



## **My Unscheduled Time In Germany**



It has recently been drawn to my attention that the Ministry for Culture and Heritage has been showing interest in the recollections of former prisoners of war. This has finally triggered me into recording my experiences when I was unfortunate enough to become captured.

### **Service Documentation**

**Service** RNZAF  
**Service No** NZ 412343  
**Trade** Wireless Operator / Air Gunner  
**Squadron** RAF 78  
Bomber Command  
European Theatre of War  
World War II, 1939 - 45

The crew of which I was a member were RAF personnel, with me as the one exception.

We were shot down on the night of 16/17 April 1943. Our target for that operation had been the Skoda armament factory, at a place known to us as Pilsen, in Czechoslovakia.

Our aircraft, a Halifax MkII, was attacked by a German night fighter when about one hour into the return flight to base at Linton-on-Ouse in Yorkshire. The plane became a blazing inferno and our pilot gave the order to bale out. This we did as quickly as possible although the evacuation was fraught with difficulties in those conditions. F/Lt A P Dowse DFC, from Dublin, gave his own life to allow the other six crew members time to save theirs. He managed to control the plane sufficiently to allow us a better chance of escaping, but it exploded in mid-air before he was able to follow us.

My own descent is something of a mystery. I have memories of leaving the plane but from there on, nothing! I regained my memory while walking about on the ground. Apparently, the chest-type parachute had struck my head, causing me to lapse into unconsciousness. We'd had numerous lectures to cover possible eventualities and one well-remembered point was to hide the parachute and "Mae West" lifejacket to hinder the searching Germans. Presume I did that during my mental blackout, for I never did see either.

However, I did have a legacy from the drop - a splitting headache. Dawn was fast approaching as I hid myself among trees. There I went to sleep. /U around 0830 hours I was disturbed by a searching group of soldiers. Never having seen one in the flesh I was surprised to find they were far from being the jackbooted, overpowering Hun depicted by various news media. In no way was I mistreated, although some other air crew were less fortunate in their handling after capture.

We walked down the Kappelburg, a small mountain, to the township of Fellbach on the outskirts of Stuttgart. I was escorted into the civil police station and told to strip to my underpants. My clothing was searched carefully and my 'Pandora' taken. That was a small box of escape material issued to all aircrew prior to an operation. It contained a silk map of the area over which we were travelling, money (guilders and francs), a rubber water bottle, tablets to purify water, others to keep one awake for long periods and Horlicks tablets to provide energy. Pieces of hacksaw blade were also part of the kit.

The reason for the search of clothing was caused by German realisation that compasses were being stitched into battledress uniforms. Two fly buttons, when removed, and with one placed on top of the other, made an excellent compass!

Documentation consisted of noting name, rank and number. I was then placed in a

cell. Lunch of boiled potatoes and spinach was provided. There was nothing wrong with the food but I simply couldn't cope. Concussion caused me to vomit, getting rid of it.

Later in the day I was escorted on foot to a waiting army truck, completely open. Once standing on the high deck I was able to see over a surrounding wall next to the footpath, into the area it enclosed, which contained many machines used for road maintenance. My attention was drawn to a large heap of human bodies - a considerable number. While walking along the street I had noted the roadside gutters were full of broken glass as the result of an RAF air raid two nights before. Years later I learned a number of foreign, forced-labour workers were killed by a single bomb, which fell into their protective bunker or trench. I presume I witnessed the result.

Two other members of my crew also appeared - the flight engineer and the mid-upper gunner. Both had been captured within a short period of time. In each case they were attacked by local workers - the engineer in a vineyard and the gunner on a riverbank running through the grounds of the Daimler Benz factory. Both were saved from death or serious injury by German military personnel.

As the war progressed and air raids became more intense and accurate, downed aircrew who were unfortunate enough to parachute into a target area, or the surrounding countryside, faced the real danger of execution by enraged civilians. The number of such deaths is impossible to estimate. One can safely assume, from eye witness accounts, that it was not an uncommon occurrence.

Before our vehicle moved off, the rear gunner also joined us. We were driven to a local *Luftwaffen* aerodrome, given a meal in one of their messes and installed in cells at the guard-house. The similarity to RAF stations was remarkable - only the large flag on the flag-pole was very different. We may have stayed there overnight. Later

we travelled by rail from Stuttgart to Frankfurt and were placed in the interrogation centre at *Dulagluft* - solitary confinement! Various forms of treatment were used in the hope of extracting useful information. Our lectures on Squadron had covered all the methods Germans would use in the event of our capture, so we were well prepared regarding our legal obligations and rights.

I was first interviewed by a charming German Air Force officer, claiming to be a flyer, speaking excellent English and stating he had been a student at Cambridge University. I was offered cigarettes - not an effective tongue loosener for me because I was a non-smoker. While he expressed sympathy for my predicament and condolences re the loss of my skipper, the conversation drifted towards service matters - such as squadron, location of base, C.O's name, and type of aircraft. (By the Geneva Convention we were only required to give name, rank and number.) At that time I was a N.C.O., and included in our training had been the instruction to treat enemy officers as we would our own. Despite being unable to gain the information he wanted, this interview was concluded in a friendly manner.

My headache carried on for about a week. Solitary confinement worried me not at all, for I slept most of the time on the rudimentary bed. I was very much awake of course for the interrogations sprung on us at any time. A great comparison of style emerged.

The next one was the opposite extreme. A pasty faced individual, obviously of the Gestapo school, was in civilian clothes and he was all bluster and threats. The well known Red Cross form was presented for me to fill in - if my next-of-kin were ever to hear of my continuing existence! It was interesting to scan through the questions. Our warnings regarding interrogation methods were correct. Forewarned, we were properly prepared. I filled in the necessary details required by the Convention, ran the pen through the remainder, which were service issues, and signed it. A fair number of dull threats ensued, emphasised by much table thumping. However, after only two

days I was released into a nearby compound where other 'processed' POWs were waiting for movement to regular Stalags.

Before being taken from the cells I was told they were aware of my squadron number and that my crew had passed through Spain as evaders in 1942. I remained poker-faced but was inwardly pleased to hear they were incorrect in the squadron locality. The source of their information was a mystery to me.

After one week in the general compound at Dulagluft the Germans made the decision to send a group of us away. On-going raids on the many targets in Germany by the RAF ensured a constant supply of captives to process. Statistics indicate 75% of aircrew in a bomber would die in the event of that aircraft being shot down. Casualties were exceptionally high. Over and above the death toll. Bomber Command also suffered serious depletion in personnel numbers with several thousand interned as prisoners-of-war.

I was one of a small group of prisoners directed to Stalag Luft III, at Sagan, in Silesia. We travelled in normal trains with guards.

My arrival created some interest among the New Zealanders already established there, as they'd not had a Kiwi arrival for some time. They were keen to catch up on news.

All prisoners arrived with only the uniform in which they were clothed. These generous people, some of whom were POWs of long-standing, provided me with a toothbrush, shaving gear, etc., and a few items of clothing. Although mail from NZ took a long 5 months, families at home had supplied them with the necessities. Germans provided two blankets and a pallet stuffed with wood wool (fine shavings). They had ample supplies of British uniforms, probably captured booty from their many successful military expeditions, so I acquired a greatcoat and boots. Flying boots were not suitable for general walking.

Our captors also provided us with a knife, fork and spoon - all fitted neatly together, camping style. Mugs and plates we manufactured out of Red Cross parcel tins, which originally contained precious food. Any soldering was done by using sap from the few scrawny pines growing within our compound as a flux. 'Churchill' cigarettes were packed in a heavy silver paper and this could be melted down to mould into sticks of solder. Heat was provided by a form of elementary blowlamp fuelled with margarine. Humans, when pressed, can produce many ingenious ideas and this group of men were no exception.

Luft III prisoners were former aircrew operating from various Allied bases. They were predominantly RAF, together with its mixture of Commonwealth additions. As the war progressed airmen from the U.S.A. joined us.

The controlling body was the Luftwaffe (German Air Force) - not the Army.

Stalag Luft III provided accommodation and security for, mainly, Air Force officers. I was a Flight Sergeant on entry. The compound I was placed in contained NCOs, but with captive numbers constantly increasing it was not long before our group was transferred to a designated NCO camp at Heydekrug, near Königsberg in East Prussia, close to the Baltic Sea. Known as Stalag Luft VI, it was an equally uninteresting piece of real estate - flat as a pancake! Positioned on part of a large plain stretching through Poland towards Russia, the compounds were surrounded by pine forest. Our existence resumed in all its spartan ways, yet was enlivened occasionally by an escape attempt.

It was the duty of every POW to cause the enemy as much trouble as we could, without causing his tolerance to snap. The Germans were sorely tested at times. The one occasion, which remains firmly fixed in my memory, occurred when a prisoner managed to steal a cardboard box containing hundreds of our identity cards. They

carried our fingerprints and photos and were destroyed by fire before the Germans could rescue them. Naturally they were furious. The compound was emptied. Inmates had to be re-photographed and fingerprinted, with the necessary written account for each on a new card. The exercise took all day, providing us with some satisfaction because it was occupying increased German manpower.

Penalties were usually imposed for misdeeds, frequently by withholding our Red Cross parcels. These were vital to our well-being. Food from our captors consisted of potatoes, sometimes only fit for livestock after being stored far too long. Removing skin could be achieved by squeezing in the hand - this very smelly vegetable shot out of its slimy covering! ... And bread - a dark brown colour. Ingredients were suspect, yet sawdust was one that was recognisable! It was rather sour of flavour. We kept it for long periods without mould appearing, but it did crack very badly.

Bulk barley was issued on occasions; also sauerkraut (pickled cabbage) and ersatz jam. This we were told was made from coal! We were not surprised. As a race the Germans were very inventive people. Mint tea was available and coffee from roasted acorns. Meat was extremely rare. We recognised the odd skull of a horse in the infrequent cauldron of watery stew. Of course horses were used in large numbers by the armed services for transport to save their diminishing fuel supplies and inevitably many would have fallen as victims of the war. Actually I found horse meat quite good. It is commonly used on the continent in peace time!

Most Air Force POWs were in their twenties, with youthful appetites. The wonderful food prepared by our mothers was never far from our minds, and sometimes in our conversation. A satisfying meal was a rare event in Germany.

However, we were not starved. And because of the Geneva Convention and our rank we could not be made to work. There was a vast difference between our



circumstances and those unfortunate enough to be in a concentration camp. We only learned of them quite late in the war, possibly 1944, when some downed flyers, 'gathered up by the Resistance Movement in France', were forced to endure several weeks in a concentration camp. They were in a shocking condition when eventually released in our compound. These men had been picked up by the Gestapo when the Resistance cell they were living with, dressed as civilians, was infiltrated and destroyed. They were indeed fortunate to be able to prove their true identity eventually.

The Red Cross played a vital role. They aimed to supply one parcel per man per week, which was considered necessary to maintain good health. Canada provided a high proportion of the parcels we received. England and New Zealand provided others. High protein foods such as tinned meat, milk powder and tins of fish were the main items, together with cracker biscuits and margarine, the last included in American parcels. That margarine word still brings back memories! Despite our keen appetites the 'Oleo' margarine was unpleasant to eat even though it may well have been nutritious. We did have tinned butter in some parcels. However, the margarine was not wasted. It provided fuel for lamps. Shallow tins formed the main structure, open at the top. Filled with margarine, and with a small piece of pyjama trouser cord inserted to act as a wick, each lamp provided only about one candle power, but that was better than nothing.

