

James G. Massey's Wartime Diary 1945.

(POW Number 34526)

Transcribed January 2013



January 4th 1945

Had a war with the Boss at work. He wanted us to do a little more so we go slow and stop out all day. The weather is very cold and a heavy frost.

January 5th 1945

There was a heavy frost last night. It has been snowing most of the day. We went out after work to get a wagonload of wood.

January 6th 1945

Today we got $\frac{1}{2}$ a parcel per man. There are 4 of us in together so it's not too bad. We got paid today but all we can do is play cards.

January 7th 1945

The best day of the week. I played cards in the morning and in the afternoon I mended my working slacks and a pair of socks.

January 8th 1945

I wrote home and one to Auntie Ella. Snow is very thick on the ground and there was a heavy frost last night.

January 9th 1945

Today is very cold and it is snowing hard. So did not do much work. My mate got a nice piece of pork today so we boiled it and had it for tea. It cost 20 fags.

January 10th 1945

We went to work but came back an hour later because it is snowing too hard. When I get home I never want to see any more snow. Spent most of the day in bed.

January 11th 1945

Today my mate and I felled a big tree. I was standing watching it fall and a branch fell and caught me right on the head. It put me out for 15 minutes. I have never seen so many stars in all my life. I went back to the [larget?] at 10 o'clock.

12th January 1945

There is a fair lump on my head, and it is giving me a bad headache. I stop in bed all day. It has stopped snowing but it is still very cold.

January 13th 1945

Today we got our $\frac{1}{2}$ parcel. There were 13 parcels up today but I missed out personal parcels.

January 14th 1945

Today we had quite a good dinner. We made 2 big cakes with some white flour and Red Cross. Spent most of the day reading.

January 15th 1945

One of the boys put an axe in his foot and it was 8 hours before he could see a doctor. Got a big loaf and some white meat today. Cost 40 fags.

January 16th 1945

At about dinner time another lad cut his foot very bad with an axe. He goes back to Stalag tomorrow. The weather is very cold with heavy frost last night. The snow is still very thick on the ground.

January 17th 1945

We have not been to work today because it was raining too heavy. It stopped at about 2 o'clock, then it turned out to be a very nice day.

Spent most of the day in bed and reading.

Mended my working gloves and a pair of socks and roll on the day when I can say to Mam "will you mend them"? I have had too much.

January 18th 1945

While at work today, we see a lot of refugees moving along the roads. So Joe's troops must be coming on fast.

Mail up today received 3 letters.

January 19th 1945

Last night we heard London for about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour. It was a very good turn.

Today it was very cold and it has been freezing all day.

January 21st 1945

Well it's Saturday today so roll on tomorrow and let's have a rest, that's what I thought.

We were all ready to go to work, when the Jerry came in and said there would be no work. We have all got to make a sledge to carry all our kit. We're going on a march, where to, god only knows. The Russians are too close. We got 1 loaf of bread per man and told to make it last.

January 22nd 1945

We started the march today at 7.30. We join 3 or 4 other parties. The roads are crowded with refugees, all going the same way. The sledges we made are running good because there's plenty of snow.

By the time we stopped for a rest at 12 we have been joined by a lot more parties. Russians, French.

After going for 10 kilos, we stopped at a farm for the night. They have kept us away from the Russians. We got $\frac{1}{2}$ a cup of soup and 4 potatoes.

January 23rd 1945

We stopped at the farm today, so the boys are knocking the place to pieces to get firewood for brewing up with. We can hear the guns quite plain.

We cannot be more than 20 kilos from the Front. When it went dark, we could see the flashes from the guns. The boys think we will be free by the end of the week.

We do a little better today, we got a soup at 12 o'clock then again at 6. But it's only a cup full and you can see through it. We got a loaf between 14 men.

January 24th 1945

This is the second day that we stayed at this farm and a lot more working parties have joined us. In all there must be about 1,500 POWs here.

We can hear the guns very plain today.

All we can do is make a fire and boil potatoes. There are 4 of us together.

January 25th 1945

Well, today is Wednesday and we start off once again. It was freezing hard last night, so the sledges run quite good. It has been very cold all day today. We reached a big farm about 4 o'clock and stayed the night. Soup came up at 7 o'clock but I threw it away. It was just chaff, so I just had 3 potatoes. I managed to get a fire going so we made a brew, then went to bed.

We had bread today – 18 men to one loaf.

We did 20 kilos today.

January 26th 1945

Once again we take the road to anywhere. The day is very cold and you have a hard job to keep warm. 2 of the boys have got frostbite. All the roads are crowded with refugees. Every village you go through you see them getting ready to leave. We stop for the night at a big farm and they put all of us in one big barn. It's just like being in a zoo. A German order [maer?] says that we will get no more bread. Instead we get 4 cooked potatoes.

We have done 22 kilos today.

January 27th 1945

Well today is another resting day. The only thing is you get no rest. We are allowed to make one big fire between all of us. I managed to find some potatoes so I got them boiled up. The Russians killed a sheep this morning, so the Jerries have stopped us from getting water. They opened their hearts today and gave us a loaf between 24 men.

January 28th 1945

Well it's a week today since we finished work and the march still goes on. The weather is very cold and frosty. I seen a sight today I shall never forget. This morning 6 Russians passed us pulling a sledge with a Russian on it. When we got to the farm about 3 o'clock I saw the same Russian dead. He lay on the sledge all day and just froze to death. They bring a soup up but I threw it away. We did 18 kilos today.

