

THE Prisoner of War

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE PRISONERS OF WAR DEPARTMENT OF THE
RED CROSS AND ST. JOHN WAR ORGANISATION, ST. JAMES'S PALACE, LONDON, S.W.1



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Free to Next of Kin

May, 1944

The Editor Writes —

MANY prisoners of war are being deprived of their letters week after week because well-meaning people on this side are writing too much and too often. A very urgent appeal has reached us from a British Camp Leader in a large Stalag begging us to do what we can to stop the excessive flow of letters to his camp. "Please impress upon relatives and friends of P.O.W.s," he writes, "that one letter a week per man is quite sufficient and would certainly ensure every man getting his mail regularly."

One Letter a Week

I believe that many men have written to their next-of-kin urging them to keep letters down to one a week, but perhaps it is difficult to make people realise the congestion and delay caused in the Censor's office on the other side if there are two or three letters for Bill Smith instead of one; for there may be thousands of Bill Smiths in the camp, and therefore thousands of extra letters to be censored and distributed without any extra staff to do the work. Naturally the men whose letters are delayed get "fed up" to see their companions getting several letters when they get none. The remedy is for each next-of-kin to organise the mail to the best of his ability. "One a week from home" is the ration, and relatives should collaborate to see that it is not exceeded.

They All Get Chocolate

I have been looking at a most interesting chart of the contents of the food parcels that are sent to the camps. Each parcel contains about 17 items out of a list of 40 different commodities. Seven different standard parcels are packed at the Packing Centres, and since last month the contents of the parcels have been replenished under expert guidance. No. 7 parcel is a special one for Indians. Of the other six all contain chocolate, tea, sugar, condensed milk, cheese, hot meat, biscuits and butter or margarine, salmon or pilchards, jam or syrup, beef loaf or chipped ham, and most of them dried eggs and rolled oats or oatmeal. One parcel contains pancake batter, another oatmeal block, and I notice that the one parcel with sausages has

no bacon. The average weekly output from all the Packing Centres in Britain is now 97,000.

Cheerful Letters—and Others

Somebody has noticed that the letters we publish on our letter pages are almost always cheerful and bright and suggests that it is time we printed some of the other kind. The answer is, of course, that we do. It is only rarely that a gloomy letter is sent to me for publication, because I think that it is realised that hundreds and even thousands of people might be caused needless anxiety by a piece of information about conditions which perhaps affected only the writer and his immediate surroundings. You have only to read the "Official Reports from the Camps" to recognise that we do not make any attempt to conceal real conditions. Many letters reach the Prisoners of War Department containing complaints about one thing or another. These are always investigated, and in suitable cases referred to the Protecting Power or the International Red Cross Committee for action.

Holiday Camp

Life certainly sounds congenial at Stalag III D, judging by an unofficial account I have seen of the camp. Stalag III D is run as a sort of holiday resort for men who have been working in mines or on other arduous tasks for the past three years.

"They come here for a six weeks' rest with good food and organised games, concerts and sports," writes my informant, "and it's really amazing



Prisoners of war setting off from Stalag Luft 3.

Official Reports from the Camps

In every case where the conditions are not so good, the following report makes suggestions for improvement. Where there is any reason to doubt whether the following Camp has more of it or not, it is not intended to say so. It is to be explained that just as in the case of the other camps, the conditions are in fact, though not in appearance, the same.

The following camp was not visited on May 1, 1918.

WISLA, POLAND. (See page 10.) This camp was visited on a full night before it was visited, when there were no British prisoners at the time. The camp was visited on the night of May 1, 1918, when there were no British prisoners at the time. The camp was visited on the night of May 1, 1918, when there were no British prisoners at the time.

The prisoners here in wooden huts, with double doors, and with two windows. The huts are well heated and there is ample space. The food is in good condition. The food is in good condition. The food is in good condition.

Food is described as good, and up to the standard of the other camps. The food is described as good, and up to the standard of the other camps. The food is described as good, and up to the standard of the other camps.

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The old hospital building of Wisla, which is now a camp.

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A group of prisoners at Wier and Wier Road.



The hospital building of Wier, Belgium.



A scene at Wier, Belgium.

gained to that of any ordinary hospital. Only part of the establishment is occupied by prisoners, the other part, being occupied by German Catholic monks, who are made to do very hard and hard work every day.

Planting and labor treatment is very good and the prisoners are made completely fit to go out to work in the mines. Medical treatment is good. Clothing is satisfactory. The British medical officers consider this hospital a great improvement on German homes.

CAMP IN NORTHERN ITALY UNDER GERMAN OCCUPATION

(Both camps) (From Birmingham Daily)

By J. H. B.

This is a beautiful camp for other reasons than its surroundings in a lovely area. The camp is situated on a hillside, and the prisoners are made to do very hard work every day. The British medical officers consider this hospital a great improvement on German homes.

SEMI-DEBILITATED

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GERMAN INTERMENT CAMP

By J. H. B.

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The Chapel at Breda Light I.

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The Letters They Write Home

His First Letter

May 1942

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They're building the cinema on Breda Light I.

He Told us Poets

May 1942

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Prisoner with his pen at Breda Light I.

REFUND OF UNUSED COUPONS

IN cases of special necessity, next of kin who require more than 20 coupons for their current parcel may, if they did not use their full allowance for their previous parcel, apply to the Red Cross for a refund of any balance of unused coupons which they retained with it.