Depending on the country of origin some parcels contained tea and others coffee. Chocolate was a welcome treat, contained in some. The supply of such benefits was not always regular. Germans used restrictions as a form of punishment on the occasions we caused them displeasure. Irregularity of parcels was also due at times to Allied bombing raids disrupting rail transport for lengthy periods. We suffered real privations as the enemy transport system was greatly reduced in efficiency towards the war's end.

Mail from New Zealand was dreadfully slow. Parcels from home took five months to arrive at my prison camp. POWs were allowed to write a small number of postcards each month. All were censored, as all service mail was - one didn't have to be a captive to suffer this lack of privacy. In the course of my war service I went missing in action twice. On both occasions my next-of-kin had to wait one month before being informed I was alive.

My mother sent a number of well packed parcels containing winter clothing, socks, shaving gear, soap and sewing equipment. She also kept me regularly supplied with home news in letter form. This vital mail provided a real morale booster. A serviceman's loved ones carried heavy burdens during the 1939-45 conflict.

Following the briefing for our raid on the Skoda Works, the Squadron's Signals Leader had advised me to prepare for a visit to the Air Officer in command of our Group of Bomber Command, on the following evening at 5 pm. That proved to be an impossible assignment.

The interview would have been conducted in such a way as to investigate my suitability to receive a 'King's Commission'. I believed I would hear no more on the subject, being firmly in the custody of our enemies at the appointed time on the following day. However, much to my surprise, the powers that be gave me the benefit of the doubt. Promotion went through. Several months after capture, my name, along with a dozen others, was read out. This took place during an appel (parade). We were obliged to form up twice daily to be counted and, following this routine, any matters the Germans wished to pass on were dealt with during the assembly. The parade was under the control of the 'Man of Confidence' - one of our own, considered suitable by our captors. He was a person who acted as a go-between. In the NCO camp, as we were mostly of the same rank, it came down to experience and force of personality. Dixie Deans filled the role admirably, being a former lecturer at London University and fluent in the German language. Also present at

each parade was the German officer of the day. His NCOs and other ranks did the count. On this particular occasion, as our names were read out, we each presented ourselves to the German officer who congratulated us on our promotion.

Soon after the notification those of us with upgrading travelled by train back to Sagan to join the swelling numbers of officers. Conditions there were little different from those I experienced in my six months at Heydekrug as far as food and accommodation were concerned, but there was a difference regarding rank. At Stalag Luft VI all inmates were of similar status, although some were undoubtedly outstanding leaders, whereas Luft III encompassed lowly Pilot Officers to a couple of Group Captains, with a liberal incorporation of those on in-between rungs of the ranking ladder. I was placed in the North Compound. A very capable Squadron Leader acted as our Man of Confidence': Bill Jennings by name.

The prefabricated wooden huts had internal subdivisions. A central corridor allowed movement to individual rooms - each being perhaps 4½ metres square. Crude wooden bunks, two tier, were arranged around the walls. There was a small central kitchen, equipped with a range-type stove and fuelled by briquettes (compressed coal dust); also a couple of benches and possibly some plumbing, though my memory is not clear on that. Alongside the kitchen was a general ablution room where we washed our dishes and had showers - always cold! But there was plenty of water. Winter temperatures in Silesia really plummet to very low levels, so to protect our feet while showering we wore wooden clogs. The floor was concrete. One had to screw up one's courage to prepare mentally for a winter shower but cleanliness was essential to avoid lice in our crowded accommodation.

Body waste during daylight hours was deposited in one long building constructed over a large pit. Four long seats, running the length of the building were equipped with holes to let us do the business! Privacy in prison camp was non-existent and

never more so than in the toilet. The '52 seaters' were particularly busy areas just before lock-up time. Long lines of glowing cigarettes tended to enhance the atmosphere! Sewage arrangements were similar in Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug. I am aware of at least one tunnel being excavated there, starting from the vertical wall of this vast sump, thus providing easy disposal of the spoil. Local subsoils were sand, which was easy for diggers of tunnels, but difficult and dangerous because of the likelihood of collapse. The above mentioned pit was emptied from time to time by Russian POWs - only two men. Their equipment consisted of a long horizontal tank, perhaps seventy-five centimetres in diameter, mounted on a horse-drawn chassis using the basic structure of a four wheeled farm wagon. The tank may have been four to five metres long. On the rear end was a mounting for a small petrol motor and vacuum pump. Hoses were attached and one end dropped into the effluent. Once the motor was started a transfer of material occurred. A lot was used to fertilise large vegetable gardens beyond Stalag boundaries. Produce was not for our benefit - so perhaps we were unwittingly helping the German war effort.

During summer months the stench from these wagons as they passed through our compound was bad - the vehicles generally being referred to as 'honey wagons'!

Before leaving this subject I must mention the amazing sight of millions of fat maggot-like creatures, all with tails, emerging from the effluent pit and travelling in a dense formation across open ground. I only witnessed this once.

While our environment was not that of a health clinic, most of us weathered the conditions in a reasonable physical shape. Only in the closing months of the war did we face real difficulties in this regard. However, depression for some was a real problem - perhaps even for all of us at some time or another. Some though seemed more prone to suffer than others.

In very rare, extreme cases, stepping over the warning wire (about 7 metres inside the main barbed-wire entanglement) and attempting to break out was enough for the guards to open fire from the nearest sentry box. We were warned that the guards were ordered to do this. Several POW's lives ended this way.

Every few months a room movement occurred. It wasn't an official direction but we got to the stage, when in constant close confinement, of knowing what another fellow was going to say before he opened his mouth! A change was as good as a rest, so we moved from one room to another. Some moodiness was caused by influences beyond prison boundaries, such as domestic stresses and strains for those who were married. Probably only a small percentage were. When a husband was captured, the unfortunate wife would be left with all sorts of responsibilities and for some it must have appeared as an untenable situation. Unfaithful spouses caused the odd distraught husband to pin 'Dear John' letters on the general notice board for all to read.

Most of us lived as a 'combine' - that is, we cared for our seven fellow room-mates, sharing what foodstuff arrived in food parcels from supporters beyond Germany. We took turns, week about, to produce what culinary variations we could think up from the limited resources. Time on the stove was limited to 20 minutes to allow all 120 odd hut occupants to have a hot meal. I can't recall, but presume each hut had a rostered arrangement for cooking. The stove was certainly red hot at times!

Every compound I was confined in had a walking track just inside the knee-high warning wire. Because the inmates were former aircrew this walkway was known as 'the circuit' - a term familiar to all RAF people, because of service terminology. On returning to base in preparation for landing, aircraft were usually advised to join the circuit by ground control, over the R/T (radio telephone), while awaiting advice on when to land. The term circuit was readily accepted and understood. We all walked and walked! Dimensions of each compound were approximately 300 metres square.

The captive population of the North Compound where I was held could easily have been 1500 by the beginning of 1945.

Escape plans exercised the minds of some all the time. Indeed it was our duty to carry on the fight, even though we lacked weapons of destruction. However, I suspect many were like me, content to just help those who were driven by the desire to break out of the deadly monotony of POW conditions. I was not prepared to take the risks involved in escaping - the war was obviously going to end in the Allies' favour. I put my neck on the line, quite voluntarily, while on raids. Now I was contemplating life in a peaceful situation.

A large number of men made individual attempts at escape - a few were on the spur of the moment and others after some planning. A home run (reaching freedom) was an extremely rare event. Once recaptured, a spell in 'the cooler', on bread and water for a period, was the normal punishment.

Often these individual attempts were a real impediment to the prisoners' own carefully devised security system. They alerted the Germans, causing more searches of huts for materials which were illegal. Our own radio receiver had to be extra carefully hidden as being able to receive news other than German propaganda was vital to our morale. 'A reader' would visit each hut most days. A yell of 'Gen up' silenced all. We listened attentively as we absorbed the latest news from the BBC. This helped to maintain spirits, especially for those long-term detainees held since early in the war when almost all the military news was of Germany's overpowering success. And the fall of Singapore to the Japanese in early 1942 had added more fuel to the despair of prisoners of war.

Long before I was captured though, a system of tight control and coordination was instituted to maximise the success rate of determined escapees. 'Big X', head of the Escape Committee in the North Compound, was Squadron Leader Roger Bushell. He

was a man absolutely driven by a healthy hatred of all things German. The reason for his personal attitude was unknown to me.

This committee exerted considerable influence in the Compound. All escape plans had to be thoroughly examined by them before permission was granted and assistance arranged to support a venture.

An industry developed around these covert operations. Those with language skills played an important role. Selected guards were carefully worked on! They were as short of luxury items as the heavily rationed people of Great Britain. By adopting a friendly attitude, inviting them into rooms, subtly offering coffee, etc, over a long period of time, individuals were quietly controlled.

A few of them were thoroughly disillusioned with the war, realising defeat for them was inevitable. Their weakness was exploited. Punishment by their own authorities for fraternisation with POWs was severe. The Russian front was renowned for being the death knell of complete German armies. It had a reputation for catastrophes, caused by a combination of stubborn and ruthless Russian resistance to German advances into their territory, plus very severe winter weather and Hitler's curious state of mind. He had overruled his very experienced senior army commanders, forcing them to comply with his own warped opinions. The German 'Blitz Krieg' strategy of rapid, mobile warfare had quickly overpowered their European neighbours but failed in the vast expanses of Russia. Victory over 'the Russian Bear' had been expected before winter set in yet this did not eventuate. Soldiers' clothing was totally inadequate, resulting in massive casualties - and ultimately in total failure. It was the threat of being sent to the Russian front that ensured silence from those guards who had been foolish enough to allow themselves to be coerced in prison camp.

When the need arose within the Escape Committee for a camera, films, radio valves, train timetables, or for any item impossible to produce by the prisoners themselves,

pressure was applied and the goods produced.

Some POWs found they had the gift for counterfeiting whatever documents were needed. Remember, this was a police state where all documents were subject to frequent and thorough inspection, and so demanded top-notch false papers.

Others developed skills such as tailoring, possibly aided by former civilian trade training. Business suits materialised, made out of uniforms that were re-dyed. Much boiling of socks etc went on to produce colour variations. They certainly managed to make the disguise clothing look authentic.

All the network of activities, perfected over time, were utilised in the preparation for the major break-out that occurred during my detention. It became known as 'The Great Escape'. Assembled in that Sagan compound were a large number of talented people. There were even some technical experts in mining from South Africa. In fact, every profession or trade must have been represented. Many were usefully employed.

During the Second World War, at least in Air Force establishments, some Allied prisoners of war found confined conditions in Stalags difficult to put up with. It was such a stark contrast to the life of excitement and fear one was conditioned to in war-time flying. Perhaps this is one reason the Luftwaffe experienced extra difficulties in confining aircrew.

A few audacious escapes were attempted above ground. Rarely were they successful. That put the focus on tunnelling, an activity dreamed about and practised from time immemorial by prisoners.

One quite daring tunnelling exploit, known as the 'Wooden Horse', took place at Luft III prior to my arrival, possibly in 1942. For weeks a wooden vaulting horse was



carried out and set down on exactly the same spot each time. The postens or guards in the elevated sentry towers became used to prisoners, keen to maintain physical fitness, running and vaulting over this obstacle. It was, of course, cover for an escape. Four sturdy men were required for carrying because the wooden horse contained a man who would dig while it was in position. And on the return to huts there was the additional weight of several bags of excavated earth - sand actually! The many willing volunteers, who were physical wrecks by the end of the job, were eventually rewarded with the news that all three men who did the underground work eventually reached Britain, possibly through Sweden.