January 29th 1945

We start again on the second week of our march. Today it is raining a little and it is starting to get hard going. No one knows where we are going or how long we will be on the road. But one thing I do not understand is that all the refugees are going the other way to us. We manage to get a loaf for a tin of cocoa. We stop at another farm for the night and we get a thin soup and 4 potatoes. Today we have done 26 kilos.

January 30th 1945

We have done no marching today. It's very cold outside and the Jerries have stopped us from making fires, so I spent most of the day in bed. I was able to get some hot water so we make a brew of tea. The soup today was quite good.

January 31st 1945

Well last night it was not so cold and the snow has nearly all gone. Today it has been very hard going, so tomorrow we will have to throw the sledge away. The boys are starting to feel this march. We land at a big farm about 3 o'clock, nearly all done in. It's the hardest day so far. The soup came up at 6 and it was quite good. The Russians stole nearly all of our potatoes, so all we got was 1 per man. We did 19 kilos today.

February 1st 1945

Today we started off at 7.30 and it has been thawing hard in the night. All the snow has gone from the roads so the sledges we made are of no use. It has been very hard pulling. We land at a big farm about 3.30 and the 4 of us are just about all in. After about 2 hours we get a cup of soup and 2 potatoes. I just managed to get some hot water to make a brew. Today we have done 11 miles.

February 2nd 1945

Today we started off well. Managed to get 2 brews and a good bowl of soup before we started off. We have had to throw the sledges because all the snow has gone. We stole the farmer's wagon to carry the kit. He went nearly mad. We arrive at another big farm about 4 o'clock. This one's a lot better. All the English boys are away from the Russians. It has been a very nice day. The sun is shining. We have done 26 kilos or 17 miles. We got 3 potatoes at 6 o'clock and soup came up at 10.

February 3rd 1945

We have just finished another day's march. It has not been as bad today. The sun is shining and the roads are not so wet but this is the first day we have had to carry all our kit. The farmer that we stole the wagon from yesterday took it back today. We stopped at a big farm and as usual they put us in with all the Russians. Today we only did 14 kilos.

February 4th 1945

Sunday.

After a good night's sleep and the soup this morning was not too bad we start on the third week of our march. Today turned out to be the worst so far because we have to carry all our kit and we marched 28 kilos, bringing the total so far up to 200. When we arrived at this farm

my back and legs, I just could not feel them. They put 300 of us in a big stable with 11 horses. We had a very thin soup and 4 spuds. Today we have done 29 kilos.

February 5th 1945

Today we have done no marching. We stopped in this stable with the horses. We have had no hot drinks from the Jerry at night. We can't make any because they have stopped us from making fires. So we don't get a drink [.....] We got a very thin soup and 3 potatoes.

February 6th 1945

Tuesday.
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February 7th 1945

Today for the third day we find ourselves still in this farm. It's a good job we are not marching today because it is raining very heavy. We have nothing to do, only lay in the barn. A soup came up, or what is called soup. All it was, was the water the potatoes were done in and we got 3 potatoes. Most of us here are starting to feel the effect of this march and next to no food.

February 8th 1945

We should have moved off this morning, but something has happened. The roads are all crowded with refugees. The village we are now in had orders to move some time last night. 8 guards and 6 of our boys have gone off. This is the second time the guards have gone off. All we got today was 1 cup of very thin soup. If this goes on we shall be in a hell of a mess when it's over. We managed to get some hot water to make a brew.

February 9th 1945

Friday, and we spent another day in this small farm. As I have said we are very crowded but I don't think we shall be here very much longer. The Russians are only 20 miles from us and we can hear the guns quite clearly. All the people in this village have had orders to move out tomorrow. We were given 6 men to one loaf today and a little soup. They took 4 boys away today as being too ill to march.

February 10th 1945

Saturday.
At last we are on the move again. We started early, 6.30. It was just breaking day and it's the nearest we have yet been to Russian troops. As we left we could see the tracer bullets. We were marching through a place called Bunzlau. 6 Russian planes came down and strafed the streets and they were crowded with refugees. We reached a farm and stayed there at 2 o'clock. Had a small cup of soup and 3 potatoes. We did 23 kilos today.
[Transcriber Note: Bunzlau is the Polish town of Boleslawiec near the border with Eastern Germany.]

February 11th 1945

Sunday and the weather is very good. The sun is shining but it is still very cold. We managed to get a wagon this morning so we all put our kit on and pulled it. It gave our shoulders a rest. Today turned out to be one of the worst. We marched from 7 in the morning until 5 in the afternoon and when we finished it was too late to cook anything, so they gave us 1 loaf for 12 men. All I got was 1 slice. Today we marched 29 kilos.

February 12th 1945

Monday, and today is another day's rest and after yesterday we all earned it. It has been snowing most of the day and the barn we are in is very crowded. We got a drink of hot coffee this morning and what they call soup with 1 slice of bread in the evening. The town of Bunzlau, which we came through on Saturday, was taken by the Russians 8 hours later. They are only 25 kilos behind us.

February 13th 1945

Tuesday.

Once again we come to the end of another day's march. Although it is raining and very cold it has not been so bad today. With all our kit on a wagon it is a lot better. One of the boys stole a radio yesterday, so we heard the BBC last night. Today the Jerries gave us hot coffee and at about 7 in the morning 2 potatoes and a soup which was only warm water. Today we have marched 17 kilos.

