

WAR HISTORY FOR ERROL GREEN

Errol Green enlisted 14.10.1940

Embarked for Canada 22.2.41 from Sydney arriving 16.3.41

Awarded flying badge 23.5.41 arriving in United Kingdom 17.7.41

stationed at Oakington Squadron 7 Bomber Command



ERROL GREEN SERVED IN THE 15TH LIGHTHORSE
REGIMENT IN MACLEAN NEW SOUTH WALES FROM
NOVEMBER 1936 (AGED 20)- 14.10.1940 (AGED 24)



ERROL'S family as a child:

Great Grandmother Grace, Mother, uncles, aunts and cousins.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

ENROLMENT OF PERSON IN THE RESERVE.

No. R. _____ Name Ernest Edward Green
Joined at Machan
Joined on 9 May 1940

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ENROLMENT.

What is your Name? Ernest Edward Green
What is your Age? 23 years 11 months.
What is the Date of your Birth? 8th June 1916
Are you Married or Single? Single
Are you a British Subject? Yes
Where were you Born? { Town Machan
State New South Wales
What is your Religion? Presbyterian
Have you previously served in Australia or elsewhere? If so, state Regiment or Corps, Service, &c. 15th Light Horse Regiment
Do you now belong to any Service, Regiment, or Corps? Temporary discharge
What is your Trade or Profession? Farming
Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? No
Have you ever been dismissed from any part of His Majesty's Service? No
What is your { Place of Residence? Broadwater via Machan, New South Wales
Business Address? Box 51, Machan, New South Wales

I, Ernest Edward Green declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true.

Thos. Haley J.P.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE.

I HAVE examined the above-named, and cannot ~~certify~~ ^{certify} that he is medically suitable for the Air Force Reserve.

Height 5 ft. 6 in. Vaccination Marks nil
Chest 36 1/2 in. When Vaccinated _____
Weight 140 lb. Marks or Scars small scuffed abrasion on R. shin
Vision R. Eye 6/6 L. Eye 6/6
Colour Vision normal
Hearing 20 ft R. Ear 20 ft L. Ear _____
Physical Development muscular & strong
Complexion fair
Eyes (colour) blue
Hair (colour) th. brown

Thos. Haley J.P.

Date 30/4/40

(Signature of Examining Medical Officer.)

Form P.P. 11.
(Revised October, 1939.)

CITIZEN AIR FORCE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

36-39.

PERMANENT FORCES.

Attestation of No. 40279 Name GREEN, Erroll Edward
402795

Joined at No. 2 Recruiting Centre, SYDNEY

ON 14 OCT 1940

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. What is your Name? | 1. <u>Erroll Edward Green</u> |
| 2. In or near what Town were you born? | 2. At or near the Town of <u>Maclean</u>
in the State of <u>New South Wales</u> |
| 3. Are you a British Subject or a Naturalized British Subject of some European descent? (N.B.—If the latter, papers to be shown.) | 3. <u>British subject</u> |
| 4. What is your Age? (You are warned that if you give a false answer to this question you are liable to be severely punished.) | 4. <u>24 years 4 months</u> |
| 5. What is your Trade or Calling? | 5. <u>Farming</u> |
| 6. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where, to whom, and for what period? | 6. <u>No.</u> |
| 7. Are you married? | 7. <u>No.</u> |
| 8. Have you ever been convicted by the Civil Power? | 8. <u>No.</u> |
| 9. Have you ever been discharged from any part of His Majesty's Forces with Ignominy, or as Inevitable and Worthless, or on account of Conviction of Felony, or of a Sentence of Penal Servitude, or have you been dismissed with Disgrace from the Navy? (You are warned that you are liable to heavy punishment if you make a false answer to this question.) | 9. <u>No.</u> |
| 10. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, His Majesty's Royal Navy, Marines, Army, Militia Reserve, Air Force, or Colonial Forces? If so, state which, and cause of discharge. | 10. <u>15th Light Horse Regt.</u>
<u>Free Discharge.</u> |
| 11. Have you truly stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? | 11. <u>Yes.</u> |
| 12. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for His Majesty's Service? If so, on what grounds? | 12. <u>No.</u> |
| 13. Are you willing to be enlisted under the conditions stated in the regulations for the Air Force of the Commonwealth of Australia? | 13. <u>Yes.</u> |

DECLARATION.

I, Erroll Edward Green, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements made.

Signature of Recruit.

E. E. Green

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I swear that I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lord the King in the Air Force of the Commonwealth of Australia for the term of three years or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed or removed; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will, in all matters appertaining to my service, faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

So Help Me, God.

(A recruit who objects to take an oath may "affirm.") (See Air Force Regulations.)

* Strike out whichever is applicable.

CERTIFICATE OF ATTESTING OFFICER.

The recruit abovesigned was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Air Force Act and Air Force Regulations of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The questions were then read to the recruit in my presence.

I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to by him.

~~XXXXXX THIS CERTIFICATE FORM IS NOT TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE AIR FORCE ACT, 1919.~~ (In the case of a British Subject, this is to be struck out.)

The said recruit has made and signed the Declaration and taken the Oath at Sydney

in the State of New South Wales this fourteenth day of October

19 40 before me.

Signature

[Signature]

Mying Officer,

Attesting Officer,

(X) ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Attesting Officer.

War Service only.
When used for
attestation
other than
duration of
War, this
strip must
be cut
off.

OATH OR AFFIRMATION.*

OATH.

I, Erroll Edward Green. swear that I will well and truly serve Our Sovereign Lord the King as a member of the Air Force Reserve of the Commonwealth of Australia, and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's Peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law. So help me God!

AFFIRMATION.

I, _____, solemnly and sincerely affirm and declare that I will well and truly serve Our Sovereign Lord the King as a member of the Air Force Reserve of the Commonwealth of Australia, and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's Peace to be kept and maintained, and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

Sworn
Declared before me at Macleay
in the State of New South Wales
this 9th day of May
One
thousand nine hundred and Forty.

Erroll E. Green
(Signature of Person enrolled.)

Name Thomas Haley, a Justice of the Peace
† (Signature of Officer or Justice of the Peace administering the oath or taking the declaration.)

Address Macleay

_____ has been passed by me this day and posted to Class _____ of the Reserve.

Official Number R. _____

Date _____

RE-ENROLMENT.

I, No. R. _____ (Rank) _____ (Name) _____ at present serving in the Reserve enrolled on (date) _____ desiring to re-enroll in the Air Force Reserve for a period of four years from _____ do hereby declare that I agree to re-enroll and to well and truly serve Our Sovereign Lord the King in the Air Force Reserve of the Commonwealth of Australia for the term of four years from _____ (date), or until sooner lawfully discharged, dismissed, or removed; and that I will resist His Majesty's enemies and cause His Majesty's Peace to be kept and maintained; and that I will in all matters appertaining to my service faithfully discharge my duty according to law.

Signature of Reservist _____

Signed at _____

in the State of _____ this

_____ day of _____ 19

before me.

(Signature) _____

* A person who objects to taking the oath may make the affirmation. Cross out form not used. All amendments must be initialed by the Officer or J.P. witnessing the Affirmation.

† "Justice of the Peace" means a Stipendiary or Police or Special Magistrate, or some Magistrate of the State who is specially authorized by the Governor-General to administer the oath.

** Rank and appointment.

Bomber Command No.7 Squadron



The Wartime Memories Project - The Second World War

Early March 2013 I discovered Bomber Command website – The Wartime Memories Project- The Second World War. They were wanting stories to be retold... I had no story but questions - I thought if I ask if anyone knew anything about Errol Green... It was now almost 70 years after war ended, maybe someone might read it in Bomber Command in No. 7 Squadron Enquiries and have some information... That was my hope... Errol had died almost 15 years ago, I felt I didn't understand him but was willing to journey to find his war roots.

F/Lt. Errol Edward Green- 7 Squadron. Information from Canberra War Memorial.

In a group portrait of members of the RAAF at RCAF Station Uplands taken after the men received their wings, identified, seventh from the left is 402795 Flight Lieutenant (Fl Lt) Errol Edward Green RAAF, who was a pilot attached to No. 7 Squadron RAF. His Stirling aircraft N3754 was shot down by a German night fighter whilst on a mission to bomb Bremen on the night of 25/26 June 1942. Four of his crew were killed in the air crash. The other three crew members became prisoners of war of the Germans. Fl Lt Green spent nearly three years as a POW, with most time spent in Stalag Luft III. He participated in preparations for escape by dispersing soil taken from the tunnel, but was moved on to another camp by the Germans before the escape took place on the night of 24/25 March 1944. Shifted from camp to camp, Fl Lt Green eventually escaped captivity with some other prisoners. After being picked up and fed by the American Army, Fl Lt Green and his fellow escapees were able to board a plane bound for Britain, arriving a few weeks before D-Day, May 8th 1945. I would love to know if anyone remembers my Dad, Errol Green perhaps from Sagan prison camp. I only know Camp Stalag Luft III, other camps are unknown to me.



Errol is 7th from the left



List of those who served with No: 7 Squadron during The Second World War: [Link to find the letter I wrote to Bomber Command](#)

[No. 7 Squadron Royal Air Force in the Second World War 1939-1945 ...](#)

www.wartimememoriesproject.com/ww2/allied/royalairforce/sqdvie.php?pid=206

Surprisingly almost 2 years later 4 emails arrived in my email box:

1. Ian Davenport was searching for information regarding his grandfather Leslie and was excited to share what he had found. His grandfather was a navigator for 7 Squadron of the RAF and was captured by the Germans in 1941 after he bailed out from his Short Stirling bomber. He spent three-and-a-half years at a number of prisoner-of-war camps including Stalag Luft 3 where Errol was also stationed.
2. Gill Chesney-Green entered information about a book she published from her Dad's manuscript in 2014. Her Dad died 2002 and it took 12 years from the time she discovered the manuscript of his war life journal until she registered it in the same website that I wrote my question...she saw my Dad's name and remembered that Errol's name was mentioned in her father's manuscript which she found after he had died. Consequently, she contacted me not knowing if my email address was still valid. From Gill Cheney Green's blog: 'on one of the websites – The Wartime Memories Project – is a page for 7 Squadron and in the list of names of former aircrew I saw the name Errol Green... definitely a name I remember from dad's book!!! 'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air gunner's Tale' by W.E. 'Bill' Goodman. At the bottom of the entry was a link to contact via email... so I naturally clicked and contacted the person named. I'll not give the lady's name but she's the daughter of Errol Green and she sounded wonderful. Errol died four years before my own father died, sadly. I think it rather ironic that she and I, in these days of the internet, have been in contact and that our fathers may not have been since those far off days! I often wondered what the folks mentioned in dad's book looked like... and now I can put a face to the name as she sent me a photo from when he was in the RAAF... brilliant! Wasn't he a handsome man?'



Flight Lieutenant Errol Green – RAAF – Picture of Errol 2nd Right in Stalag Luft 3 Nazi official photo

Short Stirling & RAF Bomber Command Forum

[Short Stirling I N3754 MG-O RAF 7 Squadron](#) Post by [Bob Wilton](#) » Wed Nov 19, 2014

Bob posted the Canberra War Memorial information I posted in Bomber Command Forum regarding Errol, photos of Errol's crew and information regarding the German pilot who claimed to have shot him down.



GREEN.jpg (226.73 KiB) Errol (a) sitting in and (b) standing by the entrance of the aircraft

Re: Short Stirling I N3754 MG-O RAF 7 Squadron Postby [Karacho](#) » Wed Nov 19, 2014

Stirling N3754 / MG-O was shot down by Oblt. August Geiger from 8./NJG 1. (2.00 time / night)

Mission on this night : bombing Bremen

The Stirling crashed ca. 6 Km north of Nordhorn / Am Lughook.

The crew on this mission:

E. Green POW 402795

T. Morris POW 1194833

R. Ketchell KIA 900301

J.R. Mason POW 1154558

E.L. Hynd KIA 404404

R.C. Williamson KIA 646510

R.E. Little KIA 628631 The killed crewmembers are buried at Reichswald-Cemetery ,

Errol never knew 2 other crew survived the crash and returned to England. Errol suffered from survivor guilt syndrome until he died in 1998.

Errol felt honoured that the pilot who claimed to have shot down Dad's plane arranged to meet him as a prisoner. This forum also wrote information about this pilot Oberleutnant Geiger.

Geiger was born on 6 May 1920 in [Überlingen](#), near [Lake Constance](#). Geiger joined the Luftwaffe in late 1939 and was posted in mid-1941 as Leutnant to 8./[Nachtjagdgeschwader 1](#) (NJG 1).^{[[Note 1](#)]} Geiger's first two claims were a [Vickers Wellington](#) and a [Armstrong Whitworth Whitley](#) on 26 June 1942. By the start of 1943 Geiger had ten victories and been awarded the [Iron Cross](#) First Class.

In early 1943 Geiger was promoted to [Oberleutnant](#) (first lieutenant) and transferred to a 7./NJG 1, becoming [Staffelkapitän](#) (squadron leader) in May 1943, with some 40 confirmed Victories. On 29 September 1943 he was shot down by the Beaufighter VI of W/C [Bob Braham](#) of [No. 141 Squadron RAF](#) over the [Zuiderzee](#), [Netherlands](#).^[1] Geiger managed to bail out of his [Messerschmitt Bf-110](#) but died in the process.



Re: Short Stirling I N3754 MG-O RAF 7 Squadron Postby [jamesinnewcastle](#) » Thu Dec 11, 2014

Hi All

Errol Green's daughter has been in touch with me and I have supplied her with the squadron ORBs, not sure if anyone has sent these to her before but anyway there are some phrases on them that I do not understand so if anyone can help!

1. Errol Green took part in the first, second and third 1000 Bomber Raids - on form 540 it is noted that:

OPERATIONS: Second raid of "The Thousand Plan

Detailed: STIRLING N. 3708 S/Ldr CREBBIN DFC

" R. 9306 SGT GREEN

There are other names mentioned but what exactly did this entry mean? What was it to be "Detailed"?

1) As shown. Aircraft serial number, skipper, crew. In other words, the battle order for this aircraft.

2. D.N.C.O ?? 2) Duty Not Carried Out

3. T.R. ?? It can be 'bombed on' and can 'fail' But what do the letters stand for?

3.TR 1335 was the Gee Box. Navigation aid to enhance bombing accuracy.

4. Gardening is dropping mines and the mines are the 'vegetables' but what is 'Rosemary'?

?

4) Gardening targets were listed by codewords. Rosemary was an area off Heligoland.

Thanks for the decodes!
Cheers
James

From: GLYNNE HOWELL [mailto:GLYNNE HOWELL <gkntstmarys@btinternet.com>]

Sent: Monday, 29 December 2014 3:23 AM

To: Sister Chrysanthi

Subject: Re: Of Stirlings and stalags

Hi again



(This photo was on my Mum's villa wall but never knew the story behind it).