To give the escapees the best chance, once they left the compound, the twice daily counting routine had to be messed up. The Germans had us form up in hut formations in ranks of five. Some clowning about, which enlivened the POW's lot but infuriated our hosts, did the trick. Apparently they had been unaware they were three short for a few days, thus delaying the general alarm.

Although the Wooden Horse escape took place before I was captured, its success was obviously encouraging for other hopefuls. By the time I got to Sagan three tunnels were being constructed: 'Tom', 'Dick' and 'Harry'. I learned later of a fourth, 'George'. 'Tom' was discovered by the Germans and destroyed. 'Dick' may have been used for safe storage of the materials we were not supposed to have.

'Harry' was the one which continued to be developed. It avoided the fate of some others built too close to the surface. Germans trundled heavy road rollers around the compound between the warning wire and main fence, thus collapsing any shallow tunnels.

Also, to be below the range of electronic listening devices placed along the main fence, the depth of nine metres had been decided on. Even at this considerable depth the subsoil remained the same - bright yellow sand, hard to dispose of secretly, when

topsoil was the normal colour.

A number of tactics were devised to hide or camouflage the tell-tale evidence. Men, referred to as 'penguins', carried long, slim bags of sand inside their trousers, string controlled from within pockets, and slowly trickled the sand as they got their exercise, trudging around the circuit. Other prisoners worked it into their gardens or surreptitiously combined it with topsoil as they lay ostensibly sunbathing and reading. Scuffling feet of hockey and soccer players could achieve the same ends. It was also stuffed under the elevated stage in the newly acquired theatre and under dormitory blocks or, in Red Cross boxes, packed into the ceilings above - until they began to sag or even collapse! Later, when escape centred on one route, abandoned tunnels were repacked with much of the material being steadily excavated from 'Harry'.

The tunnel length was a little more than 100 metres and the cross section measurement no more than 90 centimetres square. Obviously a lot of wood was necessary for shoring to make it safe. This material was funded by us all - by donating some of our bed boards! As progress was made with tunnelling, so we slept more fitfully. These boards formed the base of our bunks and were approximately 76 cm long x 15 x 2.5 cm. Placed parallel across our bunks they supported our far from comfortable mattresses.

Men doing the digging, and others moving the materials back to the vertical shaft, were courageous people. Air for their survival was pumped through a pipeline of empty Canadian 'Klim' milk powder tins. A key was used to open them initially, leaving a flange slightly narrower than the overall diameter of the main body of the can. Then, with bottoms removed they fitted snugly together.

A small workshop and pump room were located in an excavation at the bottom of the entrance shaft.

This enterprise commenced in early 1943. Security within the camp had to be of a high order to prevent intervention by the German authorities. One prisoner would always be stationed near the main entrance to record arrival and departure of Luftwaffe staff. Some of these were fully employed searching under huts which were raised off the ground, probably with the specific objective of preventing tunnels. In the corner of each room was a concrete slab which was the base for a heater. While I cannot remember the fine details, I presume the concrete slab was formed on a substantial brick foundation. POWs must have penetrated through this, and the slab, after moving the heater aside. This hole gave direct entry to the vertical shaft. The heater could be back in place within two minutes of the alarm being raised about Germans entering the compound.

The pump which supplied fresh air to the underground chambers and tunnel face was contrived from two RAF Kitbags mounted on runners. One vertical pipe carried fresh air from ground level, sucked down by one of the two bellows (kitbags). A curved pipe carried air, pumped by the other bellows, along the tunnel to the work face. A box between the bellows contained a system of flapper valves, each made of leather.

Long narrow strips of wood were removed from external walls of huts at night. These were placed on the tunnel floor to act as rails. Trolleys were constructed. It was on these that men were moved from one end to the other on the night of 24 March 1944, when 76 officers broke out of the tunnel, the longest ever dug from any prison camp.

All but three of the escapees were caught and 50 were murdered by the Gestapo on an order from Hitler. We were shocked by the outcome. Thanks to the foresight of our Senior Officer, Group Captain Massey DSO, MC, he had organised Flight Lieut. Ley Kenyon DFC, one who shared in the escape project, to go into the tunnel to make a pictorial record of it. He sketched under extremely difficult conditions, sometimes lying on his back in the cramped space, using the tunnel roof as a drawing board. A flickering flame from a Kriegie lamp gave light for the job. (Kriegie was an

abbreviation of the German word Kriegsgefangene, meaning prisoner of war).

In January 1945 all prisoners were suddenly evacuated from the camp on a forced march because the advancing Russians were only 30 miles away. The drawings had to be left behind. They were hidden in watertight containers in an unused tunnel.

The drawings were later recovered by a British officer who had been too ill to be evacuated with the main body of POWs. The Russians eventually over-ran the camp, but when the officer was later released from hospital he recovered the drawings, undamaged in their sealed containers, and carefully carried them with him to England.

I have in my possession copies of these sketches.

With such projects helping to occupy time and energies the months of confinement gradually mounted into years for many. We had to create some purpose in our way of life so men formed various interest groups and organised sporting events, very professionally produced theatrical productions and orchestral recitals, while others took up arts and crafts or pursued university studies - some of these activities receiving resource assistance from the Red Cross. The range of abilities and knowledge within the camp produced a supportive, functioning community with a degree of security well beyond what could be imagined in such a confined space in an alien country.

We had followed the progress of the war and knew of the closing in of the Allied forces on the German homeland, but we had no inkling that we would be evacuated rather than being left as abandoned chattels for approaching armies. So the unexpected order to leave caught us unawares.

The forced march in the depths of an extremely severe winter found us undernourished physically and totally unprepared regarding equipment. With only

hours of warning being given, we frantically prepared for departure. I formed my two blankets into a sleeping bag, using wool from worn out garments as stitching material. My RAF kitbag was converted into a back pack - strips of trouser leg, doubled and stitched on the bag, served as straps. It was not balanced and it was uncomfortable. However, beggars have no choice!

A new challenge now loomed - and it was daunting. As we left the compound in hut groupings each man was issued with a Red Cross food parcel. Our subsistence then depended on our load carrying ability. Our destination was unknown and there was no vehicle support for the thousands of marching men. The distant sound of Russian artillery was undoubtedly a spur to our captors, if not to us.

At around 0100 hours on 28 January 1945 we were ordered onto the road. It was the beginning of a most gruelling journey. Some had made a decision to drag their items of survival on wooden sledges, hastily designed and manufactured. For the early kilometres those men moved with less discomfort than backpackers. Lots of deep snow lay at the roadsides. It had been well compacted on the road surface, becoming an ice crust. Frozen material built up under heels of boots, altering the angle of feet, thus making walking even more difficult. We were a sorry group as we proceeded in a shambling formation roughly westward.

From Sagan we moved on secondary roads with the guards allowing us rest periods every hour or so. We just flopped down in the snow to give our unconditioned feet a rest.

Within an hour of leaving I did notice discarded items of prisoners' gear lying at the roadside. Some had been over ambitious at the beginning, trying to carry or tow too much weight.

As dawn arrived on that first day we experienced the icy-gut ache of reality. Our line

of march was revealed ahead, winding to the horizon. The wind on our faces was then mingled with driving snowflakes and by daylight we could see the difference the change in weather had made to the road surface. Less ice on the road meant the sledge men had to do a rapid reappraisal of their methods, forcing many to join the majority by humping what they could on their backs.

From midday on we marched in below zero temperatures. Food froze in tins. Bread snapped into granular chunks. The column trudged on throughout the endless day. Feet froze and limping marchers became commonplace. We viewed the surroundings from beneath snow-encrusted eyelashes.

Our strength fluctuated during this ordeal - almost like getting a 'second wind'. At one stage when I was unable to regain my feet after a rest a large South African, 'Sugar' Lowe (I do not remember his Christian name), pulled me upright. Later, when we came to a farmhouse, the same man who was a speaker of Afrikaans, managed to obtain some cooked barley for us both from a German frau. Hot food, no matter how basic, helped immensely in the frozen conditions we experienced.

Official plans appeared very vague but a cart did materialise for the sick and severely lame.

Having left Sagan not long after midnight we were moved along until darkness fell the following night. No doubt the military authorities had requisitioned a farmer's buildings and into these we were shepherded. The large barn had no lighting. In pitch darkness we stumbled about trying to locate sufficient space to lie down. Hundreds of exhausted POWs littered the earth floor. Finally a companion and I settled on what proved to be a heap of crushed limestone. We lay on the sloping side, fully clothed including footwear. Sweat-laden boots became frozen clogs if removed in those freezing conditions - almost impossible to put on. We dozed fitfully. It was a night best forgotten. At daylight our aching bodies were once more persuaded to

stand up. Hot water was provided at one building, allowing a brew to be made and some of our dry rations were consumed. Dragging on our ill-fitting backpacks was painful. My shoulders ached and my back was sore. My feet were also complaining. Weeks later the soles of my feet slowly came away. They had first turned white and there was a certain lack of feeling - possibly a slight touch of frostbite. The layer of skin that came adrift was made up of callused surfacing, about two or three millimetres thick.

Now back to the route march!

Writing in pencil on a piece of notepaper, I recorded our progression. Copying from a map, I marked in the names of places we passed through: Hermsdorf; Holbad; Freiwaldau; Leippa; Preibus. That first day of the march to Preibus was an estimated distance of 36 kilometres.

I was not aware of any great harassment from our guards at this time, although a few were not averse to making a gesture of control with warning shots. We tended to our needs and tried to keep within the dark mass of people moving across the white countryside. Some friends on other marches reported trigger-happy guards threatening dire consequences if one was unable to keep up. Prisoners who fell by the wayside were shot. Official accounts make mention of this sort of atrocity but I did not witness any such occurrences.

Following the extremely miserable night on the lime heap, motivation was in short supply. I seem to remember drifting along in a mental haze - nature's way, I presume, of insulating one from the many discomforts suffered at that time. Placing one foot in front of the other sufficed to maintain one's position within the group of suffering humanity.

We were not devoid of feelings for our fellows. One South African, with whom I had

shared a room at Sagan, seemed to be travelling completely automatically - eyes open but, to all intents and purposes, asleep. Several of us guided him along.

Fortunately, by mid-afternoon on the second day, weather conditions were less harsh. Well before dark we arrived at Muscau. My group was directed into a glass factory owned by a local industrialist, brother of the renowned General Von Amim of the African campaign. This man was not a Nazi. He fervently wished the war to end, as his largest pre-war customer was an American firm named Woolworths!

The Muscau glass factory had been in recent use and provided a real recovery shelter. The brick kilns were pleasantly warm. On these we spread our primitive bedding. Absolute luxury! Hot water was available so we could make a brew of tea or coffee. Food I simply cannot remember, for we were at the end of our tether following the interminable hours of intense hardship.

We were allowed to rest at Muscau for three nights and that was appreciated. But only one sixth of a food parcel per man was issued. Food was becoming scarce. Then the word was given that we were to be on the move again.

On 2 February, the sixth day after leaving the familiarity of Sagan, we were ready to go at 9.30 pm but an air raid alert created a delay. It gave us time to ponder our future, for we were leaving behind the assurance of warmth and shelter and facing the uncertainty of the snow conditions on the road ahead.