February 14th 1945

Wednesday.

Although the sun has been shining, there has been a very strong wind, which made it very cold today. These Jerries are getting worse every day. They put us all in a very small barn and locked us in. They gave us a soup this morning and a soup and 2 potatoes about 7 o'clock. We are now in our fourth week and there are quite a few of the boys very bad. Myself I am not too bad thank God.

February 15th 1945

Thursday.

Well last night turned out to be the worst so far. They put over 400 men in the one big barn and there was no room to move, and also no soup this morning.

Today we marched 16 kilos. It will be a little better tonight because we are on our own. Most of us thought we were going to a big camp in Garlitz, but we passed through there yesterday so we don't know where we are going.

We got a soup and 3 potatoes at 7 o'clock so now I am hoping for a better night's sleep.

February 16th 1945

Friday.

Today the weather has been very cold with a strong wind blowing. We started this morning at 7.30 and landed in a small farm about 2 o'clock. As we passed through a small village today there was a big air raid, and leaflets were dropped by the RAF.

Joe's troops must be coming fast, because every village we go through the people are all moving out and the roads are all very crowded. We marched today about 16 kilos.

February 17th 1945

Saturday.

Well last night I had a good night's sleep but the day has been a bad one. The Jerries won't let us light fires, so some of the boys lit one in the barn and they were caught. If we are caught again they are going to stop our food for 3 days and make us sleep outside. We are not marching today. All we have had today is 1 cup of soup. I ate some raw potatoes this morning and I have not had a smoke or a drink of tea for over a week. Spent all day in bed.

February 18th 1945

Sunday.

The weather today is very cold and a strong wind is blowing. We have spent another day resting. Today is the start of our 5th week and so far we have marched 325 kilos. The Jerries took 20 of the sick men away with transport. We got some hot coffee this morning and at 3 o'clock we got a soup which was a little better than yesterday.

Same as yesterday, spent most of the day in bed.

February 19th 1945

Monday.

Once again we are on our way. Today the weather is very cold. Yesterday the Jerry gave out more bread, 1 loaf between 4 men, to last 2 days. Mine has gone already. When we reached the farm where we stayed I was sitting on some straw and lit a fag. The next minute a Jerry rushed over and butted me with the rifle and made me lose my lighter. He's just one more I won't forget.

Today we done only 12 kilos.

February 20th 1945

Tuesday.

We started out at 6.30 this morning and today was the best this year. The sun shining just like a Summer's day at home. We got a soup this morning and a small cup of soup at about 6 o'clock. I also managed to get some hot water and made a brew of tea. All I want now is a good fag. Today we did about 17 kilos.

February 21st 1945

Wednesday.

Well today we have stayed in this barn, and a good job too, for it has been raining all day. I have spent all the day in bed and all you have to do is think of home. We got a cup of coffee this morning and at 2 o'clock we got a soup which was not too bad, but not enough. A Russian was shot this afternoon for grabbing a piece of bread. We had 1 fag between the 4 of us. We got a soap issue today. Jerry soap, which is no good.

February 22nd 1945

Thursday

Spent another day here and the sooner we move the better. We are very cramped. We got a cup of coffee this morning and then they told us we were going to move but they took us all in a field then searched all our kit then brought us back. We got a soup at 2 o'clock then bread came up: 12 men to 1 loaf.. It runs out just 1 slice a man. It was raining this morning and this afternoon it turned very cold.

February 23rd 1945

Friday.

We set out at 7.30 this morning in very bad weather. It was that very fine rain and we were travelling over very hilly country, which makes it very hard. The wagon we have been using has got too heavy, so we are going to leave it behind and carry our kit tomorrow. The barn we are in is very small and we are very crowded. This morning we got a soup which was just water, but it was hot. Then about 6 o'clock we got a soup which was a little better. Today we marched 16 kilos.

February 24th 1945

Saturday.

Today is the end of our 5th week and still we are nowhere. We have stayed in this barn today. It is just as well for the weather is very dirty. It rained very hard all night. This morning we heard Turkey came into the War at 7 o'clock last night. Yesterday 3 Russians and 1 of our boys fell out of the march, and if it goes on much longer there will be a lot more of us. We got coffee this morning and a soup at 2 o'clock, and that must last us until tomorrow.

February 25th 1945

Sunday.

Today it's Sunday and I only wish you at home could see us boys. We marched 24 kilos and landed in a big farm. We broke in the farmer's cellar to get some potatoes and I hope to make a fire in the barn and boil a bucket full of spuds for the four of us. And this morning somebody took 5 loaves belonging to Jerry so they are going mad. We got hot coffee this morning and a soup at 6 o'clock. 2 of the big towns we went through this week are Lobau and Bautzen and we are only about 15 kilos from Dresden.

February 26th 1945

Monday

Once again we have stayed for the day. The reason is I think is because we are very near a Stalag. I hope so. This morning Jerry took us all outside in a field and made us stay there until whoever made the fire in the barn last night came forward. After about 4 hours 2 boys went so they let us all in. We got a soup at 12 o'clock so we are finished until tomorrow night. I managed to get a brew of tea. Yesterday 4 boys got away so the Jerry said next time we get no food for 7 days.