Directly above is
Errol Green

Glynne writes: Thought I had better tell you the story behind the photo. On the 24th November 1941 two Stirlings took off from Oakington and headed for Borkum looking for any enemy shipping. On reaching the Borkum area they found a convoy which they attacked. At this point eight Me 109s arrived and attacked both aircraft, fighting off repeated attacks, shooting down two fighters they headed for home at sea level. Several crew members received awards hence the photo. See 'Place, Date summary of Events' - this was one of Errol's sorties 24.11.41

As for the POW camps, at first when captured he would have gone to Frankfurt Dulag Luft for interrogation, then on to Stalag Luft 111 (Sagan). As you have said he was moved from there just before the Great Escape. With the increase of RAF and American POWs in the camp, the Germans decided to open up an old German army training camp as a POW camp. This was not far from Sagan, a place called Belaria, I think this camp was run by the Sagan administration and called also Stalag Luft 3. The rest I think you know, the long march west. Regards Glynne

I will see what else I can find out for you. You will have to let me know what operations you have so I can look out the ones you are missing from the Sqn ORBs.

Will contact you again soon,

Regards Glynne.

British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP), often referred to as simply "**The Plan**", was a massive, joint military [aircrew](#) training program created by the [United Kingdom](#), [Canada](#), [Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#), during the [Second World War](#).^[1] BCATP remains as one of the single largest aviation training programs in history and was responsible for training nearly half the [pilots](#), [navigators](#), [bomb aimers](#), [air gunners](#), [wireless operators](#) and [flight engineers](#) who served with the [Royal Air Force](#) (RAF), [Royal Australian Air Force](#) (RAAF), [Royal Canadian Air Force](#) (RCAF) and [Royal New Zealand Air Force](#) (RNZAF) during the war.^[2]

Information from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Commonwealth_Air_Training_Plan

Background -The United Kingdom was considered an unsuitable location for air training, due to the possibility of enemy attack, the strain caused by wartime traffic at airfields and the unpredictable climate, so the plan called for the facilities in the [Dominions](#) to train British and each other's aircrews. The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan was viewed as an incredibly ambitious programme. The 1939 agreement stated that the training was to be similar to that of the RAF: three initial training schools, thirteen elementary flying training schools, sixteen service flying training schools, ten air observer schools, ten bombing and gunnery schools, two air navigation schools and four wireless schools were to be created.^[7]

The agreement called for the training of nearly 50,000 aircrew each year, for as long as necessary: 22,000 aircrew from Great Britain, 13,000 from Canada, 11,000 from Australia and 3,300 from New Zealand. Under the agreement, air crews received elementary training in various Commonwealth countries before travelling to Canada for advanced courses.^[8] Training costs were to be divided between the four governments.

Countries involved



During 1940, Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) schools were established across Australia to support EATS in Initial Training, Elementary Flying Training, Service Flying Training, Air Navigation, Air Observer, Bombing and Gunnery and Wireless Air Gunnery. The first flying course started on 29 April 1940.



Canada was chosen as the primary location for "The Plan" because of its ideal weather, wide open spaces suitable for flight and navigation training — sometimes on a large scale, ample supplies of fuel, industrial facilities for the production of trainer aircraft, parts and supplies, the lack of any threat from either the [Luftwaffe](#) or [Japanese fighter aircraft](#) and its relative proximity to both the [European](#) and [Pacific theatres](#).

Instructor and student with [RCAF Station Uplands](#), Canada, 1941.



Errol in Canada



Errol sailed from Sydney 21.2.41 arriving 16.3.41



Birthday 8.6.41 aged 25

Errol Errol

Pilot's Name: *Charles John Errol* Date and Place of Birth: *18.10.40, 6.12.40*

Home and Address of next of kin: *18.10.40, 6.12.40*

Relationship: *Errol Errol*

Service Number: *18.10.40, 6.12.40*

Rank: *Errol Errol*

Branch: *Errol Errol*

Remarks: *Errol Errol*

Signature: *Errol Errol*

Date: *Errol Errol*

States: Flying training 2 ITS (initial training service) 14.10.40, 6.12.40
Australia Recruiting centre
5 EFTS (Elementary Flying Training) 12.12.40- 5.2.41 Linfield, Sydney + Narromine +Bradfield Park Pass 64%
2 SFTS(Service Flying training school) 17.3.41, 28.5.1941 Average
Willing aerobatics Good average
Awarded Flying Badge WLF 23.5 41
[RCAF Station Uplands](#), Canada,

Errol embarked 18.6.41 Canada for UK arriving 17.7.41

Green

Name and Address of next of kin: *18.10.40, 6.12.40*

Relationship: *Errol Errol*

Service Number: *18.10.40, 6.12.40*

Rank: *Errol Errol*

Branch: *Errol Errol*

Remarks: *Errol Errol*

Signature: *Errol Errol*

Date: *Errol Errol*

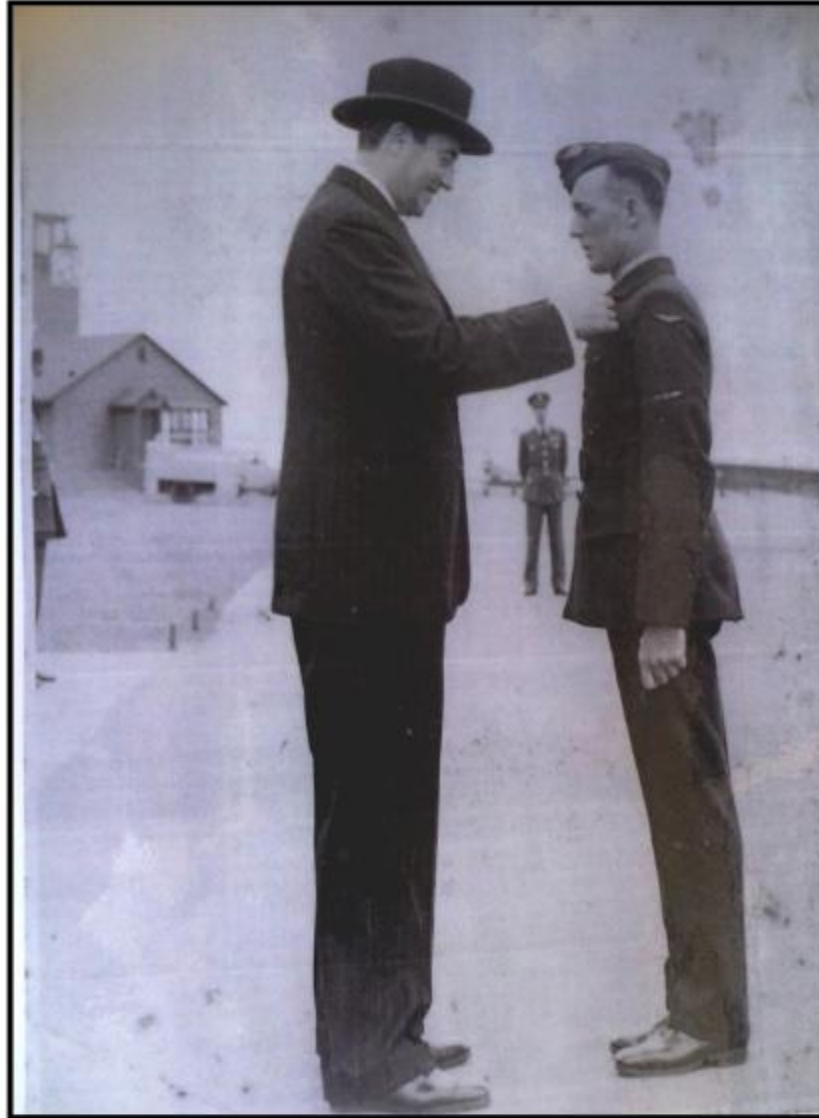
States:1. Errol granted as Pilot Officer in RAAF on 17.6.1942 (General duties).
2. Flying Officer (Temp) 17.6.1942 Temp. Flight Lieutenant
3. 17.6.1944 awarded while as Prisoner of war in Germany
4. Registered as missing 26.6.1942
5.- 11.5.45 registered as safe in UK
6.- 8.8.45 repatriated to Australia



Errol seated 3rd from the right



Errol second from the right



ERROL Awarded his Flying
Badge in Canada by Sir
Clive Baillieu- Director
General of the British
Purchasing Commission-
23.5.41

Embarked 18.6.41 Canada
for UK arriving 17.7.41



Summer uniform- Errol 3rd from left –in Canada training -16.3.41- 18.6.41

Training to be a Pilot was rigorous; the trainee had to be accountable for mistakes in Training- even rendering the trainee to be suspended from further training, stripped of his wings and rank and sent home to do menial duties. I have since learned that in training and other accidents in bomber command, there were over 8,000 air crew killed and another 4,000 or more injured as a result of accidents. This was invariably caused by inexperience, worn out aircraft, overcrowded skies and/ or bad weather. All our training was then to be put to the test knowing that the survival rate was not high. It is understood the life expectancy of a Lancaster bomber was no more than forty hours operational flying time. Nearly nine thousand of all Bomber Command aircraft failed to return from bombing raids over Nazi occupied Europe during the war, of which three thousand five hundred were Lancasters.

From 1939 to 1945, from a total of about one hundred and twenty five thousand, over fifty five thousand Bomber Command crew were killed as a result of all bombing operations over Europe. More than 4,000 Australians were among that number. Almost 10,000 became prisoners of war. This rate of loss has been reputed to be greater than the total loss of British Army Officers in the trenches during World War 1. "Mission Incomplete" by Dudley Hannaford- (Australia) -- Introduction.

Dudley Hannaford lived in a Retirement village near Camden. Dudley's book 'Mission Incomplete'. gave me my first understanding of what my Dad's war journey might have been like.

PREPARATIONS FOR TAKE OFF IN BOMBER COMMAND



FROM book 'Aircrew the story of the men who flew bombers' (in England) by Bruce Lewis-

'The most terrifying enemy the bomber crews had to face was appalling weather—endless blankets of fog and fierce head winds. Ice was the worst menace. It formed thick layers on the wings. It turned hydraulic systems to jelly; gun turrets, bomb doors, undercarriages all stopped working. It formed opaque sheen over Perspex windows, making it impossible to see out. Ice played havoc with instruments and the radio.' Frostbite was not uncommon among those who flew in these pioneer bombers. Hands were encased first in a silk glove, over this a woollen glove, and finally a thick leather gauntlet. In order to carry out some essential duties, plotting a course on a chart for instance, writing up a signals log, or accurately tapping out a message on a Morse key, this protective clothing had to be removed. If a bare hand inadvertently touched a metal part of the aircraft it would freeze to that object immediately.'

On one of his first cross-countries out training, the writer 'had been provided with a pack of sandwiches wrapped in grease-proof paper with an outer cover of newspaper. In addition he was given a small tin of concentrated orange juice. About 3 am he felt the need for refreshment. He reached for the fire axe and aimed a blow at the top of the tin, making a suitable hole through which to pour the liquid. It was a waste of time. The orange juice had frozen into a solid block. Unwrapping the sandwiches he discovered they were encased in a frosty covering of crystals and were hard as stone. When he hit them with an axe, sharp splinters of bread flew all over the cabin.' He noted he was flying in an airborne refrigerator.

(From Dudley Hannaford) Preparations for air crews started about midday with specialist briefings when each crew member received detailed instructions from his section head, followed by the main briefing. It was at this briefing each captain answered the roll call on behalf of his assembled crew after which the battle order, target and enemy flak positions and fighter concentrations to be avoided as well as 'doubtful' information on likely weather conditions to be encountered. This was followed by "Any question?" All this happened in a windowless room with a guard at the door. The last call, as always, was "Synchronise your watches- the time now is- good luck chaps!" This was followed by a special ops meal which was always welcome (P2-3).... {Then ...early bacon and eggs, because of the severe food rationing in Britain this was always a bonus for all who returned safely, (P.17)}

All necessities, such as parachute, "Mae West" (life jacket), leather helmet with intercom and oxygen attachments, extra warm clothing, flying boots, other personal items like coffee flasks and maybe 'bikkies', were gathered up and taken to the crew room to await necessary transport to take us to our allotted dispersal, usually two crews to a van. At the dispersal we joined our ever faithful ground crew who had always done a champion job. They were waiting in their "home-made" dispersal hut which they called their "retreat", and where they regularly had a good coal fire going. We generally had to wait around so we were always pleased to join them for a chat. We had become a close-knit team. They were very much a part of us. We knew they had our safety at heart and we were certainly conscious of it.

Our bomb load this time was 9 five hundred pounders and one "cookie"-four thousand pounder- as well as some incendiaries. Our load was limited to the weight of nine thousand pounds because of having to carry the maximum fuel load of 2154 gallons to such a distant target. En route we were to fly at nine thousand feet till we reached our bombing height of eleven thousand feet. Take off could be delayed due to changed weather conditions. This was fairly normal and it was something to which we had become conditioned, but not without protest at times.

At least half an hour before take-off was the time to get onboard to do the final checks- electrical, radio and radio gear, bomb sight and switches, oxygen, turrets- while the pilot gave the engines a run-up with the flight engineer checking all his gauges. It was about this time when the Commanding Officer usually dropped by in his car to wish us all well. It was always a good morale booster. If and when everything checked out OK the pilot signed the Form 700, signifying the aircraft was fit to fly. This was the last physical contact we had with the ground staff.

Sixteen aircraft from each squadron lined up head to tail along the perimeter tracks ready for take-off at about one minute intervals as the signal was given. As always, there was the large crowd which consisted of ground staff, both RAF and WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force), senior officers and sometimes the Commanding or Station Officer. They all lined up at the beginning of the runway to wave us off, each in turn. It was a constant reminder that it was totally a team effort. It was estimated that for every member of the air-crew there were nine ground staff involved in getting them into the air. So, responding to the

green flash of the aldis lamp at the end of the runway, we were off. There was great relief when we finally and safely lifted off. Our time of take off was recorded.

As we increased in height through cloud, some icing developed on the propellers, windscreen and leading edges of the wings but it wasn't long before we passed through it all as we continued to climb to our designated height. There was always the danger of the pitch head on the airspeed indicator, even though it was electrically warmed, being affected by icing and giving a false reading. Over the North Sea the gunners fired their test bursts making sure their guns were in good working order.

As we crossed into enemy-occupied territory we could see the occasional flashes and puffs of smoke from flak ahead and on each side but none close enough to worry us. From the time we began flying over enemy territory the bomb aimer regularly pushed out bundles of "window" – strips of metal foil- which were designed to provide a screen for the bomber stream, with the intention of clouding the German radar monitors. This was particularly important when approaching the target area which was our most vulnerable time.

One of the wireless operator's important responsibilities was to listen out for each quarter-hourly broadcast from base in England. These broadcasts were vital and important not to miss one. They were sent on code and could at any time relay a change in instructions, direction or, at times, a recall. On the outward journey, strict radio silence had to be observed unless you were designated as a 'link' with base for important communications or were confronted with an emergency such as having to ditch into the North Sea. In such cases an SOS distress signal could be transmitted. Another duty, particularly near or over the target, was to keep a watch-out through the astrodrome for fighter enemy planes. Every eye on them was important. **P. 2-8 'Mission Incomplete' by Dudley Hannaford.**

PLANE HIT AND GIVEN THE ORDER TO EVACUATE THE PLANE AND BALE OUT...