At 10.30 pm we finally formed up in the confusion of darkness and marched out in ragged order. The roads, although clear of snow, were pot-holed with slush-filled puddles. For those still relying on sleds the going was quite impossible. Hasty reorganisation was required. Then, as dawn became barely perceptible, word was passed back that our destination lay one kilometre ahead. The column passed the sick that were being organised into groups for transportation. We were a bedraggled.



unshaven, obviously weary lot as we arrived at Spremburg. There we saw an army barracks and armoured regiments. We stopped in a nearby rail depot where a line of guards faced us with weapons at the ready. Our ranks were numbered off into groups and immediately ordered into wooden railway wagons. We clambered in, hauling our gear after us. The doors slid to and the eerie light vanished. We heard the bolts slide home as we stood in the darkness. Eventually the train moved off, rattling slowly over the uneven railroad tracks.

We had no water; no light; no straw for bedding; no provision of sanitation. About 40 men were crowded in the dark confinement. We just stood for a time. Then, by general consensus, we started to improve our lot. Bags and sundry gear were hung on the walls or roof. We organised ourselves into two shifts of approximately 20 men. This allowed one group to lie down across the width of the wagon while the remainder stood along one wall. Dysentery was suffered by some. Thankfully it was not my lot. Empty Red Cross cardboard cartons served as receptacles for body waste. Pieces of wallboard were broken away to allow for disposal. Endurance was our sole objective.

On 3 February the train stopped on a side line, the doors were unbolted and the guards took up positions to restrict our movement. No identifying feature could be seen. We stood outside the car taking pleasure in the dual relief of release from confinement and being able to respond to the calls of nature, although in full view of curious civilians who could be seen on the other side of a tall steel fence. It was almost midday but we had still not been given any water. We were quite filthy.

After that brief respite it was back into the wagons and another bad night before we were finally provided with water at around 1.30 in the afternoon, having gone without for some 44 hours.

The train squealed to a stop at Tarmstedt at 4 pm that afternoon, 4 February. As we watched through a crack in the wall our Luftwaffe guards were marched off, being

relieved by new guards, identified as Marines. Our new camp was therefore to be Navy, an assumption which proved to be correct.

Anxious for any alternative to the restrictions of our rail-wagon, we formed up and began to march in drizzling rain which developed into a downpour by the time of our arrival at the camp, in darkness. Sodden and chilled-through after the two hour walk, we were in a fit mood to welcome a return to the routine of normal prison camp existence.

The column halted at the gates and went no further. Like cattle, we could only turn our backs to the wind and rain. Camp lights revealed a squalid scene. Minutes became hours. We stood tightly packed together, from the wire gates to the extreme end of the rutted cinder roadway, about half a mile of clustered dejection. We stood quietly, becoming progressively more silent as the hours went by, withdrawn from each other by the renewed demand for endurance and the will to survive.

Eventually word filtered back that the entire personal effects of each man were to be searched for illegal possessions prior to his entry into the camp.

We waited, standing in the rain, for six hours. At intervals men collapsed and were carried to the head of the column where they were granted access to the camp.

Our group passed through the gates shortly before midnight. Marching directly through the Vorlager (administrative office area), we entered a building within the inner wire. Squinting in the dim light of naked bulbs hung from the ceiling, I saw a large elongated room, barren of furniture, at one end of which stood a sagging unpainted stage, occupying the floor from one wall to the other. An officer and several guards awaited us. The room was unheated and this became painfully apparent as we partially stripped and, with utter weariness, awaited their inspection of our meagre belongings spread in disarray on the floor.

Repacked and dressed, we carried our gear across the compound to an unlit room in an adjacent barracks. A match disclosed a bale of wet wood shavings in a corner. Spreading it, we lay down on its dampness for a cold and fitful sleep.

The next morning an appel was held on the parade square and we were allocated quarters. I was put in a room of 14. Some were members of the combine I lived with in Stalag Luft III. No beds were available. We merely received a few more bales of the wet wood shavings, over which each man spread his blanket, trusting a combination of body heat and evaporation to eventually dry it out. There was one shower in the camp, located in the ablution shed, which was largely open to the weather, consisting as it did of only one wall and a tin roof. Cold water of course. Lacking an alternative, a group of us shared it in the afternoon. After the initial shock and chill had subsided, and I had changed into my other underwear and socks, I felt considerably fresher.

Weakness was a commonplace symptom throughout the camp. The rigours of the march, plus the fact that we had been on half parcels since the previous September, combined to sap our strength.

An acute shortage of fuel for heating or cooking forced us to remove boards from our huts, to be used as firewood. After arrival at this camp at Milag Marlag Nord, to the north-east of Bremen, rain and occasional snow proved to be our constant lot.

We were cheered considerably on 18 February by the arrival of 6000 food parcels from Lubeck. Beds also began appearing and rumours abounded, each one seeming to feed on another. Could there have been an ulterior motive in the apparent slight improvement in our treatment? Considerable sums continued to be wagered on a date for war's end - a topic dear to the heart of every Kriegie. Promissory notes written on any scrap of paper and signed by the issuer were later honoured by Barclays or

Lloyds Banks in England, once we returned.

Despite the slightly improved outlook, the combination of recent events probably caused my immune system to fail. I became a victim of diarrhoea. Subsequently, as I was moving through the dense night fog, having emptied my bowels in the toilet hut, I almost collapsed when a sudden burst of automatic gun-fire shook me to my foundations. It was so very close - just on the opposite side of the barrack block I was passing. Having recovered from the shock I moved towards my own accommodation, noting as I did so a strange animal sound! The next day I was mortified to find that one of our own had been shot by a guard, and I had done nothing to help, firmly believing the guard must have shot a dog.

Black market trading with the guards was the cause of this tragedy. A chap named Bryson had been haggling through the wire for some food, with a German NCO. The bargain arrived at, he stepped across the warning wire to collect, and as he did so another guard shot him. We learned he was in a bad way.

Although some small quantities of firewood had been forthcoming, at this time the Germans refused a further log issue. But they did then allow daily foraging parties out of camp to dig up rotting stumps and gather brushwood.

On 1 March the bread ration was reduced to one seventh of a loaf per day and amounts of margarine and sausage also diminished, the latter having been almost non-existent anyway - about enough to cover one slice of bread with thin slices every ten days. Our state of near-starvation was however slightly alleviated not long after this when American food parcels became available. Unlike the Canadian and British Red Cross parcels the American ones contained cigarettes and this had an immediate currency effect - prices in Foodacco (the trading centre) moved up. A chocolate bar went to a value of 101 cigarettes, whereas it had been 65, two days before.

The dreariness of our situation, the cold and the never satisfied appetite for food made for a miserable existence. Treats of some sort were necessary to lift our flagging spirits. An occasional raid on our carefully husbanded dwindling rations provided some comfort - perhaps two biscuits each, covered with a mixture of powdered Klim milk and Goon jam!

About this time the continual rain and snow finally came to an end - to be supplanted by a deep freeze! Then at the end of the first week in March we were at last blessed with some sunshine. It began to feel as though Spring might be close at hand.

A large scale raid on Hamburg gave us some real interest one night, and on the following day we received a report that 1250 aircraft had participated. We witnessed several being shot down, felt great empathy for the crews, and wondered about their survival chances. Situated as we were, not too far distant from Hamburg, Bremen and Bremenhaven, we were well placed for observing the increasing intensity of the Allied air attacks.

On a later occasion a daylight raid of American Flying Fortresses and Liberator bombers flew directly overhead in perfect formation, perhaps at about 12 000 feet. No flak or fighter opposition was observed that time.

Learning of a crossing of the Rhine by the Allies set the rumour-mill going again - regarding another forced march!

In late March we went into a hunger strike. It was an odd situation, arising from a decree by the Kommandant that all Red Cross food tins must be emptied into open receptacles before being issued. Such action would prevent planned rationing because of the need for quick consumption of the food to prevent spoilage. The lack of sufficient containers was also a problem. Moreover, there was a need for Red Cross tins for the manufacture of utensils. The SBO (Senior British Officer) refused

to accept any parcels whatsoever under such conditions. The camp agreed to support his position with a 48 hour hunger strike.

A second meeting took place resulting in the Kommandant's refusal to acknowledge the SBO. Group Captain Wray took over negotiations and the same day the German food issue increased to four slices of bread per man, swede soup at midday and enough hot water for four cups of coffee per day. But the improvement was short-lived. Soup was discontinued the following day and further wood supply for the kitchen was forbidden.

The Germans won that contest. All tinned food was emptied into any available container. However, obtaining any food at all was a victory of sorts. Food was urgently needed. Bending over fairly quickly, or standing up suddenly, created blackouts.

March 23<sup>rd</sup> was another noteworthy day. During the morning the sound of familiar engines brought us on the run from every hut in the compound to stand squinting at the sight of 120 Lancasters approaching the camp. They turned into their bombing run directly overhead and disappeared to the south-west on a course for Bremen.

Despite the Group Captain's denial of rumours of another march, some preparations were made by individuals. New packs and a variety of wheeled carts were produced. I stuck to my proved method of carrying all on my back, even though it was uncomfortable. To try to alleviate that problem a piece of cord was obtained and, by linking the shoulder straps of my kitbag across my chest, the strain on my shoulders was reduced.

About this time we witnessed a strange sight. North-west of the camp, just after dark, a loud roaring sound was heard. Then we saw a bright light rising in the sky a long way ahead of the accompanying sound. Whatever the object was, it travelled at great

speed on an angle of 80 degrees. It did not deviate in any way from its course. We watched for many minutes till it was lost from our view, but not through poor visibility. The night sky was clear and it just travelled on upwards. Later we learned this was a V2, one of Hitler's secret weapons, designed to turn the war in Germany's favour. These fearsome weapons were aimed at various targets - London being one where terrible carnage and damage was inflicted. The only defence against these large rockets, which carried about one ton of explosives, was the destruction of the launch sites. The Allied Air Forces concentrated on these targets, although total success was only achieved when the invading Allied Armies over-ran the launching areas.

That same night a large raid on Hamburg took place. Lasting 45 minutes, it was the most spectacular raid of our imprisonment. Huge, sheet-like explosions of flame illuminated towering columns of smoke which rose beyond the brilliantly-lit horizon. Yet, because of adverse wind conditions, no sound reached us.

Some two months after our arrival the first small mail delivery took place on 5 April. It was amazing that, despite our changes in location and all the turmoil within Germany in those latter stages of defence, any mail of no strategic importance could get through.

A couple of nights after that our sleep was disturbed by cannon-firing night fighters. They were twin-engined Mosquitoes, commonly referred to as 'wooden wonders'! They prowled the roads and railway lines of Germany, dropping flares from time to time to illuminate targets. The superiority of Allied Air Forces had, by this time, made travel in daylight well-nigh impossible without being spotted and attacked. Germans were obliged to move men and supplies by night, further hampering efforts to defend their country.

On 9 April the rumours about being moved again became a reality. At 7.30 pm we

were still waiting to leave camp although an appel at 2.30 had ordered us to prepare for departure at 6.30 pm. We were warned that failure to comply would result in the use of force.

Following an issue of two complete food parcels per man we ate as we packed. We were experienced travellers this time and the weather had greatly improved with the advance of spring.

With the British army only seven miles from Bremen, Group Captain Wray had attempted to delay the march, as a single day could be vitally important to our liberation, but his negotiations failed to influence decisions already made.