February 27th 1945

Tuesday

The day today has been very quiet. The weather has been dull with rain this afternoon. The Jerries wanted 80 men to go out and get wood for the cookhouse, so I passed the morning with that job. When we are on these resting days we only get 1 soup a day with sometimes bread. We got 6 men to 1 loaf today. All I could do with now is a good smoke.

February 28th 1945

Wednesday.

Once again everything has been on the quiet side. This morning Jerry found out that we were getting potatoes from the cellar so I don't know what will happen. I managed to boil a bucket of spuds this morning between 10 of us. We got coffee this morning and a soup, which was only a good drink, so roll on tomorrow. All afternoon I have had a headache and pains just above my eyes. Oh, I also had a good wash and a shave with the hot water from the potatoes.

March 1st 1945

Thursday.

And the weather today is very good. The sun is shining just like a Summer's day. Bread came up last night and cheese but Jerry took the cheese back because he said we have stolen too many potatoes. We got coffee and a soup today. All we can do now is lay in our beds and there's plenty of that done. So once again I'll say "I wonder what March will bring for us?"

March 2nd 1945

Friday.

March is certainly living up to its name for today the wind is blowing hard and this morning it was snowing. I managed to get 2 buckets of potatoes boiled between 10 of us. Then we got our soup. I am feeling quite full. Salt is the hardest thing to get in Germany.

March 3rd 1945

Saturday.

Saturday and a day I shall never forget for this morning the Jerries found the fire we have been making in the barn, They made us pack all the kit and put us out in the open field, and gave us no food. The weather was bad. It has been snowing all day. It's now 5 o'clock and I hope they don't keep us here all night. I can't write any more now, it's too cold.

March 4th 1945

Sunday.

Well it was about 7 o'clock last night when they took us back. All our blankets were covered with snow. I could not sleep, it was too cold but it was better than being out all night. This morning they gave us a soup and a loaf to 2 men, to last us 3 days. It has been snowing hard all day. We marched 17 kilos today and it's been damned hard. 4 boys fell out with weakness. We got a soup about 6 o'clock.

March 5th 1945

Monday.

It has stopped snowing today thank God. But there is a lot of snow on the roads, which makes it bad for walking and most of us lads are feeling this march pretty bad. The Jerry won't give transport for the sick. They must march, or if they are lucky they get a little hand wagon. We got a soup this morning and I have eaten all my bread. Then we got a thin soup at night. Today we marched 19 kilos.

March 6th 1945

Tuesday.

And we have stayed the day here. It is a big State farm and they have put us all in the one barn and we are very crowded. It has been snowing all day and very cold. I have spent all the day in bed. Just to get a smoke, this is the sort of thing that's going on. For 5 cigs, a

chap gave away 1 new shirt, 1 towel, 1 pair of socks and 2 new vests. We got coffee this morning and a soup which was quite good, only we only get a cup full.

March 7th 1945

Wednesday.

We started off again this morning but there is something very funny going on because when we started we were only 10 kilos from Dresden and now we have stopped at a small farm which is 26 kilos from Dresden, and only 10 from a place called Bautzen, which we passed 2 weeks ago. So we must be going round and round. The Jerries told us we may stop here for 2 days, or we may stop 2 weeks and that we will be going out to work. 2 boys fell out today, too weak to march. We got a soup at 5 o'clock so roll on tomorrow.

March 8th 1945

Thursday.

And the sun has been shining all day, but it has been very cold. The only thing I have been out of bed for is roll call. We got coffee this morning which I kept to have a shave with because we can not get cold water. The Jerry officer was around today and said we would be going out to work soon and that the Red Cross parcels and cigs were burnt in an air raid on Dresden. There's only one thing wrong when we do no marching. That is we only get one soup. There was a bread issue today, 12 men to a loaf and they still want us to work.

March 9th 1945

Friday.

Today has been very quiet and the same as usual, nothing to do. The weather has been very cold and it turned to rain this afternoon and so we come to the end of our 7th week. And for the time being our march has come to a halt. But it won't be for long because Joe is only 32 miles from us and these 7 weeks have made a big difference to us boys. We have not had a bath or change of clothing since we started.

March 10th 1945

Saturday.

Well today has been all of a mix-up. At 5 o'clock this morning the Jerry came and told our party that we would be going out to work at 8 o'clock. We started out but when we got about ½ way they turned us back. So let's hope we go soon, we may get better food. We got our usual soup and bread came up at 7 men to a loaf. The weather today has been very cold and raining most of the day.

March 11th 1945

Sunday.

And the day started well but it did not last long. As soon as we had soup about 12 o'clock, we were told to pack our kit. We were off to a working party. Well we only had to go to the next village and there we were put in a barn with 300 Russians. There are 52 of us. We have got to work in the woods but we only get the same rations. So I can see us all being in a bad way before long.

March 12th 1945

Monday.

After a night of no sleep and a day of hard work I feel just about all-in.

We got a cup of coffee this morning, started work at 8 o'clock and finished at 4. The Russians are cooking our food. When we got back we got a cup of soup, which was just hot water, and 7 men to a loaf. The same rations as when we are not working. I could fill this book with things we do and see, but I will store it far away until better days.

March 13th 1945

Tuesday.

And we all have just finished a day of Hell. To start we got a cup of coffee this morning then we went out to work. The Russians are cutting down and trimming the trees and we are carrying them to the road. All the guards are very bad. The one we had carried a stick and was lashing us most of the day. By the time we finished some of the boys broke down. But

leave them have their fling. It won't be for long. When we got back at 4 o'clock we got a bowl full of hot water and 8 men to a loaf of bread.