Beginning the descent by parachute- by rolling over and over before feeling the tug on the harness was the welcome loud crack as the chute opened. All the training exercises, like making the necessary count before the pull, God's guidance and instinct take over. With great relief, I swung to and fro while gently floating down. There was an uncanny quiet, apart from the sound of the wind swishing past the canopy- almost unreal after all the confusion, noise and hectic drama through which we had just passed. The plane now a complete inferno from stern to stern, passed by me at quite close range till it finally crashed one hundred and fifty to two hundred metres away and exploded in a ball of flame and thick black smoke.

Time spent in the chute was amazingly short. I passed through some low cloud and mist just before hitting the deck with a mighty thud, totally unprepared. The low cloud and the darkness closing in beneath it made it hard to anticipate and I had no idea at that stage how low we were when we bailed out. Fortunately it was a muddy field. It had been raining heavily and the ground was very soggy. I was grateful to be in such a welcome spot. I knew it could have been much worse from stories we had heard on the Squadron-could have been caught in a tree, in a swirling river or lake, on a burning city building or even a Gestapo Headquarters, as was the sad experience of some.

MAYBE ERROL EXPERIENCED SOMETHING LIKE THIS AS HIS BACK COLLIDED WITH A POST AS HE LANDED.

As a result of my sudden 'clash with the earth' I copped excruciating pain in the back as well as a sprained ankle. It took me a moment or two to get my breath. The back problem slowed me up but there were more important things to think about now. I was more than thankful to the One whom I now had come to trust. When I picked myself up my first priority was to get rid of my chute. It was such a big white mass glowing in the night. So, working at top speed, I buried it together with the harness', Mae West' and other gear, by piling mud over the top of them all in quite a deep ditch between the field and a quiet country road. I then began to make myself scarce. We were always issued with elementary escape rations. These included a compass- the size of a five cent piece, a large map of the whole of Europe or part thereof, depending on the target, half a dozen matches, cigarettes, concentrated food blocks (half inch square), thirst sweets, a number of hoerlicks and vitamin tablets, water purifying tablets, sleeping tablets, a half pint rubber water pouch, a razor and shaving brush. Because of the extra long distance to this target we were also given a supplementary escape kit. The rounded Perspex container fitted nicely into each inside breast pocket. All in all this was expected to sustain us for at least a week or as long as we could stretch them.

ERROL WAS SHOT DOWN OVER BREMEN AND WAS CAUGHT AT BENTHEIM, GERMANY 26.6.42 AND SPENT THE WEEKEND IN A CELL NEAR OR UNDER COLOGNE CATHEDRAL



This is a summary of Dad's squadron war log notes for the sorties (23 as 2nd pilot + 9 as Captain) he participated in and includes portions of Bill Goodman's book which related to Dad's sorties and of Dudley Hannaford plus portions of letters from his mother sent to Errol while doing operations and as POW.

PLACE	DATE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS
Oakington	24 th Nov. '41	'K' W/Comdr. H.R. Graham DSO and 'J' Sgt. Taylor (of Sydney, NSW)	left to attack enemy shipping. South of Borkim they sighted an enemy convoy which the former attacked but missed between the two target ships. 'K' was attacked by 8 M.E. 109's, up to 3 attacked at any one time generally breaking off at 1,000- 1200 yards. One pressed home attack from ahead firing some cannon. Front gunner got in 50 rounds and the mid-upper gunner got in some good hits at 150 feet range as the M.E. passed above. It was seen by the rear gunner to burst into flames and dive almost vertically to sea level- was last seen making for land still burning.

We had a changed course so that we were approaching Brest from a southerly direction, so that WE were now approaching with the sun behind us and blinding the ground defences. Brest was then a German Navy base for the war in the Atlantic. At the time the Pocket battleships, Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, were berthed there for repairs. It was imperative that they remain there as they were such a potential danger if allowed out to attack our shipping. To do the maximum damage we were carrying armour piercing bombs, two thousand pounds each, long, slim and looked very wicked. The aim was to put them through the armour plated decks before they exploded inside. Graham was trying something new for our squadron. We were to go in in a steep glide rather than a dive- a frightening prospect with such a large aircraft, but the Stirling was very manoeuvrable and 'gentleman friendly'. P.83. : 'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air-gunner's tale' by WE 'Bill' Goodman. P.83

At one time I worked with the Australian pilot, Errol Green. He had acquired the distinction of telling Graham to quit trying to land. He was returning from a daylight sweep off the German and Dutch coasts. The squadron had a reputation for one or two Stirling's to make them carry some 250 pound high explosive bombs and as much daylight ammunition as could be loaded for the guns. Sometimes they would be in company with our fighters briefed to escort them; on other sweeps they would be on their own. Obviously shipping would be a target if any were found; if not a few bombs from low level onto German fighter dromes on the Friesian islands or near the Dutch coast. The Luftwaffe pilots came up to engage them, only to be shot down as they could never know our tactics and the use of some of the older Stirlings which had beam guns rather than the later mid-upper turrets

Returning to Errol Green: They arrived back home without damage and the Wingco made all arrangements to land. The nature of his landings invariably involved a number of bounces, some of which were likely to put the aircraft in danger as they were so severe. Those of us who became aware he was about to land would drop whatever we were doing to watch and it was not unknown for bets to be made on the outcome.

To the amazement of the watchers it made a perfect landing, and it was only when it became known from the Flying Control staff that the Wingco had left his radio switched on after the last transmission, so that the pre-landing checks were heard by them. The plane made an approach, obviously with Graham at the controls, when Errol's voice was heard shouting, 'Get your hands off the controls. I'm taking it down!' and the plane's flying attitude settled down and the landing from the right hand seat was perfect. Not a word of reproof was uttered by the Wingco and the matter died a death, but remained in the memories of us all." P. 91, 92 : 'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air-gunner's tale' by WE 'Bill' Goodman.

Towards the end of December, the weather worsened a little. It became dull with increasing dampness, and we had a few quiet days. Christmas approached and we all looked forward to a grand

Christmas Eve. To our dismay it was rumoured amongst Intelligence sources that despite the damage the two pocket battleships might sail from Brest, taking advantage of the worsening weather and the possible 'hung over' condition of the RAF crews and make a dash up the English Channel on Christmas Day 1941.

During WW1 the opposing armies had held an unofficial truce, meeting in 'no man's land', singing carols together and if I remember correctly, even having a game of football. It was obvious that in WW2 there would be no such relaxation on that day.

24.12.41 The aircraft were assembled ready for take-off the following day, should the ships sail, fully refuelled and ready to receive the bomb load at the last minute. Engineers were unhappy that the planes should stand around for many hours overnight with so much additional weight of fuel in the fully laden tanks, but operational necessity seems to have been very important. We were all confined to camp that evening and aircrews were banned from the bars in the Officers' and Sergeants' messes. To further that isolation it was impossible to telephone calls to numbers off-camp.

When we awoke on Christmas Day there was a sprinkling of snow frozen to the surface of the runway and surfaces of the planes. It would have been foolhardy to attempt a take-off with frozen surfaces on the planes or in intakes which could affect instrumentation, viz. the pitot head tube which connects to the air speed indicator. Everyone not engaged on essential duties was pressed into service with shovels and brooms to clear the runway and to de-ice the aircraft. Bomb loads had been prepared to winch up into the bomb bays and the work had just been completed when word came through that the ships were not coming out and the operation was cancelled. The aircrews were stood down for the rest of the day. One more thing remained to be done- excess fuel had to be drained from the tanks and put back into the fuel storage facilities to lighten the weight of the bombers. What an anticlimax!

I always wondered what operation was cancelled that allowed Dad and Mum to meet on Christmas Day 1941!!!

Traditionally in the RAF on Christmas Day all members of the Officers and Sergeants messes attended at the Dining Rooms of corporals, airmen, including their WAAF members. The men and women have their dinners served to them by the mess members amongst much jollity, crackers and all the other things to make for a Christmas as merry as war-time would allow. I was working hard as a waiter along with a pilot called Errol Green; we came to one particular WAAF who knew me. She was a Scottish girl. I left them talking together and later, on occasions, I saw them walking out together. P.89, 90 'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air-gunner's tale' by WE 'Bill' Goodman.



Oakington 3rd March '42 Nine aircraft visited the RENAULT Works at Rillancourt and dropped 100,000 lbs. of bombs on the objective. Hits were observed on the Power station, the Gasometer blew up and altogether a very successful time was 'had by all'. Most aircraft reported a congestion of friendly aircraft, very few searchlights and little 'FLAK'. In fact a perfect party except for the lack of a traffic cop!

Oakington 8th March '42 Eight aircraft to Essen on an incendiary Raid. Good results were obtained on

the whole, many fires being started some of which were visible sixty miles away. In all nearly 10,000 4lbs. incendiaries and 48 x 250 incendiaries were dropped in and around KRUPPS Works.

After the Battle of Britain (July- September 1940) and the German invasion of Russia (December 1940- June 1941), the Luftwaffe had to commit a large element of its strength to the Eastern front. What was left was not enough to knock out RAF bases etc, but was able to continue night raids on London. The Luftwaffe started to mount raids against towns and cities of historical and architectural interest of the nineteenth century but which were not considered legitimate 'war targets'. One of the first was Coventry, which was absolutely devastated in the attack- Other cities York, Canterbury, Norwich, Exeter and Bath being prominent in the list of unwarranted destruction. Naturally, the entire English speaking world was disgusted, many demanding repercussions against similar German cities instead of the war targets the allies raided. In the briefings for various raids crews were not happy when the reciprocal was to occur, as they did not wish to indulge in the barbaric conduct of the enemy...murmurings that almost hinted of mutiny occurred. But sanity prevailed and to obey orders was the safer option. But sometimes other factors occurred so that the target wasn't reached.

As well as Essen and Mannheim; Dortmund, Cologne and Hamburg had our attention, and sometimes more than once. We did our share of 'Gardening' when we planted 'vegetables'. Vegetables was the code name for a sea mine and they were 'sown' in waterways, most often waters where the RN minelayers could not reach. It followed that the code name 'gardening' should cover the sowing of vegetables. Such operations could be as dangerous as bombing trips as they required low level flying and were so often well within the range of enemy guns. P.108, 109 : 'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air-gunner's tale' by WE 'Bill' Goodman.

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| Oakington | 13 th March '42 | Eight aircraft to Cologne. Five reached the primary and dropped 72x 250lbs and 4320 x 4 lbs. incendiaries in the target area. Many fires were seen starting and in progress in the town. Two aircraft returned owing to failure of Special Equipment and one had engine trouble. All returned safely. One freshman bombed an aerodrome S.E. of Dunkirk. |
| Oakington | 6 th April '42 | Five aircraft were detailed to attack ESSEN. Weather conditions were appalling and all turned back. Continuous heavy rain, thunderstorms and squalls made the carrying out of the operation impossible though S/Ldr. D.J.H Lay (DFC) reached the Dutch coast. |
| Oakington | 7 th April '42 | Group Captain, C.D. Adams and W/Cmdr H.R. Graham DSO attended a lunch in London given by the directors of Shorts, builders of the Stirling. W/Cmdr. Graham in a short speech summarized the efforts of 7 Squadron since the commencement of operations in February 1941. |

In 525 Sorties 1,600 tons of bombs were dropped on enemy territory at the cost of 29 aircraft and 199 casualties were killed, missing or prisoners of war. One DSO, 12 DPC's and 12 DPM's have been awarded the Squadron and 34 enemy aircraft destroyed or probably so.

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| Oakington | 8 th April '42 | Nine aircraft were detailed for operations HAMBURG and Gardening. Three aircraft abandoned HAMBURG due to icing trouble and one more from excessive oil temperature. Two aircraft bombed the primary target, six good bursts and some fires started in target area. |
| Oakington | 10 th April '42 | Two aircraft attacked the harbour at LE HAVRE and five |

ESSEN.. S/Ldr. D.J.H Lay DFC. was attacked by a night fighter and made a good landing with one tyre punctured.

Oakington 12th April '42 ESSEN was again the primary objective, eight aircraft being detailed to attack it. There were so many fires that results were with difficulty observed. Fires were visible 100 miles away however and the results appeared satisfactory. Dropped bombs on decks 5,6 and 7.

21st April '42 H.R.H. The Duchess of Gloucester visited the station but her activities were in connection with the W.A.A.F. personnel and she did not visit the Squadron.

28th April '42 It was a month of records for the Squadron. One hundred sorties was topped for the first time. Out of 105 sorties only one aircraft was lost and 262 tons of bombs were dropped. W/Commander B.D. Selleck DFC. recorded his thanks to the ground staff for their splendid efforts which made this possible.



Oakington 9th May 1942

Eva Green's letters to her son Errol in England and Germany

Just another attempt to tell you the news from home- First of all we 'three' are all well, just waiting for news of our loved ones, and we will be OK. That sums up all that matters these days. Of course we have to keep our eyes open for the 'yellow menace' but we believe 'we can take it' with the help of God and the assistance of our American friends....

Well today is another milestone in Dad's life he was very lucky....many gifts and we feel sure there will be a cable soon from 'England'. He is feeling quite pleased with himself. The only 'fly' in the ointment is that he has to answer these gifts; also he has to write to Grandma for Mother's Day. I don't mind as it gives one a spell.

I am listening to the 'wireless' giving us an account of 'cloths rationing'. We used to think that only belonged to foreign countries, but it is here now, but we don't mind, we want to win this terrible war come what may.

We received a letter from Alvin today. He seems well. He has not been home for nearly three months. I sent him a cake for his birthday and he did not receive it so far. He seems to be out somewhere where he doesn't get his mail regularly. I also posted one for you too Errol; also we posted two puddings in tins. I just wrote a few lines and put in the parcel explaining how to remove the puddings easily. It was not a letter as we always write twice each week. So some kind person, who certainly has no one 'overseas' or far away forward the note back to me. Someday they may have loved ones far away, or will they? They may have easy jobs at home.

Mavis and Aunt rang up late last night for Dad's birthday and Mother's Day. It was lovely to hear poor old Mavis's voice again. She is very happy. So was Sadie, laughing away as usual. Flora was 'out' but will ring again soon.

Now this seems all for this time, so with these words I will close. Be strong and of Good Courage; be not afraid, for the Lord thy God is with thee wither thou goest.

Love & all God's blessings from your loving Mother, Dad and Elva

17.5.42

My darling Errol,

Well the weeks go by and sometimes I think that is week more to the end of all this terrible war. How are you Errol? I would like so much to know. But it takes so long to get an answer, the mails are very slow now, but one of these days we will get a great big bundle. I hope so at any rate and I do hope you receive ours OK. We never miss twice each week. I'd rather miss a meal than miss writing to you.

Elva has not had word from John since Feb. from Java. She is hoping each day will bring news of him. She is far better than I thought but I believe "Your lack will be according to your burden". I do hope and pray he is safe.