We eventually departed in heavy fog, only to be stopped a hundred yards beyond the gate for half an hour. The Kommandant's nervous hesitation, apparently provoked by the fog and an air raid in the area, led to our return to camp at 11.15 pm. After sleeping in our ransacked room for one more night we repacked and left Tarmstedt and Milag Marlag at 9.15 the next morning.

Some of the assortment of carts made from scrap materials soon gave trouble, ending up on the roadside as they were discarded. Wheels made of soft wood without metal bearings were the main problem. There were attempts by some to commandeer the odd wheelbarrow that was visible on properties being passed, but they were quickly spotted and reclaimed by their rightful owners.

Guards, by and large on this second march, seemed less trigger happy than some on the first. They were older men, the younger ones having been withdrawn from guard duty to take part in defending what territory they still controlled. The guards were only human though - possibly their families were suffering from the many air raids conducted by Allied Air Forces. Whatever the reason, when we were ordered into a field for the night on one occasion, a guard became quite hysterical when a few



POWs, on spotting a haystack, jumped the fence to obtain some of this material for bedding. He fired into the group, hitting two men. One had been shot through his left thigh about two inches from the groin, the bullet continuing on to graze his right knee, and finally lodged in another's ankle. The group scattered for the fence. On looking back the wounded were seen to be attempting to crawl after the group, writhing with pain, while the guard continued to scream hysterically, his rifle held at the ready. The two men were rescued. Tourniquets successfully staunched the bleeding and no bones appeared to have been broken.

Group Captain Wray immediately protested to the Senior German Officer and an ambulance eventually arrived to carry them off to Zeven hospital, both in reasonably good spirits.

Troop movements and the noise of heavy transport on the road made sleeping difficult and morning revealed another heavy fog. A farcical appel was attempted on the roadway and we moved off yet again.

Our diet on this march was improved with opportunities to barter with inhabitants of villages and towns we passed through. Things like soap, tea, coffee and cigarettes had been in short supply to the civilian population for a long time and, thanks to the Red Cross, we did occasionally receive food parcels containing these items. Eggs and vegetables were what we wanted, or even cooked barley and hot water, and all of these we managed to procure every now and then, by bartering.

We became expert foragers. By remaining in small combines it was possible to use the skills of individuals to contribute to the good of our tiny groups. On one occasion a freshly killed hare was discovered during our firewood gathering. Des Symonds, having completed his elementary medical exam before we left Sagan, performed the preparation of the body. The egg of a goose made an excellent omelette for about six men when reconstituted milk, made from Klim milk powder, was added to the mix.

While the Germans were in overall control of our destiny, there were signs of relaxation to some degree. Our guard had already surrendered in spirit, if not in fact. This was evident by the more reasonable distances marched in any one day and by the selection of fields for our night's rest. Water was always a necessity, required in large measure by the thousands of men, all prisoners, being moved about within this enemy controlled region. There may well have been 1000 in the group I was attached to. Our night parking spots were often close to streams or village water pumps. These open fields were quickly converted into temporary camps. Smoke filled the air from hundreds of small cooking fires. By good fortune the weather was remarkably stable - only on one or two occasions did it appear really threatening. Our only shelter was formed by a blanket hung over a cord stretched between two upright stakes driven into the ground. Blanket edges were secured by sods of earth. Eustace Newborn and I shared one of these makeshift dwellings. Our packs blocked up the head end while we crawled in at the other open end.

On 11 April, which was a brilliantly fine day, the Naval Officers from Milag Marlag marched as a military unit behind us. We of the junior service travelled as destitute scavengers! RAF Tempest fighter bombers were then roaming the countryside searching out targets of opportunity - which meant anything that moved or didn't move!

We watched as four heavily armed aircraft formed up line-astern in preparation for an attack. Being strafed from the air is quite stimulating for those forming the target! The agricultural land about us was in use, having recently been sown in cereal crops and plants were only eight or nine inches high. As the planes zoomed along the road, perhaps forty or fifty feet up, flashes from gun barrels were seen. We bolted off the road. Once well clear, I dived into the crop with my pack on my back. I remember the reassuring sense of security provided by the ground and the flimsy greenery. It was an illusion but comforting in those traumatic moments.

There were no casualties in my group but the Naval Officers immediately behind were hard hit. Two were killed and seven wounded.

Group Captain Wray managed to arrange for a day of rest on 13 April. News reports indicated Magdeburg had fallen, so the Allies were still some distance to the east and south of us. Nevertheless, we lived in the hope of being overtaken.

The next day we were on the road again by 9.30. The gently rolling hills of this lush farming area were a sight worth seeing.

News of Roosevelt's death reached us. He had played a major role in convincing his reluctant people to support England against the rampant Nazi Forces which had ravaged so much of Europe. A sense of sadness prevailed, further emphasised by the closeness of victory being achieved through the combined efforts of freedom-loving nations against this terrible foe.

On 15 April we departed Homeburg on a bleak, cold morning, intending to march to the Elbe River, a distance of about 16 kilometres. The possibility of being ferried across the Elbe caused some speculation about the likelihood of strafing from aircraft.

Travelling over muddy back roads and crossing a flat, marshy terrain we arrived in the town square of Jork. A lunch break was called and the town residents proved eager to trade. That day's march ended at Cramz, a small village situated in the shadow of a tall, curved dyke, on the other side of which low-lying flats extended to the river's edge, a few hundred yards distant. The Elbe appeared to be possibly a mile wide at this point. We made camp on the river flats.

April 16<sup>th</sup> - Fears of air attack during the ferry trip proved to be groundless. Queuing up with our varied vehicles and collective gear we awaited our turn to embark. The

ferry held about seventy including gear. Blankanese, our destination on the opposite shore, ascended the steep escarpment which bordered the river, the multi-tiered houses, inns and hotels reminding us of seaside resorts in England.

Our twenty minute trip ended safely. Disembarking, we formed a small ragged column and clattered slowly over the cobblestoned streets of the lower town as the locals inspected us from the comfort of their hotel patio chairs. The climb steepened as we approached the top of the hill. We travelled leisurely through the suburbs of the town, eventually reaching others in the party who had stopped to await the main column in the formally landscaped grounds of a hospital. Groups of convalescent German wounded lay scattered about on the grass, sunning themselves. Mutually interesting conversations were conducted. We talked with them until the arrival of the later ferry loads.

Re-forming, we marching on to a hamlet named Sulldorf where we camped in yet another field, this one featuring a huge pump in the farmyard. We were weary and footsore. The novelty of being not-fenced-in had long since departed. The pump offered the chance of an ice-cold shower and many took advantage of this enjoyable activity.

Bartering on 17 April bought only a few eggs and some rhubarb at the cost of a half-bar of soap.

Our fighter bombers were very active, both night and day. Tempest aircraft dealt to all forms of enemy transport during the day and we were in rather close proximity on occasions - such as that day when eight Tempests attacked a target sheltering beneath a bridge over an autobahn. The performance was spectacular. We were resting in a village barely 500 metres from the target, crouched behind stone walls and any other protective screen we could find. Light anti-aircraft weapons came into use, adding to the general noise. No aircraft appeared to be hit. Ricocheting bullets caused some

heart stopping moments as we hugged the ground.

Night attacks were carried out by RAF Mosquito aircraft. We suffered many disturbed nights. Flare-dropping 'Mossies' followed the roads close by our resting spots which were usually open fields. Small bombs and 20 mm cannon made up the armament for planes involved in these sorties. We witnessed a number of attacks on targets not visible to us. Plenty of evidence littered the roadsides during our travels - dead horses and sizeable branches pruned from roadside trees by cannon fire. We presumed pilots of Allied aircraft would receive scant knowledge of the thousands of POWs moving north toward Lubeck. Positive recognition from a fast flying plane is difficult. To aid the aircrew, and hopefully to save us from direct attack, large POW signs were put out on surrounding green fields.

About this time we learned that the German officer in charge of the column was taking the prisoners to the concentration camp at Lubeck. But the RAF Senior British Officer - 'the Groupie' - had told the German that if such a move was contemplated the advancing British would seize him and have him tried as a war criminal.

This battle of wits was fought while British Mosquito bombers made the night hot with blastings close to our bivouacs and rain had set in again, chilling our exhausted bodies.

On 23 April the line-of-march left the town of Baruitz where we had rested. Forty-eight hours earlier we had passed Bad Odesloe where, six miles distant, a force of 200 Lancaster bombers were unloading their lethal cargo on a target.

April 25, 1945, proved to be significant with a rest interlude declared at the village of Hamberge. The Groupie had won! We didn't have to go on to Lubeck but were to find new quarters in the surrounding country and await the end of the war.

On 28 April we left Hamberge in the morning and arrived at Trenthorst, eleven kilometres distant, at midday. It was a huge estate with equally large bams. I was in the loft of one, 15 by 70 yards in size, with 250 other people. A system of parole had been arranged, allowing freedom to wander within the bounds of the estate. It was a rather beautiful place. There was a lake, half a mile long, with lovely trees bordering it and paths running in all directions - a marvellous change from barbed wire and a sandy circuit.

A very heavy artillery barrage could be heard in the direction of Hamburg throughout our first night at Trenthorst. We presumed our advancing forces would intend to cross the lower Elbe - making things interesting for us!

At 8 pm on the 29<sup>th</sup> news was received confirming our army's move over the Elbe. Spirits soared as we once more anticipated imminent release. Berlin was practically mopped up, Mussolini had been executed and Munich entered, so what was holding them up from reaching us? Although there was no railway or main road anywhere near us we could see a lot of aircraft in action. We awaited the end with quiet impatience.

Some rats shared our bam but none seemed to run over my face in the night. The weather had been miserable, cold and wet. However, on this occasion we had a sound roof over our heads and a little bit of straw to sleep on. That was a vast improvement on previous arrangements. Nevertheless, it was hard to get warm, but crawling into my roughly made sleeping bag helped.

The news on 1 May was that our boys were driving for Lubeck. Although the main roads were some distance away, tanks could be heard. We could only wait - and we'd had heaps of practice in that!

Small groups of German infantry were moving through our position. They were in

single file, sticking to the roadside and they looked weary. One could only admire the discipline inculcated into those soldiers. I did not hear one ribald remark from our people as we watched.

The second day of May arrived with us still waiting expectantly. We had been confined to the immediate vicinity of our bams and there were lots of bangs nearby and plenty of machine-gun fire. Our hope was that we would not have to survive street fighting through Trenthorst. The Luftwaffen had some quite useful jet propelled aircraft but, for them, these had been developed too late to have an impact on the air war. Undoubtedly they were superior to the Allies' planes of similar propulsion. I did watch one light jet bomber drop a sizeable bomb right overhead, probably aimed at a concentration of Allied forces nearby. Couldn't see the result but it went off with a fair bang! Plenty of Bofors anti-aircraft fire was aimed at this lone plane, yet it appeared to escape unharmed.

At 12.45 pm there was mad cheering down the road. Within minutes the reason became clear - a British armoured car with our 'man of confidence', Bill Jennings, perched on top came tearing into our village.

What an incredible scene! It was a moment packed with emotional upheaval and I shall never forget it. The car's radio operator reported to his base that another group of POWs had been released. The startled crew of three were overwhelmed with offers of food as gifts of appreciation. They may not have immediately realised the significance of such generosity - it represented our currency, the lifeblood of our survival and our most valued asset.

On 3 May we remained in our bam filling in realms of bumph - necessary material, no doubt, for our readmission to our controlling authority. We were each issued with a temporary identity card.