March 14th 1945

Wednesday.

Today has been a little better than yesterday. We have been digging trenches for roadblocks just outside the village. The weather has been very good. When we got back I gave one of my spare shirts to the Russians and also my Tunis Ring for 3 apples and 4 swedes. All I have got now is a clean change which I must try and keep. That's not all. I was eating a slice of bread and I don't know what it was, but it brought the filling out of my tooth and broke another which I have pulled out.

March 15th 1945

Thursday.

Well today we have been working again in the woods, but it was not as bad as Tuesday. We had another guard. It certainly looks like Spring has come. It's been the best day this year, sun shining and nice and warm. Today my mate let his trousers go for 2 slices of bread and a small piece of cooked meat, so it just shows you the state we are all in. Today we got coffee and soup when we finished work and 7 men to a loaf. We have had no spread for over a week.

March 16th 1945

Friday.

Again today the weather has been very good. We went out to work at 6.30 and was told we would be back again for 12 but we might have known the Jerry, because we did not return until 4 o'clock. The guards have certainly turned very bad this last week. It must be the news has been bad for them. They only get 6 to a loaf and 2 soups a day, no butter but they get a little honey or meat. Today there was a big air raid. You could see the aircraft quite plainly.

March 17th 1945

Saturday.

It has been a very bad day today from when we went out until we came back, it rained all the time which made us all wet through and the overcoats won't be able to go on the bed tonight. Well, today is the end of our 8th week outside and not one of us has had even a good wash or change of clothing since we started. A change of clothing is all the kit I have left now so roll on the end of this [-----] war. Today there was a bigger air raid than yesterday. It lasted 9 hours.

March 18th 1945

9th week.

Sunday.

This morning we all got on roll call same as usual when the unexpected happened. We were told there was no work, so straight back to bed I went, all amongst the lousy Russians. The Germans told us today that we must keep ourselves clean so they got us some hot water. I had a good wash and shave.

The soup, which came up at 2 o'clock, was much better and a little thicker. It has rained hard all day so it will be dirty working tomorrow.

March 19th 1945

Monday.

And it's just one more day that we won't work for the Germans. The weather has been very good today and there was a big air raid again today on Dresden and Bautzen, which are very near to us. The planes were low and we could see them quite plain. Today I think I did the least day's work since I left home, about 1 hour's work all day. The hardest job was to let the guard see you're moving all the time. The soup today was again just swedes and water. Bread was the same today only we had honey as spread. It was in block form, so I ate mine by itself. It was good.

March 20th 1945

Tuesday.

Well today is certainly the best day for us. We went to work as usual and came back at 4 o'clock and then they told us we would be going back to the other boys straight after soup. So we leave the lousy Russians. The soup today was the best we have had for the last 2 weeks. Bread was 8 men to a loaf. Because 4 boys escaped last night we must hand in our boots to the Jerries tonight, and the next time he said that he will take our trousers.

March 21st 1945

Wednesday.

Today has been another good day because the Jerries got us hot water for bathing. The first for 9 weeks, and I never thought a man's body could change so. We got coffee this morning and the soup was thick, and we got more of it. Bread was 8 to a loaf. So you are a lot better when you are not working. And today is the first day of Spring. The weather is cold and very windy. Oh, yesterday I let my best trousers, which I carried all the way, go for ½ a sack of potatoes and carrots.

March 22nd 1945

Thursday.

And today the weather is very good. I sat outside most of the day mending 2 pairs of socks. The holes were that big I cut an old sock up and patched them.

And today I have thought a lot of home and of Arthur because it is his 14th birthday. I should have liked very much to be home with you all, but never mind, we will all have a good time. We has a soup which was quite good and 8 men to a loaf with a sort of white cheese as spread.

March 23rd 1945

Friday.

Today we had roll call at 6.30 and coffee came up at 7 o'clock. I went back to bed and mended my trousers. Then I spent most of the day reading the book "A Tale Of Two Cities". Today a Red Cross Representative arrived here. He said that complaints have been made to the Red Cross at Geneva about the treatment of 1,700 B.P.O.W's, and that parcels are on the way. There was another big air raid today and leaflets were dropped. We managed to get hold of one, and it had some good news on it.

March 24th 1945

Saturday.

Well I have spent another quiet day. Just the same as any other day, nothing to do only lay about, which is certainly better than working. Yesterday we got a letter and a letter card to write home, a job which I have just done. We also got a small issue of coffee so it shows we must be in touch with Stalag 4A, which is at Bautzen. The village which we are now staying at is called Stache.

There was another heavy air raid last night, and at this present moment we are locked in because there is one on now.

March 25th 1945

Sunday.

And today is another day of Spring. We had roll call at 6 o'clock then bread and soup came up the same time, which was early, 4 o'clock. I spent most of the day sitting in the sun with only one thing to do and that's thinking of home. The 2 boys that escaped last Monday were brought back today after doing 5 days in clink.

March 26th 1945

Monday.

Today has been another very quiet one. They are also starting to go very slow. We got roll call at 6.30 then I got back into bed until soup, which came up at 12 o'clock, and was quite a good one. Spent most of the afternoon sitting in the sun. There was another air raid over here at 10 o'clock and lasted until 2.30. We get bread every day now at 8 men to a loaf, but no spread.