Mavis seems very happy. Aunt Sadie wrote to Elva yesterday. She is wonderful. She is a mother to Mavis and Elva, that is if?? you can have two mothers (she is very good anyway). I'll never forget how she treated us while you were in Sydney. She made all that last week possible for us to be together so much. She often asks one to go down, but I am waiting for you to come home then I'll go down willingly. The weather is lovely here now- Just getting cold at night. We could do with some rain for the farm.

Dad is getting the machine for threshing the corn tomorrow while Alvin is home to help. We have a lot of corn and it's a good price. The cane is a problem. Who is going to cut it?

I still have my 'love birds' noisy as ever and Roger too. He is just a friendly dog, not much use of course. Dad has started the tractor again ploughing all the corn stalks -Plenty to do, but he keep going and keeps well. We still get enough petrol to go to church twice on Sunday. Mr. Trotter is doing very well. We all like him and Mrs. Trotter.

There is talk of cloth rationing and most people went mad and bought up more than they need. Lots of things are getting scarce, but Australians should never starve while we have an Australia and God to help and protect us. I often think of that Hymn we used to sing. Lead kindly Light amid the encircling gloom. Lead Thou me on, I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless. Lead Thou one on also, Rock of Ages cleft for one. Let one hide myself in Thee. So I hope we will all trust and pray for help and peace on earth and good will among men.

Love from your loving Mother, Dad, Elva and Alvin.

21.5.42 Crews trained and posted to No.7 Squadron Sgt. Green (Captain)

Flying time for the month 142.35 hours

22/30th May Met. Conditions prevented operations

20.5.42

My dear Errol,

"Thanks for Dad's Birthday Cable". We received it yesterday, also two letters written 20th and 24th March. They were very welcome. You must have missed some of our letters if you did not hear any news of Mavis' wedding as we all gave an account of it at different times. It was 27th December she was married at 6.30 in the Free Church. Mrs. McPherson did most of the catering and we had the long tables in the lounge room decorated with pink and blue 'hiderangers'. We had all sorts of nice things- Chicken Platters and Sandwiches and cordials (nothing stronger). Did you receive your piece of wedding cake and also the photos? I am sorry we all looked so glum. Well that's how I felt. It's pretty hard for one to smile these days. I am keeping them in store. Mavis is very happy these days. I am sure by now she has written lots of letters. Poor old Elva is still waiting news of John since Feb but she has great faith that he is safe. I do hope that God will care for you Errol and I do thank Him for keeping you so far and pray that you will be spared to return to me if it is His will.

We had Alvin home. You could hardly believe how well he looks. He had not been home for 3 months. He had 6 days home. He helped Dad thresh out 140 bags of corn. They got word that 100bags was sold for {censored}. Dad and Alvin put 40 bags in the big tank. I saw in the paper that the girls out of 'Coles' Grafton went down to Herb Greene last Sunday and husked 50 bags of maize.

I keep on sending small parcels. I hope they are OK. I sent two this month. I just scribbled a few lines to make the parcel more attractive, but some kind person returned them to me. Evidently he has no one across the seas. Considering we write twice each week it was only a note and please remember that I am not to blame.

Now if we could see beyond today as God can
If all the clouds could roll away
The shadows flee
Our present grief we would not fret
Each sorrow we would soon forget
For many joys are waiting yet
For you and me!

I do hope and pray that God's goodness will continue to follow you all the days of your life. I will ever thank Him for all His goodness to you Errol. Trust your life in His keeping and we will not fear. It's always my prayer and lots of others praying for you and John too. I do hope he is safe. God can care for you and John too.

Love from your loving Mother, Dad and Elva. Dad keeps very well.

- 30th May OPERATIONS: 'The Thousand Plan' (1st Thousand Plan for Dad as Captain)
COLOGNE- The largest raid of the war. 19 Stirlings left this station, in which 7
& 101 Conversion Flight aircraft and aircrew co-operated. A successful raid, on a clear
moonlit target. Large fires and bursts seen by most aircraft. Over 1,000 aircraft left Cologne
ablaze. 4 aircraft had engine troubles. All other aircraft bombed target, and all returned
safely to base.
- 1.6.42 Eighteen aircraft of this Squadron took off on another thousand effort. (2nd Thousand Plane)
Target was ESSEN. Two sorties abandoned owing to engine and trouble. Many fires were
started in built up area despite cloud. One failed to return.

31.5.42

My dear Errol,

Well Errol it will be your 26th anniversary on the 8th. I'll be thinking of you my boy. I never dreamed that you would be so far away from home but I know that God is guiding and caring for you or I could not endure the strain. I wish you many happy returns of the 8th. I will send you a "Cable" tomorrow 1st as I always do. I sent two parcels a few weeks back. Did you get that suit? I had it cleaned and pressed for you. It should be through by now but things take so long these times, but we must be thankful. We are all in our usual good health and today we are all sitting on the front porch in the sun. It is a beautiful Sabbath day and everything so calm and peaceful. The river looks lovely and calm.

Alvin had hard luck on his leave. He took one day extra to help Dad thresh the corn and then could not go on the 1st Div of Express so kept him some hours late. He had two days pay deducted from his pay and fined 1 pound. So that is his first (bad marks). It may learn him a lesson. Dad did want help and he thought it was the right thing to do as there was over 140 bags to thresh. Things are rationed now and we have to have 'cupons'. Who would have thought that a few years ago? But we can take it that there will always be

plenty in Australia for everyone. Mr Trotter preached today on the text 'we can do all things through Christ'. If we trust and pray Christ will do the rest!

We are all right as far as work goes. Elva and I get on well but that awful anxiety of not hearing any news or knowing where John is. But God has opened prison doors before and set the captives free. I had a letter from Mrs Bailey 'Lloyds Mother'. She said she will wait patiently for she knows miracles were performed 1900 years ago and still can be. So I do hope nothing worse than being a prisoner is his fate. The news now is bad but I still believe we are on the right side and 'Right' is 'Might'.

The road is pretty busy today as the cane gangs go out tomorrow to make a start on the cane for the season. There is supposed to be 9000 tons this year so there should be enough sugar. The trouble is getting men. Some say that the girls will have to help drive the carts. There are a lot of potatoes being planted but I am wondering who will pick them. Dad is planting a few tone down along the front.

Errol, you are always in my mind and prayers both you and John and Alvin. We are always looking for mail so I hope we are lucky this week. We received Dad's birthday cable. "He really was expecting it". Now Errol I really must be closing hoping and praying that you are trusting your life in God's care, that He will be the unseen guest in all your journeys and He bless and keep you always in your Mother's prayer.

Love from all at home. Mum.

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| 2.6.42 | A follow on raid on ESSEN took place, eight sorties being detailed. Seven took off. Many fires were started in target area. One failed to return. |
| 5.6.42 | Seven sorties detailed to attack ESSEN over again. Three attacked successfully. Two sorties abandoned owing to engine trouble. |
| 6.6.42 | Seven sorties to EMDEN, starts several fires. One failed to return. |
| 8.6.42 | ESSEN- Seven sorties detailed but two abortive. Errol's 26 th birthday. |
| 12.6.42 | Visit of their Majesties the King and Queen to this station, who with A.V.M. Baldwin C.B. DSO. O.B.E. inspected aircraft and 'Cologne' bombs. |
| 13-15.6 | No operations |
| 16.6.4 | ESSEN again. Six sorties detailed; one had a burst tail wheel; one returned owing to exactor trouble and two met severe icing conditions. One failed to return. |
| 25.6.42 | (Errol's 3 rd Thousand Plan flight as Captain) Another thousand raid over BREMEN. Cloud made necessary bombing on E.T.A. by T.R. fix. Of sixteen sorties two returned to base with engine troubles, one sortie jettisoned bombs near EMDEN during evasive action. One sortie bombed VERESACK as alternative. |

SGT. Green and his crew and plane failed to return.

Dulag Luft

Near Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany
Interrogation Camp

Dulag Luft was the first stop for most Army Air Force Personnel captured in German occupied Europe. Newly arrived POWs were usually told "Vas Du Das Krieg Ist Uber" - "For You the War is Over." Hardships, suffering, deaths, illness, etc., in subsequent POW camps, proved that our POWs were very much a part of the war until their 1945 liberation.

Location: There were three installations: Interrogation center at Oberursel; Hospital at Hohemark; Transit camp at Wetzlar

Opened: 1942

POW Strength: From 1,000 per month in late 1943, to an average monthly intake of 2,000 in 1944. The Peak month was July 1944 with over 3,000 Allied Airmen and paratroopers. Since solitary confinement was the rule, the capacity of the camp was supposedly limited to 200 men. Strength on any given day averaged 250.



Camp Description: The camp had four large wooden barracks. Two of the barracks contained about 200 cells eight foot high, five foot wide wide and twelve feet long. Each cell held a cot, table, chair and an electric bell for the POW to call a guard. The third barrack contained the administrative headquarters. The fourth barrack, an L-shaped structure, held the interrogation offices, files and records. The camp was surrounded by a barbed wire fence and the perimeter was not equipped with floodlights or watchtowers.

Interrogations: Each prisoner was held in solitary confinement for a limited period of time - usually four or five days. During rush periods as many as five men were held in a cell. The interrogators used various methods in an effort to obtain operational information from the captured airmen. Most POWs

gave only the information required by the Geneva Convention - Name, rank and serial number. After interrogation the men were sent to a transit camp and then to their established POW camp.

Liberation: On 25 April 1945 American troops overran Oberursel camp vacated by German personnel and records destroyed or moved elsewhere.

INTERROGATION

They piled us on to the back of a small truck with no shelter whatsoever. It was to take us about sixteen kilometres North West of Frankfurt to the notorious 'sweat boxes' of the infamous Dulag Luft. On arrival we were placed into solitary confinement after the usual search and registration procedure. Photo was taken and allocated POW number (Errol's POW number was 317) and escorted to a cell. Personal items were taken.



Errol was sent to Dulag Luft-
Frankfurt from 27.6 -3.7. 1942



and
put in a cell in solitary
confinement before being taken
to Stalag Luft 111, Sagan now
Poland.

We had been given plenty of gen about what to expect, but we knew we had to face this before we could ever get to a permanent POW camp. Running over in my mind was, as drummed into us, 'you give your name, rank and number, nothing more!' - as required by the Geneva Convention of 1929- 'say nothing and keep saying it!' This was our duty! I remembered the advice that 'the enemy can learn nothing from a silent and resolute prisoner whose pockets are empty.' Our briefings on the Squadron had always emphasised that, when being interrogated, we must avoid all eye contact and be careful about any body language.

The cell was, as expected, very basic. It was narrow, less than two metres wide, with the usual wooden bench for a bed, a straw filled pillow and a small blanket. In addition there was a chair in the corner and, a high barred window with a small central heating unit on the floor, which was very welcome. But to my bitter disappointment this appliance operated for no more than one or two hours at a time when it was least required. The inner walls were of a fibre substance which was soft enough for kriegies to make indentations with their thumb nails. There were all sorts of messages and names recorded for posterity. The messages in which I was most interested were the number of days each one had to spend in this wretched place. Some of them had spent up to twenty days but the least and most attractive to me was four.

From the time of 'lock-up' there was no chance of seeing or speaking to another soul. This I greatly missed. The rules were strict. Before entering the cell our cosy lamb's wool lined flying boots were removed and kept in the corridor outside the room, in case we had any ideas of escaping. Pacing the concrete floor in well worn and holed socks was not the ideal way to keep feet warm but this I did hoping at least to keep the circulation going.

The food was terribly scant- barely enough to keep us alive. In the mornings I might get a couple of pieces of black rye bread, some watery soup for lunch and some more bread lightly spread with jam together with some ersatz coffee in the evening. The nights were long and sometimes I wondered if daylight would ever come.

For the interrogation I was allowed to put on my flying boots and I was marched along to a large pretentious office with a plush carpet and superior furnishings and furniture. There to greet me was one of their senior interrogating officers with the rank of Oberst (Colonel). To me he was a forbidding figure, smartly dressed in neat uniform with decorations, but initially quite easy to meet. He was most cordial as he spoke in a fluent cultured English accent- courteous and friendly. I had to remind myself that he was not a friend but the enemy who was now about to set traps for me. I lifted up a silent 'telegram' prayer to God for the needed wisdom and strength to cope with what might come my way. Still running through my mind was 'name, rank and number- nothing more'.

As I entered he greeted me warmly, shook my hands and asked me to take a seat. His large polished desk between us caught my attention as I complied. Looking up above his head I spotted on the wall behind him another of those larger than life-size portraits of Adolph Hitler. He began by offering a cigarette which I promptly declined. Leaning back on his impressive swivel chair he followed up by encouraging a congenial chat to which I didn't find room to respond. He started his discourse by telling me exactly when, where and how I and my crew were shot down. He knew what Squadron to which we were attached and the location of the Squadron in England.....(P 54-57 Dudley Hannaford)

CAMP LIFE

The nights were bitterly cold and we had to do with just one blanket each. Thankfully it wasn't too long before Red Cross parcels arrived. Although only in small numbers, the first sight of them was so exciting and to open them was beyond belief. Depending on the country from which the parcels came they would contain some of these items: dried fruits-raisins or prunes, canned meats and vegetables, fish- sardines or salmon, crackers, cheese, margarine, oats, dried milk, peanut butter, powdered egg, sugar, tea, cocoa and /or such extras as jam, chocolate, tooth powder and soap. If they came from Scotland they were bound to have shortbread. When available, it was expected that one parcel was sufficient for one person a week. P.68-69 'Mission Incomplete' by Dudley Hannaford.

Stalag Luft III Errol's camp from July 1942- January 44

Stalag Luft III

Model of the set used to film the movie *The Great Escape*. It depicts a smaller version of a single compound in *Stalag Luft III*. The model is now at the museum near where the prison camp was LOCATED



Sagan, Lower Silesia

Stalag Luft III Sagan, Germany (pre-war borders, 1937)	
Type	Prisoner-of-war camp
Site information	
Controlled by	 Nazi Germany
Site history	
In use	March 1942 – January 1945
Events	The "Great Escape"

Allied aircrew (officers) who were shot down and survived during World War II were incarcerated after interrogation in Air Force Prisoner of War camps run by the Luftwaffe, called Stalag Luft, short for *Stammlager* Luft or Permanent Camps for Airmen. **Stalag Luft III** was situated in a pine woods area at **Sagan**, 100 miles (168km) south-east of Berlin, now called Zagan, in Silesia. At the time of the escape it was part of Germany but is now in Poland.



P.O.W. camp hut 105

Camp Description: The camp had six compounds - Three used for American officers (South, Center and West) and three for R.A.F. Officers (including East & North). Each compound had fifteen one story wooden hutments to house prisoners. Barrack rooms were about 10 x 12 feet. The fifteen men in each room slept in five triple-decked bunks. In one corner was a wood or charcoal burning stove. A high wire fence surrounded the buildings. A few feet inside the fence was a low strand of wire - the warning wire. Guards were permitted to shoot any prisoner crossing the warning wire. Guard towers, equipped with powerful searchlights were placed at strategic locations along the fences. Armed guards with police dogs patrolled the interior and exterior perimeter of the camp.