For the next few days I had difficulty sleeping, so excited was I by the events. Even though there was an amazing sense of freedom everything appeared very disorganised and haphazard. There was obviously no fast route to normality.

Our former guards were assembled, disarmed and marched away. While their immediate future was uncertain, at least the war was over for them - and for us.

Many of us, on occasions, had allowed idle thoughts to dwell on owning a vehicle of some sort in the future. Unlike similarly aged people of this twenty-first century, (I was 23 at the end of the war) a large proportion had never driven a car. A motorcycle was my own mode of transport at home. Quite suddenly our village seemed awash with vehicles of all types. The advancing Allied Army may have gathered them, and they were also able to provide fuel. A large white star was painted on the roof of each, to hopefully prevent a strafing attack by our own aircraft. And so we briefly became tourists! It did not bother us that we were allowed only a limited distance of travel, controlled by the Military Police.

I joined five others partaking of a joyride in a quite luxurious BMW. It was a former police vehicle and we enjoyed a few hilarious hours of freedom. Part of the deal was that we'd be back at a pre-arranged time to reassemble all borrowed vehicles in the village square. Army trucks were organised for that time to transport us to the west and we willingly complied with all stipulations having any bearing on speeding our desire to return to England as soon as possible.

Soon after we had been liberated, an army colonel standing on the back of a truck had addressed the mass of freed POWs. He informed us all of the immense problem of moving thousands of men while continuing to fight a war, and could only promise a time of approximately ten days elapsing before our repatriation. We had not been very understanding of their difficulties!



However, we had no say in the matter. We gladly mounted these ten ton trucks and were just thankful to be retracing our recent travels on rubber rather than on our feet. Numerous delays occurred, due to traffic congestion. Each night was spent in army reinforcement billets, which were canvas camps set up on roadsides to provide temporary shelter and feeding arrangements for troops moving up to the battle front. We used them in reverse order.

Meanwhile our senior officer had made contact with Bomber Command. Our predicament was explained regarding our frustratingly delayed arrival in England. Requests went out for volunteers to fly bombers into Germany, with the objective of flying these large numbers of their stranded colleagues out.

Germany surrendered on, I think, 7 May 1945. 'VE Day' was celebrated in England on the 8<sup>th</sup>. And what a huge relief that was for millions of people.

My group was still in Germany on 8 May. An aerodrome suitable for bomber activity had been selected as our take-off point. It had been well and truly knocked about and was a mass of bomb craters, except for the repaired runway. Under nearby trees stood a line of burned out ME 109 fighters. We arrived there in the afternoon. While examining a parked aircraft, a great noise of gunfire suddenly erupted. The eight ground-defence Bofors guns on the perimeter, equipped to fire streams of 40 mm shells, sent up a barrage with the apex of the cone of fire over the centre of the aerodrome. It was a marvellous way to celebrate the end of war. I only wish they had warned us first!

My last night of war service in Germany was spent curled up in a small stack of hay on the side of that aerodrome, somewhere near Munster. While the surroundings were indeed peaceful, lying about were signs of violence. Some of it was in the form of unexploded aerial bombs and hand grenades, yet I still managed to sleep well.

I returned to my group in England on 9 May, the 754<sup>th</sup> day after my descent into Germany. A stream of Lancaster bombers had started arriving in the morning, to carry out our evacuation. As we boarded these stark, efficient machines each man was issued with a Mae West and the gunners gave out sweets to the 25 passengers. Soon we were trundling along the runway, bound at last for 'Blighty'. One by one we climbed into the mid-upper gun turret for a parting look at Europe. I could only see a waste of sand-dunes during my brief look. We didn't mind the discomfort of bare metal, just sitting wherever we could. To be honest, the sensation of flying had never felt quite so good.

RAF Squadron 106 had provided the aircraft and crew, and we landed at Dunsfold, north of London.

Very efficient reception centres were awaiting our arrival - staffed by Red Cross and other civilian women who were mostly of a motherly nature. We were guided to the delousing table and, lying full length, powder was pumped up our trouser legs, down from the waist line, up sleeves and inside from all around the neckline. Helped onto our feet we moved further into the hangar where we were given a bun in one hand and a cup of tea in the other. It was emotionally all a bit much for some of us. While we Commonwealth ex-POWs were still far away from our native lands, England had become familiar and a substitute home for us during the struggle to protect our way of life. Being free, and reunited with a people we understood, produced a feeling of deep gratitude.

The future was very much a real issue now. Had the Nazis won the conflict, we, as captive aircrew, would undoubtedly have followed the Jews into the gas chambers. Hitler and his henchman had a solid loathing of us because of the immense damage done to 'the Third Reich', largely due to the Allied Air Forces.

RNZAF personnel awaiting repatriation to New Zealand were based at Brighton.

Some were seriously ill and were hospitalised until their health was restored. My own group was fortunate to survive in reasonable order, even looking moderately fit and bronzed. Credit is due to the Swedish Red Cross. They managed to get permission from the Germans to operate a fleet of trucks driven by British and Canadian Army personnel who gave their parole not to escape. By this means many of the marching columns of POWs, in the latter stages, received significant support in the shape of Red Cross food parcels. Without this assistance large numbers would have perished. And for those surviving, their life expectancy could have been reduced. The Red Cross was undoubtedly our saviour. Its wide international network supported and sustained us, not only during the marches but throughout our whole time of imprisonment.

Hotels in Brighton had been requisitioned by the RAF for our use. We were longing to get home but the shortage of shipping caused inevitable delays. This was before the days of long distance passenger flights, and even the fastest ships took around two months to complete the voyage to New Zealand and return for the next contingent awaiting passage - so, equipped with an issued rail pass and with a number of contacts to visit, I became a tourist while I waited.

Finally I was detailed to travel on the Andes. This large, fast liner departed from Southampton and travelled via Suez and Australia with 3000 passengers, mainly aircrew, from Australia and NZ. We disembarked in Wellington at the end of October 1945. I was relieved and pleased to at last be back with my family, and grateful for my life which had been spared when many fine friends had lost theirs. It was a strange mixture of sadness and gladness.

Humankind's second great catastrophe of the twentieth century had been successfully concluded at enormous cost to the major participants.

My own endeavours through six years of war service hardly deserve a mention.

However, I do not regret the opportunity to serve and the wide-ranging experiences gained.

Facing the future proved to be a further challenge and was not always easy. Fortunately I survived the war reasonably sound in mind and body, whereas some ex-service people were never able to put those traumatic years of conflict behind them.

I am writing this fifty-seven years after all these events ended. Some place names and dates I cannot recall, yet the experiences of just over two years as a POW have not faded and are still as vivid in my mind as they were long ago.

In conclusion I wish to acknowledge the assistance to my memory of some details gained from the biography by James Sanders on the life of Group Captain Leonard Trent, VC, DFC. I had travelled in the same group of marchers as Squadron Leader Trent, as he was at that time.

Subsequently referred to as 'the death marches', when countless thousands of prisoners were compelled by the Germans to move ahead of the approaching Russian forces (they, incidentally, were not bound by any conventions governing the humanitarian treatment of their prisoners of war), our group actually fared comparatively better than many of the others, particularly the Army captives. Nonetheless, it really was a most terrible ordeal.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Philip Sanders". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the main body of text.

Personalkarte I: Personelle Angaben

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke

Kriegsgefangenen-Stammlager: Stalag Luft 3

Nr. 1154  
Lager: & STALAG Luft 3

Name: LANGSFORD  
Vomame: Philip  
Geburtstag und -ort: 17. 'f\* J > New Zealand  
Religion: 0\*2)r  
Vomame des Vaters:  
Familiennamen der Mutter:

Staatsangehörigkeit: Viufdeterta  
Dienstgrad: V2  
Truppenteil: RAF Kom. usw.:  
Ziviberuf: JktdWfid&ir Berufs-Gr.:  
Matr. Nr. (Stammrolle des Heimatstaates): //z w\*412  
Gefangennahme (Ort und Datum): Stuttgart 17.4.43  
Ob gesund, krank, verwundet eingeliefert:

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Nahere Personalbeschreibung



Grosse	Haarfarbe
<u>1.75</u>	<u>m' blond</u>
Fingerabdruck des rechten I Zeigefingers	

Besondere Ker.nzeichen:  
Name und Anschrift der zu benachrichtigenden Person in der Heimat des Kriegsgefangenen  
Ch\*\$r>ds i.a.^fsfars Domft/av Si-  
Tc/TcOu/la Aucttasta,  
/Yew Zee?« si a  
LANGSFORD, PH.  
T-i-r-L

Beschriftung der Erkennungsmarke Nr. = 1 Lager: ..... Name: .....

Bemerkungen:

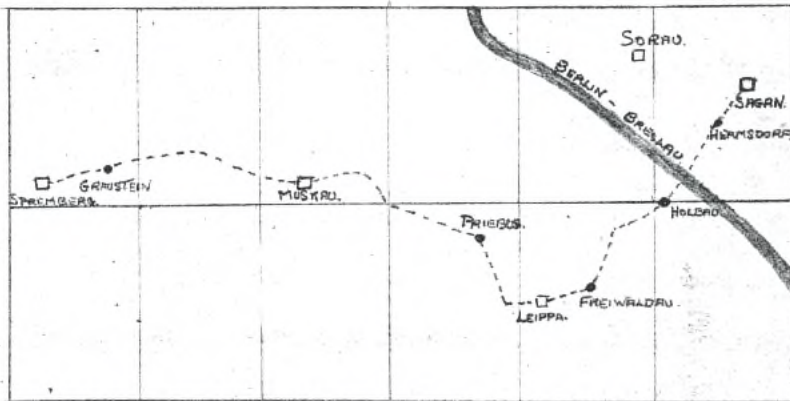
Personalbeschreibung

Figur:- kräftig  
Große: 1.75  
Alter: 21 J.  
Gesichtsform: oval  
Gesichtsfarbe: gesund  
ScKadelform: t?-7rx~£  
Au gen^\_X: grün  
\* Nase: kurz, breit, gerade  
Gebiß: gut, gesund  
Haare: m' blond S&i.  
Gewicht: v kg  
Besondere Merkmale: \* j>< "Vv -  
Deutsche\* Sprachkenntnisse^

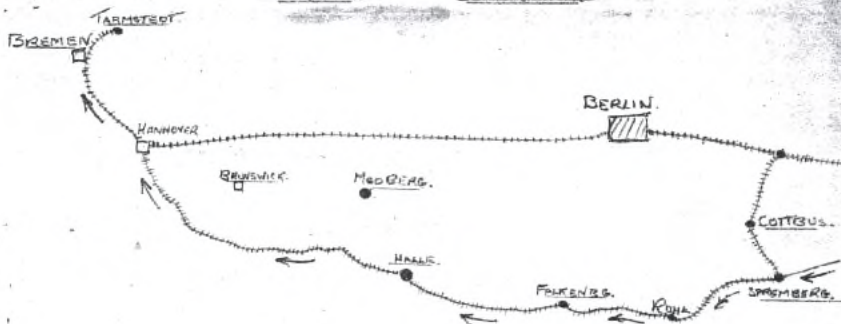
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^4.  
 a train journey endured by /P'O ws  
 in January 1945. Severe winter. Terrible experience

Roure y/ftLffEP



TRAIN JOURNEY



Fhii's sketch map done after reaching Tarmste/Jt.

Not to scale.