March 27th 1945

Tuesday.

Today the weather turned quite cold so stayed in bed all day. One of the boys went out to mend a radio this afternoon, and he heard the BBC news and it sure was good news: big attacks in the west, and Jerry's on the run fast. We were told that Red Cross parcels are on the way for us. The latest racket on the go is pulling down any woollen thing, rolling it in a ball then getting a bucket of spuds.

March 28th 1945

Wednesday.

Well today is the best day I can so far remember because at 6.30 this morning they went for Red Cross parcels. Everybody here has changed. They came back at 3 o'clock, Canadian parcels. As I have said, there are 4 of us together and the issue was $\frac{1}{2}$ a parcel per man. First we had the chocolate, then a tin of bully with biscuits and jam, and then a good smoke. We had 10 cigs. We also heard the news that we have given Germany until the first of April, so roll on Sunday.

March 29th 1945

Thursday.

Well this morning I woke up feeling better than I have ever felt for a long time. We had some bread and jam with the coffee for breakfast. Then soup for dinner, and a tin of ham and jam for tea. They took 60 of the boys away to work this morning leaving 56 of us here. But this afternoon 18 Serbs and 86 Frenchmen came. They gave us another issue of letter card and letter.

March 30th 1945

Today the weather has turned quite cold, and this afternoon it started to rain. This afternoon 83 Russians came into this barn, so we are very crowded, and the Russians are all lousy. Well at home I expect you have all had your hot cross buns and fish for dinner and I'll bet you were thinking of me and Bob. But I don't think it will be very long now before we are all together again. Today we got a 3 lb loaf for a good shirt so we are having big eats.

March 31st 1945

Saturday.

So we come to the end of March and I think myself it has been quite a good month. The weather has been good. The war news has been and still is very good. And best of all we have come to a sort of resting place. We have had a R.C. parcel, and we may get another one next week. Myself, I am feeling a lot better and stronger since we received our parcel.

April 1st 1945

Sunday

And today is Easter Sunday. I can only guess how you at home spent it but myself I spent most of the day in bed because it has been very cold. Today we got an issue of black pudding. Not much but it went down very nice.

April 2nd 1945

Monday.

Again today it has been very quiet and it's these sorts of days that make us all here browned off. This morning until soup came I stopped in bed, and the afternoon I passed away by playing cards. This morning they put the clocks back 1 hour. I thought we were early on roll call.

April 3rd 1945

Tuesday.

This morning on roll call they asked for 20 men to go in the woods for the day. So I went just to pass the day away. We came back for soup at 12 then went out again for 1 hour. The weather today is just like April, sun shining one minute, then raining the next. Today one of

the boys got a paper and the news is great. Our own troops are only 200 kilos from this barn. That's about 120 miles.

April 4th 1945

Wednesday.

Today again I spent a very quiet day. Roll call was at 6.30. We had coffee then I got back to bed until soup came up. They took another 80 men to work in the woods for the day. This morning they took 200 of our boys from the next block away to a Stalag, so I hope our turn comes next. I managed to get a bucket of cooked potatoes for a ball of wool so the 4 of us don't feel too bad now.

April 5th 1945

Thursday.

Again today they wanted 20 men to work in the woods, so I went out and spent a very easy day. We came in for soup at 12 and never went out again. Bread came up about 3 o'clock and it had just come from the baker. I have just eaten it so roll on soup tomorrow. The weather here today has been fine but very cold.

April 6th 1945

Friday.

Well today I spent one of those lazy days. They got us out at 6.30 for roll call. I had my coffee then went straight back to bed until soup. It has been raining most of the day so I spent the afternoon playing cards. We got a paper here today and the news is good. Myself I don't think it will go all this month.

April 7th 1945

Saturday.

Again today it has been raining most of the day so I passed it away playing cards. Roll call now is at 7 o'clock at night and it makes the day very long.

April 8th 1945

Sunday.

Well I was up early this morning because the sun is shining lovely. I was thinking of what I would be doing if I was at home. Going for a quick Sunday walk. Spent the day sitting in the sun. Today was 7 to a loaf with a small piece of black pudding.

April 9th 1945

Monday.

I went out to work in the woods again today. All we have to do is trim some small trees that are lying on the ground. It saves you lying in bed all day. The weather is very cold today. The bread came up at 7 men to a loaf instead of 8 today.

April 10th 1945

Tuesday.

Well today the weather is lovely. I got up at 11 o'clock for soup then spent the afternoon sitting in the sun. My other 2 mates are out working today. The news today is great. We heard of our boys coming on fast in the west. At present they are only 140 kilos from us, or 89 miles. We are all looking forward to seeing them very soon, and hope to be in England by June.

April 11th 1945

Wednesday.

Today I went out working in the woods. The weather was just good for working in. They took another 170 men away to a Stalag. That leaves us at 160 men left here. The Russians yesterday took the town of Garlitz which is only 40 miles away.

April 12th 1945

Thursday.

Well today I can enter into this book as being one of the best because we received another ½ parcel per man, so the 4 of us got 2 parcels. So once again we say "Thanks to the Red Cross". We also got 10 cigarettes.

April 13th 1945

Friday.

Last night there was a little disturbance in the place. I was lying awake about 3 o'clock and I heard someone call out. It turned out to be one of our boys. He caught one of the Frenchmen in his Red Cross parcel, so the boys gave him what he deserved. And the next surprise came when bread came up at 6 men to a loaf. I managed to get some more cooked potatoes for some wool, so we had them with salmon for tea.