In view of the great amount of clerical work and correspondence already entailed in connection with the control of coupons issued for prisoners of war, next of kin are particularly asked not to apply unless it is absolutely necessary.

Read These Rules

The following rules must be observed:

(1) All applications to be sent by registered letter post and addressed to the Next of Kin Parcels Centre, 14, Finsbury Circus, London, E.C.2, or, if the coupons are issued by the Scottish Packing Centre, to the Prisoners of War Next of Kin Parcels Depot, 411, Saatchell Street, Glasgow, C.2. Envelopes should be clearly marked "RUCS."

(2) The Prisoners of War coupon book must be forwarded with the application. If clothing has already been purchased it should be entered on the coupon account page, to account for the coupons used.

(3) Applications must not be made for a refund of unused coupons from any parcel except for the last one sent.

(4) Refunded coupons must be used with the coupon book with which the application was made and may not be kept for a later parcel. Clothing purchased with refunded coupons must be entered on the coupon account page in the ordinary way.

(5) The prisoner's full name, regiment and Red Cross file number must be given in every letter of application which should on no account refer to any other matter. No reply will be sent to any other question included in these letters.

County Representatives

Please note the following changes:
CUMBERLAND: Mrs. du Dorday, P.O.W. Officer, Housleyway, Keswick.
OXFORDSHIRE: The Hon. Mrs. Gore, Oxfordshire Branch, B.R.C.S., 41, St. Margaret's Road, Oxford.

FREE TO NEXT OF KIN

THIS journal is sent free of charge to those registered with the Prisoners of War Dept. as next of kin. In view of the paper shortage no copies are for sale, and it is hoped this next of kin will share their copy with relatives and others interested.

Tips for Food

Do you use special tin for your food parcel contents?

Special lagging is used for tin a Prisoners of War food parcels, ensuring differing according to the commodity. Many of the foods sent are also contained in special sizes suitable for inclusion in these parcels.

Study Facilities

Can you tell us how the provision of study facilities for prisoners is governed? In view of the fact that work is compulsory for those under the rank of sergeant, and that working hours are often very long and days of very infrequent (in my husband's case there is only one day off in 21), how do some of the "other ranks" manage to study for exams, etc?

Work is compulsory for Privates although not for N.C.O.s or protected personnel, but it is not necessarily continuous, and if a man is determined to study he usually does so, even though it be at the end of his day's work. One man worked for his B.Sc. after 10 hours a day in a salt mine, and a number of Privates have already passed examinations. In Stalag 341 (formerly Stalag VIIIb) the Germans have allowed men preparing for examination to return to the base about six weeks before the examination is held.

Transit Camp

What is a Transit Camp? I am anxious for news of my son who was a prisoner of war in Stalag and has been told he may be in a Transit Camp and not able to write for some time.

A Transit Camp is one in which prisoners remain for a comparatively short time before being moved to a permanent camp. It is for this reason that prisoners writing from transit camps often tell their next of kin not to write to them until they have been able to send a permanent address.

Papers for Switzerland

Can I send my husband, now interned in Switzerland, his favourite weekly paper?

You should consult a bookseller or newsagent who holds a Censorship permit about this.

P.O.W. in Italy

I have still no news of my son who was a P.O.W. in Italy. Does this mean he escaped and is still in Italy?

In the absence of news from your son, it is likely that he escaped from his camp and that he may be still at large in Italy awaiting an opportunity to make his way through to the Allied lines.

Any Questions?

Income Tax

Does a prisoner of war pay income tax?

Yes. For details see the article on page 14.

Pay on Their Return

Do repatriated prisoners of war receive accumulated pay when they return to this country?

Yes, if it has not already been disposed of on instructions given by them to their paymasters.

Stage Make-up

Can I include a stage make-up outfit in my quarterly parcel for my son, who is a theatrical producer for his camp?

Yes.

Patterned Dressing-gown

May I send my son, who is a prisoner of war, a patchwork or patterned dressing-gown?

If you will refer to the list of instructions sent out each quarter with the label and coupons, you will see that patterned materials are recommended for dressing-gowns.

Patchwork should not be sent.

USEFUL GLOVES

(Continued from previous page)

Next Row.—Working into the back of the cast-on st., p. 18, turn. Continue as the instruction for the 1st finger of the Right Hand.

2nd Finger.—With the right side of the work facing, join the wool to the base of the 1st finger and knit up 2 sts. through the cast-on st. of the 1st finger, k. 1, (p. 1, k. 1) 2 times from the left-hand needle, turn and cast on 2 sts.

Next Row.—Working into the back of the cast-on st., p. 18, turn. Continue as the instruction for the 2nd finger of the Right Hand.

3rd Finger.—Work as the instructions for the 2nd finger, commencing with p. 1, after knitting up 2 sts. at the base of the 2nd finger, but working 28 rows instead of 31 rows, before shaping the top.

4th Finger.

Work as the instructions for the 4th finger of the Right Hand. Carefully press the gloves, care being taken to stretch all 168 sts.

NUMBER, PLEASE!

PLEASE be sure to mention your Red Cross reference number whenever you write to us. Otherwise delay and trouble are caused in finding previous correspondence.