# GERMANY in WW II

Showing Details of

Phil's Experiences

> Y

! \* 9  
0 © \* k ©

☒ ... Bombing raids

... Crash site

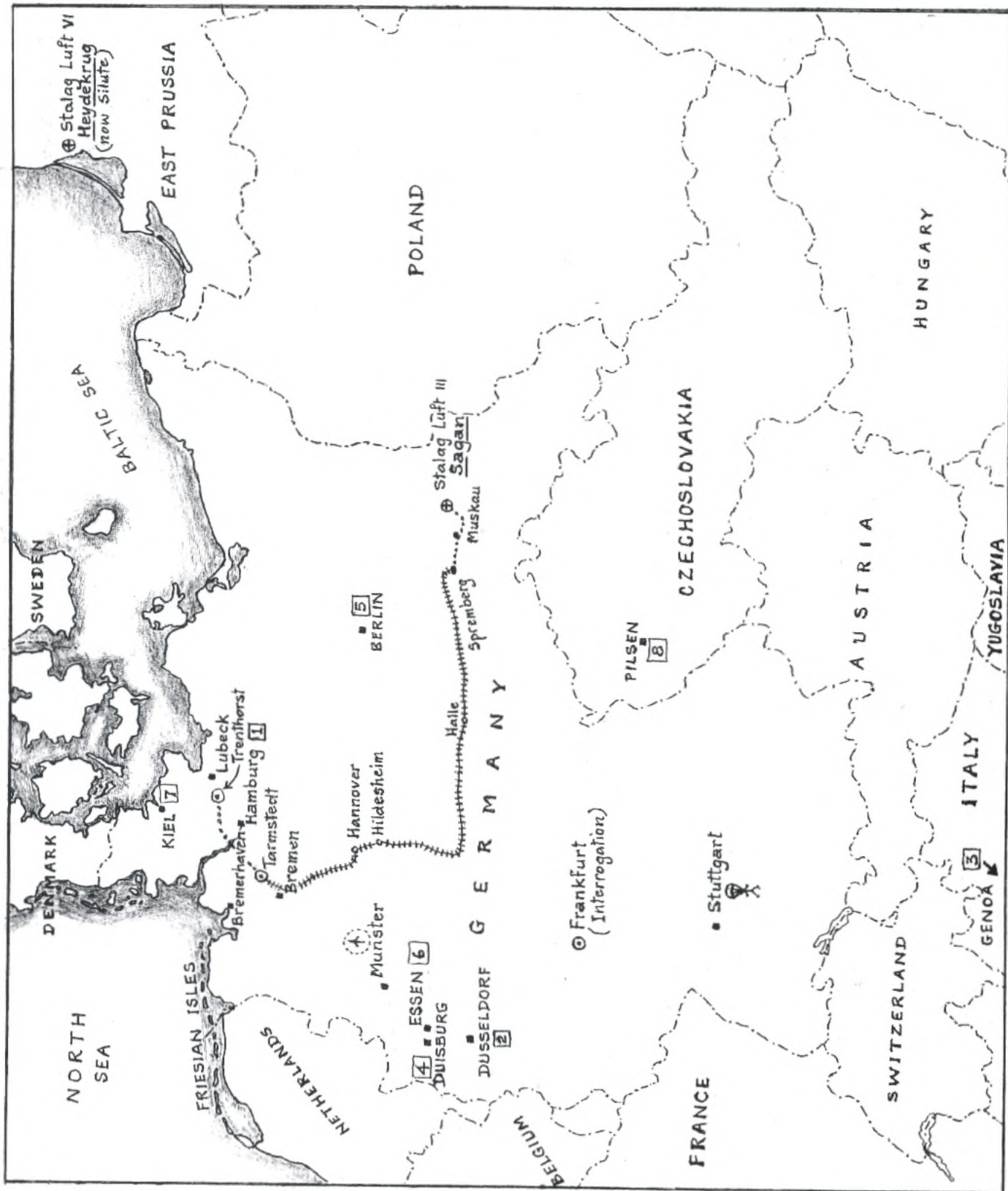
... Interim detention location

⊕ ... POW Camp

..... ... March Route

+++++ ... Cattle-truck Rail transport

⤴ ... Departure point



A IB Squadron /dark ji Halifax

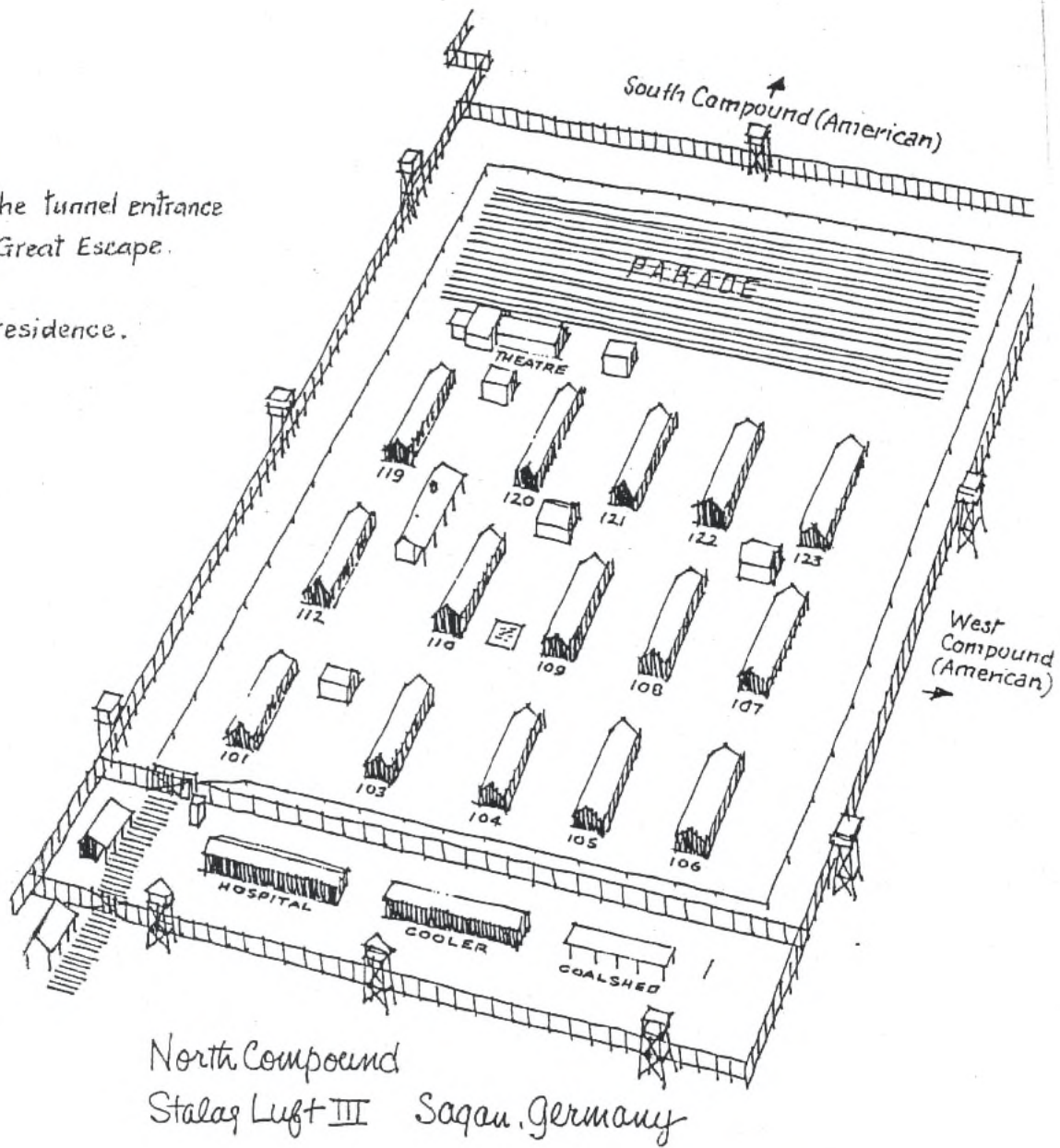


EVOB denotes the 5th Squadron identification (Linton-Oust based at the time of the episode), and the letter B is the recognition of the individual aircraft.

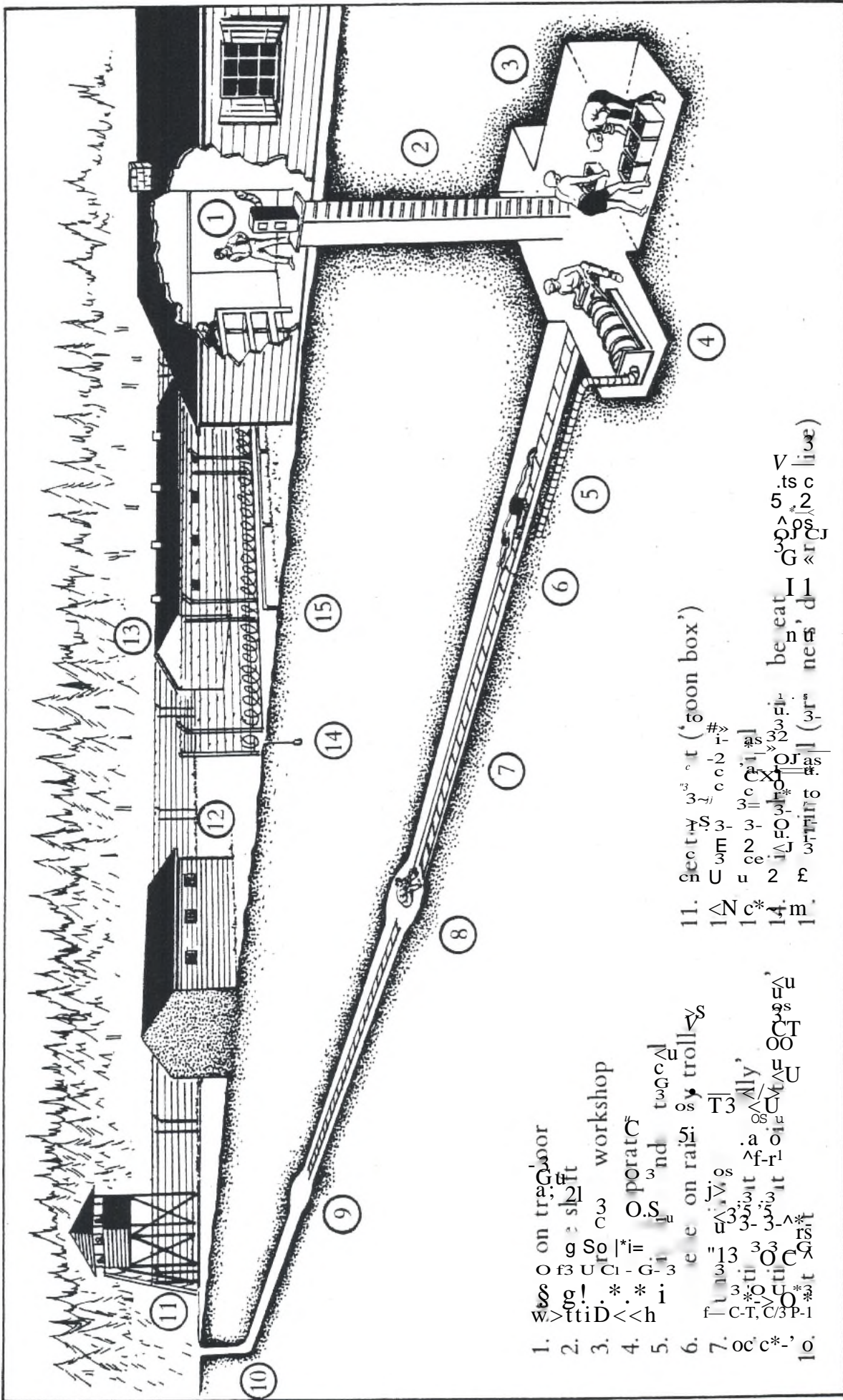


Hut 104 contained the tunnel entrance  
used in the Great Escape.