April 14th 1945

Saturday.

Well today it has been very dull and cold so I stopped in bed until soup came at 11.30 and it was quite good. It had plenty of spuds and meat in it. I also managed to get a brew of tea for after soup and another for after roll call which is at 7 o'clock. My other 2 mates went out to work today. The guards here got their cigarette issue today. 20 fags to last them 15 days. Ain't they lucky?

April 15th 1945

Sunday.

Went out to work again in the woods until dinnertime. The weather has been warm so I had a cold bath and I feel much better for it. The news today is too good to be true. The Yanks last night entered Dresden and withdrew. That brings them only 40 kilos from us, or 25 miles. Bread came up again at 6 men to a loaf with black pudding, and we got hot water for a brew. So we did well today.

April 16th 1945

Monday.

Today the weather has been very warm, so I have spent an idle day. For the most part of last night we were all kept awake by the noise of a big tank battle which was being fought by the Russians for a town just the other side of Bautzen. To the west of us our boys are at Dresden 40 kilos away. To the east of us the Russians are 50 kilos away. So I think we will be on the march again very soon.

April 17th 1945

Tuesday.

Again today I went out to work in the woods. All we did was to load 3 wagons. We finished at 4.30. At about 10 o'clock this morning, and again at dinner, we all saw Russian fighters and bombers dive-bombing an aerodrome which is only 5 miles away. We are getting plenty of excitement here these last few days.

April 18th 1945

Wednesday.

Well last night I sure thought the Russians were here, but when I awoke I was wrong. We had a very heavy thunderstorm and after it rained very heavy. Spent most of the morning in bed and passed the afternoon playing cards.

April 19th 1945

Thursday.

Today has passed very quiet. I was to have gone out to work, but they made us all stay in. We can hear the guns on the Russian front quite plain, and the people in the village have started moving out. But where they can go, I do not know. Today they also got us hot water to bath, so I had a hot bath and feel much better.

April 20th 1945

Friday.

And once again we go on the march. All last night we were kept awake by the [...] and shaking of the barn. I thought Old Joe would get us, but at 5 o'clock the Jerries came and told us to pack our kit. But we did not move off until 11 o'clock. They gave us ½ a loaf, to last us 4 days. By 1 o'clock mine had gone. They kept us marching until 10.30 at night and today we got no soup. The roads are crowded with people all pulling carts with their little bit of kit. But it's good to know that they as well as ourselves must suffer. Today we marched 23 kilos, 14 miles.

April 21st 1945

Saturday.

Again this morning we started off at 6 o'clock and marched until 9 at night. It has been raining heavy all day and my blankets and overcoat are soaking wet. Also today my left foot has started giving me pain and making me limp all day. Again today they have given us no food or drinks. There's one thing, all I have got to carry is a small pack with my washing and shaving kit in it. Today we marched 13 miles.

April 22nd 1945

Sunday.

Well today we have stopped in this barn which is quite a good one. They gave us a soup and hot water to make tea with and to me it was the best soup in the world because I sure felt [...] hungry.

Yesterday we came through the town of Rumburk. Quite a big place, but although it was Saturday, all the shops have nothing in them. When we started on Friday we were 15 kilos from Bautzen. After 2 days of marching we are only 35 kilos further, so we must be going round and round.

April 23rd 1945

Monday.

We are still here in this barn and a good job too, for like yesterday it has been rainy all day. Again today we have had only 1 cup of soup. They have told us that they cannot get bread, so something wants to happen soon, or there will be nothing left of us. We heard the BBC news last night and it's only the good news that keeps us going.

April 24th 1945

Tuesday.

And once again we have stayed put, but when you are lying about all day it makes you feel weak. To make it worse it has been raining most of the day. We got a soup at midday then we got bread 1 loaf between 15. It's not much but better than nothing.

April 25th 1945

Wednesday.

And the weather has made a change. The sun is quite warm so I kept out of bed. Soup came up at 12.30 then they issued bread, 3 to a loaf but it has got to last us 2 days. I have just eaten my bread with some dandelion and a little salt and it was quite tasty. They also gave us a very small piece of cheese but I swapped it for a smoke. Our planes were over 5 times today.

April 26th 1945

Thursday.

After being here for 4 days we at last found our way into the cellar, but there were only mangels in, so we got as many as we could. They are not bad with your bread, but before the day was out the farmer's wife found out and on roll call Jerry said next time we would all have to sleep out in the open. Somewhere in this area there are 2,000 Red Cross parcels. Somewhere in this area there are 14,000 P.O.W.s looking for them. Our Red Cross man has took 2 days' rations, and has gone to see if he can find them. Let's hope he gets there first.

April 27th 1945

Friday.

Today has been one of those days when all you can do is to lay in bed because it has been raining all day. The M.O. who is on this march with us had a wireless with him for the last 14 months, and we have been able to get the BBC near every day. But last night when the officer was just getting the news, The Jerry walked in and found it. A straight case of a give away. Again today, our boys were over and dropped leaflets.

April 28th 1945

Saturday.

As I said on Thursday our Red Cross man went to look for some parcels. Well he found them and came back at 6 o'clock just when we were getting our bread. They are Danish parcels, and not like our own. There was a packet of biscuits, ½ a lb of butter + cheese, sugar and a 1 lb packet of oats. There were no meats at all. The issue was 1 parcel for 3 men. He went to Stalag 4C for them. The men there are on 2 soups per day and 15 to a loaf. They are all packed up ready to march.

April 29th 1945

Sunday.

For breakfast this morning I finished of my third of the parcel. The cheese jam and the biscuits went down very nice with the coffee which for a change had sugar in. Bread came up with soup at 12 o'clock. I ate my bread after my soup so roll on tomorrow. Stopped in bed until after soup then got up and had a wash and shave, after which I feel much better. We have had 3 air raid alarms today.

April 30th 1945

Monday

Well yesterday with it being Sunday and very quiet we took the chance of going down the cellar. Every body got as much potatoes and mangles as we wanted. But this morning they kept us on roll call for 2 hours while they searched the barn. They found a lot but not ours. All yesterday and today quite a few of the boys as well as myself have been feeling ill. We blame the butter from the parcel. Spent most of the day in bed.

May 1st 1945

Tuesday.

Last night I spent one of the worst nights I have had for a long time. I had a splitting headache and my body and legs were shivering. I have stopped in bed all day. Because of the potatoes that were stolen from the cellar on Sunday, today and for 2 more days we are to get no potatoes in our soup. Well today is Mayday, and once again I'll say "I wonder if this will be the month?"

May 2nd 1945

Wednesday.

When I woke up this morning I had the surprise of my life. Snow was about 6 inches thick. So we may get a bit of Summer weather now. Today I am feeling a little better, but I have stopped in bed. Today we heard that Hitler died last night. All the guards say it will be over this week. I only hope they are right.

May 3rd 1945

Thursday.

Been quite busy today. We were up and had our coffee at 5 o'clock, by 6 we were on our way for a hot shower and a de-louse, which we badly needed. We had to march 5 miles to a big hospital. It was well worth it. The water was very hot. The only fault was that I had no clean clothes to put on. The weather has been fine but very cold. It was damned cold in bed last night.

May 4th 1945

Friday.

Nothing to report today. It has been very quiet and outside the weather is more like Winter than Summer so we spent most of the day in bed. The German officer in charge of us was around today, so we got on to him about our rations. He said they cannot get any more swedes for the soup, but we are to get beetroot and potatoes for 5 days, then all he can give us is potatoes. He said that he cannot give us any more bread because they can not get it.

May 5th 1945

Saturday.

All last night it has been raining heavy, so outside it is very dirty and very cold. Spent all day in bed. This morning someone found a goldmine, 2 sacks of salt. So myself, and every one here, has enough salt to see this war over. The first day of our beetroot soup, and it was not too bad with a little salt.

May 6th 1945

Sunday.

Last night 12 lads went to escape. 7 got away but 5 of them got chased back. We were 1½ hours on roll call while they searched the barn and checked up.

We were down in the cellar again today, but we were not so lucky as before. The 3 boys that were down there got caught. With it being Sunday, soup and bread came up at 11 o'clock. I ate mine when they came up, so roll on soup tomorrow.

May 7th 1945

Monday.

For the last 4 days it has been raining heavy, so all we have had to do is lay in bed. I am just about bed sore and browned off. The M.O. brought us the BBC news today which was very good. Most of us give it until Whitsun. The other day we had a change of guards. Now we have got all old and wounded men.

Tonight once again we lose our boots and trousers, because of the 7 lads that escaped.

May 8th 1945

Tuesday.

Well the great day of waiting has come. We heard the news at 9am. At 10 I was out in the village and had plenty to eat. We heard an account of Churchill's speech at 3pm. I went to the village again and had some wine and cake. The first since I left home. Also today, Russian planes have been over this village, bombing and strafing. We can see the guns firing on the front worse than I have ever seen before. So now for home.

May 9th 1945

Wednesday.

We started marching at 9pm last night and we marched until 11am today. 14 hours with out a break. We rested then until 6 o'clock. There are 8 of us together. All the guards have had their rifles taken away and they left us today. 2 of us went into the town and we brought back 6 bottles of wine, 23 tins of biscuits 2 big tins of butter and 4 loaves of bread. I have eaten more today than I did all last week. We have got to make our own way to our troops. We have just got 2 good horses and a wagon. It's just as it should be.

May 10th 1945

Thursday.

We crossed the Elbe at 12.30 last night and stayed at a place called [.....] We started again at 8 o'clock after a breakfast of porridge, fried potatoes, meat and veg. All the people here are afraid of the Russians, and they have a right to because they are taking everything they see. The roads are all crowded with people making their way west to our troops and it's a change to see them walk and us riding. We are making our way to [.....] where we are sure most of our boys are.

May 11th 1945

Friday.

After having a good night's sleep in a farm we were on our way early again this morning. We passed through Dresden at 3 o'clock. I have never seen a town in such a mess. There was not one house that was standing. The Russians are taking everything. Cows, horses, everything. Today we thought we would have a bike and ride, so we stopped the first Jerries with good bikes and took them. We left 2 of them with the wagon. We are having a fine time.

May 12th 1945

Saturday.

The weather since we started has been very good and we are starting to get a little tanned. Today for dinner we had potatoes with milk, pork and onions. Coffee, with bread and cheese. For supper, fried eggs on toast. Just the opposite to a week ago. Tomorrow, we hope to meet the Yanks.

*****There are no further Diary entries, so it seems they reunited with Allied troops on May 13th 1945******