Errol was taken from this camp in January 1944 to a subsidiary camp out of town to Belaria. This camp was managed by staff at Stalag Luft 3 and so was still called Stalag Luft 3. Errol was here until the evacuation on the long march January 1945. So, Errol was not in the main camp at the time of the actual 'Great escape' March 1944 but was involved in preparations beforehand.

Escape attempts: Escape attempts were started soon after Stalag 3 was established and reached a scale that was hardly reached by any of the other German POW camps. Almost everyone in all compounds were involved in one way or another in escape attempts. The major escape took place in the North (British) compound on 24 March 1944. It became known as "The Great Escape." A tunnel 336 feet in length, 30 feet below ground level, was constructed. Eighty prisoners made their way out and only three made it back to Great Britain. The rest were recaptured. Fifty of the escapees were executed by Gestapo firing squads.



Stalag 3 Sagan Evacuation: Russian troops were approaching Sagan, Poland. At 11:00 PM on 27 January 1945 Germans marched the POWs out of Stalag 3 with Spremberg for their destination. The exodus was harrowing to POWs of all compounds, especially to those of the South Compound who made the 55 kilometers from Sagan to Muskau in 27 hours with only 4 hours sleep. At Muskau they were given a 30 hour delay for recuperation and then marched another 25 km to Spremberg. At Moosburg men were railed "forty-and-eight" boxcars packed 50 men and 1 guard in each boxcar. The trip took two days and two nights. On 7 February the men from the Center Compound joined them. Errol was sent to Stalag 3A at Lukenwald near Berlin until 22nd April, 1945.

The camp is best known for two famous prisoner escapes that took place there by tunneling, which were depicted in the films [The Great Escape \(1963\)](#) and [The Wooden Horse \(1950\)](#), and the books by former prisoners [Paul Brickhill](#) and [Eric Williams](#) from which these films were adapted.

The first compound (East Compound) of the camp was completed and opened on 21 March 1942. The first prisoners, or "kriegies", as they called themselves (from "[Kriegsgefangene](#)"), to be housed at Stalag Luft III were British and Commonwealth airmen as well as Fleet Air Arm officers, arriving in April 1942. The North Compound for British airmen, where the Great Escape occurred, opened on 29 March 1943.

Eventually the camp grew to approximately 60 acres (24 ha) in size and eventually housed about 2,500 Royal Air Force officers, about 7,500 U.S. Army Air Forces, and about 900 officers from other Allied air forces, for a total of 10,949 inmates, including some support officers. The prison camp had a number of design features that made escape extremely difficult. The digging of [escape tunnels](#), in particular, was discouraged by several factors. First, the [barracks](#) housing the prisoners were raised approximately 60 cm. off the ground to make it easier for guards to detect any tunneling activity. Second, the camp itself had been constructed on land that had a very sandy subsoil. The sand was bright yellow, so it could easily be detected if anyone dumped it on the surface (which consisted of grey dust), or even just had some of it on their clothing. In addition, the loose, collapsible sand meant the structural integrity of a tunnel would be very poor. A third defence against tunneling was the placement of [seismograph](#) microphones around the perimeter of the camp, which were expected to detect any sounds of digging just below the surface.

The first successful escape occurred in October 1943 in the East Compound. Conjurung up a modern [Trojan Horse](#), the kriegies constructed a gymnastic vaulting horse largely from plywood from Red Cross parcels. The horse was designed to conceal men, tools, and containers of dirt. Each day the horse was carried out to the same spot near the perimeter fence, and while prisoners conducted gymnastic exercises above, from under the horse a tunnel was dug. At the end of each working day, a wooden board was placed back over the tunnel entrance and re-covered with surface dirt. The gymnastics not only disguised the real purpose of the vaulting horse, but the activity kept the sound of the digging from being detected by the microphones.

For three months three prisoners, Lieutenant [Michael Codner](#), Flight Lieutenant [Eric Williams](#), and Flight Lieutenant [Oliver Philpot](#), in shifts of one or two diggers at a time, dug over 100 feet (30 m) of tunnel using

bowls as shovels and metal rods to poke through the surface of the ground to create air holes. No shoring was used except near the entrance. On the evening of 19 October 1943,^[2] Codner, Williams, and Philpot made their escape. Williams and Codner were able to reach the port of [Stettin](#) where they stowed away on a Danish ship and eventually returned to Britain. Philpot, posing as a Norwegian margarine manufacturer, was able to board a train to Danzig (now Gdansk), and from there stowed away on a Swedish ship headed for Stockholm, and from there repatriated to Britain. Accounts of this escape, long overshadowed by *The Great Escape*, were recorded in the book *Goon in the Block* (later retitled *The Wooden Horse*) by Williams, the book *Stolen Journey* by Philpot, and the 1950 film [The Wooden Horse](#).^[3]

Camp life



Kommandant [Friedrich Wilhelm von Lindeiner-Wildau](#), Kommandant of Stalag Luft III.

The recommended dietary intake for a normal healthy inactive man is 2,150 [calories](#).^[2] Luft III issued "Non-working" German civilian rations which allowed 1,928 calories per day, with the balance made up from American, Canadian, and [British Red Cross](#) parcels and items sent to the [POWs](#) by their families.^[2]

As was customary at most camps, both Red Cross and individual parcels were pooled and distributed to the men equally. The camp also had an official internal bartering system called a *Foodacco* — POWs marketed surplus goods for "points" that could be "spent" on other items.^[2] The Germans paid captured officers the equivalent of their pay in internal camp currency (*lagergeld*), which was used to buy what goods were made available by the German administration. Every three months a weak beer was made available in the canteen for sale. Luft III had the best-organised recreational programme of any POW camp in Germany. Each compound had athletic fields and volleyball courts. The prisoners participated in basketball, softball, boxing, touch football, volleyball, table tennis and fencing, with leagues organised for most. A pool, 20 feet by 22 feet by 5 feet deep, used to store water for firefighting, was occasionally available for swimming.^[2]

A substantial library with schooling facilities was available where many POWs earned [degrees](#) such as languages, engineering or law. The exams were supplied by the Red Cross and supervised by academics such as a [Master](#) of King's College who was a POW in Luft III. The prisoners also built a theatre and put on high-quality bi-weekly performances featuring all the current West End shows. The prisoners used the camp amplifier to broadcast a news and music radio station they named *Station KRGY*, short for *Kriegsgefangener*, a term meaning "POWs", and also published two newspapers, the *Circuit* and the *Kriegie Times*, which were issued four times a week.

To prevent Germans from infiltrating the prisoner population, newcomers to the camp had to be personally vouched for by two existing POWs who knew the prisoner by sight. Anyone who failed this requirement was severely interrogated and assigned a [rota](#) of POWs who had to escort him at all times until he was deemed to be genuine. Several infiltrators were discovered by this method, and none are known to have escaped detection in Luft III. The German guards were referred to as "[Goons](#)" and, unaware of the western connotation, willingly accepted the nickname after being told it stood for "German Officer Or Non-Com". German guards were followed everywhere they went by prisoners, who used an elaborate system of signals to warn others of their location. The guards' movements were then carefully recorded in a logbook kept by an assigned rota of officers. Unable to effectively stop what the prisoners called the "Duty Pilot" system the Germans allowed it to continue and on one occasion the book was used by Kommandant von Lindeiner to bring charges against two guards who had slunk away from duty several hours early.

The camp's 800 Luftwaffe guards were primarily either too old for combat duty or young men convalescing after long tours of duty or from wounds. Because the guards were Luftwaffe personnel, the prisoners were accorded far better treatment than that granted to other POWs in Germany. Deputy Commandant Major [Gustav Simoleit](#), a professor of [history](#), [geography](#) and [ethnology](#) before the war, spoke

several languages, including English, Russian, Polish, and Czech. Transferred to Sagan in early 1943, he proved sympathetic to allied airmen. Ignoring the ban against extending military courtesies to POWs, he provided full military honours for Luft III POW funerals, including one for a Jewish airman.

The "Great Escape"- In the spring of 1943, [Squadron Leader Roger Bushell RAF](#) conceived a plan for a major escape from the camp, which occurred the night of 24–25 March 1944. Bushell was held in the North Compound where British and Commonwealth airmen were housed. He was in command of the Escape Committee and channeled the effort into probing for weaknesses and looking for opportunities. Falling back on his legal background to represent his scheme, Bushell called a meeting of the Escape Committee and not only shocked those present with its scope, but injected into every man a passionate determination to put their every energy into the escape. He declared,

"Everyone here in this room is living on borrowed time. By rights we should all be dead! The only reason that God allowed us this extra ration of life is so we can make life hell for the Hun ... In North Compound we are concentrating our efforts on completing and escaping through one master tunnel. No private-enterprise tunnels allowed. Three deep, long tunnels will be dug - Tom, Dick, and Harry. One will succeed!"

The simultaneous digging of these tunnels would become an advantage if any one of them was discovered by the Germans, because the guards would scarcely imagine that another two could be well underway. The most radical aspect of the plan was not merely the scale of the construction, but the sheer number of men that Bushell intended to pass through these tunnels. Previous attempts had involved the escape of anything up to a dozen or twenty men, but Bushell was proposing to get in excess of 200 out, all of whom would be wearing civilian clothes and possessing a complete range of forged papers and escape equipment. It was an unprecedented undertaking and would require unparalleled organization. As the mastermind of the Great Escape, Roger Bushell inherited the codename of "Big X". The tunnel "Tom" began in a darkened corner next to a stove chimney in one of the buildings. "Dick"'s entrance was carefully hidden in a drain sump in one of the washrooms. The entrance to "Harry" was hidden under a stove. More than 600 prisoners were involved in their construction.

Tunnel construction- The tunnels were very deep — about 30 feet (9 m) below the surface. The tunnels were very small, only 2 feet (0.6 m) square, though larger chambers were dug to house the air pump, a workshop, and staging posts along each tunnel. The sandy walls of the tunnels were shored up with pieces of wood scavenged from all over the camp. One main source of wood was the prisoners' beds. At the beginning, each had about twenty boards supporting the mattress. By the time of the escape, only about eight were left on each bed. A number of other pieces of wooden furniture were also scavenged.



End of "Harry" tunnel showing how close the exit was to the camp fence

A variety of other materials was also scavenged. One such item was [Klim](#) cans; tin cans that had originally held powdered milk, supplied by the [Red Cross](#) for the prisoners. The metal in the cans could be fashioned into a variety of different tools and items such as scoops and candle holders. Candles were fashioned by skimming the fat off the top of soup served at the camp and putting it in tiny tin vessels. Wicks were made from old and worn clothing. The main use of the Klim tins, however, was in the construction of the extensive ventilation ducting in all three tunnels. As the tunnels grew longer, a number of technical innovations made the job easier and safer. One important issue was ensuring that the person digging had enough oxygen to breathe and keep his lamps lit. A pump was built to push fresh air along the ducting into

the tunnels - invented by Squadron Leader Bob Nelson of [37 Squadron](#). The pumps were built of odd items including major bed pieces, [hockey sticks](#), and [knapsacks](#), as well as Klim tins.

With three tunnels, the prisoners needed places to dump sand. The usual method of disposing of sand was to discreetly scatter it on the surface. Small pouches made of towels or long underpants were attached inside the prisoners' trousers. As the prisoners walked around, the sand would scatter. Sometimes, the prisoners would dump sand into small gardens that they were allowed to tend. As one prisoner turned the soil, another would release sand while the two appeared to carry on a normal conversation. The prisoners wore [greatcoats](#) to conceal the bulges made by the sand and were referred to as "penguins" because of their supposed resemblance to the animal. In the sunny months sand could be carried outside and scattered in blankets for sunbathing. More than 200 were recruited who were to make an estimated 25,000 trips. The Germans were aware that something major was going on, but all attempts to discover tunnels failed. In an attempt to break up any escape attempts, nineteen of their top suspects were transferred without warning to Stalag VIIIIC. Of those, only six were heavily involved with tunnel construction. Errol was one of those who was transferred to Belaria January 1944 shortly before the escape occurred.

Eventually, the prisoners felt they could no longer dump sand on the surface as the Germans became too efficient at catching prisoners using this method. After "Dick's" planned exit surface became covered by a camp expansion, the decision was made to start filling the tunnel up. As the tunnel's entrance was very well-hidden, "Dick" was also used as a storage room for a variety of items such as maps, postage stamps, forged travel permits, compasses, and clothing such as German uniforms and civilian suits. A number of guards co-operated in supplying railway timetables, maps, and the large number of official papers required to allow them to be forged. Some genuine civilian clothes were also obtained by bribing German staff with cigarettes, coffee or chocolate. These were used by escaping prisoners to travel away from the prison camp more easily — by train, if possible. **Tunnel "Harry" completed** - "Harry" was finally ready in March 1944, but the American prisoners, some of whom had worked on the tunnel "Tom," had been moved to another compound seven months earlier. Contrary to what is suggested in the Hollywood film of the same name, no American prisoners of war actually participated in the "great escape and no motor bike was in camp for prisoners."

Previously, this escape attempt had been planned for the summer as good weather was a large factor of success. However, in early 1944 the [Gestapo](#) had visited the camp and ordered increased efforts in detecting possible escape attempts. Bushell ordered the attempt be made as soon as the tunnel was ready. Of the 600 prisoners who had worked on the tunnels only 200 would be able to escape in their plan. The prisoners were separated into two groups. The first group of 100, called "serial offenders," were guaranteed a place and included those who spoke German well or had a history of escapes, plus an additional 70 men considered to have put in the most work on the tunnels. The second group of 100, considered to have very little chance of success, had to draw lots to determine inclusion.

The prisoners had to wait about a week for a moonless night so that they could leave under the cover of complete darkness. Finally, on Friday 24 March, the escape attempt began and as night fell, those allocated a place in the tunnel moved to Hut 104. Unfortunately for the prisoners, the exit trap door of Harry was found to be frozen solid, and freeing the door delayed the escape for an hour and a half. An even larger setback was when it was discovered that the tunnel had come up short. It had been planned that the tunnel would reach into a nearby forest but at 10.30 p.m., the first man out emerged just short of the tree line and close to a guard tower. (According to [Alan Burgess](#), in his book *The Longest Tunnel*, the tunnel reached the forest, as planned, but the trees were too sparse to provide adequate cover.)

As the temperature was below freezing and snow still lay on the ground, any escapee would leave a dark trail while crawling to cover. Because of the need to now avoid sentries, instead of the planned one man every minute, the escape was reduced to little more than ten per hour. Word was eventually sent back that no prisoner issued with a number higher than 100 would be able to escape before daylight. As they would be shot if caught trying to return to their own barracks these men changed

into their own uniforms and got some sleep. An air raid then caused the camp's (and the tunnel's) electric lighting to be shut down slowing the escape even more. At around 1 a.m., the tunnel collapsed and had to be repaired.