Hut 110 was Phil's residence.



A brief respite on the Second  
march during the dosing weeks  
of the War in Europe.



1. Tower
2. Road
3. Workshop
4. Operator
5. Control room
6. Cable
7. Pulley
8. Support tower
9. Cable
10. Cable car
11. Tower
12. Cable car
13. Tunnel
14. Cable
15. Cable

11. Tower

12. Cable car

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THE CREW assembled beside a Halifax bomber shortly before their last raid. From left to right: "Andy" Orr (Rear Gunner), Sgt W. Hoare (Mid Upper Gunner), Sgt T. 'Tom' Slater (flight Engineer), F/Lt A. P. 'Faddy' Downes (Navigator), Sgt J. 'Jeff' Kershaw (Navigator), Sgt H.E. 'Eddie' Thompson (Bomb Aimer).



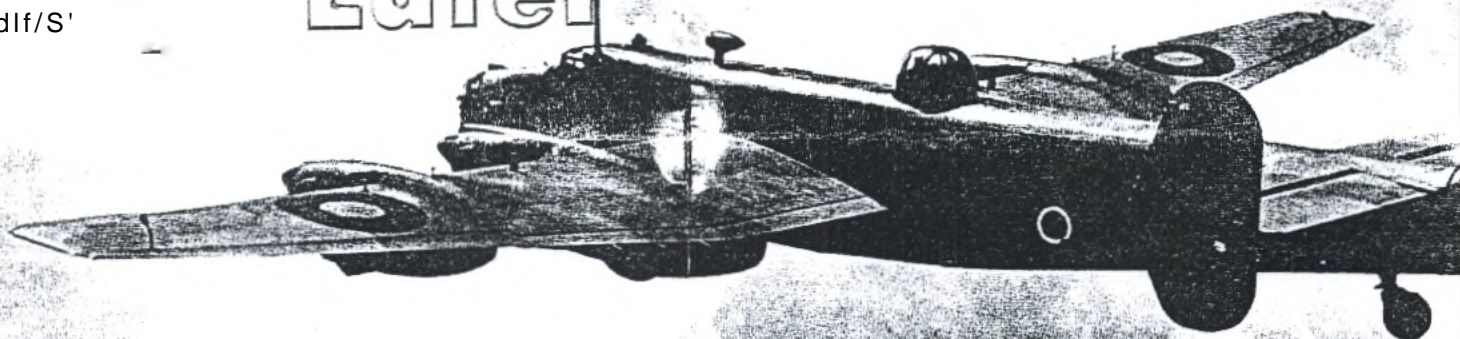
Homeward bound at last. Herr Rainer Moser (left), who as a 12 year old collected and kept a fragment of the Crash of Halifax IDT 773, handing over the relic to personnel of RAF Braggen in January 2001, for return to Linton-on-Ouse. The archivist and historian, Herr Heinz Hardua (centre) had also witnessed the sad event in April 1943. He eventually managed to contact the surviving crew members during the IJ&Os, piece together the complete story and finally arrange for the details and plane fragment to be preserved in the JR Squadron hall of the Memorial Room at RAF Linton-on-Ouse,



# Part of the Fin from a HALIFAX

Back Over 20,000  
Later

©dlf/S'



(A story about heroism, anger,  
compassion and reconciliations)



General view of  
the memorial MttIM  
room-RAF  
Unton-on-Ouse.



mm t 2101 hrs on 16 April 1943 Fit Lt Paddy MW Dowse took off from RAF Linton-on-Ouse in M/L a 78 Squadron Halifax MK2 DT 773 which was one of 327 bombers on a raid on the Skoda factory in Czechoslovakia which was making weapons for the German military forces. The aircraft, which had been stripped of a gun turret and some other "non-essentials" to reduce the weight to achieve the range, was late on target and south of the intended track on the way back. This unfortunately resulted in this lone aircraft flying over the night Fighter base of Nellingen, from which Me 110s took off and attacked the straggler - igniting fuel from the port wing tanks. The subsequent fire was soon out of control and Paddy Dowse said, "It's time to go boys".

The situation for each crewmember, outlined below, has been researched by Herr Heinz Bardua who has subsequently met all five survivors and pieced together their dramas and tragedies. Herr Bardua also knew that a piece of the aircraft, part of a fin leading edge, had been held as a trophy by Herr Rainer Moser who was 12 years old at the time. Having found such a moving story of such heroism and selfless sacrifice they resolved to return the relic to Linton-on-Ouse. The piece of the fin was collected from Herr Moser in January 2001 by personnel from RAF Bruggen and eventually arrived back at base in May, courtesy of S Eng O's staff, 20,818 days after it left. It now resides in the Memorial Room (Key bunch No 98) above the Airmens' Mess as part of the 78 Squadron Display.

But what of the last few minutes of the flight for the aircraft, and the crew- descending into a city which had been attacked by 462 four engined bombers only two nights previously - killing 619 on the ground.

**The Mid Upper Gunner.** Sgt Albert Hoare, was the first out of this aircraft and his only recollection was of a factory roof, which he missed, and landing on a canal tow-path. But his parachute dragged him pan way into the water and then angry locals arrived and started to kick him until a soldier pushed his way to the front of the crowd and rescued him. He was taken to an army post where he was given a cigarette and fed. (It wasn't until he had finished this cigarette that he realised he had never smoked before in his life!).

**The Navigator.** Fit Sgt R Desjardines, a Canadian, was second out but he was never seen again, f by the crew)

**The Bomb Aimer.** Sgt Andy Thompson, was severely injured when the trap door was Siaiiuneci shut by the air flow just as he was leaving the aircraft. This broke both of his legs. He was in agony during the descent, compounded by the prospects for his landing. When he regained consciousness he drew attention to his plight by whistling and a farming family gave first aid to stop the bleeding and called the army. One leg, which had been impaled on a three pronged object in a vineyard, was amputated by German surgeons. He was subsequently taken to Sweden to be swapped with a Luftwaffe pilot who had sustained similar injuries in England.

**Wireless Operator (WOP),** Sgt Phil Langsford, a New Zealander, was the fourth to leave the aircraft. He landed in a vineyard 30 metres from some houses but hid in some trees before being found by soldiers. He was not threatened by them in any way, but near the police station the crowd called "crucify him". He was fed before being moved on. During transfer he saw a huge pile of corpses from the air raid two days earlier.

**The Flight Engineer.** Sgt Tom Slater, who knew that the wing fire was becoming a desperate threat and that the tail gunner could not be helped because of fire in the

fuselage, jumped just before the wing exploded. He landed near people on the ground who shouted "strike him dead" and punched him before an old man came to his rescue. The German pilot who had shot down DT 773 tracked down the flight engineer and gave him a cigarette, much to the disapproval of the SS present.

When Paddy Dowse, the pilot, said 'jump' Pilot Officer Andy Orr, the tail gunner, was horrified to find that his turret would not turn and the doors were jammed shut. Paddy told him to remain calm "I can still fly this dragon", but Pilot Officer Orr was in a complete state of panic. "Try your shoulder" "Try your axe" - which promptly smashed through the perspex and disappeared down into the darkness. But suddenly the turret doors flew open and the rear gunner fell out backwards but his boot caught on the structure. Struggle as he did against the air flow he could not escape. Exhausted he gave up all hope, relaxed, "and waited for the end". Then the wing exploded and the violent manoeuvres and additional centrifugal force of the spinning airframe threw him clear. He landed safely and buried his parachute, but the German soldiers soon found him.

Fit Lt Patrick "Paddy" Dowse, the pilot from Dublin, did not get out in time, and he is now buried in the Dumbach Military Cemetery, near Tegernsee.

**"Greater love hath no man than this; that he lays down his life for his friends".**

Even today, the two surviving crew members, Albert Hoare in South Wales and Phil Langford in New Zealand together with the widow of Tom Slater and Germans who have been involved:

**ALL HOPE THE DOWSE CREW'S ESCAPE WILL FIND A PLACE IN THE ANNALS OF HISTORY, NOT TO GAIN NOTORIETY, BUT RATHER THAT THE AGONIES SUFFERED IN THE 1939-1945 WAR, BY THOSE ON BOTH SIDES, MAY BE RECORDED.**



Trust you to have already received an original of this print from Peter Naylor. #2





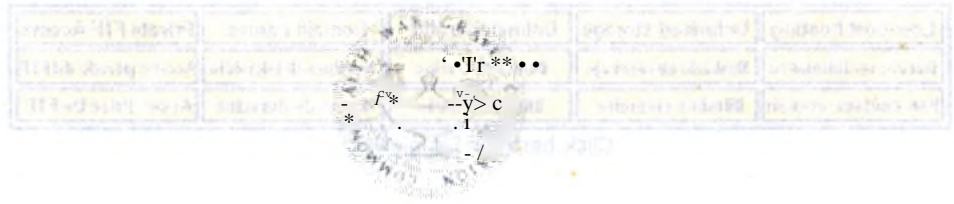
**In Memory of**  
**ARTHUR PATRICK DOWSE DFC**  
**Flight Lieutenant**  
**88035**  
**Pilot Instr.**  
**78 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve**  
**who died on**  
**Friday, 16th April 1943.**

**Commemorative Information**

Cemetery: DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY, Bayern, Germany  
Grave Reference/ 11. D. 28.  
Panel Number:

Location: Durnbach is a village 16 kilometres east of Bad Tolz, a town 48 kilometres south of Munich. Durnbach War Cemetery is 3 kilometres north of the village Gmund am Tegernsee. Using the A8 from Munich, turn off at the junction Holzkirchen, taking the 318 road in the direction of Gmund am Tegernsee. At the crossroads with the 427, turn left into Miesbach. The cemetery is situated approximately 500 metres on the left from the 318/472 crossroads.

Historical Information: The site for the cemetery was chosen, shortly after hostilities had ceased, by officers of the British Army and Air Force, in conjunction with officers of the American Occupation Forces in whose zone Durnbach lay. The great majority of those buried here are airmen shot down over Bavaria, Wurtemberg, Austria, Hessen and Thuringia, brought from their scattered graves by the Army Graves Service. The remainder are men who were killed while escaping from Prisoner of War camps in the same areas, or who died towards the end of the War on forced marches from the camps, to more remote areas. One of the graves in the cemetery contains the ashes of an unknown number of unidentified war airmen, recovered from Flossenburg. Within the Indian section of the cemetery will be found the Durnbach Crematorium Memorial commemorating 23 Non-Commissioned Officers and men of the army of undivided India who died while prisoners of war in various places in France and Germany and who were accorded the last rites required by their religion - committal to fire.



In Memory of

**Flight Lieutenant ARTHUR PATRICK DOWSE DFC**

78 Sqn., Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve  
who died on Friday, 16th April 1943,

Remembered with honour  
DURNBACH WAR CEMETERY, Bayern, Germany.



In the perpetual care of  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission