kind that sears the brain and burns the heart,  
 Yet chills, and almost Kills the very soul  
 And leaves you – sort of standing all alone, without  
 A friend – without hope  
 And TIME the healer of all pain and sorrow  
 Says this must end, and shows to you  
 A different morrow, but better still I think,  
 A brighter future  
 With life served straight, in priceless pewter.  
 Oh yes, times change as they must change  
 Just like the ebb and flow – there's none can stop it.  
 And now we've TIME to meditate upon  
 The things we've done – and should have done.  
 But TIME will come again one day.  
 And what we'll do there's none can say.  
 But I think we'll love – be loved.  
 Drink wine from priceless pewter  
 And trouble not to recon with the future.

- Sgt Forbes Patterson P.O.W.

## **They Gave Me a Tank – Troop Ten, Ed Bennet was in Command.**

### **Eve of Aug. 18, 1942**

Even as we drifted silently from the harbour an atmosphere of catastrophe seemed to hover about us. I sat as eager and careworthy as the rest of them, on the turret of my tank drinking orange ale with the rest of the crew. “*Bloody*” was ready for the battle, a mighty monster of steel, even amid the crowded deck of soldiers, she seemed to offer a challenger unbeatable.

The twilight was fastly fading but still you could see the people waving to us from the shore, hundreds of them. “Of course no one knew anything about it” So our officer told us. Soon the shore grew dimmer and in the calm of the channel we could see scores of other boats with us. What a surprise the Jerry was going to have. Soon the drone of voices died down as men in their blankets lay down to get the much need rest they would require in a few hours. I think that

very few of them slept. They probably were trying to picture what they would be doing at dawn in the gloom that confronted them. I think a lot of them prayed for the first time in their lives. And most of all dreamed of their homeland, and ones dear to them. Some wondered if they would be afraid, others felt they wouldn't return, others felt a guardian over them, others didn't know, they were the victim of circumstances and confined their odds to fate.

**Aug.19/42.**

Early in the morning I awoke in my hammock by the stir and bustle on board. We would not land for a couple of hours, but in the distance could be seen streaks of tracer filling the sky. No Guy Faulks day ever competed with the picture that was being set up on the French Coast. "Boy! Are we giving them Hell," said Tosh as he stood on his tank. We stowed our hammocks and blankets on the T.L.C. and attempted to eat a bit of breakfast, The effort was useless. I didn't take much notice but I doubt if anyone did eat much. They were better than I if they did. The excitement of it all was too much, a fellows stomach just seemed to have a sickly feeling and speared to be right at the back of your throat.

Soon we were getting the first news of the battle on the wireless. Some troops had landed and met no opposition for about five minutes. Then they were getting action and plenty of it too. Now and then the opparator was having trouble in receiving anything at all. While privates and sappers downed their equipment and shouldered many a weighty rook sack, And planes roared to and fro overhead amidst a distant rumble on the coast, we crawled into our tanks and warmed the engines. Carefully trained eyes scanned the instrument panels, anxiously satisfying themselves that all was well. Soon we would feel that familiar crunch as steel met gravel and sand. Then the ramp would be down. Nothing must fail then.

Now the roar of battle was becoming greater. I could discern the familiar rat-tat-tat of the M.G.s and above all the mighty blast of shot and shell. Then the familiar Pom-pom-pom aboard us was going. The Sgt. informed us over the I.C. that we were getting close. Then the T.L.C. was lurching to the tune of the Gerry shells. "We may have to evacuate" said the Sgt. "they are firing on us." Then came the most hectic time of the battle, the boat gave a mighty lurch, we had been hit. A shell had come through the side and set the first tank afire, wounding

the officer (BENET). The gunner exclaimed wildly as the Co-driver and I began to think of evacuating. "Get down" "Hurry" "This is war" "We've got a man wounded." As my comrades extinguished the fire, my one ambition was to be able to see what was going on! Ausey and I were as rats in a trap. Then as the Gunner re-handed me an empty fire extinguisher, came the familiar forward lurch with the grating of steel against gravel. I knew the ramp was already down. As my trembling foot pressed down on the clutch pedal, and my hand automatically grasped the change lever, my nerves steadied. I viewed the rev-counter mounting five hundred, one thousand, fifteen hundred, two thousand. Then came the familiar words. "Driver Advance!" My foot gradually released the clutch pedal and I knew we were rolling off the T.L.C. It was not my hand but one of invisibility that guided me as my fingers touched the tiller bar. "A little left! Steady! Driver right!" Something was making me calm and stealing my nerves. Perhaps after all it was the hand of Fate. I felt *Bloody* proudly sway to and fro as she mounted the ramp and then defiantly plunge down onto the beach. Over the wire came, "Driver halt, blow your cortex." Calmly amidst the din of the already raging battle I grasped the plug that would blow the water tight sealing and open my vision hatches onto the scene off Hell.

What I saw I have not enough words to describe but I shall always remember. These two poems are enough.

## **The Battle of Dieppe**

### **The Calgary Reg't (Tank) Aug.19, 42.**

- I      You've heard many a story  
           Of battles of glory and fame  
           So now I'll tell you a story  
           Of a battle much the same.
- II     The channel was lovely that evening  
           As boats sailed out on the blue  
           Some of the boys sat dreaming  
           Their fate they never knew.
- III    The soft breeze off the ocean  
           Seemed to refresh you for ever more  
           As you saw in the dim light of evening  
           The last of England's shore.
- IV    Time seemed to fly so swiftly  
           As we sailed along the deep  
           Some of the boys were singing

- Few were fast asleep.
- V** Just as the sky was dawning  
The sky seemed to turn blood red  
We all sat looking and listening  
To the roar of the planes overhead.
- VI** For we were on an invasion  
Of a town on the coast of France  
We were told of its easy taking  
The Jerries didn't have a chance.
- VII** We sat on our Tanks quietly waiting  
With radios tuned on for a sound  
Soon we heard them saying  
Some tanks had landed in France.
- VIII** It was soon our time to get going  
So into our Tanks we got  
Soon of the boats we went rolling  
While Jerry was making it hot.
- IX** The sight my eyes first saw  
As we landed that terrible day  
God but I'll never forget  
As I turned to look away.
- X** So many lives seemed wasted  
As you looked at the tatorred and torne  
You thought of the things you hated  
As you fought on that terrible day.
- XI** Ten hours we fought like devils  
Ten hours hardly able to breath  
Amid smoke and the roar of explosions  
While above the sky seemed to scream.
- XII** With the guns in our Tanks still roaring  
We were told it was time to retreat  
With hope our spirits went soaring  
As we returned to that hell on the beach.
- XIII** It was then that we saw how hopeless  
Was our chance of returning home  
For our boats were sinking and burning  
While a few were headed back home.
- XIV** We waited for our rescue  
On that blood soaked beach at Dieppe  
The R.A.F. seemed missing  
As Jerry bombed and straffed us to death.

**XV** We looked and hoped for the sight of the Navy  
“The Boats” they said, would come soon  
Minutes seemed to drag like ages  
It was hell on the beach that afternoon.

**XVI** Swiftly the tide came nearer  
The wounded we couldn’t help  
We knew we must soon surrender  
We were trapped in that terrible hell.

**XVII** After the guns stopped roaring  
While planes still dived overhead  
Jerry marched us away from the seashore  
Strewn with wounded and dying and dead.

**XVIII** The Huns shot many a soldier  
As we surrendered that day at Dieppe  
For they couldn’t hold their hands up  
Their shoulders seemed filled with lead.

**XIX** But now we can say to each other  
The few that came through that day  
Good work you Canadian Tankers  
You gave Jerry Hell at Dieppe

**XX** Some unloyal person had sold us  
Jerry had found out our plan  
For days he had waited our coming  
And boasted we never could land.

**XXI** Those that are left shall remember  
We do not ask for fame  
We gave all we had for our Country  
God knows we’ll do it again.

**XXII** Those that fell in battle  
Shall be showered with honor and fame  
Their names shall live forever after  
For the cause and the life they gave.

- Cpl. J.K.Nash M25266

## **BATTLE OF DIEPPE**

### **Second Canadian Division**

**I** It was the eighteenth day of August in the year of forty two  
We sailed away from England  
Though no man knew where to  
We had received no orders



- No friends were there to see us leave  
The second Canadian division  
With the blue patch on their sleeve.
- II** Early the next morning  
When everything was still  
We saw those tracer bullets  
Coming to us from the hill  
But we kept right on sailing  
And no man will ever forget  
The morning that we landed  
On the beach there at Dieppe.
- III** The enemy were waiting  
And had taken up their post  
We met a hail of bullets  
As we landed on the coast.
- IV** But every man landed  
Or at least he tried  
Though many of them were wounded  
And many more of them died.
- V** It was early in the morning  
When we started in to fight  
The mortar shells came at us  
From the front, the left and the right.
- VI** They shelled from the cliff  
And bombed us from the air  
But the second Canadian Division  
Were not so easily scared.
- VII** We fought hard for nine hours  
From five A.M. till two  
Our losses were terrific  
But there was nothing we could do.
- VIII** The Navy came to help us  
But their boats they couldn't land  
So at last we had to surrender  
At Dieppe on the sand.
- IX** What is left of us are prisoners  
Beneath a foreign flag  
Here in the heart of Germany.  
In this Camp they call Stalag.
- X** Many of our comrades fell  
But we never will forget

- They gave their lives bravely fighting  
In the battle of Dieppe.
- XI** When this war is over  
And once again we're free  
To our homeland we'll be sailing  
To the land of Liberty.
- XII** Though many have a battle scare  
No man will er'e forget  
The morning that we landed  
On the French coast at Dieppe.

I felt strange, oh so strange as I sat by my tank on the beach. The din of the battle was over but for the odd stray mortar shell about us, and a few stray cracking bullets overhead. The sea was calm, oh so calm, not a ripple disturbed it. A lone T.L.C. sat with her nose out of the water some distance out trying her best not to flounder. The sky was heavenly blue in the bright sunshine. Was this after all to be the end? Would they come and shoot the lot of us, or send down another hail of mortar and bullets. Yes perhaps this was going to be the end. After all it would not be so hard to die. But what would those back home be thinking. Such a cruel world this, to bring such sorrow upon them. But no somehow I didn't feel as if I were going to die. Yes! That was it we were going to be prisoners of war.

Just then I awoke to a series of activities. Men were throwing away and destroying their arms, wearily rising as if in a dream and staggering up the beach. Down the beach I beheld a group of men with a white flag. Unconsciously I undid the buckle that secured my belt and holster. It dropped heavily into the sand.

Then I turned my back to the beach of hell, and walked to the promenade. Past dear old "*Bloody*" for the last time. Battered and beaten a bit, but nevertheless the same old "*Bloody*".

They gathered us up and after searching us marched us away to the hospital as the R.A.F. still were straffing and bombing the town. At the hospital the wounded and injured were taken from us, after we were all again searched and counted we began a march. To where, no one knew.

Out of the wreckage of the battle scene we were taken into the countryside. Men spoke very little to each other as the Jerry Guards ushered us

on. Their faces were hard and grim. They seemed not to care what would happen to them now. One lad hummed quietly Keep your chins up toodle-oo. The sun was very warm and soon we were glistening with sweat under the sweltering rays of the sun. On and on we trudged, up dale and down dale. The people we passed looked at us with pity in their eyes. Many an old mother's eyes were dim with tears and sadness as they watched us pass. Perhaps they were sharing the sadness that would soon come to our own mothers and wives. Mabe it was because another second front for the delivery of France had failed. We stopped once for water in a small village. The people willingly quenched our thirst and gave us bread and fruit. One girl followed the column for miles, bringing us what little food she could secure. But it was always on and on, how my feet ached and burned. God knows how those who had lost their shoes stood it. It was growing late in the afternoon when we passed a wedding procession. For those two was beginning a journey of happiness and security. We were embarking upon a voyage of sadness and hardships. From which no man knew if he would return.

Finally we came to a village and as we passed to the sports ground the inhabitants viewed us with sadness and curiosity. Here we were halted, surely to be shot in mass. But proved to be only a short rest. We were given water and I ate half my emergency chocolate and a bit of bread. This made me feel a bit better. Soon they announced that we were moving again, and those who couldn't walk must fall out. My feet were killing me but they would not know. The Jerrys weren't going to get me down. If they could walk so could I. The next lap of our journey proved not so long. As it commenced to grow dark we halted at a brick yard and were all ushered into a vacant building. Here we lay ourselves down every muscle aching and our minds dimmed and throbbing from the catastrophe of it all. Some made a bed on stone and gravel others on cinders. The good gods watched over me as I found myself on a mound of grass. Here I removed my boots and placed them under my head as a pillow and fell into a deep slumber which seemed as nectar to my sorely aching body. I was awakened once by a comrade as he handed me a steel helmet full of mint tea to drink. No, I wasn't hungry and fell into a deep slumber too tired to dream.

**Aug. 20, 1942**

In the morning I was awakened by the shouting of the Jerrys and my own comrades rising. I was breaking in every muscle. Oh how cruelly my body was paining me. With an effort I barely pulled my boots on to my badly blistered feet. The Jerrys were already moving them outside into the yard. Our berets and badges at once became of interest to souvenir hunters. One politely asked Gilly for his but not understanding the language knew not what it was about. Another soldier more forward and savage pushed his mate roughly aside, snatched Gillie's berrete from his head tearing off the badge and threw back the tam. Pocketing his treasure with a lurid grin leaving the other soldier with a whimpering disappointed air about him. When we were all lined up in the yard, where the Jerry's stood guard over us from the rooftop with machine guns, we were counted and an officer sorted a small group out to one side, of which I became one.

They marched us away to what proved to be a farm house. Here we went into the house one at a time and underwent a small interrogation. The officers spoke very good English and were quite polite. Not seeming the least bit annoyed when we refused to answer their questions. They appeared to think that we were the second front.

While at the farm house we were quite lucky. The farmer gave us water to wash with and to drink. Truly it was liquid gold being the first wash since the battle. Also he gave us some milk and a bit of bread and went on with his work about the farm yard very much un-concerned. Crowds of people were now arriving at the scene trying to get a glimpse at us. The guard in charge of us, a lad of about 18, accidentally discharged a round into the air. He was immediately visited by the corporal or whatever it was and properly dressed down. The civilians occasionally tossed us fruit and bread as they passed. One even brought wine and soda-water. This however finally began to aggravate the guard commander, a short stout, red faced brutal tempered fellow who stamped about and bellowed like a mad bull. I fully expected to see a young woman and her child shot to death when she tossed a bag of lump sugar over the fence to us. I never quite imagined such an eruption could issue from a human body. There after the natives stood off at a distance to view the operations.

It was past noon when we again joined the main body of prisoners. After receiving some more mint tea we were again lined up and marched to the nearest rail-road station, where we were all loaded into box cars just like a herd of cattle. These box cars were the same style in which we would later be transported to Germany. About 8 feet wide and 20 long and 8 high. Forty men rode cramped in these. Written on the side was: "Forty men or Eight horses."

Well we were soon on our way jolting along to a destiny unknown. What few could see out the windows watched the countryside. On and on we rolled. Late afternoon came and then darkness. I had eaten the rest of my immergency chocolate and had a try at the German bread. It was horrible stuff. "Black Bread," very heavy and sour to the taste. When we later became accustomed to it and were hungry it was good. Later I learned its constituents to be as follows:

Rye Flour, Potatooe flour, Very small percentage of wheat flour in some cases. Wood fibre and meat.

We spent a very bad night, still not entirely rested from the battle we lay, or at least tried to lay on the rough floor. Soon it grew cold and we lay close cramped together trying to get a little warmth from each others body. Finally the train stopped for I slept, anyway when I awoke in the morning we were at a standstill. A fellow made out Verneuille on a sign post. From a map which we possessed we found our position to be just south of Paris.

### **Aug 21, 1942**

Soon we were taken out of our box cars and lined up in the road. A short march now took place. Which soon brought us to our first prison camp. All our journeyings so far were regarded with the greatest of interest. Many times we had our pictures taken. The first thing we received at this camp was water. We had been some time without it. Men fought each other like animals for the precious liquid when armed postens brought it into the compound where we were imprisoned. It was some few days before we were all interrogated and registered. During this time we were not allowed near the wooden huts in our compound, but kept together in the hot sweltering sunshine which sapped every bit of strength we had left in us. While at this camp several amusing incidents took place which I shall never forget. Here are a few of them. The Camp Commadent was a rather nice fellow who spoke a bit of broken English. He always bid us good morning on

the morning check parades. The first time he said, "I bid you all a good morning." All was silent. "I say again, Good Morning" at which a few mumbles issued from us. Another morning he said, "Of course you shall have your Breakfast and Soap to wash with." Another time on the matter of escape, "Remember, if any of you try to escape, you all get shot, understand, brrrrrr—."

We were now all very hungry all the time although the soup wasn't too bad. But not enough. We were also starving for a smoke. One day the French Gov't made a present of chocolate, cake, cigarets etc to the Canadian French. They did their best to avoid disention by giving us some of it.

In one of the huts in the compound was some old furniture. Among it a great full sized mirror. When we were allowed more freedom a few of us used to go and take a look at the long beards we were growing. Fortunately I managed to get a shave the day we left. About seventy five shaved with one blade.

One day we were given some paper on which we were allowed to write a letter home. It was the hardest thing I ever attempted. Perhaps the letter never reached home.

Another evening a van containing a broadcasting set came in. On it we could speak to our homeland, but I doubt if any of the boys messages ever got further than the recording machine in some intelligence officers office. I strongly suspect our huts were also wired, merely another trick to gather information from the talk amongst us.

Finally the day to leave for Germany arrived. We were all well checked. Marched again to the station, loaded 20 men to a car, given bread, meat and water and hauled far four days to Stalag 8B. Lamsdorf in Germany. Sept 1/42

### **My First Day in Stalag VIII B. Lamsdorf.**

**(Later in 1943 it was changed to Stalag 344)**

We arrived at Annahof, a small railroad station a few kilometers from the Stalag, at about ten O'clock in the morning. When we were unloaded I was struck by the good looking British Prisoners of War coming and going in small parties. Later I came to know that these were working parties. I was very much impressed by the smart looking appearance of the prisoners, they were even smoking. It did not make sense to me. They threw us many packets of fags.

English fags at that. Well we soon left the station in rank and file. Oh it was so good to be able to stretch your legs again after being penned up in a jolting box for four days. The way led through an evergreen forest, past a well kept cemetery. Then we began to pass what seemed to be military quarters for a short way, and then directly in front of us, loomed the prison camp, with its low, long narrow dwellings with rows upon rows of barbed wire and quaint looking sentry boxes. At first we did not take much notice of the camp. The day was very hot. We were halted for a few minutes outside the gate. A group of officers came and looked us over. Then we were all searched in small parties. Mine was the first of such, so I was among the first of us to cross the threshold of the Stalag.

Anxious inquisitive men curiously regarded us as we were marched along the road to the bath house and de-louser. Many threw us fags. And shouted questions at us.

In the bath house, Englishmen greeted us adieu with more fags and questions galore. We were told to put our clothes on a special rack for delousing, then we had our first bath for many days. How heavenly the water was. We scrubbed and scrubbed with joy. It was really the most enjoyable thing I think I shall ever experience. While waiting for our clothes it was a race to see who could ask the most questions we or the old prisoners. In a short while I learned that there was plenty of sport, a school, a theatre, plenty to eat and smoke in the camp. As well as many more small features.

We went out from the bath house to a registering office where we gave our occupation, home address and several other minor particulars. In return they gave us a metal disc with a number on it mine had Stalag 8B. Nr. 25252. That was our identity disc. A few days later we had our photos taken which completed our registration. Oh yes. We were also finger printed at this office also.

From the registration office we were taken to a compound commonly called 7 to 10 compound as the barracks there were numbered as such. A good looking Staff Sergeant received us into his hut.

These huts were long narrow buildings built of brick and straw and plastered inside. They are quite low. Each end of the hut forms a barrack. It holds comfortably about seventy five men but sometimes ends up with nearly two hundred. The centre is a washroom with cold running water and washing troughs.

Also a copper boiler is installed here for heating water and sometimes a hot plate.

Well we were received into our new home with the greatest of stalag hospitality. A brew of tea was awaiting us. Also crowds gathered about us to hear our tales and news of England. One lad gave me some soap and lent me a razor with which I took a much needed shave. All the time fellows kept offering and giving us fags, and brought around cups of tea some were also invited to supper. The Englishmen were very good to us on this day. There were some Australians in the compound. They were also exceptionally good to us. Also one compound hut was inhabited by Palestinians. They set up a barber shop and proceeded to give everyone who needed it, a shave. Later we went to the Red Cross store for a blanket and I selected a top bed. The beds were wooden with no springs. These beds lined one half of the room. The other was lined with tubs. And the sergeant had a boarded off bunk of his own in the corner. Well another fag issue came up and I was plenty dizzy by this time I can assure you. In the evening we received a Red Cross soup of dried vegetables. I can't say how much of it I ate but it was plenty, the first time I was full since leaving England. Red Cross parcels also came up but the sergeant didn't have time to issue them that night as he had plenty to do registering our names and sorting us out into order. So I eventually went to bed and thanked God for delivering me into an entirely different world than I had dreamt of.

### **Just an Ordinary days Routine in the life of a Prisoner of War in Stalag.**

As the sun rises on Stalag all is peace and quietness. The average prisoner of war is still peacefully dozing away. He is trying to tell himself that it is not morning, but a series of camp whistles tells him it is not so. He only snuggles deeper into his blankets as the posten goes through the camp barrack and shouts "Aufstehn". The odd cleaner may now be heard stirring about. Probably a couple of them preparing to go and draw the morning brew from the cook-house. Mabe it is an early riser having a wash in the wash-room or busily preparing breakfast. A familiar sound is that of a spoon beating up klim milk (You usually hear so and so's mucker enquiring "if he was chasing a mouse in the klim milk tin this morning," later in the day). Well by now the hut commander is busily trying to



get the boys on parade. Morning's parade is 7.AM. This process generally takes quite some time. Strange how tired some of the boys are in the morning. Finally all the boys are ousted and the Jerry begins to count you. He is assisted by the compound Sgt. Major. They generally try to have these check parades quite military. But the boys aren't soldiers anymore and they don't stand to attention very good anymore. Well you're soon counted and everyone makes a dash back to the barrack room.

Breakfast making really goes on in earnest now. Some turn their tea into the cook house and receive ready made tea in return. This is drawn in large tubs by the cleaning staff, twice a day, morning and evening. Others keep their tea and make their own. Every barrack has a copper boiler in the washroom. You can get hot water there or boil it on your own blower. An ingenious invention (a very small forge like affair). It produces terrific heat and uses little fuel. You usually racket the coal for 50 fags a Red Cross box. So you all have tea, coffee or cocoa for breakfast with black bread and jam. Some make burgoo. Scoffers generally have just a brew unless it was Red Cross issue day yesterday. You are usually enjoying our last drops of tea and your fag, laughing and joking with your mates as the Hut commander announces that you must all get outside or on your beds. So that the cleaners can clean the barrack up. It is generally "All right chaps, Everybody outside and give the cleaners a chance." You now make a slow attempt to get yourself out of the way. Some go back to bed and sleep or indulge in a book. Others go to school or to the reference library and study. You can get a good university education in the school at Stalag 344. If you are just a Stalag lazy man you hang around outside and watch the others go walking. On your walk you probably meet one of your friends and you stop in at the swap shops to view the stocks or trade an article from your Red Cross parcel for fags, or vice versa. These swap shops are very popular and do a thriving business. No matter what you need its always procurable there. Any food article, any clothing article, All types of trinkets etc. You also note what is on at the theatre to-night as you pass. Mabe it's a play or a band concert. Perhaps its your huts turn to go this evening. As you pass the football around you stop a few minutes and watch them practicing. Sometimes you wonder how some guys can expend so much energy on so little food. Well there's a football game this afternoon and we can watch

them then. Until then lets get back to the hut its nearly 10:30 now, Brew should soon be up, anyway the spuds will just about be there now anyway.

You generally find one of your mockers has arrived before you and has everything well in hand. He has the spuds all drawn and peeled for supper. He bought a package of Canadian biscuits on the stall for 60 fags, a can of butter for 80, and jam for 30 so a scoff is in turn. Probably as he hands you the tea pot to make a brew he also informs you that we have a loaf a bread coming for 40 this aft.

After tea you have no more interests except the soup, which comes at noon. You generally ignore this unless it's a good soup. And take up your favorite pastime, mabe it's a book, a game of bridge. 90% of the gefangeners play bridge, when fags are in, gambling is quite prevalent. Perhaps you study, Play your musical instrument, draw or paint, Repair trinkets, watches etc if you are mechanical, Build a new blower. Make models of the Dieppe chains or do wood carving. Some sew and knit, blankets and hats are made from old woolens. A thousand and one things are made and done. All from odds and ends, The jerry gives you next to nothing. Its all rocketed or brought in from working parties. The arts exhibition in the school each year exhibits articles worth a fortune. The camp carpentry shop turns out first class furniture, the camps coffins and toys, etc.

In each prisoners possession you will find: A pair of model handcufs, a ring or locket made of celluloid containing his sweetheart's picture. In his log book is a pencil or colour copy of some living person. Many tattoos on his arm. As well as many other hand made articles. Prisoners are men of ingenious inventions. "Necessity is the mother of invention." In Stalag they make rope from Red Cross string. There is a large loom for weaving. And a small handful of coal cooks your supper on the blower run by an old gramophone motor.

Even so, amid such activity there is a very dull lazy atmosphere which grips you in the camp. So many men and such a small percentage do these things. The biggest percentage loaf in idle meditation, read novels or play cards. You find yourself drayed by it and find yourself putting off what you planned to do to-day till-to-morrow.

Well about four o'clock you are summoned to supper if you haven't been cook yourself. Its a good one to-night bacon and egg flakes, mashed spuds,

tomatoes and a big Stalag pudding. A couple slices of black bread and jam with coffee. Supper over its evening roll call, similar to that of the morning. From here theatre goers make a dash for the show. The first there gets the better seat. Some have their supper after roll call.

Evenings are generally the time of visits from friends in the other parts of the camp. Some sleep, others read, play cards or as in my case play the mandolin. The compound gates are locked at eight and then the evening brew comes up again with a small snack from the Red Cross parcel. P.O.W.s definitely do a lot of drinking. After lights out someone generally plays the gramophone and you go off to dreamland once more to the voice of Bing Crosby or Vera Lynn. Thus ends a day in the life of the men in the city of Lamsdorf. The world of the living Dead.

### **Life on a Working Party E608.**

As a whole, life on an arbeits commando is much healthier than in the man camp. From the average working camp men come back to Stalag looking very clean, neat and tidy and fat.

Conditions are much better plenty of warm water and fuel to heat it with and to do your cooking. You lose the dull lazy atmosphere of the Stalag, long beards are not so prevalent and men show more activity in doing things for themselves.

E608 was a forest party. I went there on Jan 22/43. I will always regard it as the saving of my life. I was thin and very weak and pale from the chin up, very little work made me tired, but there I soon got strong and fat again. The logar was small but we never varied over 50 men. Beside Lumsdorf it was Paradise.

We did various types of work. The main being falling of the timber. Which took place in the winter months. This was pine and spruce, and used mostly for paper, though some of the biggest is used for lumber. Other went for pit props in the mines. You all have a special job. Mabe two saw the trees down and another helps them by trimming the branches from the fallen tree. The miester now comes and measures the tree as he wants it cut up. All the ends or sometimes all of the tree is cut into metre lengths. Rotten trees go for firewood the others for paper. All paper holtz must be sholed, that is the bark must be taken off the tree.

This is a special job done by other workers. All pit props are also sholed. When the trees are all cut and sholed the metre lengths must be stacked in nice square piles containing one square metre of wood of a special kind. i.e. firewood or paper wood. The Germans make all sorts of things from the forest, paper from wood. Cloth from the boughs, leather from the bark are some of the many uses.

A forester is in charge of all the workings of the forest. Nothing must be taken killed or done in it without his supervision. He is responsible to an "Over Forester" etc. Under the forester are the common over miesters and misters who boss the gangs that work in the forest. All is done neat and orderly and slowly. "Langsam unt gut" they say.

In the spring we done re-forestation work. This consisted of planting young trees, on ready prepared ground. Girls and women planted most of the trees. All we done was to make the holes into which the young seedlings were planted. In fall and also spring this ground is prepared. All the dead branches left from cutting are cleared away. Then with hackers you turn the top soil back in long rows one metre apart, then grub the underlying earth up until you reach sand. It is a very hard back breaking job. They used to make us do 150 metres of this work per day. Other times in the forest was merely maintainance work done. This consisted of cleaning old drainage ditches, repairing roads and clearing away trees blown down by the wind. We spent about six weeks once cleaning and working along a small stream.

I spent fourteen months on this commando. It was at a place called Hirschfilde. The last three months I worked as camp shoemaker. One week I stayed in and repaired shoes the other I worked in the forest while the tailor stayed in.

My average day went something like this.

Six o'clock I got up, made my bed and had a wash. Then as a few of the later risers were getting out I would enter the mess hall filled with the odors of burning toast, coffee and smoking pine wood. Some of the earlier birds were already through, the fire had been lit since five a.m. While my coffee was boiling I would make some toast and warm up my breakfast, cooked from the preceding evening. It was either porridge or a stalag pudding made from biscuits and dried fruit. I generally finished just in time to get on the seven o'clock roll call. Here we

were counted by the under officer and then divided into our working groups under one posten each. We each picked our tools up from the tool shed outside the compound, either an axe, saw or sholer etc. From here each colony made its own separate way to the forest, depending where you were working. Sometimes you would walk for one and one half hours to your work. These were very enjoyable walks. All was piece and quietness in the forest. I nearly always said to myself, "Into the deep dark woods we go." We generally saw deer browsing or leaping through the woods. There were few birds in the bush. In fact I noticed a definite shortage of birds in Germany as a whole.

When we arrived at the job we invariably would have a smoke. Being a canuck fags were always plentiful. They always made life what it was for us in Germany. Cigs meant plenty to eat, clothes and other comforts. Well the meister soon would arrive. After shaking hands with the posten he would be all for the arbeit. After dily dallying at what we should do for some time we would start our job. If you worked hard you could be generally finished before noon. We usually took our time and aimed to finish around noon. Then we would eat our small lunch of black bread, and rest till one. Then it was away to the logar again.

Arriving home it was a rush for places on the hot plate. Sometimes those staying in would have our pots set on for coffee or tea. A scoff always took place on return from the bush, mostly bread and jam etc.

Then from the copper boiler outside the wire we would haul hot water with a jug and have a wash or a bath in the small washhouse. Basins were all we had but the boys kept remarkably clean.

The boys were now getting into bed for a snooze or read a book. Others played cards. Being a handy man I generally had somebodys lighter to mend or other job to do. Five o'clock I would have supper. (After a wash). Oh yes the soup was generally up by then, turnip soup and boiled spuds. Ignoring the soup, by six I would be eating something like this. Fried spuds and meat roll, green canned peas, Fresh picked blueberries which I got in the forest today. Coffee and bread and jam. Sometimes I had things like pancakes, eggs, white buns, pork, etc. Depending on the rackets. Trading was always stricktly forbidden but it went on just the same, About the first German you learn is "Hobbensei brot for seife" or "Eire for Chocolate".

Rations came up about 7. Bread 480 gms, margarine and wurst. I then cut up our sections bread, made my next days lunch. Had a cup of cocoa and biscuits or (coke – civil) and retired to the sleeping room to bed with a book until roll call and lights out.

### **A little about my Life at E578 & E749.**

We the Canadians were called into Stalag 344 on the 7<sup>th</sup> of March 1944. Supposedly to go to Stalag II D, where the rest of the Canadians had been sent. To a better camp, to work on farms. To make up a better life in compensation for the way we had been treated. The Forester on E608 told us that he hoped we would be able to take home some pleasant memories of Germany with us, after we had been there. The prevalent rumor was that we were going to be repatriated with the draft of wounded going home in May. Such proved not the case. We, after a couple of months rest were sent out on a railroad job E578. It was to be for only three weeks rest, while they got enough together to make up the party. From there we would be again recalled and sent right off to Stettin. Well three weeks past and the premier camp of IID was never seen by us, only arbeit.

We left Lamsdorf May 12 and after traveling all night in box cars reached our commando the next morning. A place called Peiskretscham.

At first the logar looked bad to us with its bare cinder compound. However the first sight proved not a fair judge. After being there a while I think it was one of the best logars in Germany.

There was a good wash room. Hot running showers. You could get a good bath every day. There were long rows of porcelain wash stands with tip bowls to wash in and a good drying room. The wash house was large and could be kept clean as it had a good cement floor with proper drains. The place was steam heated and a civilian was employed to operate the boilers.

The barack rooms were good with plenty of light, each man had a locker and a spring bed. One of a P.O.W.s dreams. (Most other commandos have wooden bunks). The rooms could be kept quite clean. There was a good hot plate and copper sufficient for the 200 of us (100 Canadians and 100 Bines).

There was a good long concert hall and a piano. We later had many an enjoyable show here of which I took an active part as compire.

The job proved to be a construction job. They were building a new Round House and R.R. Yard. It was to be the largest in Europe when completed. And to be used as a distributing centre for the products from the Ukrain. Many construction companies were working on the contract.

The P.O.W.s were mostly employed as unskilled labourers on excavation work for bridges and cement tunnels and subways. Some helped to lay new track and switches, others made large fill-ins, unloaded cement and gravel for the concrete work. Helped to lay the telegraph lines, build air raid shelters, etc. A few worked later as brick layers and carpenters.

The whole of the project was being done by conscripted labour. Us, Poles and Ukrainians. The Germans only were in supervision as engineers and meisters. A large number of Ukrainian women were employed. They were doing the same type of work as we were doing but worked much harder.

There was little machinery used, most of the work was being done by hand. Dirt for fills was of course dug by steam shovel and hauled in small trains and skips. The rest was pick and shovel. The cement pouring on the firm "Berlin" was done by quite modern machines. This was quite interesting. They poured the long cement tunnels and tressles. Tons of gravel and sand was unloaded on a high level by hand. This formed large piles of material at a height above the construction going on. Cement was unloaded down a long shoot into sheds at a lower level near the mixers and the project. When the pouring was started it never stopped till the form was filled. We worked for 12 hrs on a shift then the Poles would relieve us. When the job was completed we got a few days off for rest. The pouring went something like this. The gravel and sand was shoveled independently onto conveyor belts which in turn conveyed it to separate hoppers. Tracks for skips ran under the hoppers. Also tracks for skips ran into the cement shed. These tracks ran to the mixer. You pushed the skips about by hand. Each man had a special job. Under the hoppers were weighing contraptions for dumping a certain quantity of gravel into the skips. You pushed your skip under the gravel hopper and get a measurement of gravel, then the same procedure under the sand hopper. Now you were away for the cement mixer. Cement had

arrived on a small flat car also. A large power scoop (part of the machine lies beside the small track in a hole. You tip your gravel into it, a fellow throws in a couple bags of cement. The man on the machine pulls a lever and up it goes into the large revolving mixer, he pulls another lever and in goes a quantity of water, down comes the scoop again for the next load while that batch is mixing, he pushes another lever and the rotating mixing drum reverses and out comes the ready mixed concrete into a shoot on the other side of the machine. The shoot goes into a hopper. The cement mixer is set over a dug out in which is a large electric driven pump. From this pump a large iron pipe runs to where the cement is being poured into the forms. This pipe is composed of short lengths very strong and put together with clamps. The cement in the hopper is forced by the pumps through the pipe, around corners, up slopes and down slopes to the forms, where more men spread it about and tamp it into place.

If the machine stops, the cement must not be left in the pipe so they quickly knock one of the pipe clamps off and take out a length of pipe close to the machine. A large paper plug made of wet cement bags is shoved into the pipe, an air tight connection is clamped on to the pipe again and compressed air turned into it. Then out comes all the cement from the pipeline, everyone waits in expectancy, all of a sudden out comes the paper wad with a bang from the end of the pipe. It reminds you of a cannon and everyone cheers.

At first I went to work on the job, we worked from 7 till about 4:30 with 1 hr for noon. Then one day when we were moving a conveyor I got my foot under the wheel, and smashed my foot. However no bones were broken and I got three weeks off altogether. It however still hurt me to wear my boot. So I got a job on the logar staff till we left 578.

When I had my foot hurt the Jerrys treated me quite well I was carried in to the logar on a stretcher. The British Medical Officer who was on a party E1 in Laband came and looked at me. He sent me to Hindenburg the next day on a stretcher. We went by train and I was taken to a large civilian hospital where the nursing sisters exrayed my foot. There were no bones broken so I didn't stay. The next day they took me to the Stabs Artz who gave me my required time of excused duty. While my foot was healing I got caught up on my sleeping, played



the mandolin and read. I even would hobble over to the shoe shop and help Smoke mend a few pairs of shoes.

At first my job on the staff was merely as a cleaner around the logar. One day Jack Cook the fireman had an argument with the Sgt. so I was put on his job. I got to be the logars no.1 right hand man. Then my days routine went something like this. 4:30 A.M. Reveille. I got up and dressed. About 5 I had the hot plate with a good fire in it. Also a good full copper of boiling water for the boys morning brew. I had a wash then and put a few of my friends pots on the stove and would prepare my muckers breakfast. Coffee, porridge and toast. Being in the logar I was always chief cook, Red Cross quarter master and cig storesman. We always managed to keep a good supply of groceries on hand. I could always get a loaf when I wanted it. After breakfast I sometimes took a snooze. The logar vetraunsman always counted me if I was asleep. On re-arising I would go and wash the breakfast dishes, perhaps there was a drop of coffee left to warm up. Then I would clean up my stove, sweep the yard, gather the rubbish up, and have my freestick. Sometimes with George, Smoke or Harry and Len. Then we would haul out the rubbish and get a load of coal. Then I would have a shower and put on clean clothes, all ready to go for the noon soup. This usually consisted of spuds, a very small portion of meat and a ladle of gravy. Spuds were 500 grams. We went outside the compound to the kitchen to draw the soup. The cooks were German Women. They also cooked for the Ukrainian girls who lived in a logar adjacent to ours. Frau Webber a middle aged good looking jovial lady ran the kitchen and gave us our rations. Myself with one of the staff gave out the soup, (sometimes it was semolina or porridge as a change) while Sgt Pedigrew and Reg Sherwood opened the Red Cross Store. Then I would go and have a bite to eat, usually bread and jam, with my muckers who had arrived on the scene and prepared lunch. After dinner I would have a short nap until the parties had gone out to work. Then we would go and draw the bread and margarine. Bread was about 400 grams. During the day I had to keep the fires stoked. So between all these jobs I was kept quite busy. I always cooked the evening meal, usually of fried spuds, meat roll or bully beef and perhaps an egg and if we had the ingredients Apple pie, and coffee and bread. In the evening I would play the mandolin or sit around the compound with the boys and watch people go by.

Maybe we would have rehearsal for the next show. We always had an evening brew before role call with a couple of Canadian Biscuits. In the Red Cross Store we had thousands of Fags so we could buy anything we wished, extra Red Cross food, clothes or jackets. While evening Roll call was going on I would bank my fire up and have a wash before being counted and locked up. I lived in the staff hut so we could have lights on as long as we wished. It was nice and quiet so we could go to bed early if we wished to.

### **July 7, 1943**

It was in this logar that I saw my first Allied Aircraft over Germany. They never bombed near us but just far enough away so that we could hear the bombs and A.A. When our local guns opened up we got in the trenches as oft time shrapnell fell in the compound. The big bombers would pass directly over us. How grand they looked and sounded. The raids were over Hydelsbreck and Bleckhammer the Leaniest as large plants were situated there (Benzine factories). Appeln and Baiten also were objectives.

The alarm usually went about eleven. Soon after we would see the familiar vapour trails in the sky of the Pathfinder planes as they led in the flights and marked out the target. Then we would see the puffs of Anti aircraft going up and hear the drone of hundreds of mortars. Perhaps they would come into the right angle for the sunlight and we could see them shining slivery as diamonds in the sky. How our hearts leaped and our faces beamed. Then came the death destructive rumble and our faces would grim abit as after all perhaps hundreds of people, quite innocent and as war weary as us were being killed. After the all clear had gone the sky would be streaked once more by a couple of fast planes. This meant that soon down would be dropping hundreds of leaflets. Then the civilians would be dashing here and there collecting them. It was forbidden to read them, they must be turned into the police. The guards got some but not one fell in our logar never. However the old undercover system usually brought one in the next day or so. These raids occurred about once a week. Few planes were shot down. Later the raids occurred at night-time also and we would have to go into the trenches. In the fall and winter they came nearly every day and more frequent in the evenings.

Thus life went on at E578. We got our mail and parcels from home regular. The boys got on better with the work and by working on quota were not obliged to go out after dinner. Finally in September we were told that we would move to another logar in the same place to join the working party there. It was a bigger logar but not quite so clean and convenient as we were now a larger party known as E749. The job stayed the same however. I still retained a staff job as fireman but decided to go out working in October as the boys were doing much less work outside than I inside.

November 1<sup>st</sup> the Red Cross stopped but John, George, Jim and I had twenty two thousand cigs on hand, so we still lived as well as before with the rackets between us and the Poles. "All for the good of the Poles", as we would say to Punya Duda. We ate pie or cake every night with plenty of wurst, eggs, beef, pork, flap jacks, rabbit, chicken, turkey, etc. Sgt. Major Burton was a good scrounger in these days so we had good rations from the cook house. Lots of extras such as milk and fresh vegetables.

Xmas showed you what the cigs could do for Can. P.O.W.s. Xmas Eve we had a variety show run on the Amateur Contest plan. It was highly successful with plenty of Canadian cig prizes. We got ½ an invalid parcel per man, for xmas only. But Ted Welton and Mac Moby with us four put up a Christmas dinner with these things on the menu. "Roast Goose" with "onion stuffing and English meat roll". "Rich brown Gravy", "Mashed potatoes", "Creamed carrots and Green Peas", "Pickled Onions", "Tea" and "White Buns". "Chocolate Cake", Our own Home made Fruit cake, "Apple Pie", "Table Wine and Cigars".

Xmas night we had an old time dance with plenty of beer. Our band or should I say Hoot's Band supplied the music for the square dancing. Hoots on the squeeze box. Paddy Grogan on the violin, Lasard drumming and Joe Trudea and myself on mandolins.

After Xmas work was easier, events leading up to the occupation of Ober Salesia by the Russians probably had a bearing on it. We worked shift work, morning and afternoon alternatively. The quota was small. We were always in the logar by 10:30 in the morning. After dinner we worked from 1 till 4. Red Cross was again coming after the New Year (1/2 parcel per man) so we lived like Kings. Plenty of baked beans and puddings extra to what I have hitherto mentioned. Jan

20 was my last mornings work. On the 22 we evacuated. Of which I will later write about.

### **October 8, 1942. 12 Noon till September 1943.**

Every British P.O.W. captured on the 19<sup>th</sup> of August 1942 has in his possession a miniture pair of handcuffs made from the handle of a celluloid tooth brush or a tatoos on his arm of a set of chains with Lamsdorf 1942-3. Also the inscription "Deutschland werde ich nich vergessen". In England this means "Germany I will not forget." Anyone asking this question gets this story with a few of his own discomfortures and experiences added.

We were living well in Stalag 8B between Sept.1 when we arrived from France and Oct 8. Two or three work parties had gone out to work in a sugar factory. We had not yet accumulated all the necessities of a P.O.W. in regards to clothing and other toilet articles but were getting one Red Cross parcel and a bit of bulk per week. Fuel was plentiful for cooking on your small tin can stove. Blowers had not yet been introduced from Italy where it was invented by a Kiwi in Camp no 52. I was doing camp work putting in the camps supply of winter potatoes. We were able to bring some in everyday and we got one loaf between four, extra for this work. One of my mates was working in the wood shed. Another was unloading cabbage.

About the first day in Oct. a rumor to the effect that we were going to be tied up (The Dieppemen). It wore off and all was quiet again. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of Oct. all the Stalag Compound gates were closed. You couldn't go anywhere. No one knew the score, it had never before happened in the history of 8.B. Oct 7 all was in order again and we got a R.C. issue.

In the morning of Oct. 8 two officers arrived on the compound roll call. And started to conduct what appeared to be a search. We hid our pocket knives in the sand. The rest of the compound was sorted away from us. We were ordered to bring out our kit, surely a search, A lot of nominal rolles were read out. And about 10:30 without being searched we were all marched into the top compound Twelve hundred of us in all. The rumor now ran that we were going on a work party. We were now divided into groups of about 180 to 200 and allotted to barracks. There was a wild scramble for beds, but I didn't get one. There was

room for about 150. So there I was sitting against the wall with my box and blankets. 11:30 the soup came up. A few minutes before 12 the Germans went wild. "All on parade". A mad under officer who spoke English jumped through the window with a stick in his hand to speed us on parade. In no time we were standing orderly on roll call. There was an armed party outside the wire fence. There was a double guard on the whole camp. The camp Commodant and his staff were in the compound with a large party of guards armed with machine guns. There was certainly something funny coming off. It looked suspiciously like there was going to be a mass murder done of which I might be one of the victims. At last we were called to attention by our Sgt. Major. He said he didn't know what was happening but as we were soldiers he knew we would make the best of it. (Sgt Major Busley)

An officer stepped out beside the Commodant and read a proclamation to us. Exactly how it went I cannot recall but the contents were something like this. We were to be bound, our hands tied, until Germany received some satisfactory answer from Great Britain in regards to her methods of handling newly taken prisoners. In commando raids on the Channel Islands German soldiers had been found with their hands and feet tied, shot in the back. The same was reported to have been done by us, proof in the fact that "Brigade staff orders" had been captured at Dieppe wherein it stated that prisoners taken were to be bound. We were mentioned as pirates and would be treated as such by having our hands tied at 12 noon Oct 8. A short silence now ensued. All sanitators and protected personnel were singled out. Sgt Major Beasley of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commando again called us to attention. He said he didn't know what it was but that it concerned the first twenty in the group. They came very smartly to attention and marched 100% soldier like into the hut. They continued taking us in groups of twenty. Mine came up. In we went through the hut to the wash room. Guys were standing about, hands tied with a dazed look on their faces. In the wash room guards were binding our hands with our own Red Cross string, from our food parcels, Heaping insult upon insult. As they bound mine for some reason my chin stiffened and my lips quivered to think that a man, a soldier, defenceless should have this done to you. You crossed your wrists and the cord was securely bound about them. It hurt a bit and cut your circulation but we didn't whimper. The twine

crossed in a peculiar knot on top so they could tell if you tampered with the strings. After I went into my end of the hut I came face to face with Snyder. We looked at each other a moment, then burst out with hearty laughter. After all it had its funny point.

Strict orders of straff were issued. We had to stay in the barracks. You couldn't go near your beds in the daytime sleeping was forbidden. There was to be no smoking on the side of the room where your bunks were situated. It was strictly forbidden to tamper with your ropes. If they were cutting your wrists a sanitarior was to be seen or a guard. Fires and cooking was strictly forbidden. The Red Cross was stopped, there would be no issue of food articles or cigarettes. Shouting, whistling, singing, and playing of musical instruments was forbidden. You couldn't go to the latrine alone. Parties of four or five must be accompanied by a guard and a sanitarior who helped you to do up your clothing. Anyone caught breaking these orders was further punished. They took you away to the guard room where your hands were bound behind your backs and you stood with your toes and face to the wall for one hour.

Two postens with tommy guns roamed about the hut. Two more outside the door. You couldn't get in or outside the compound gate without a pass or a Red Cross band on your arm. Sgt Major Beasely and his Dormiture were excused the Ropes. Sanitators and protected personel were not bound. They were allotted to each barrack room for duty and to help us do the things we couldn't for ourselves. No Americans were bound. We had four of these men to each Barrack room. The following day this straff was also placed upon the air force in the camp. Men in officers camps also experienced it.

I had no bed so I layed my straw mattress along the wall on the cement floor. The rest of the unfortunates did also. It wasn't comfortable and some of the boys got sick after a while. One caught pneumonia and had to go to the hospital. Medical attention was very restricted at first. Only severe cases were seen to and the doctor had to fight to organize a regular sick parade. Padres were not a first let in but later were allowed in to hold church services on a Sunday. (Padre Foote)

The first day went quite uncomfortable. We did nothing much but discuss the situation. The lads were already trying to estimate the length of our straff.

Some estimated a matter of hours. Others gave it a week or ten days. Little did we realize the order would be in effect for a year. They were already experimenting with the ropes and in pares. It was extremely difficult to do anything with crossed wrists. Guys tried to roll fags in two's. Bread could be cut. One held the loaf while the other cut it. Later we solved the problem of loosening the bind so that you had 3 or 4 inches play between your hands. A quick twist and wrap made it look natural again. Some even (in fact we all did) slipped their hands from the ropes in an unobserved corner to do some task. We managed to get our bit of Red Cross cooked in the evenings by putting a fire into the hut stoves and cooking over the flames. This Red Cross was what we still had on hand. If they caught you burning bed boards however you were for it. There were nearly always guys in the guard room. We went to bed the first night tied. You couldn't cover up very well. And kept waking up with yourself pulling and straining at the cords. The guards we had were not so bad at heart. They were soldiers and at heart not in accordance with the political orders being carried out. However duty is duty and they had their orders. They would roll you a fag or any other small favour. This first night they were seen covering the odd fellow up. At that you still met the occasional fanatical one, even in 1945 who believed in a divine power and super race.

At two o'clock we were roused and the guards came in. Another proclamation was read. Due to the generosity of the German Gov't we would be untied in the evenings between 8 p.m. and 8 a.m. Later we were also untied between 12 noon and 1 p.m. for dinner. That made sleeping more restful.

Oh yes I neglected to mention that on the first evening we had a sing song. Moral never got low at any time during the straff. We only grew to hate the Jerrys more. And to really realize just what kind of race they really are. The sing song lasted for sometime, quite heartily and joyously too. Finally an enraged officer came and blew his cork, "I have said before. There will be no singing or whistling or playing of musical instruments, this is serious business." At that he left us and we figured it would be possibly better to be a bit quieter.

The next morning we were wakened early by the Sgt Major and told to be sure to have a good wash and clean up, and to do anything we possibly could to keep our health, air our blankets and take a bit of exercise. At eight we were

again bound and put back in the hut. Later we were allowed out for one hour after the tie up for exercise, while the sanitarior cleaned and aired the billets.

During this straff the rest of the camp were quite good to us. They voted and refused the Red Cross also. If we couldn't have it so couldn't they. We had no water in the compound. They organized carrying parties and brought it to us, filling all the troughs in the wash room. The rackets compound smuggled in cigarettes to us with the rations and carrying parties. Setters also were smuggled in to us when they arrived.

Amusements we had few outside of the few Red Cross games and cards in our possession. Books were also a premium. 90% of the guys read the whole Bible for the first time in their life.

A game of bridge was interesting to watch, two men shuffled the deck together on the table. The deal was one handed or if a guard wasn't looking a bystander would slip his ropes and make it. You couldn't hold the cards and play at once, so you set your field service cap in front of you and arranged the suits around the band. We had lots of bridge, crib and checker contests.

The noon soup was poor but the camp medical officer after a fight got Red Cross meats put into the soup. And an issue of tea brought from the cook house morning and evening. Besides this we got only the regular issue of dry rations. Later in about two weeks time we got Red Cross Bulk issued again at the rate of about  $\frac{1}{2}$  parcel equivalent per man. We were always very hungry and cold as the ropes stopped your free body movement.

We always looked forward to issue day in the compound. The sanitarior pushed it up on a flat wagon stacked high in the air. They could barely push the wagon. On this issue we got: One package of Argentina biscuits (32). Five blocks of crack cheese. A bar of chocolate. Honey and Butter. With some dried fruit. The fellows were very hungry so they were all quite sick during the eve. The Jerry rations per day consisted of: Soup of turnips or cabbage  $\frac{1}{2}$  litre. 200 grams black bread, 32 grams margarine, or fat. A bit of jam, or Honey. (Fish cheese which no one ate.) Potatoes 3 or 4 medium sized.

Saturday afternoons we were untied to do our washing and give things a good kleen up. The state of our billets never suited the Orderly Officer. He even went so far as to threaten to put Russians with whips in with us.



While in the top compound one incident occurred which I shan't forget. A fellow Joe Smith slept beside me. He and his comrades had been playing cards before lights out. A fellow was cooking in the fire next to us, burning bed boards. When the lights went out, Joe and his friend came and sat by the stove to smoke a fag before retiring. All at once the lights came on and in came the compound corporal and his armed guard. The cooker immediately scooted, leaving his cooking supper. The under officer looked at the fire, he took it for Joes. They argued in German. He pulled a burning ember from the fire, holding it in front of Joe. More conversation ensued and the enraged corporal smote Joe in the face with the red hot ember. I understood none of the conversation as I had not yet learned any of the language. At that he put the fire out and they left us. Life went on thus until Nov.11 when they moved us into compound 19 to 22, later known as the Dieppe Compound. Here there was plenty of water and warmer billets for winter. Each man had a bed and there was no need of sleeping on the floor.

We were constantly standing on parade. Sometimes ropes were short so they thinking we had destroyed them kept us on parade regardless of the weather for an hour or so. Until someone produced a few missing ropes or the time had expired. Many times we knew not what for at all. These parades I think must have averaged two a day.

When the Red Cross strings wore out they brought  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch ropes soaked in creosote. These ropes were whipped on the ends with strong cord. We used to take off the whipping to sew on our buttons, so that the ropes also unraveled in time and had to be replaced. They chaffed and cut into your wrists so infection set in and your wrists swelled up and had soars. Chill blanes became very prevalent resulting in swollen hands. When your hands got in this state the M.O. was able to get special permission for you to be left untied until the soars had healed.

All your cleaning etc. was done after eight in the evening when you washed and shaved. At least we were at peace at night and on Sat. afternoon when the Jerrys wouldn't be there. Thus life went on until the second of Dec 1942.

We heard a rumor that we were going to get chains instead of ropes. These started appearing about a week before we got them in the airforce

compound. They were on the snap hand cuff pattern with about 18" chain between them. They allowed you more movement as you could get both hands at once in your pockets and do many other things. They could be taken off by screwing a special key in one end but any sharp pointed instrument would do the trick. On December 2, Twelve 0'clock we were given the chains. It meant less trouble, more movement and now we could do something which we wanted to in the day-time. Cards could be played easily, sewing done in the day-time, drawing, and writing, etc. The boys were forever getting in and out of their chains. They had their great coats on for the chain up. Five minutes later they had the coats off or vice versa. One air force was caught one day having a bath with his chains on, but no clothes.

Our main pastime now was the making of Xmas decorations and planning for the much looked for event. Blanket making from old wollen sweaters and socks was quite popular. The favourite pastime was the crocheting of winter hats. We called them "mod trappers". Some done needle work, made their regimental crests, etc. I don't think the camp commandant was at least in favour of the staff himself. The second day of our tying up. He sent us a notice congratulating our actions as soldiers. He was glad to see that we had acted as such.

We got our first Red Cross Parcel one week before Xmas. 1 between 2. We got a full Xmas parcel unopened, per man. All other issues of canned food stuff are punctured or opened on issue. (A safeguard against escape)

The Xmas parcel contained: Xmas cake, Xmas pudding, sweets, chocolate, chocolate biscuits, Tomatoe and Steak pudding, steak, and macaroni, Cheese, milk, tea, butter, sugar, soap and bacon. We had a good dinner in two settings in the hut. We were unchained 6 p.m. Xmas eve and chained again the day after boxing-day.

Finally the guards got laxer on the methods of chaining. At one time if they chanced to find you with loose ropes they would tighten them. One guard went round doing so one day. All of a sudden he had a cue waiting for their ropes to be tightened. They kept going from the front to the rear, meanwhile loosening the strings. After an hours re-tying the guard gave it up in disgust. As I say they got more lacking in the chaining and unchaining. The chains were brought into our hut and we normally lined up for them. Now we just filled past, took a pair, and

put them on at our leisure. In the evenings we took them off at our will and handed them back again. After unchaining we always had a brew, boiled over the embers in the stove and had our supper if we hadn't already done so. This was the most enjoyable part of the day. We could have lights on as long as we wished. On Jan 22 Spud Woodhead got John, Jim, and I on a party. We left thanking God to get out of the hole. I was not there for the lifting of the straff in the fall nor in the summer. But I learned that after the Canucks got their home parcels and cigs, life wasn't so bad. The chains became a farce. Each man had a hook with his number on, here he hung them throughout the day. The compound gates had been open since xmas. You could go out to school, to church, sports, the theatre or to visit friends. They only checked occasionally to see if all the handcuffs were there. The Dieppe Compound became the cleanest in camp, Art paintings adorned the barrack walls. The billets were all re-painted inside. Men took a personal pride in their own cleanliness. Where there is money there is prosperity. Cigarettes really meant money in a Prisoner's life. The Canadians revolutionized the sporting world in Lamsdorf with softball. Many a wild tale was told by the Limeys after the Canucks left. They missed our cigarettes only I think, but softball stayed.

### **Our Evacuation of Ober Salesia, 22/1/45.**

As a prisoner of war you seldom get very much news as to the conduct of the war. Merely the main headlines and happenings, through your camp paper and information from the civilians. Sometimes you can procure a newspaper. Our attention since "D" day had been all towards the west wall. The Russians seemed very distant and far away.

Air raids had become more frequent we were down in the shelters nearly every evening now. We heard that the Russians were breaking through, and advancing very rapidly. So we would sing in the evenings when the lights would go out, to the ukulele. "We'll all hail Joe when he comes" and "He'll be commin through Peiskretcham when he comes." Little we knew the truth of this statement. A steady patrol of planes were seen daily up and down the tracks. The train was only going as far as Katowitz. We oft heard machine guns in the sky. But we put it down to, "Just clearing his guns". The work slowed up immensely. A lot of the

big shots were going away for a few days. The Poles were going home on leave and staying. People were seen evacuating with large bags by the railroad. We heard the Russians were coming closer. Everyone who could was leaving. They didn't seem to be doing much about us. Probably they would leave us, for which we all hoped. Our main object of interest was the main highway to the north east of us. It became a bee-line of activity. Transport after transport went up it. Horses drawn and otherwise. Columns of troops were seen marching, marching. They must have been going up to the front.

We really got woke up on the 20<sup>th</sup> of Jan. Most everyone was in from work. There wasn't much doing, no meisters, no Poles, the Russians were coming fast and close. It was forenoon I was contemplating cooking a cake. We had had lunch.

Just then Harry came running in and stated that we should come out and see the stuff they were dropping. We took him for joking. Out he went again and McLaghton (we called him McGooglesburg) hit for the air raid shelter. Ron Gun said, "Now look what you've done. He'll be down there for hours". At that he took his cup of tea from his table, evidently he was going to take it to him. A bit of excitement stirred outside. I started for the door. Halfway there I heard machine gun fire in the air. "Must be a dog fight", thinks I. I was stopped still as a statue, they were coming closer. Another burst. Oh, Oh, straffing and bombing. I hit the floor and I think I must have tried to get under the cupboard. As guys all toar past me shouting to each other, the raid came thicker. We were really in for it this time. I decided to make a dash for the shelter. What a havoc outside. The Sgt. Major was kneeling by the corner of a hut. Guys were tearing past and I could see a small congestion by the door of the shelter. I laid on my face next to the wall of the building as planes roared overhead, machine guns chattered, cannons roared and bombs smashed into their target. Someone dropped a cup of dried peas. I could see them bouncing on the ground. I figured they were bullets. I made a last dash for the shelter. This time I made it before the bomb burst went. Now I really wanted a fag as a bull broke in the happenings. Most everyone stayed near the shelter after it was over. For the rest of the day everyone was jumpy. We had several mad dashes for the shelter but they were false alarms. You had to tip toe to the latrine or across the yard if you didn't want another rush

started. It took me all afternoon to get my cakes baked. We had no casualties from the raid. A piece of shrapnel had passed through John's blanket on the line. Five men had been caught in the shower room during the strafing. We heard that three civilians had been killed.

Sun 21 was quiet and cold. At evening Roll call Under Officer of Lugar Dienst announced there would be no work tomorrow. He didn't know if or when we would be evacuated. All was very quiet on the railroad. The Sgt. Major advised us to be packed in readiness.

On Mon 22 of Jan an officer came at 9 A.M. He gave the order to be ready in marching order to evacuate in three hours. We were told we would be marched to Labond and loaded onto trains. A heart breaking scene now followed. They cleared the Red Cross store. We each got  $\frac{1}{2}$  parcel and any clothing we wanted. They cleared the cig stores. All equipment and clothing left behind was to be burnt. In went uniforms, coats, shoes, new sports equipment, musical instruments, and other treasures which the boys couldn't take. I threw away most all my extra stuff. It broke my heart to part with my mandolin. We took most of our food. We had to leave 5 kilos of beans and 3 of pudding powder, as well as a few other odds and ends. For dinner we each had  $\frac{1}{2}$  raisin pie and milk. We were excited so not so hungry. My heart had sunken when the order to evacuate came. We could now hear the rumble of the big guns coming closer and closer. When we left the logur behind at 1:30 we could also hear ground machine gun fire. The Russians were close indeed. We wanted to stay and yet there was a certain fear. We were not sure, we had heard and perhaps believed too much propaganda. At five o'clock we arrived in Laband. We could hear guns all the way. We had a lunch at Laband, heard many rumors about going the following day, received a Xmas parcel and  $\frac{1}{2}$  invalid per man. We built us a sleigh when we were given half an hr. to evacuate again. Large boxes of Red Cross food was set out to be taken. It was a prisoners dream. At Laband I threw away all my belongings except a change of clothes and my Log book. It was dark when we moved out on to the road. All together in food we had 12 parcels and some extra bulk and bread.

The highroad was in a panic. Many civilians were hurrying along it, some walking, some with sleighs and bicycles. The army was moving in the same

direction as us. Large white troop carriers loaded with white clad, silent men passed us by the score. They towed guns in some cases. They were or seemed to look well equipped. This equipment was all very much first class. Some horse equipment also passed us. Along the road we passed broken carts, dead horses, discarded equipment, even a Jew in his striped uniform and a dead Russian. There certainly had been a panorama along this road. On and on the postens hurried us. Our fellows were also throwing away more stuff so they could carry on. We stopped only for traffic congestions etc. And late but before midnight we stopped at a large estate near Gleimity where we were billeted in a barn. Little did we realize that for weeks upon weeks would these barns be our home and refuge from the elements. The German Sgt. told us that the next day we would be loaded on a train, Since noon we had made 20 kilometers.

The first week went very fast. We marched 110 kilometers up till Sat night to Traumity. The first two or three days we saw plenty of front line troops in the towns which we passed through, all waiting for action. Each day we heard less and less of the guns. We saw millions of P.O.W.s English and Russian. Many Russians passed us and we passed many. The second night we stopped at Rouden. There were eight of us hauling our stuff on the sleigh. Welton and Maloy, the two Bines Rudd and Morris, and our four. We were roused at midnight in Rouden to continue on our march. The Russians must have been close. Sgt. Major Burton stated that it was a good time to go. Two took the opportunity. We marched steady until five or six in the morning. It was bitter cold. The leather of our shoes was frozen stiff. We waited for a couple of hours at this stop. Why I didn't know. But there was a large column of Russians ahead of us. I had to keep running up and down and stomping my feet to keep them from freezing. A lot of guys got their feet frostbitten here I think. Several had their toes amputated later in the march. We now marched till we crossed the Ador River. A rumor went that everyone must be over this River by eleven as they were going to blow the bridge. Just over the bridge we halted and many columns of Russians passed us, also English men. We halted here a couple of hours. We built a fire and managed to get a brew and our feet warmed up.

The Russians that passed us had come straight off their shifts in the mines and onto the march. Jerry had been caught very much unawares. As they passed

us with hunger written on their poorly shaven and unwashed faces they begged for smokes and food. This we had, it was hard to refuse them, but we must live. It was survival of the fittest. Some of these hoardes stated that they would have their day. The Russians ate a lot of row spuds, turnips, and mangles. We saw plenty of them dead along the roadside. Some had been shot. For the first few days it was a race between them and the Jews as to the majority of the dead. They never shot any of us. Our weak ones were always hauled on wagons. Later, out of the danger zone they also hauled the Russians. These dead were horrible sights. Ragged unshaved and unwashed. Bloody and goary, where they had been shot. The Jews had their throats cut. The Russians always dived into the vegetable clumps. When this happened the postens discharged shots into the air and beat them with sticks and the butts of their rifles. The Geneva Convention stood between us and such treatment. It meant food, cigarettes, and good treatment to us. We marched that afternoon to Alt Weiler where we cooked a hot meal over an open fire, got our shoes and socks dry and had a good wash in a nearby abandoned breavry. That night towards morning we were awakened by the firing of the VI nearby. It shook the barn nearly to pieces. We thought it was the Russians and that the Jerrys had left us but next morning the posten still shouted "Auf Stein" at 5:30.

All week evacuees passed us in cars and trucks. Our direction was at first towards Ratibar but it proved full of evacuees awaiting trains. So on and on we marched passed broken down wagons, dead horses and men, with wet socks and frozen boots to Traumity in all 110 km.

Sunday we had a rest, it was just outside Jagensdorf. We called this place Ma Englishe's. That was the owner's name. The lady was very hospitable to us. She gave us fires, plenty of hot water, spuds and even milk. Some were even allowed in the house. It was bitter cold, but we had good food and got our feet dry.

The next day before Jagensdorf we passed piles of ammunition and shells along the roadside. This day brought us into Sudetenland. We were bearing ever in a south western direction. At Ma Englishe's we learned that the whole of Uber Salesia had been sold. The chief of the railroad had paralyzed the railroad in 48 hours. Hilter was reputed to have arrived and shot several leaders and Generals.

Our sleigh was very hard to pull this day so that night we decided to disguard the sleigh and pack. Jan 30 our first day of packing was a hard and long one. We went six kilometers over our intended destination. It was dark and late when we arrived at Klinhohl. We were nearly asleep when the officer came and ordered us all outside, he seemed very angry and had been drinking. We were reputed to have been smoking and had slept on some seeds. However the misunderstanding was soon rectified and we went back to our blankets. We had another rest day Feb 2 at Trubinet. Here we got our first issue of bread of 500 grams from the Jerry. Hither to we had depended on 5 days rations which we had brought on the wagon with us.

Due to the old Army red tape on Feb 3 we over marched our destination 3 km and had to return again to Gras Poidt. At Muglit a large town before Gras Poidt we scored a loaf of bread. The chief centre of interest here was two well dressed women. One in a leopard skin coat who persisted in standing quite conspicuously in our view. We had a very much needed rest on Feb 4. My feet were very soar and my legs were al knotted and cramped. It pained me terribly to walk. This place seemed rich in potatoes. All day all you could hear was spuds up. Boiled spuds and row spuds. We bought some apples from the farmer, And had a good scoff of pidgeon spuds, soup powder, 4/7 of a tin of German meat all cooked togther. Feb 7 brought us to Abtsdorf, our last stop in Sudetenland, Germany. To a rest of five days. I felt badly to my stomach so I welcomed this stop very much. The hay barn was very good and we had a good spot. In fact we were always lucky in getting a good bed. There was always a mad rush for a bed. You waited in the yard, the Sgt Major gave you instructions where and where not to sleep. The barn door was open. At the word go, away you went, pushing and scraping. It was indeed a struggle of existence. It's a pity Englishmen couldn't act like soldiers and men. But it was always the same in P.O.W. life. When the going went hard it was always, "To hell with you Jake, I'm O.K." You cut each others throat in deals, wouldn't share and even begrudged your friends the but of a cig. The bigger your combine, the bigger the graft. The more you had the more you wanted. So the lone wolf fought the hoard on his own. The Volksturm relieved the postens on guard duty here.



We had quite a few Can cigs left. We managed to buy quite a store of bread. I think we left with 12 or 14 kilos of bread. From the French workers we bought cake, biscuits, and meat etc. John bought a pair of baby carriage wheels and built a cart to haul our extras in. Someone stole flour from the frau. There was quite a do, but we were not punished. The main rumor was that the Russians were on the outside of Berlin. This proved to be just a rumor. This stop netted us 264 km in all. We had some good soups from our cooks here and plenty of hot water for brews. Red cross food was still plentiful and cheap if you had the fags. Every farmer in Germany has a cooker. Here we always made our soups and heated water for tea. Generally the farmer allowed you to build a fire to do extra cooking in the yard. If not the frau would do a bit for you on her stove. One point I must say these German people generally did all they could for our comfort, if we didn't steal or do any damage about the place. Even some would overlook these faults. I think they realized our plight. Some seemed pro-British. I think the most of them were war weary and looked forward to the day of peace. Some of them would tell us that they had been soldiers in the World War, or had sons. P.O.W.s. Well this stop proved very restful, not much of extraordinary interest happened. So we put it down as one of good profit.

### **Feb.13**

On Feb 7 we left Abtsdorf the day was dreary and the roads were bad. When we crossed the boarder of Checo Slovakia in the afternoon it was like an entirely different land. It was warm and thawing. The snow was off the roads. The roads were better. We saw American built cars. The cities were clean and well kept. The first large town looked like a town. Clean, wide streets. Nice looking houses all nicely painted, built on the American style with rounded off corners. The stores and business places were strictly modern. Instead of empty windows there were rows of sausage and meat in the butcher shops. Piles of bread on the bakers shelves. Good looking shoes and clothes in the show cases. American influence showed everywhere. The people smiled and waved at us, threw us things to eat. There was a definite increase in the male population. Lots of men of military age in civilian clothes. The Chec policemen looked very smart in their green and red uniforms. We noticed an increase in good machinery. Tractors, etc. Even a truckload of rubber tires passed us. There were no road blocks or

defences being thrown up as in Germany. In all it seemed a land of peace and plenty of sunshine and smiling friendly people. Even the air seemed, cleaner, brighter, and freer. Yes, we were going to have experiences in which we would not forget the Chec people.

Our first stop was Leitomischel. Here the people gave us bread. About the main thing that happened concerned the Russians. They drank 40 litres of machine oil in the barn where they slept. Many were dead the following morning and many died and were sick along the road next day.

At first the Jerrys did nothing to stop the Checs from giving us food. After we were a few days into the country, proclamations were seen pasted along the way forbidding the giving of food to P.O.W.s. This however did not stop the giving altogether. What was given was to be collected at the Burgermeisters and given under his disgression. We were a long column. The Russians were ahead of us. About a thousand to our five hundred. Passing through towns we would hear shots ahead. We would say, "The postens are shooting their way through". You would see the Russians darting to the sidewalk, the open doors, and windows to fight over the bread and cakes. We were no exceptions. Some of our fellows were worse than the Russians and made me ashamed to be a Br. Soldier. We called it the dip and dive. McGooglesburg (McLaghlon) was an artist at it. At the sight of bread or fags away they would rush. The giver would be jolted and nearly knocked over. Ten chances to one it would be McLaghlon or The Palestinian who emerged amid the pawing hands with the prize. I heard one man give his muckers special orders one day to go only for the white buns. The kit bag was full of bread. The policemen were given orders to keep the people back. Our guards tried to keep us in line. But even so the people would throw the food to us. It took some time to go through a town, due to this confusion. Many such a scene would have brought a fortune in Holywood if I would have had a camera. I got more enjoyment watching the rushes than joining in them. On our nightly stops the Sgt. Major or more rightly I should say Sgts. Smith and Petigrew would make a joint collection of the food brought by the civis and divide it equally amongst us. Sometimes they made up very good soups and brought them down. Though they treated us very good they treated the Russians even better. We never went short of bread in Checoslovakia.

Our first rest day in Chec. Proved the best. We were billeted Feb 15 at Holtz in a Cinema dance hall. The civis brought us much bread. I think about a loaf per man. We got 3 good soups, all you could eat at a time and a good wash and dry out. One of the boys met a Scotchman who had been there 37 years. He told us the next large stop was Konigsgratz. Here we might possibly receive "Red Cross parcels". This however proved false and also from here we marched through no more large towns but around them. The Jerrys weren't giving us our proper rations, but they resented the Checs giving us food also. They were begrudged food by the people, and didn't want us to see that the Checs had more than the Germans. We had many escapees in this lap of our journey. You could get a good meal from the people, but they wouldn't harbour you. Many skipped out after dark for a scoff. I think these are the main features of our march through Czechoslovakia. The order of march was generally two days march and one day rest. Each rest day found me very foot soar. On Feb 27 we marched 33 km. We were marching on Carlsbad supposedly (continued on page 90) our final destination. Feb 28 was a rest day at Uber Sletnow. We were billeted at a large estate in a sheep barn. It had been cleaned good and straw put down but the pens still stood. Here we slept four or five in a pen. Just like sheep. I had a haircut here and a good rest.

Mar 8 we said farewell to dear old Protectorate as we marched back into Sudetenland. The days of the old dip and dive was past. In all we now had 554 km to our backs, About 346 miles in our language. We stopped at the Burgermeister's farm March 8, 9 and 10 for a good rest and a waiting surprise in Furwitz. It nearly proved disastrous though. Whenever we would hit a place the guys were always on the scrounge. Anything loose generally went west. The spud cellar was generally the main objective or the hen house. The guards were always on the alert for this. At this stop the barn had an upstairs in it. We were strictly forbidden to go up there. Shortly after we arrived I could hear the farm hands nailing down the trap doors. Well some hungry person (Yes we were all very hungry) pried up the trap door and started the ball rolling. It proved to be the grain stores. Thereafter nice pots of cooked wheat appeared. At this place we were allowed all the wood and fires we wanted. What caused the most trouble though was the oat chop. Someone discovered that he could sift out the hulls

from the nice white meal. It made a very good and filling porridge. There was on awful rush, soon everyone had come and the pile all completely disappeared. On discovery there was an awful to do. Fortunately for us the Burgermeister was a very good man. He realized that we were hungry and the Sgt. Major managed to square things up. We put back what we had left, but out of three hundred pounds about 75 was returned. One Seatsman said it was “a Rrreal Burrgoo.” It also made good cakes fried up.

On the evening of March 11 at approximately midnight, a large truck drove in the yard, and there was a loud banging of cases being unloaded. The guys grouched at the noise. But I tried to figure out what it could be. Must be the milk truck I thought, or perhaps they are putting in a cache of ammunition here, it sounded like amo cases being banged about. It could even be Red Cross, Oh no that isn't possible. But next morning at 5:30 Sgt. Pedigrew announced, “Pay – Special – Attention – Section – Leaders – (Oh, oh, thinks I. Someone must of at least butchered the fatted calf last night) Come – and – draw – your RED – CROSS – PARCELS. – This – is – no – S\_\_\_”. At that a shout and roar from the guys lifted the roof. Some seemed to jump out of bed into mid air and into their trousers in one movement. We got one package per man of an assortment of French, American, and Canadian.

These parcels had been brought by a large convoy of Red Cross trucks, right from Switzerland, for the aid of P.O.W.s evacuating from Ober Salesia. They were of American build, all white with a big Red Cross painted on them. The Jerry's transport had failed so Geneva had to supply her own. I would believe anything now. This made the fellows new, joyous happy men. We marched 30 km that day to Krippau with nary a moan. Food made such a difference. Besides our Red Cross we had scored six kilos of bread and 6 eggs from a pair of breeches of John's. He bought them one year ago for one hundred fags. Our stop at Krippau proved to be another Burgermeister's. Here we rested March 12. The wife of the old fellow I think was really the Burgermeister. Two or three of the kids seemed loony so we called it the Crazy Burgermeister's farm. I never heard such family commotions. The frau didn't want us to have fires. She shouted at the old man and the postens. One minute we could have fires, then fires with no wood, then no fires. I never saw such a do. In the finish we got one long fire in

the yard. We had a good scoff from our Red Cross here and borrowed a good portion of his lard in the air raid shelter.

On March 13 we had our guards changed in the forenoon. We were marching in a circle about Carlsbad so there went our destination to the wind. At noon we had a rest by a stream. We made a brew of coffee. Some of the boys bathed and discovered lice. When we re-continued our march we got our old postens back from the Russians. Our next rumored destination was Mariansbad. That night we stopped at Neudorf also the following day. The old boys barn took a beating for firewood. On March 17 we reached Plan, we were now expecting Red Cross again but Plan was another turning point in our march to nowhere. The next day we were expecting a rest day, but instead we were informed that we were marching back six km. Well we marched back but it was first eight. Here we got a new set of guards. We were well counted and turned over to a new company. After this we marched a further four km to a place called Wilkowitz. Here we were split into groups of a hundred, and billeted into hay barns as usual.

Rumors in the new Co. were good. Not more than eighty km to march to our destination. Our destination was a working party. Another railroad job.

I think the next day was one of our hardest March 19. We had no bread to march on. German coffee and a few row spuds and turnips consisted of my breakfast. At mid forenoon we were halted on the highroad and all grouped into commandos, according to your race. We were commando No.10 of 100 Canadians. I got a job with John as brakemen on the Company's wagon. It proved very helpful as we had nothing at all to eat and marched 32 km to Haid. John managed to score us a loaf of bread so we had a bit for supper. Thanks to dear old John. All along he had scored us plenty. He was always the appointed business man of our syndicate and I was cook and quarter master. The next morning March 20 looked quite grim however rations came up unexpectedly before we took out. Also no.11 commando's ration wagon on which was plenty of grub stolen from the Russian's rations. Our new guards had been in charge of Russians prior to their coming to us. Anyway this wagon was raided by the guys. Out came bread, meat, and margarine. The posten saw it too late, he tried to redeem the stolen food with threats from the Captain. It did no good, very little came back, the boys were too hungry. We bought two tins from a fellow for four

fags. Not bad for two tins of meat. We scoffed the lot and felt much better. This days march was 8 km and brought us to Pfraumberg, where we were billeted that and the next day in a warehouse where they sold building materials. We were hungry, but the Jerrys gave us our usual soups here and we managed to score a loaf of bread. So after all we were still surviving.

March 22 our rumor of destination was still standing. We were going to a Stalag at Weiden, from there to our working party. It was only another couple of days marching. Bearing this we crossed the Sudetenland and Bavarian border into Bavaria just after noon. Two Red Cross food trucks passed us. Up went cheers, the convoy had again arrived. That night we got them. Not perhaps what we had expected but anyway two French parcels between five men. Rumor had it that we would get a parcel on arriving at the Stalag, which the Hauptman said he hoped would be Sunday. Our days march brought us to Lohma and there besides the Red Cross we got the farmer's corn. It was good but needed about three hours boiling.

The next day March 23 brought us to Albersreith, where we still are to-day April 10. In all we have marched 737 km. A distance of 460 miles. Now we have Red Cross parcels again. The day is very warm and sunny. The farm is a drone of activity No 11 cmdo. has just had its soup. We are waiting for ours. It is 4 P.M. Everyone is making himself a blower these days, as we are not allowed camp fires. Some of the fellows are sleeping others washing their clothes or bathing. We have rigged up a delouser to try and keep the lice down. I have not got them as yet. We were quite hungry a few days after we arrived. No Red Cross, consequently the fellows broke into the farmer's root cellar. 1 ½ Tons potatoes were eaten before the discovery. On searching 8 nearly killed chickens were also discovered in the barn. There was a terrible to do the day they searched, but we were not punished. Next day we got our Red Cross. The day we came here the allied armies broke loose over the Rhine. Now the Yanks are very close to us. Occasionally we hear the guns. There are thousands of bombers and other aircraft over everyday. A few days ago they bombed Weiden and dropped thousands of pamphlets. The Jerrys give the war days, two or three weeks. It looks like they won't evacuate us this time. They all expect to be P.O.W.s. Whatever does happen I hope and think that it shall not be very long. All I am

doing is waiting and hoping, perhaps to-morrow it shall be all over and we shall be free again, then I can forget and remember the past three years as a dream. I want to forget the chaining up with its days of straff and hunger. The labouring under a foreign hand shall become a dream. I want to forget the evacuation of Ober Salesia, the long cold, hungry days of marching with cold wet feet, I don't want to recall the collumns of marching men with its dying weak ones. Along the roadside, being goarded on and on by the point of a rifle and bayonet. Yes spring has come and with it I want peace, my homeland and dear ones. There I swear I shall never be hungry or cold again. I shan't have to live the life of self preservation. I want a home and a family, my trade in return for my army life. What I have lost I shall regain and may I add a last bit of warning. God help the man who tried to bar a P.O.W.'s way to security when this bloody war is over.

### The Route of Marching

January 22	(Ober Salesia)	Large Estate	20 Km.
January 23		Rauden	18 Km.
January 24		Alt Weiler	16 Km.
January 25		Zinntal	17 Km.
January 26		Grobitz	19 Km.
January 27		Traumitz	20 Km.
January 28		Rest Day	
January 29	(Sudetenland)	Spilensdorf	23 Km.
January 30		Klinhohl	27 Km.
January 31		Bergstatd	17 Km.
February 1		Trubnitz	20 Km.
February 2		Rest Day	
February 3		Gros Poidt	28 Km.
February 4		Rest Day	
February 5		Ditters Dorf	21 Km.
February 6		Abtsdorf	18 Km.
February 7 – 12		5 Days Rest	
February 13	(Czechoslovakia)	Leitomischl	18 Km.
February 14		Chotzen	22 Km.

February 15	_____	Holitz	22 Km.
February 16	_____	Rest Day	
February 17	_____	Vischka	9 Km.
February 18	_____	Opatowitz	10 Km.
February 19	_____	Rest Day	
February 20	_____	Klemitz	22 Km.
February 21	_____	Unter Gutswasser	7 Km.
February 22	_____	Rest Day	
February 23	_____	Aulibitz	14 Km.
February 24	_____	Osek	29 Km.
February 25	_____	Rest Day	
February 26	_____	Wobrub	6 Km.
February 27	_____	Ober Sleinow	33 Km.
February 28	_____	Rest Day	
March 1	_____	Saleslitz	24 Km.
March 2	_____	Slosuin	8 Km.
March 3	_____	Rest Day	
March 4	_____	Dollen	20 Km.
March 5	_____	Stern	11 Km.
March 6	_____	Rest Day	
March 7	_____	Nesuchen	23 Km.
March 8 (Sudetenland)	_____	Furwitz	12 Km.
March 9	_____	Rest Day	
March 10	_____	Rest Day	
March 11	_____	Krippau	30 Km.
March 12	_____	Rest Day	
March 13	_____	Deutch Klima	
			13 Km.
March 14	_____	Neudorf	19 Km.
March 15	_____	Rest Day	
March 16	_____	Royau	11 Km.
March 17	_____	Plan	18 Km.
March 18 (Retreat to)	_____	Wilkowitz	12 Km.



March 19	_____	Haid	32 Km.
March 20	_____	Pfraumberg	8 Km.
March 21	_____	Rest Day	
March 22	<u>(Bavaria)</u> _____	Lohma	22 Km.
March 23	_____	Albersrieth	18 Km.

One point of interest which I have forgotten about the march occurred in Czechoslovakia. I forgot the place. But they asked us to join the German Army. The pamphlet went something like this.

It is now evident after seeing what Bolshevism has done in Poland and other occupied countries that its aims are not only for Germany, but also the Western Civilization, the United Kingdom, and possibly America. It went on to say that our homeland and ones dear to us were in danger. It asked us to decide and join the German army, thereby enjoying the privileges and freedom of the German Soldier. We need not join the active fighting but could choose the service corps. We were to give our decision to the officer in charge of our convoy.

They got no recruits.

Our stop at Weiden proved for only 15 days. The Yanks drove us out and we turned once more to the open road. We got two Red Cross issues while here. All English.

A couple of interesting events occurred. The first was the most interesting. The boys were very hungry so their wits were quite keen as usual. They discovered the spud cellar. Within half an hour everyone was in possession of a large bag full. We ate just spuds. Steaming big pots of them. All went well for five or six days. The boys figured the farmer knew about them, but he didn't. One day we knocked off the hen house for eight eggs and a hen. That started the rush. Within 15 minutes there were eight dead hens. To top things off, at the same time the empty spud cellar was discovered. What a scene. We were all on parade. A ton and  $\frac{1}{2}$  of potatoes were missing. The Huns raved and fumed to Sgt. Pedigrew. They in turn talked to the farmer and Joe Smith, ever a good talker had him talked into accepting a bill of sale to be settled when the allies came. That's how sure the farmer was that the war was on his doorstep. However it didn't work. The report had been made to the Ober Feldwebel. He came and a search followed. We had hung our chicken out on the barn roof. They discovered

the warm hens and then the Jerrys did some "Stealing". Sgt, Major Burtram said they hadn't been stolen, just taken. Ours was the last to be found. And they had some time getting it down off the roof. The search finished, our leaders and the square heads went into the house to iron things out. We were dismissed without a word. How George and Joe managed to settle it with the Huns I don't know. But anyway the next day (continued on page 112) we got a Red Cross Parcel, but our cooking fires were stopped. Everyone now made a blower of which we were permitted after a while to use.

The second incident again concerned spuds. The boys would bribe a posten and nip out after dark to the spud clumps in the fields and bring in a load. After a few days this was stopped also, but we now had a good supply anyway.

Some of us worked a bit while here for the village farmers. They gave you bread, spuds, soup etc in return. These jobs consisted of picking up stones, planting spuds, building fences, and road repairing.

Well April 14<sup>th</sup> we got orders to move, so on Sun 15 off we went. We had plenty of bread and a Red Cross parcel appeace. Eight men hid in the barn, to wait for the Yanks. I dreaded the march ahead of us. We decided to make a break for freedom and chance being retaken. The horrors of another night-mare march I could not face. This day we marched 7 km to a place, Treluslau, where we changed companies and were billeted.

On arrival six of us looked the situation over for escape. It wouldn't be easy. But the guns of the Yanks we could hear. And planes dived overhead and straffed the Hun columns. However we decided on a door by a wagon, in an adjoining shed which was on the main street. The shed connected our barn by a loft. We had a big feed of stew and bread. Packed and at dusk got our packs down by the door. The six of us were: John Chapman, Jim Horne, George Morris, Bruno MacDonald, Geoffrion and myself. At nine it was dark so we got down in the shed by the wagon. The Huns must have got wind of it for that night they tripled the guard. One took up post very near us. We could hear him breathe. It got very dark. We had to be very quiet. The tension was terrific and we began to get cold. Many troops were passing on the street. We decided to use their noise to cover ours when the time came. We could see it was going to be very risky but we couldn't stay there all night. It was one chance or God knows how far to

march on poor rations. The posten shone his light down our alley way once. I think they must have known we were there and were waiting for the break. At last in desperation just before 12 we decided to make a try. Two postens went away and all was quiet. I figured they were changing guard and we now had the chance. I slid the door out. John went through and Jeff. I was now going out. A light shone on us, My heart stopped beating. The Feldwebel in a villainous voice shouted, "Ah Da ist eine, Da is zweite. Sheitson Posten Sheitson". The light went out. Shot after shot echoed in the shed as the guard emptied his rifle and the Hun Sgt. His revolver. John and Jeff were now back in the shed. I clung to the front of the wagon for protection and cover. We shouted a plea of surrender, but the Huns kept firing. They were mad killers and didn't challenge. The Sgt. shouted quick on the street. They were there in a flash. Firing through the barn door. I expected it every moment. There must have been a good God guarding over me for next morning I seen that where I was standing the wall was riddled with bullet holes. The door swung open, they turned the light on me. I could see the Sgt. Trying to load his gun saying, "There's another Shoot him." I threw up my hands and ran. Why I don't know, out past the wagon back to the barn. John and Hoots were already there. We got our boots off and into bed. Mac came back and finally Jeff. All were here but Georgie. We could hear the Huns looking for us. They went out of the barn and we heard more shots. George didn't come back. I was shaking like a leaf. John went out to try and find some news of George. The guard said he had been heavily wounded and taken to hospital. I couldn't sleep much. All I could see was the Hun shining his light on me and trying to get a shot away. Next morning we learned that George had been shot. He was still lying under the wagon. I had lost my pack under the wagon and my Red Cross. The Huns had it, so could obtain my name and number. I needed the food and there were things in my pack I didn't want them to find. So I went with Ship to try and get it. The square heads had taken away the Red Cross from the boys above the shed after the shooting. They were getting it back. The Hun Sgt. Nearly fell over when I asked for my belongings. So I was the one who tried to escape. He consented to give me my kit after I had given my name and no. He said I was lucky not to have been shot. He thought there were only two of us so we let it alone at that. George's pack was there also but he wouldn't give it to me. We got

it that evening very badly shot up. John went to get his personal stuff. The Huns had taken his cigarettes. He had been shot five times in the heart at close range.

We learned from Ted Welton who had been looking out of a crack in the barn that after the first shooting the Hun had come back and found Georgy hiding in the straw and shot him, then carried him under the wagon to make it look as escape. We named the Hun Sgt. the "Killer" then and swore we would get him if the chance permitted. He had not shot George in escape, but murdered him. He often boasted of shooting 28 Russians. And luridly would ask in the evening of anyone else was going to try and escape. He always wore his great coat and as he, the Killer, would ride up and down the column in the daytime, put us in mind of a villain in his last days. Yes, too true his days were numbered.

On the march he pointed me out to all the Huns and put a posten near me, who I always noticed marched close by whether I was in the front or rear of the column. This day April 16 we went 20 kilometers to a place Tannesburg. My feet still pained me after 15 days rest. On April 17 we went 14 kilometers to a place called Abervischtan. The Yank planes passed over us and gave us the sign of recognition by wobbling their wings. We heard of a bigger offensive. Our final destination was to be Regensburg and on the way we would stop at Chan for Red Cross Parcels. The country was very beautiful, a Rolling land of blossoming fruit, trees, meadows, fields, woods and quaint old villages set in green valleys. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April we trekked 11 km through more of this picturesque landscape, and heard or saw no sign of war activity at all.

April 19 the hour of departure was not certain. We witnessed one of the grandest sights when Yank fighters came over and strafed and set fire to a petrol column in the woods near us. They passed right over us. One of them waved back to us. Another did the Victory roll. They were all about us, diving a few feet above the ground. Two Jerrys were strafed. Such a display as they dived and strafed the convoy. Leaving it in smoke and flames. In the afternoon they again flew over our column. When they recognized us one of them tipped his wings. We made 20 km to Roding. It was very hot. Rumors of a big Russian breakthrough. There is a big advance on Munich. We are going to Regensburg. Our troops entered Berlin and the Yanks are in Czechoslovakia.

April 20. A rest day. Hilter's birthday. John knocked off a chicken so we had a good supper. Rest and clean up. Bombers were over and there was more strafing near us.

April 21. A very uneventful day. We marched 20 km to Pilgramsburg arriving early, 1:30 P.M. The country is very beautiful. All the trees are out green, and the fruit trees are beginning to bloom. We are travelling south. There are a rough looking range of hills on our left. My feet are hurting me terribly.

April 22 is another rest day. It is very cold and windy, so I stayed close to bed. We managed to steal another chicken from the Huns so went to bed quite full.

April 23. We marched 12 to 15 km to a place. I did not get its name. It was very cold and drizzly in the forenoon, but after dinner it got warmer. We passed tons of German transport on the roadside all burnt up from the Yank strafing. Plenty of evacuees were seen hurrying about. We ate the farmer's prize 14 lb. black rabbit. The farmer was quite angry but the "Killer" couldn't make out his Bavarian dialect so all was well.

April 24. We were aroused at 12 o'clock midnight and put on the march at 2 A.M. We could see two towns burning not far away. I felt very tired and hungry. Each time we stopped I had to sit down on the wet road to rest. Civilian P.O.W.s had been marched along before us, for in the ditch lay many a dead Jew. Later in the morning we passed them in their thin, striped uniforms. Bare footed and sunken eyed. The Living Dead. At six in the morning we crossed the River Danube at Straubing and learned from a Frenchman that the Yanks were 30 km behind. We billeted at Leiblfing near an airport which was strafed and bombed. That afternoon I calculated our distance as 25 km.

April 25. A rest day. Got up at 9 A.M. Hoots and I cooked up burgoo for breakfast. While doing so Yank fighters came over and strafed transport. They were so close that the empty shell casings dropped in the yard. They killed two horses, which the Jerrys gave to us. Some of the men went down to butcher them. We got ½ a beast per Co. Today we got our first bread issue in 3 weeks, 2 kgms for 7 men. We managed to racket 7 or 8 kilos to-day. We saw plenty of Bombers and fighters pass over to-day. About 5 P.M. all the guards were called out on a parachute patrol. The Killer made a comical sight dashing out with the Bren gun over his shoulder and lugar in his hand. Later a Jerry Plane landed in

our backyard, the pilot left it there and scrambled. The main rumor seems to be that we are staying here. (page 120)

April 26. Another day of leisure. Quite welcome for we know that the Yanks are that much closer to us They towed the aeroplane away by oxen this A.M. We got our issue of Horse meat this morning. It tasted quite good. We managed to get some flour so Hoots and I cooked up a big feed of flap jacks. The Yanks are rumored to have crossed the Danube at Straubing. Our hour of departure isn't certain in the morning or to-night. We are supposed to be going to a logar 60 km away and there we will get R.C. Parcels.

April 27. Revalei at 4 o'clock. We marched off at 6 A.M. The day was cool in the afternoon we crossed a river where the Huns were making ready to blow up a bridge. All the towns on this side of the river (Tiger) were full of S.S. Troops and evacuees so they couldn't find us any billets. We stopped in a woods near Neiderveihback. A distance of 47 km. The bed wasn't comfortable with one blanket and at 9:30 it began to rain. We got up and put our blankets around us under our coats to keep them dry. It was cold and miserable. We got wet, some of the boys were soaked to the skin. We marched off at about 12 midnight for our next destination.

April 28. We passed lots of Hungarian troops. The only weapons evident were the iron fists. During the night we saw plenty of troop movements. Two trucks with heavy A.A. guns mounted on them. We saw French P.O.W.s and Jews going in the opposite direction to us. The Jerrys sang as they marched. Our Ober Gftr. told us it only amounted to a few hours before we would be encircled. When we stopped for rests we were so tired that we would lay on the damp roadside and sleep. The Huns would do likewise. Our cloths were gradually drying from our body heat but God it was terrible trying to stay awake. At five AM. The Jerrys wagon ran off the road. We couldn't get it back so our group went on to catch up with the rest of the column. We met the officer and he kept us waiting here for an hour. I slept cold and miserable on the roadside. Finally we marched on to our billets, a farm a few km from Landshuts 14 km in all. We arrived late so had to wait for a bed. There was a rabbit pen on the farm a couple had been taken. 10 minutes after we Canucks arrived the remaining eight were gone. The farmer made the discovery and reported it to the Hun Sgt. Things went wild. He grabbed

a guard's rifle and said he'd shoot the first one he found with a rabbit. They turned everyone out in the yard, brought the police dog and searched. Finally all were returned. The only outcome was that our group wasn't allowed any fires. However we made them anyway and cooked a breakfast then went to bed. Got up late afternoon, made a scoff, washed and went back to bed. Our next destination is to be Stalag 7A Mulesburg and a R.C. Parcel.

April 29. To-day proved a very hectic day. We got up at 5:30. I was still wet and cold. We had a brew and our sandwiches of black bread. Then came the order. We were not moving. So back to a cold damp bed. There was straffing on the road, then a cheer. Only one thing could make the lads cheer like that "Red Cross". I got up. Yes, a load was coming up the road. We got one parcel per man so we had a good feed. Five P.M. proved even more exciting. The guns of the Yanks could be heard coming closer all day. As we were preparing supper we saw artillery landing two km from us. The Jerrys gave us orders to remain orderly and should our people appear our Sgt. Major and Hun would advance with the white flag. The Sgt. Major then went to see the Houtptman. He returned with this news. We were being turned over to the Americans when they came. Until then we would stand fast and fix our billets up to be recognized. We were overjoyed, just to think at last it was nearly over. At eight o'clock we got orders to march. The Huns were very scared. The Yanks must have been close. Their artillery was falling on all sides of us. We marched all night. It was dreadful, my feet hurt me terribly and my eyes were hard to keep open. Every opportunity we sat down and dozed. It was cold. They moved us 35 km to a place just outside Vilisburg.

April 30. We arrived at Vilisburg this morning had a hot drink and slept all day. Hoots and I cooked up a good Red Cross meal with some spuds we stole in the evening, as we were supposed to move at 11 P.M. When we had got up and were all out on parade they cancelled it. So back to bed we went till morning. Thank God we did not have to march. (page 124)

## **May 1      Our Last day a P.O.W. – Our Liberation**

The Huns say to-day is our last day of marching we are going to a Stalag. We moved off in a snowstorm for the usual day's hardships to a place near Bruckback 22 km in the area of Velden. We could hear artillery fire and ground

machine gun fire all day. Well we had finished our supper and decided to make a steam duff for breakfast, when artillery fire again began to land around us. We were expecting moving orders. We saw a small detachment of fast tanks come down the road. The Huns said they were Deutch Panzers. But somehow there was a tension in the air. We washed. About 6:30 a beautiful armored column came down the road some distance from us. Too far away for recognition. There were tanks, trucks, and what looked like jeeps. The Huns viewed them with suspicious interest. We wanted to say they were Yanks but nearly 3 years of P.O.W.'s dissapointment make you doubtful. We admitted that we had seen no German motorized units to compare with the size of this. They were on the brow of a hill in perfect convoy. Some said they were Yanks. The farmer said so and the French workers but still we could do nothing till we were sure. The tension and excitement continued for about half an hour. Then all of a sudden six tanks peeled off in formation and came down the hill towards us. That was enough, trully they must be Yanks. Our fellows advanced to-wards them with white hankies. Some stayed put and heaped more fuel on our fires. What rejoicing and cheers. The Huns made off in a small wagon. But returned. After a few moments a Yank tanker came up the hill with one of the boys. We ran to him and flocked about to talk and to touch him. He said very little but mainly, "Where's the Crauts." "In the farmyard" came the answer, "Let's go get them" The Huns did nothing to resist they were going to be P.O.W.s. He fired one shot in the air and they all lined up minus their weapons. We were now free. Once again we could roam the world in liberty. The Yank told us to stay put and wait for orders. We set up a guard to take care of the Crauts. We told the Yank about the Killer. He gave one of the lads his gun and said use your own discesion. We did. The long sworn for vengence was settled and we buried the Killer later by lamp light. When the Huns were gone we stoked high the fires and scoffed to our hearts desire what little food we had left. To-morrow there would be plenty to eat. That night after midnight we marched back under American escort to Bruckback. How happy we were. The Americans told us to go in the houses and make ourselves at home but not to be too rough.

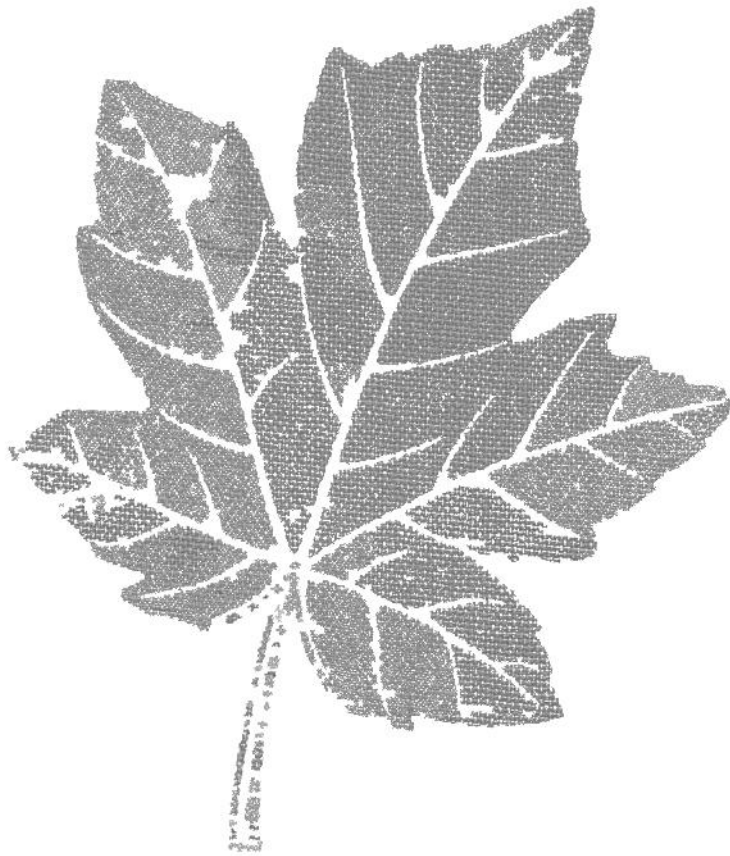
Six of us found ourselves a house. An old man let us in. They were very much afraid of us. But soon became more at ease when we spoke to them. They



allowed us to make some cocoa and gave us some bread. Well we finally got to bed at about 3 A.M. The people seemed very frightened at us so wouldn't bother us when we pryed into anything. The Americans kept us here for two days. We plundered every home in town, taking all the food we could get ahold of, and anything of value. From here the Yanks took us to a liberated Stalag where we stayed until May 10. On May 11<sup>th</sup> we flew back to England.