Despite these problems, 76 men crawled through the tunnel to initial freedom. Finally, at 4:55 a.m. on 25 March, the 77th man was seen emerging from the tunnel by one of the guards. Those already in the trees began running while a New Zealand Squadron Leader [Leonard Henry Trent VC](#), who had just reached the tree line stood up and surrendered. The guards had no idea where the tunnel entrance was, so they began searching the huts, giving the men time to burn their fake papers. Hut 104 was one of the last huts searched and despite using dogs the guards were unable to find the entrance. Finally, German guard Charlie Pilz crawled the length of the tunnel but found himself trapped at the other end. Pilz began calling for help and the prisoners opened the entrance to let him out, finally revealing the location.

An early problem for the escapees was that most of them were unable to find the entrance to the railway station until daylight revealed it was in a recess in the side wall of an underground pedestrian tunnel. Consequently, many of them missed their night-time trains and either decided to walk across country or wait on the platform in daylight. Another unanticipated problem was that this March was the coldest recorded in 30 years and snow lay up to five feet deep, so the escapees had no option but to leave the cover of woods and fields and use roads.

After the escape - Nationalities of the 50 executed prisoners;

 20 British;  6 Canadian;  6 Polish;  5 Australian;  3 South African;  2 New Zealanders

 2 Norwegian;  1 Argentinian;  1 Belgian;  1 Czechoslovak;  1 Frenchman;  1 [Greek](#)

 1 [Lithuanian](#)

Following the escape, the Germans took an inventory of the camp and found out just how extensive the operation had been. Four thousand bed boards had gone missing, as well as the complete disappearance of 90 double bunk beds, 635 mattresses, 192 bed covers, 161 pillow cases, 52 20-man tables, 10 single tables, 34 chairs, 76 benches, 1,212 bed bolsters, 1,370 beading battens, 1219 knives, 478 spoons, 582 forks, 69 lamps, 246 water cans, 30 shovels, 1,000 feet (300 m) of electric wire, 600 feet (180 m) of rope, and 3424 towels. 1,700 blankets had been used, along with more than 1,400 [Klim cans](#).^[33] The electric cable had been stolen after being left unattended by German workers; as they had not reported the theft, they were executed by the Gestapo.^[38] From then on each bed was supplied with only nine bed boards which were counted regularly by the guards.

Main article: [Stalag Luft III murders](#)

Of 76 escapees, 73 were captured. [Adolf Hitler](#) initially wanted the escapers to be shot as an example to other prisoners, as well as Commandant von Lindeiner, the architect who designed the camp, the camp's security officer and the guards on duty at the time. [Hermann Göring](#), Field Marshal [Keitel](#), Major-General Westhoff and Major-General von Graevenitz, who was head of the department in charge of prisoners of war, all argued against any executions as a violation of the [Geneva Conventions](#). Hitler eventually relented and instead ordered SS head [Himmler](#) to execute more than half of the escapees. Himmler passed the selection on to General [Arthur Nebe](#). Fifty were executed singly or in pairs. Roger Bushell, the leader of the escape, was shot by Gestapo official Emil Schulz just outside [Saarbrücken](#), Germany.

'Of Stirlings and Stalags: an air-gunner's tale' by WE 'Bill' Goodman. P.186-188 Bill wrote about Errol: Another cause of hilarity involved Errol Green and me. He now had his own crew and was unlucky enough to have been shot down two or three weeks after we had. The Royal Australian Air Force was more generous in awarding commissions than the RAF (and so were the Air Forces of the other Dominions). The form was that Errol, having accepted the offer, was issued with sufficient clothing coupons to cover the tailoring of a new officer's pattern uniform and the purchase of other items such as greatcoats, raincoat, shirts, shoes etc. After a short time, when the uniform was judged to have been obtained, the appointment was promulgated, and Errol would move from our Sergeants' Mess to the Officers' Mess. Apparently, Errol ordered his new uniforms and was awaiting the promulgation when he was shot down. As luck would have it he joined us in Hut 40 and occupied the top bunk next to my own. We both had one thing in common- we were both thinning slightly on top!

We RAF men were known in Britain as 'Brylcreem' boys, that being the popular hair dressing of the day. In actual fact I did not use Brylcreem- my dressing was Vaseline Hair Tonic, but, whilst kidding myself that I was not going bald, never the less, I was doing my best to make sure it would not happen. One of the WAAF's back at Oakington who had worked as a hairdresser warned him that in her opinion it would not be too long before he would be bald, and put the blame partly on the wearing of a close fitting flying helmet which was bringing it on sooner than normal heredity would have done. She knew I was getting towards the end of my tour of operations and would be posted elsewhere, and said it was a pity as she thought a course of scalp massage would help, but there would hardly have been time for proper treatment. As it happened, she was posted before she was able to show me how it should be done.

With this prediction of balding in mind, Errol and I discussed our problem and decided that, as the shaving of one's chin promoted a sturdier growth at the bottom of the skull, why should it not do the same for the upper regions? The pair of us settled down in the hut with a mug of hot water, soap and an issue razor, lathered each other's heads and shaved them clean of hair. We had quite an audience and, as I said much hilarity and some 'cutting' comments. One of the Canadians likened our polished scalps to a 'skating rink for flies': others coined the nicknames 'flare path' which was a landing strip lit with flares: and 'pathway' which lived with me during the whole time in camp. The WAAF hairdresser also said that oil should be used to massage the scalp, but that was not available to we Kregies. The only oil available was olive oil and the only supply of that came from tins of sardines which often came in the English Red Cross parcels- and so we used that. The only problem was that of smell, so we were not welcomed by anyone in the hut until we had washed our heads, which we had to do each night. However, sadly, my hair never grew back lustrously and I eventually became almost totally bald!



A German photographer arrived without notice to take a photo of those at Stalag Luft 3

EXHIBIT 1A-1271.

79667 ✓

JUL 15 1942

RAF.102/118/396(74)

Dear Sir,

This letter is to confirm telegram from this Department dated the 1st July, 1942, informing you that your son, Sergeant Royal Edward Green, is reported to be missing as a result of air operations on the 28th June, 1942.

The details available at present in this Department are that your son was a member of the crew of a Stirling aircraft which was lost while on an operational flight on the date mentioned above. The loss is presumed to have been due to enemy action.

I would point out, however, that although your son has been reported missing, he is not necessarily killed or wounded and, in view of this, it may be of assistance to you in your anxiety to know what action is taken to trace missing members of the Air Force. I am, therefore, forwarding herewith a leaflet which gives full information concerning this matter. You will see from the leaflet that any further information received will be conveyed to you immediately.

I desire to extend to you the sincere sympathy of the Department in the anxiety you are suffering.

Yours faithfully,

(M.C. Legg) *ML*
SECRETARY

Enc.

Mr. G.J. Green,
 Box 51,
 Wexham,
 CLACKNASH RIVER. W.S.S.

W.S.S.
 D.P.S. CASUALTY SECTION
 11/7

COPY.

DEFENCE
RAAF.

163 118 374

TO: AIR BOARD MELBOURNE
FROM:
AIR MINISTRY KINGSWAY

PX.5366 20/6

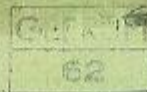
FB (A) STIRLING W57554 (B) 7 SQDN (C) NOT KNOWN 26/6 (D) AUS/
404404 SGT ERIC LESLIE HUND KINNOT FATHER MR. H. HUND KERLAW
JESSEY ROAD ALBION BRISBANE QUEENSLAND AUS/402798 SGT EDWARD
GREEN KINNOT FATHER MR C J GREEN BOX 51 MACLEAN CLARENCE RIVER
AUSTRALIA ALSO REV D TROTTER WHARF STREET MACLEAN NSW. NOT
AUSTRALIAN RAF/900301 SGT GETCHELL RAF/1194833 SGT MORRIS RAF/
1154558 SGT MASON RAF/646510 SGT WILLIAMSON RAF/628631 SGT
LITTLE. ALL MISSING (E) NOT KNOWN (G) PRESUMED ENEMY ACTION.

IMMEDIATE

402195

Sergeant/Pilot
GREEN, E. E.

Stalag. Luft. 3. Germany



Mrs. C. J. Green

Box 57 Maclean

Blairmont Tenn

U.S. Mails

airmailed

My Dear Carol

Once again I'll try to tell you the local news. Hoping you will receive it, and that you are in good health, as this leaves us all at home in our usual good health. Our thoughts are always of you Carol, we received news of you from Alvin McIntosh by cable which was very welcome, I am hoping each day to have one from yourself. We are thankful that your life has been spared and that you are still alive. Knowing the almighty will care for you always. I sent a parcel of warm clothes I do hope you enjoy them. I will send one parcel every three months. Tell me if there is any thing you would like. I have been two weeks ago with Uncle Will & Ken. Roy has gone back to work. Aunt Amy is with them now. They do miss poor Aunt Alice, but she has gone to her reward. She was a good woman. Roy is going to make arrangements to visit Alvin whenever possible. Alvin was to go to Mary's mother's home last week end. She wrote to me saying her home would be Alvin's home whenever he cared to go there. He writes twice each week, he seems happy.

Dad is working the tractor just above
the house. The crop has been cut, about
500. tons. he will plant corn this time.
Dad is very well. Flora is still home and
Geff is coming up this week. Elva is still
waiting for news of John. She is keeping
up fairly well, hoping soon to hear
good news of him & others. The news of
Stuart Munro, and Jerry Smith,
Maris & Alice, have sent you a small parcel
also Aunt Sadie. Grandma is fairly well.
It looks like rain to day and we can
do with it to make the potatoes grow.
Ray is home on six days also. Munro
is in hospital but will be out in a slight
accident on his motor bike got serious.
Charlie Green called last week looking
well. He is engaged to Oliver Warner,
a Ulster girl. John Enal keeps on Weston,
and the time ^{will} pass, and we will all
be looking for that day to come
when we shall all meet at home
once more, the one of your love
with you. Just think of us at home
much the same as when you left us.
and may God bless and keep you always
remember the 28th. Love from home
and your loving Mother. M. B. J. Green

Box 61 Macleay
Claremont, N.S.W.

B.7
 AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY
 BUREAU ENQUIRY SERVICE
 Date: 14th March, 1944. 1944
 No. Rank, Name and Unit: 400795, P/O GREEN, S.E. RAAF att. R.A.F.
 Details of Casualty: Stalag Luft 3 Germany, Prisoner of War No. 317
 Is called enquiry desired?
 Remarks:
 Name: _____
 Signature of Officer: *W. C. Kingston A.P. 1/2*
 Date: 17/1/44
 Address: _____
 Forward in DUPLICATE.
 Enclosure will attach and furnish reply in duplicate. Signature: _____

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
 Memorandum to: *Encl. 1/2*
 POSTMASTER GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT,
 AIR BOARD
 Melbourne
 POST OFFICE: *Macleod*
 24 7 1942
 Your² Telegrams lodged at Melbourne
 at 7.54pm on 23rd Postal
 Acknowledgment Delivery to
 L. J. Green and Rev. D. Brooker
 Macleod re Enoch Edwards
Green now prisoner of war with
 Telegrams were delivered at 10a
 on 24. 7. 42. *277/3474*
 S. C. 1942-4/1942
Edwards

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Telephone: HOLBORN 9211

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS TO
"THE AIR OFFICER COMMANDING"

FILE NO. 1401/1838/P.4. 8175.

OVERSEAS HEADQUARTERS,

KODAK HOUSE,

63, KINGSWAY,

LONDON, W.C.2.

1st September, 1942.

The Secretary,
Department of Air,
Victoria Barracks,
MELBOURNE

File 10 P. 4. N 38711

AUS.402795 SERGEANT GREEN, E.E.
Prisoner of War

Forwarded herewith is a letter received
by this Headquarters from the Australian Red Cross
Society, London, Branch, with the request that
same be forwarded to the next-of-kin of the above
airman.

W. M. Melville

(W. M. MELVILLE),
Squadron Leader,
for Air Vice Marshal,
Air Officer Commanding

*61.27
11
42*

464 issued
J. A. T. P. AUSTRALIA

R.A.A.F. Form P/F. 71.
(September, 1937.)
R.A.F. Form 1080.

Before completing this form read the Notes to R.A.A.F. Supplement to Appendix III (Part II) War Manual Part II.

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE.

AIRMAN'S RECORD SHEET (Active Service—Overseas).

Official No. 402795 Name GREEN ERROL EDWARD Rank 1st Sgt.
(In full in block capitals, surname first.) (Or acting appointment.)

Mastering Aviation 1st P. Special Qualifications
(e.g., Gun Instructor, Fire Fighter, Landing Instructor.)

Date of Birth 9.6.16 Religion Protestant Occupation in Civil Life Farming

Last Enlisted 14.10.40 Current Engagement Overseas 1st P. 1st

If Reservist, which Class ("E," 1-5) _____ Whether Married, Single, or Widower Single

Name and Address of Person (or Persons) to be informed of Casualties:
Rev. D. J. Foster, Warf. St. Maclean T.S. 1st.

Charles John Green, Box 51, Maclean, New South Wales, N.S.W.

Relationship (2) Father (In Full)

Any alteration to above (e.g., Promotions) to be made by crossing out and writing above.

SECTION 1—MOVEMENTS AND CASUALTIES.

SECTION 2—
PROMOTIONS, ACTING APPOINTMENTS (Paid or Unpaid),
RELOCATIONS, REINSTRUCTIONS.

Unit FROM which.	Unit TO which.	Date of effect.	*Authority. R.E.O.	Description.	Date of Effect. M.D.Y.
5 EFF. TR.	2 E.D.	6.2.41	P. 401/402	L.A.C. 1st P.	7.12.40
2 E.D.	R.C.A.F.	22 FEB 41	CR 124	Lt. Temp. Paid	28.5.41
No 2 S.F.T.S.	No 14 Depot		124	Remnant of Special Temp	28.5.41
Uplands	Halifax	29.5.41			
Canada	UK	16.7.41			
UK	3 PRC	17.7.41			
3 PRC	23 OTU	26.7.41			
23 OTU	7 Squadron	25.9.41			
No 7 Squadron	No 13 Depot (N.E.)	27.6.42			
Discharged to	Commissioned	16.6.42			
	Rank				

*When on active service overseas, the authority to be quoted will be the serial number of the R.P.E.O.'s Casualty Form.

Mit Kriegsgelangenpost
Par Avion
Postkarte

21.3.43 11:12

MISS FLORA GREEN
P/OFFICE Box 51,
MACLENN
Clarence River
NEW SOUTH WALES
AUSTRALIA

Gebührenfrei
Absender:
Vor- und Zuname:
PAUL GREEN, FA (4402796)
Gebührennummer:
517
Lager-Bezeichnung:
M. Stammlager Luft 3
Deutschland (Germany)

Kriegsgelangenlager
Datum: 23-5-43

Dear friends
Your letter 20/4/43 came to hand today + when by post the news came
one at that time, seemed OK. Since then I received a letter from Eng
informing me of Mum's death the letter did not state the organ of the cable
to have in your doubt as a letter from Mamma written in Dec 42
me of Grandma being ill. I am still awaiting a reply to a cable
which went off asking for confirming news. Received a post
of 10/4/43. At present I am writing this language, which is
just a job. Well. I am to all friends

M.D.

14/9/44.

Enc. 500.

XXXXXXXXXXXX MU.9981.

Casualty Section,
391 Lit. Collins St,

211364

RAAF.163/118/374(30A)

SEP 15 1944

Dear Sir,

I refer to previous communications concerning your son, Flight Lieutenant Errol Edward Green, who is a prisoner of war.

I desire to inform you that your son has been promoted to the rank of Flight Lieutenant with retrospective effect from the 17th June, 1944.

All records have been amended accordingly and in future correspondence he will be referred to as Flight Lieutenant.

Yours faithfully,


(M.C. Laggalo)
SECRETARY.

Mr. C. J. Green,
Box 51,
WAGGA WAGGA,
CLARENDON RIVER. N.S.W.


CASUALTY SECTION

In Errol's release papers from the air force in May 1945, he writes he was in Stalag Luft 111 from July 1942 – Feb. 44 which was scratched over with Jan 45 when he left Sagan in Silesia for the long march toward Berlin.

As early as 1939, soon after [invading Poland](#), Nazi Germany established a system of notorious [Prisoner of War](#) camps in Żagań. In total, the *Mannschafts-Stammlager Stalag VIII C* and its subsidiaries held over 300,000 prisoners from some 30 different countries. It is estimated that around 120,000 of them died of hunger, disease and maltreatment. Later, in 1942, an additional camp was set up for Allied pilots, called *Stalag Luft 3*.^[2]



The compound of "Belaria" which was a short distance northeast of the city of Sagan was opened at the beginning of 1944, and seemed to be a more secure compound used to incarcerate those kriegies who were suspected of being trouble makers or part of escape attempts. THE LOG, the camp newspaper of 10 July 1944, reported the camp is 728 officers and NCO's: British 449; Canadian 184; Australian 40; New Zealand 28; South Africa 27; and three rabbits of uncertain parentage. The compound operated as a separate unit, but received some support from the main Stalag. No facilities for hot water, or baths, so the prisoners were marched around the town to the other camp for showers and delousing.

Belaria was the last compound evacuated). From 28.1.1945, many of the prisoners, particularly British and Commonwealth, were marched westward ahead of the Soviet offensive. The German camp command destroyed all documentation and evidence of the crimes committed. The route traversed to Spremberg was different than the others, being north and more direct to Muskau. At Spremberg, Errol was sent by cattle truck to Luckenwalde, -where Errol spent from 5th February 1945- May 1945).

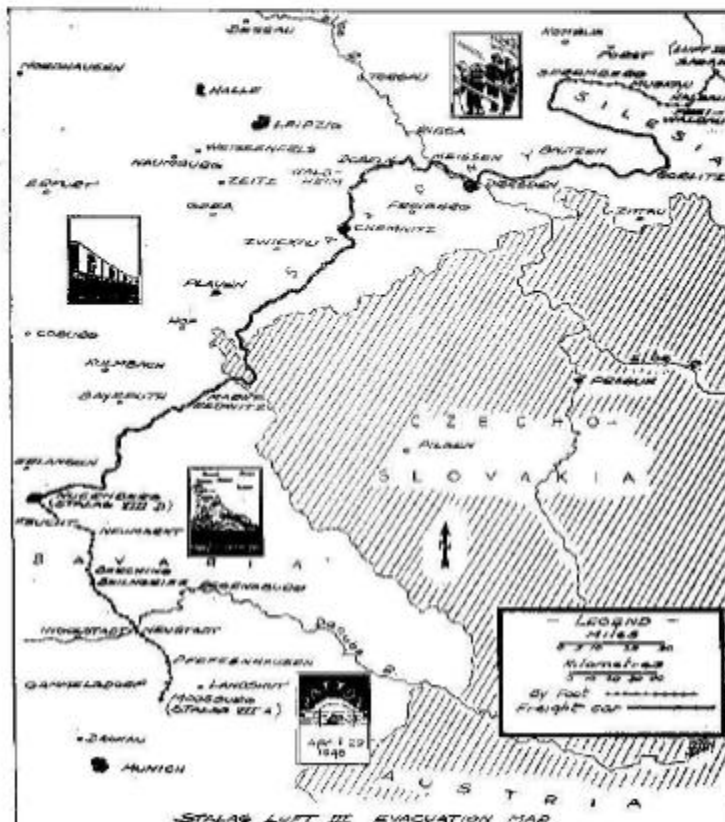
On the long (death) march Errol managed to get a billy can and so he could then get hot water from the farms and Errol also spoke with gratitude about getting apples that were put into his pocket which had a big hole that allowed apples to fall into the lining of his coat. He was very grateful for the generosity of the German farm women who he noticed were very poor.

Forced March Route: German & Polish Town Names

SLIIL March Route	
German Name	Polish Name
Sagan	Zagan
Hannenberg	Gornia
Zehnbeul	Dolany
Hallau	Ilawa
Charlottenhof	Borowin
Freiwaldau	Gozdnica
Sellingsruh	Lissa
Prebus	Przewoz
Weissbrunn	Weissbrunn
Pettau	Pelkoz
Jamitz	Jamnica
Lohmenberg	Lesnow
Birkhahn	Birkhahn
Schrothammer	Kielot
Harnsdorf	Harnsdorf
Muskau	Bed Muskau



During World War II, Stalag Luft III was in a portion of Germany that over time was claimed by both Germany and Poland (or the countries that preceded them). Historical research on this area can therefore be a little confusing because towns were often known by both German and Polish names. At this time, the remains of Stalag Luft III are in Poland. This photo provides a list of the towns that the Stalag Luft III POWs walked through during the forced march of Winter, 1945 (click on the photo for a bigger view of it). It provides both the German and Polish name for each town. The last name on this list is Muskau. After Muskau, all the remaining towns on the march were in territory that, before and after the war, was part of Germany, and those towns never had Polish names. The march ended in Spremberg, Germany.



CHRISTMAS IN BELARIA 1944

By December 1944, Stalag Luft III was overcrowded and prisoners, who had long relied on Red Cross parcels to supplement their poor rations from their Luftwaffe captors, were down to half a parcel, per man, per week. Bruce Lumsden, a navigator from 195 Squadron, whose Lancaster had crashed in Allied territory in early November 1944, found himself in Stalag Luft III's Belaria satellite compound, settling into one of the 12 barrack-type huts which contained five 20 foot square rooms, with a smaller one for the block leader (dubbed by his underlings, the Blockhead).

Lumsden's new quarters was crammed with six three-tiered bunks, a table with eighteen stools, a bench-top cupboard to store food, and a cast iron stove which, if there were any briquettes on offer, would heat the room. His bed, in an overcrowded space, in an overcrowded camp where he would never be truly alone, was his 'own small piece of territory'.

Lumsden joined seventeen others in Room 7, Block 18. They were a mixed bunch of seven RAF men, five from the USAAF, one South African, one Canadian, one New Zealander, and three Australians. As well as adjusting to captivity, they had to learn to live with each other. John Dack of 463 Squadron, one of the other Australians, had a head start. He had been captured with his crew member, Canadian Frank Major and had met Lumsden at the interrogation centre. Cy Borsht, another Australian and also from 463 Squadron, had been lost on the same operation as Dack and Major. Dack recalled that 'Cy is much shorter than me and we were known as Mutt and Jeff. I'm not sure who was which. He had the ability to bring people together in quite close relationships'. Generally speaking, Borsht succeeded but it was very much an eternal joint effort to maintain cordiality. There was one squeaky wheel—'an overbearing character'—one of the Americans. But, as in any family, he was tolerated, because 'he was one of us'.

Each room was called a 'mess'. The inhabitants pooled their Red Cross parcels and scrupulously shared everything out. Everyone in the mess had his own task. Some groups rotated the jobs, others designated them permanently to the individuals. Although he had no great aptitude for it, Lumsden agreed to be his mess's cook. To volunteer for such a position was particularly courageous. If he failed, the mess starved. Happily, he proved more than competent in his new role. Dack remembered that meal times were 'generally very pleasant social occasions, mainly due to Bruce's patience and understanding, and above all, his ability to make things palatable.'

Long term prisoners had hoped that the war would be over by Christmas. By the time Lumsden arrived, it was all too obvious that that would not be the case. Lumsden and his new friends soon set about planning their Christmas dinner. Old stagers had been planning for months. They had saved up little titbits from when the Red Cross parcels had been plentiful and some had already had quite a good store cupboard of festive niceties. Lumsden's mess, however, 'were the newest kriegies', with few stored up supplies, because 'desperate hunger drove us to eat every crumb and morsel of our meagre rations'. Lumsden worried if it would be possible, 'from our slender resources, to place on the table on Christmas Day a meal that even slightly resembled a traditional Christmas Dinner?' Somehow, they would do it.

Nobby Clarke, who, as 'quartermaster', was in charge of the pantry, started eking out their rations even more stringently. He sliced the bread thinner, he scraped the margarine so finely that the bread had barely a covering. He swiped the tastiest items from the parcels before Lumsden could even start planning his next meal. Somehow, almost miraculously, the 'goon rations' one day included semolina and molasses, and a Christmas parcel from the American Red Cross arrived full of nutritional 'wealth beyond our wildest dreams'.

The most precious items in Nobby Clarke's pantry were the ingredients for the Christmas pudding. In a recipe that bears no resemblance whatsoever to anything from my family cook book, Lumsden mixed together crumbled crusts of Reich bread, a chocolate D-bar, semolina, crumbled American biscuits, raisins, prunes, sugar, molasses, margarine,

Klim powdered milk, four 4 cups of pre-cooked barley, a tin of orange juice, a spoonful of coffee and a pinch of salt.

When Lumsden had finished blending the mixture—all 21 pounds of it—each man honoured the age old tradition of stirring the pudding and making a wish. None revealed his wish—it would not come true! But, as Lumsden recalled, decades later, ‘you may be sure that the same wish came from every heart.’

Pudding stirred, wishes completed, the mixture was poured into a calico bag, tied up, boiled for four hours, and then hung from the rafters ‘to await the day’.

Lumsden also made a Christmas cake from a combination of scrounged and saved camp ingredients and American Red Cross largesse. Despite Lumsden’s lack of culinary skill, his mess had faith in him. When the cake came out of the oven, ‘with the whole mess watching eagerly, it looked and smelt superb!’

Pudding and cake sorted, it was time to deck the halls, just like they, or their families would have done if it had been a normal Christmas at home. Decorations were of the home made variety and improvisation was the name of the game in a camp where every man was trying to create a festive air with scant resources. Toilet paper was turned into streamers, coloured by crayons, and were festooned from wall to rafter. They saved white card from the Red Cross parcels and John Dack and Cy Borsht, Room 7’s other Australians who had artistic talents (they were both studying architecture) produced individual table menus. As much as they could, Lumsden and his friends created a sense of home and celebration in the dingy prison room.

And then it was Christmas day.

Each man who had arrived in camp had experienced some sort of trauma—crash landing in flames; baling out; battle wounds; death of comrades; survivor guilt—not to mention the despair of being taken prisoner and assorted difficulties in adjusting to captivity. Each man was older than his years and yet, to Lumsden, ‘the joy and excitement of Christmas morning was close to child-like in its unabashed naiveté. It is not possible to explain how war-hardened young men, locked up in a prison camp in far-off eastern Europe in mid-winter could be so softened by the consciousness that it was Christmas morning.’

After a breakfast that in itself seemed a feast, morning appel and a short church service, they began their preparations for their biggest meal since imprisonment. They decided not to serve dinner until after the 3 o’clock roll call, so they wouldn’t be interrupted. Lumsden started boiling the pudding at 1.30 pm and it ‘boiled merrily away at the back and other pots and cooking dishes were in place’.

As he stood at the stove, stirring and checking, and breathing in the aroma of a well-cooked and much anticipated meal, Paul Louis ... a most likeable American Jew and a friend of mine’ asked if the deeply religious Lumsden would say grace before the meal. Louis may not have shared Lumsden’s faith but he knew that Christmas was more than just a religious celebration. It represented family and hope. ‘Somehow’, Lumsden recalled, Louis ‘felt this was the most significant and should not be omitted’. Even so, he was reluctant.

While imprisonment tested the faith of many men, Lumsden had found succour, strength and comfort from the Christian fellowship of a bible study and prayer group. They, however, were in the minority and were, perhaps, treated as suspect by the majority: in a camp which had developed its own language—‘kriegie-speak’—Lumsden and his friends had their own entry in the camp lexicon: ‘god botherer’. Given this, ‘I protested that other members of the mess might object. But he had already put it to the company and the desire, he told me, was unanimous.’ Cy Borsht was one who valued faith, regardless of creed. He and his close crew had worshipped together. As Dack recalled, they took ‘turns to visit each other’s church, or, in Cy’s case, the Synagogue.’

Lumsden 'was much touched.' They may have come from all walks of life, but Lumsden's mess had formed their own family—symbolised as much as anything by the sharing of 'household' tasks, and the solemn stirring of the Christmas pudding—and they had much to be grateful for, despite their situation. He accepted Louis' invitation to say grace.

And so, '...we rushed back to the hut [after appeal] hardly able to contain our excited anticipation. I cannot remember the words I used in my grace, but I recall the quiet participation of every man present, especially when I expressed our thoughts for our homes and families and for our return to them soon'.

Grace said, very item on the menu was carefully shared out eighteen ways. Then, tin plates laden, the men ate and enjoyed the tantalising flavours. John Dack recalled that 'not one of us could possibly forget the emotions of that particular Christmas Day.' He believed that their memorable day had been because of the 'character of one man, and his ability to make us all feel as one. That is apart from his ability to feed us.' But each man in that mess had all played their part in creating a small sense of home despite the difficulties of captivity: the 'twice daily appeals, ablutions, discussions sometimes bordering on arguments, talking and dreaming about food, trying to find something to read, anything to find relief from the ever present boredom.'

Christmas is a day of sharing, for remembering happy times, and for looking towards the future. When Cy Borsht artistically rendered the Belaria 'Xmas Bash' in his wartime log book, illustrating the Christmas tree, fully laden table and a smiling cook holding the plum pudding, he made a slip of the pen. When he recorded the date, he noted it as 25 December 1945. Perhaps he was dreaming of a future Christmas, with the same sense of happiness and festivity, but in a time of peace.

Peace would come, but not for many months, and Lumsden and his friends would endure much hardship before they returned home and to their own families. One thing was certain: 'Every man knew that as long as he lived, this had been a Christmas dinner that he would never forget.'

This account of Christmas in Belaria for three Australians and their wartime companions is drawn from the recollections of Bruce Clyde Lumsden and Irwin John Dack. I would appreciate any assistance in locating their families. (The illustration comes from another source.)

I include a link for one of my favourite Christmas carols. It is a newish version of The Little Drummer Boy by my favourite singer and his Christmas guest. It includes a special wish for the peace on earth that Bruce Lumsden, John Dack, Cy Borsht and their comrades fought for.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADbJLo4x-tk>

Kristen Alexander at 22:41

EVACUATION AND LONG MARCHES BACK INTO GERMANY AWAY FROM THE ALLIES...