# PART C

## A Wartime Log: Additional Material





## Arbeit Commando E608

### Hirschfelde – Deutschland

D.G. Woodhead Sgt.  
Bob Hall, Tailor  
C.V. Richardson, Shoe Maker  
Doug Bennet, Sanitator  
John Chapman  
Jim Horne  
George Hailes  
Charles Crawford  
Roy Dickie  
Frank Powells  
Shadow Richards  
Red Perry  
Jack Poolton  
George Wright  
Bob Laurie  
Sotiriss  
Cyrill Hymas

James Cook  
Bill Walker  
Ernest Walker  
Bob Shanks  
Frank Cleavely  
Rocky Moore  
Joe Humphries  
Ken Caygill  
Curly Caygill  
Ginger Rutter  
Lew. Colk  
Bill Glanister  
Jack Murdock  
Wee McLeode  
Jack Woodard  
Bell  
Fred Frederickson  
Brawner (Brown)

Guy Lasnier  
Jack LaChappelle  
Joe Trudeau  
Mark Pilot  
Henry Fontain  
Morriss Liberty  
Buck Douroche  
Louis Lamirande  
Jock. Crawford  
Jock. Brunton  
Mac. McDonald  
Doug Spacey  
Fred Booth  
Auctullonie (Auc)  
George Morriss  
Sid Cox  
Ron Stibbs

- Jan. 18, 1943 to March 6,  
1944.

Oh Happy those whose  
fathers and mothers still walk  
the earth beside them. Youth  
remains, not withstanding the  
passing of years, while there is  
still a voice to say, in reproof  
or approbation. "My Child"

A friend with "BREAD" is worth more than going to a feast with a host of kinsmen.  
AND: A "BREW" in hand is better than ten packages of tea in the "Red Cross"  
Box.

Morgen, Morgen, Noch Nich Heute.  
Sprechen Alle Foulle Leute.

Jealousy is not Love, but self Love  
All cruelty springs from the Weakness.

The ignorant are never defeated in argument.

In the World's broad field of battle,  
 In the bivouac of Life,  
 Be not sick dumb, driven cattle!  
 Be a hero in the strife.

Let us, then be up and doing,  
 With a heart for any fate;  
 Still achieving, still pursuing,  
 Learn to labour and to wait.

(Longfellow)

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**A Red Cross Parcel**“Canadian”

1 lb. Butter  
 1 lb. Jam  
 4 oz. Cheese  
 5 oz. Chocolate  
 6 oz. Coffee or Tea  
 Pilot Biscuits  
 Salmon & Sardines  
 Bully Beef & York Roll  
 Prunes & Raisins  
 Sugar & Salt  
 1 Can Klim Milk Soap

“New Zealand”

1 lb. Butter  
 1 lb. Cheese, Dried Peas  
 Jam & Honey  
 Sugar & Raisins  
 Chocolate  
 Bully, Beef & Mutton

Stew            Sausages  
 Bully Beef    Soap  
 1 lb. Tins Butter & Margarine  
 Jam            Honey

\*Fifty Cigarettes per week.

“English”

8 oz. Margarine  
 12 oz. Jam or Syrup  
 3 oz. Cheese  
           4 oz. Chocolate  
 4 oz. Tea & Sugar  
 Biscuits (Peek Freens or Macuitas)  
 Stew & Meat Roll  
 Bacon or Fish  
 Fruit or Pudding  
 Egg Powder or Fish Paste  
 Oatmeal, Soap  
 Cocoa & Nestles Milk  
 Marmite or Yetex  
 Canned Vegetables

“American”

(These Parcels Vary)  
 Pork, Meat Roll    Cigarettes  
           Powdered Milk    Chocolate  
 Prepared Coffee    Vitamin Tablets  
 ½ lb. Sugar            Margarine  
           Bully Beef            Biscuits  
 Prunes or Raisins    Liver Paste  
 Cheese ½ lb.            Jam

Wild crap-shooter with a whoop and a call  
Dance the juba in their gambling-hall  
And Laugh fit to kill, and shake the Stalag.

An article you can always borrow "*Trouble*".  
All war is suicide for those that *began* it.  
Lips however *rosey* must be fed.

If you would yourself protect  
From Thieves  
From Loss by fire  
From banditry  
From Taxes  
Don't own anything.

Not chance of birth or place has made us friends,  
Being oft times of different tongues and nations,  
But the endeavour for the selfsame ends.  
With the same hopes, and fears, and aspirations.  
(Longfellow)

### **Thanks to Thee**

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend  
For the lesson thou has taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life,  
Our fortunes must be wrought,  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped,  
Each burning deed and thought.

Right is right, even if nobody does it.

Without an equal growth of mercy, pity, peace, and love,  
Science herself may destroy all that makes life majestic and tolerable.

Sorrow is a tool with which God does some of His finest work.

### **Spirit and Riches**

Gold and silver do not lead to a happy life –  
only the spirit can do that. A people which  
has nothing more than these metals will  
live precariously, but a people which uses its  
soil well, without these metals, will be truly rich.  
Every people goes through times when its  
spirit rises above its natural limitations.

### **The Man in the Bowler Hat**

I am the unnoticed, the unnoticable man:  
The man who sat on your right in the morning train:  
The man you looked through like a windowpane  
The man who was the colour of the carriage  
    The colour of the mounting  
Morning pipe smoke.  
I am the man, too busy with a living to live,  
Too hurried and worried to see and smell and touch:  
The man who is patient too long and obeys too much.  
And wishes too softly and seldom.  
I am the man they call the nation's backbone,  
Who am boneless – playable catgut, pliable clay:  
The man they label Little, Lest one day  
I dare to grow  
I am the rails on which the moment passes  
The megaphone for many words and voices  
I am graph, diagram,  
Composite face.  
I am the led, the easily - fed,  
The tool, the not quite fool,  
The would-be-safe-and-sound,  
The uncomplaining bound,  
The dust fine - ground,  
Stone-for-a-statue waveworn pebble-round.  
    (Peter Black)

### **Compound Blues**

Laying around in the compound.  
Trying to make time pass  
Making our plans for the future  
Forgetting our Plans of the past.  
Dreaming our dreams of homeland.  
Hoping our dreams come true.  
Thinking of our Loved ones  
Wondering if they're thinking too.

Trying to blot out the barb wire  
Trying to think ourselves free  
Losing our faith in mankind  
God, we believe in thee  
Growing old in the compound  
God but the time goes slow  
When will the gates swing open  
When will they let us go.

### **A Soldier's Prayer**

Our Father who art in Canada,  
Mackenzie King be thy name.

Thy will be done, in Montreal  
as in Ottawa.  
Give us this day our deferred pay,  
And forgive us our A.W.O.L.'s.  
As we forgive everyone, except  
the Canadian Provost.  
Lead us not into the Army Reserve,  
And give us bonds negotiable,  
with interest.  
For yours is the Glory and the Graft,  
For ever and ever,  
Amen.

### **The Fireside Fusiliers**

I'll tell you all a story  
No matter what you are  
Of a bunch of spineless Quislings  
Away across the sea  
They have no guns or rifles  
They shed no blood or tears  
For they're Conscientious Objectors  
The Fireside Fusiliers

While women serve in the Army  
The Navy and Air Force too  
The only job these men will do  
Are the ones with no work to do  
Their ranks have been getting thinner  
And now there's about 50,000  
Of the Fireside Fusiliers

I believe there's a special medal  
And it's one they call their own  
It's painted a bright gleaming yellow  
Designed by the women at home  
It has in the centre white feathers  
And a cure for cold feet it appears  
And their motto's Self Preservation  
That's the Fireside Fusiliers

The pubs are their defences  
The bar their firing line  
The billiard cue their rifle  
They practice every day  
And when Jerry has been defeated  
They'll go Looking for souvenirs  
And tell you how they won them  
That's the Fireside Fusiliers.

### **Hear Longfellow!**

Kind messages that pass from land to land;  
Kind letters, that betray the hearts deep history,  
In which we feel the pressure of a hand,  
One touch of fire, – and all the rest is mystery

### **Farming as I see it in Germany.**

In the evacuation of Ober Salesia we were always billeted on farms. So naturally being born on a farm I have taken special note of how they go about it.

In wandering about the country you see no country farm houses scattered about as we have in Canada. The people all live in villages. These villages are quite close to-gether as an average two or three kilo-metres apart. As you walk down the street all that is evident are long rows of houses and high brick walls, with large wide solid gates barring an archway. Let us enter through one of these gates into the average German farm yard.

It always struck me as if these farmers sought for seclusion from his neighbors. There was a medieval air of seclusion in the walled in farm yard and its large barred gates. The farm buildings are situated about the edge of the yard, forming a square. The centre of the square is nearly always decorated by a manure pile over a large sump. All the farm drainage goes into this sump. Periodically the sump is pumped out and hauled out onto the land in a special steel or wooden tank which the farmer has on wagon wheels. An interesting feature concerns the manure. It is hauled out and spread on the land. Here it remains for a few months, being washed by the rains until only the clean straw is left behind. This straw is then raked together and hauled back to the farmyard for bedding.

They are great people for having their stables adjacent to the personal dwelling. One end of a long building would be the house, the other more than likely the cow barn. The other buildings were pig styes, horse stables or machine sheds. One of the barns was always a hay barn. The centre of the hay barn was always open. Large doors on either side of the barn permitted you to drive right through the barn. The farmer's personal thresher was situated in there. On either side and above, the hay and other feed was stacked. The feed would be carried in large wicker baskets from the barn to the animals.

The Germans have strange ideas concerning their live stock. The cattle are kept tied in their stables nearly all year. When they are allowed out a close shepherd-ship is kept over them. They are very backward and lacking in knowledge about the care of sick animals, you see cattle with long deformed hoofs. One farm I can remember had a colt barn. One of our lads tended the mare. When she foaled the owners were quite put out when he refused to cut the foal's navel with a pair of scissors and bind it with cord.

Germany's war campagne showed itself greatly in the type of machinery and tools found on a farm. Tractors were very few, seeders old and scarce. A lot of seed broadcasting is still done. I myself have done this in Germany. Proper binders and reapers I have not seen. A hay mower is used. The grain is then gathered together and bound by hand with bands made from the straw. The thresher is very old fashioned, no blowers or grain elevators on it. Oh yes, a lot of the grain is still cut with the scythe and also threshed with the flail. Power is still supplied by Oxen hitched to a gear contraption which turns a shaft. The oxen are driven in a circle about the fixture. The Ox is still a big item of power in Germany. Horses are scarce in Wartime. All axes, wrenches and other tools are very poorly made and scarce.

The land is not laid out in large fields. Each farmer has his portion adjacent to the village. Here they grow their crops in much the same manner as the old medieval peasant. The main crops are potatoes, Rye, turnips, and poppys of which the seeds are used for cooking. Wheat is scarcely grown.

In various localities different things may be grown. I recall one where hops were grown. Here you would find large sheds with ovens under them for drying out the hops.

On some farms you find large brick and clay "Dutch Ovens" in the yard. A large fire is put into the oven. When a terrific heat is reached the fire is raked out and the loaves of bread put in, in wicker baskets. A couple of hours bakes the bread. It is then taken out, dusted with a feather and wiped with a damp cloth.

On each farm are turnip cutting machines, for feed, and also a kersel to boil hog and cattle feed in. These choppers and feed cutters I might say are widely used. Nearly all feed is chopped before being fed.



I have never seen any proper horsemanship in Germany. Breeching harness is very scarce. The breast type is mostly used with a break on the wagon. To drive horses you must have a whip, to be caught without it means bunker, as it is believed that a man has no control over a horse without his whip.

Consequently with the combination of poor harness and equipment, poor horsemanship and the whip and bad tempers, I have seen many a horse take such a beating that would bring a man years in the penitentiary at home.

So I must say that the German type of farming has no resemblance to ours at all. They are still peasants of at least a hundred years ago. With the women working as slaves and the men looking wise and fighting wars. Yes, war that is it, all has been taken to build arms and war machines. Nothing is given to help advance or modernize the agricultural industry. Consequently the peasant tills his tiny plot of earth to exist. What is over goes for the "Kreig". And when he dies he is probably buried beside his father and another crucifix erected over him.

## **Deutsche Reichsgelt**

At first we were given the paper type of money. (Lagargelt) For this we could buy various articles from the canteen. If we were to buy anything from a civilian store we must first get the money exchanged by the German Military Authorities in charge of us. eg. (a posten). We were allowed only thirty marks at one time. All over this amount was to be handed over and put into our credit. In 1943 & 4 it could be sent home. In October 1944 we received the proper type of German money instead of the old artificial type.

## **LiLi Marleen (German)**

Vor der Kasern / vor dem grosen Tor / stand eine Lanterne / und steht sie nock davor / so wollen wir uns da weidersehn bie de Laterne / wollen wir stehn / wei einst LiLi Marleen / wei einst LiLi Marleen / wei einst LiLi Marleen

Un sere beiden Schatten / sahn wie einer aus / Das wir so lieb uns hatten / das sa man glich daraus / Und alle Leute sollen es sehn / wenn wir bie Laterne stehn / wie einst LiLi Marleen / wei einst LiLi Marleen

Shon rief der Posten / sie blasen Zapfenstreich / es Kann drei Tage kasten / Kamerad ich komm sogleich / Da sagten wir auf Wiedersehn / Wirgerne wollt' ich mit dir gehn / mit dir LiLi Marleen / mit dir LiLi Marleen

Deine Schritte Kennt sie / deinen shonen Gang / Alle Abend brent sie / doch mich vergas sie lang / Und sollte mir ein Leid geschehn / wer wird bei der Laterne stehn / mit dir LiLi Marleen / mit dir LiLi Marleen

Aus dem stillen Raume / Aus der Erde Grund / hebt mich wie im Traume / dein verliebter Mund / Wenn sich die spaten Nebel drehn / werd' ich bei der Laterne stehn / wie einst LiLi Marleen wie einst LiLi Marleen.

### **LiLi Marleen (English)**

Listen to the bugle, hear it's silvery call,  
Carried by the night air, telling one and all,  
Now is the time to meet your pall, to meet your pall.  
As once I met Marleen, My sweet LiLi Marleen.

Underneath the lantern, by the barrack gate,  
There I met Marleen, every night at eight.  
That was the time, early in the spring, when birds all sing.  
When love was king of my heart and Marleen, Of my heart and Marleen.

Waiting for the drum beats, signaling retreat,  
Walking in the shadows, where all lovers meet.  
"Yess" those were the days of long ago, I loved her so,  
I could not go, that time would part Marleen, That time would part Marleen.

When I heard the bugle, Calling me away,  
By the gate I kissed her, kissed her tears away.  
And in the flickering of the light, I held her tight, twas our Last night.  
My last night with Marleen, My last night with Marleen.

### **Two Weekly Orders Read to P.O.W's Weekly**

#### **NO. 1**

Prisoners of War are forbidden to have any intercourse with a German Woman. This not only pertains to sexual intercourse But Prisoners have to Abstain from approaching them to start a conversation or touching them. Conversation is only permitted. Where Working Conditions make it nessesary. Offenders of this rule may be punishable by death or long periods of sentence in "The House of Correction".

**NO. 2**

At night P.O.W.'s have to stay in their Barracks. The guard has orders to fire on anyone approaching or touching the trip wire. In case of flight the guard will shout halt three times, and if you don't ---.