As the [Soviet Army](#) was advancing, German authorities decided to evacuate POW camps, to delay liberation of the prisoners. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of German civilian refugees, most of them women and children, as well as civilians of other nationalities, were also making their way westward on foot, in hazardous weather conditions. "**The March**" refers to a series of forced marches during the final stages of the [Second World War](#) in Europe. From a total of 257,000 [western Allied prisoners of war](#) held in [German](#) military prison camps, over 80,000 POWs were forced to march westward across [Poland](#), [Czechoslovakia](#), and [Germany](#) in extreme winter conditions, over about four months between January and April 1945. This series of events has been called various names: "**The Great March West**", "**The Long March**", "**The Long Walk**", "**The Long Trek**", "**The Black March**", "**The Bread March**", and "**Death March Across Germany**", but most survivors just called it "**The March**".

REFERENCE FROM: [RAF - The Long March History](#)

[www.raf.mod.uk](#) › [History](#) › [Anniversary of the Long March](#)

Historical Background. Towards the closing stages of the Second World War Soviet forces edged into Germany provoking one of the most incredible yet hidden ..

[HomeHistoryAnniversary of the Long March](#)The Long March History



The Long March History

Historical Background

Towards the closing stages of the Second World War Soviet forces edged into Germany provoking one of the most incredible yet hidden stories of courage and stamina in RAF history.

Throughout the war the Hitler's Third Reich held hundreds of thousands of Allied Prisoners of War in a comprehensive network of POW camps across the Germany and the occupied territories. The vast majority of R.A.F aircrew were housed in Stalag Luft camps such as Stalag Luft I at Barth and Stalag Luft III at Sagan in Silesia. The story of these institutions stands alone, however as the Red Army approached the Germans faced a major problem – how to deal with the POW's.

Hitler was well aware of the impending situation on the Eastern Front as early as July 1944 and on the 19th of July (one day before the assassination attempt) he issued orders for the 'Defence of the Reich'. Amongst these orders was the decision to evacuate the Prisoner of War camps in the eastern territories and march the inmates towards the rump of Germany around Saxony and the north around Lübeck and Hamburg. It was this decision that set in motion the events of the Long March in the winter months of 1944-45.

Forced to march hundreds of miles in wretched conditions with little food, water or accommodation, R.A.F prisoners were subjected to a horrendous ordeal; hundreds died of starvation or disease, scores collapsed through malnutrition and exhaustion. The Long March became one of the most extraordinary chapters in Royal Air Force history – and one of the least known about.



The ordeal of the Stalag Luft III prisoners was harsh and confusing, typical of the arduous march towards an uncertain fate. Marching from the gates of the camp at Sagan through the wooded countryside of Silesia and towards Berlin, the prisoners stopped off at small hamlets and towns along the route. Staying in makeshift barns and abandoned factories, they hunted for food and tried to rest as best they could.

Adding to the misery of the march, the temperatures plummeted and the thick snow made the arduous journey a fight for survival – airman who had endured captivity for over five years collapsed by the roadside of exhaustion and malnutrition, cold and fever. Errol mentioned that during his 'long march' he was suffering from conjunctivitis...very sore eyes and how grateful he was, on one hand, to be able scoop some of the snow up to soothe his eyes....but it was bitterly cold...

"By the time we reached Friewaldaü we were all exhausted, hungry and delirious with cold. The thick snow and ice made the journey torturous and led to many of my colleagues collapsing by the roadside. Occasionally we'd get a scrap of food or some liquid...I can only describe it as liquid because we didn't know what it was!". Flying Officer S. Parker, Stalag Luft III. Eventually the Sagan party halted in the town of Spremberg and from there they were fanned out across Germany in a mixture of cattle trucks and railway box cars. Spremberg, a small town eighty kilometres south of Berlin was bursting with prisoners and refugees, retreating soldiers and former concentration camp inmates; the scene was horrific and confusing.

The Long March became etched into the history of the RAF and sits proudly alongside the Battle of Britain and the Strategic Bomber Offensive.



Images: Imperial War Museum

From the Book 'Mission Incomplete' by Australian Dudley Hannaford

"Rumours of the rapidly advancing army of General Patton continued to be rife.

Every day we seemed to hear something new, but we didn't know what or who to believe. The prospect of being released by an Allied army was something we had been longing and praying for. But the big day of moving out came on Wednesday, 4th April 1945. The whole camp was to be put on the road with little notice. We didn't have much time to prepare but just enough time to organise any gear we had accumulated, anything needed for any long trek. All we had was to fit into a backpack issued to us all by the American Red Cross, for which we were most grateful.

These items included recently acquired eating utensils, any bits of food remaining from our Red Cross parcels, toiletries such as soap, towel, blanket and a change of clothing as supplied by the International Red Cross. Because of the weight of the pack and increasing weariness and weakness, treasured items gradually had to be abandoned along the road. No-one seemed to have any regrets about leaving but at the same time we were once again filled with apprehension and uncertainty. At least we were on the move and we hoped General Patton and his army were making good progress and would soon catch up with us. There was some temporary elation when we realized we were free from the constraints of barbed wire.

Organisation of such an enterprise by the Germans was not easy and it took some time to get going. We had marched along the road for only an hour and fifteen minutes when we spotted some fighter-bombers overhead and recognised them as American Thunderbolts (P47s). This was a glorious sight but one which we came to regret. Their target was a railway bridge about two kilometres ahead of us. They managed a direct hit and then turned for home. But as they turned, two of them swooped down on us, one following the other at low altitude and high speed right along the full length of the column strafing as they went. As many as were able, both kriegies and guards, took to the deep muddy ditches on each side of the road and hoped for the best. We were totally devastated to think this was being done to us by our allies. When we picked ourselves up we were absolutely soaked in mud. Sadly fellow kriegies were killed and injured.

Much confusion and panic followed, both among the kriegies and the guards and it was a long time before we got going again. Some of the kriegies decided to make a break for it in the midst of it all but were shot at when they were spotted going over a rise to the railway line. After a number of hours the column of people 'bivouacked' in the woods on the left hand side of the road in the midst of a forest. The Germans saw fit not to issue us with any rations for the day, but thankfully they could nibble from their Red Cross parcels. To add to our woes it later began raining and it rained right through the night. It was bitterly cold, wet and miserable time.

With little or no sleep over night we moved off from the woods next morning at 0800. Long before this the guards had to do a count and some were sent into the woods to round up all the stragglers. Many were missing and never accounted for. Around noon, we had a long halt when we were afforded a ringside seat witnessing Nurnberg again being furiously bombed, by the American Flying Fortresses. The sight of all this caused the whole column, especially the guards, to become jittery and quite confused. As we were right under their flight path we wondered whether we could again be a target. As expected, in the distance we saw two P47s coming our way again. No one waited for orders. We were in the ditches in a flash, this time to find a greater depth of water and mud caused by the heavy overnight rain.

But instead of swooping down the length of the column they both flew across us at low range wagging their wings and waving as they went. When we first spotted them everyone was petrified, but when we witnessed this friendly gesture we were up on our feet and a great cheer went up. We hoped it was their way of apologising... We saw several Allied aircraft flying over us throughout the day. So we set to work and made a large P.O.W. sign out of toilet paper and Red Cross tins. We made the sign so big it would have to be easily seen from the air. We didn't want any repetition of what happened that first day out."

(Taken from [The March \(1945\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#))

[Experiences of a Prisoner of a War: World War 2 in Germany](#) jmvh.org/article/experiences-of-a-prisoner-of-a-war-world-war-2-in-germany/

Experiences of a POW: World War 2 in Germany. By Eric Stephenson In *Reprinted Articles* Issue Volume 18 No. 2 .

Eric was evacuated from Belaria into Germany...following the same trail as Errol did. This is his report.

January and February 1945 were among the coldest winter months of the 20th century in Europe, with blizzards and temperatures as low as -25°C (-13°F), and even until the middle of March, temperatures were well below 0°C (32°F). Most of the POWs were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing ill-suited to the appalling winter conditions. In most camps, the POWs were broken up in groups of 250 to 300 men and because of the inadequate roads and the flow of battle, not all the prisoners followed the same route. The groups would march 20 to 40 kilometers a day - resting in factories, churches, barns and even in the open. Soon long columns of POWs were wandering over the northern part of Germany with little or nothing in the way of food, clothing, shelter or medical care.

Prisoners from different camps had different experiences: sometimes the Germans provided farm wagons for those unable to walk. There seldom were horses available, so teams of POWs pulled the wagons through the snow. Sometimes the guards and prisoners became dependent on each other, other times the guards became increasingly hostile. Passing through some villages, the residents would throw bricks and stones, and in others, the residents would share their last food. Some groups of prisoners were joined by German civilians who were also fleeing from the Russians. Some who tried to escape or could not go on were shot by guards. Those with intact boots had the dilemma of whether to remove them at night - if they left them on, [trench foot](#) could result; if they removed them, they may not get their swollen feet back into their boots in the morning or, worse, the boots may freeze or be stolen.^[3]

With so little food they were reduced to scavenging to survive. Some were reduced to eating dogs and cats — and even rats and grass—anything they could lay their hands on. Already underweight from years of prison rations, some were at half their pre-war body weight by the end. Because of the unsanitary conditions and a near starvation diet, hundreds of POWs died of disease along the way and many more were ill. [Dysentery](#) was common; sufferers had the indignity of soiling themselves whilst having to continue to march, and being further weakened by the debilitating effects of illness. This disease was easily spread from one group to another when they followed the same route and rested in the same places. Many POWs suffered from frostbite which could lead to [gangrene](#). [Typhus](#), spread by [body lice](#), was a risk for all POWs, but was now increased by using overnight shelter previously occupied by infected groups. Some men simply froze to death in their sleep.^{[3][4]}

In addition to these conditions were the dangers from air attack by Allied forces mistaking the POWs for retreating columns of German troops. On April 19, 1945, at a village called [Gresse](#), 30 Allied POWs died and 30 were seriously injured (possibly fatally) in a "friendly-fire" situation when strafed by a flight of [RAF Typhoons](#).^{[5][6][7]} As winter drew to a close, suffering from the cold abated and some of the German guards became less harsh in their treatment of POWs. But the thaw rendered useless the sledges made by many POWs to carry spare clothing, carefully preserved food supplies and other items. So, the route became littered with items that could not be carried. Some even discarded their greatcoats, hoping that the weather did not turn cold again.^[4] As the columns reached the western side of Germany they ran into the advancing western Allied armies. For some, this brought liberation. Others were not so lucky. They were marched towards the [Baltic Sea](#), where Nazis were said to be using POWs as human shields and hostages. It was later estimated that a large number of POWs had marched over five hundred miles by the time they were liberated, and some had walked nearly a thousand miles.

LONG MARCH JANUARY 1945

Errol Green was on the Long March in the winter of January 1945. Dad did mention he had been on a march but from previous experience I rarely ventured to ask what he meant by the term so it just remained harmless in my memory. The stories he did share were enticing:

1. He and a guard went to a farm house to get apples. Dad had a coat with a pocket which had a hole so the apples tumbled into the lining of his coat and he had many apples to share. 2. He had conjunctivitis and he found snow was soothing to his sore eyes. 3. He had a billy can (he was a farmer so had a good eye to spot useful items) which he had to keep hidden but was good to get hot water on those very cold days. He had to hide his can as such items could so he said cost him his life if found. 4. He mentioned German ladies bashed the guards to give the prisoners some provisions of milk and bread. I felt Dad tried to make his stories have a positive note so as a child even as teenager it confused me as to why he seemed at times so unpredictable. I didn't understand why he was so different from other Aussie Dad's.

So in this story line I am using stories from the Stalag Luft 3 club told by 2 English men (Les Rutherford and Fred Hooker died April 2019) who did this actual march from Belaria to Spremberg and then by cattletruck to Luckenwalde. Maybe Dad could have experienced and told some of these stories too.

The Royal Air force in Britain recently issued a report on the Long march:

As the Soviet Army advanced on Poland, Nazi Germany evacuated Prisoner of War camps to prevent the early liberation of POW's by the Russians.

Over 80,000 Allied POW's were forced to march towards Germany away from the Soviet advance. The POW's marched around 1,000 km from POW camps in Poland towards Germany, in one of the coldest winters of the twentieth century. Temperatures reached below -20deg C. From late 1944 to early 1945, over 2,000 Allied servicemen perished, mostly from exposure (hypothermia), fatigue, starvation, dysentery, despair, disease and through misidentification by Allied Air Forces in what later became known as the 'Long March'.

Les Rutherford's wartime log book released on line through the Stalag Luft 3 club on Facebook...Les (British) was in Belaria the same camp as Dad before he was forced to march into Germany in the face of the Russian army arriving in January 1945. I took the information Les shared in Belaria leading up to the march leading to entering the final camp Luckenwald. The information from this last camp Luckenwald was very interesting as Dad fled the camp and mingled in with the refugees as soon as the Nazi camp officers left on April 22nd 1945. Dad didn't want to wait for the Russians and with good reason as the Russians delayed those who stayed (who didn't take the chance to flee) almost an extra month...by then Errol was already back in England.

JANUARY 20 Terrific surge in optimism in camp. New Russian offensive brings them today within 100 miles of Sagan. Lorries containing civilian refugees and luggage beginning to pass camp.

JANUARY 23 Refugees passing camp all day long mostly in horse drawn carts.

Red Cross parcel issues were reduced to one full parcel per man per week. Future supply of food rations-doubtful. Preparation for March in full swing in case we are moved out. Kit bags being converted to haversacks and packs. Special cake made from barley, Kilm cocoa and sugar.

JANUARY 25. Nearest point of Russian advance now only 50 miles from us. Gunfire heard at frequent intervals during the day. Refugees still pouring along the road.

JANUARY 26. ...20 R.A.F. N.C.O.s arrived at 11 P.M. from camp on the Polish Czech frontier. They were among 1500 evacuated from the Czech frontier 8 days ago - had been on road since. Tonight's

sick arrivals did last two days of trip to Belaria by rail. Rest of party still on road somewhere living on infrequent Goon rations and finding rough going through snow and ice.

From The Story of Stalag Luft 3 Part IX The March Artefacts and Recollections:

Nothing in Shakespeare could match the impact of the short speech delivered in the middle of the second act of 'You can't take it with you' at the South Compound Theatre on the night of 27th January 1945. Making an unscripted entrance Colonel Charles G. Goodrich, the senior American officer, strode centre stage and announced: The Goons have just given us 30 minutes to be at the front gate! Get your stuff together and line up!"

At his 4:30 staff meeting in Berlin that very afternoon, Adolf Hitler had issued the order to evacuate Stalag Luft III. He was fearful that the 11,000 Allied airmen in the camp would be liberated by the Russians. Hitler wanted to keep them as hostages. A spearhead of Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev's Southern Army had already pierced to within 20 kilometers of the camp.

In the barracks following Colonel Goodrich's dramatic announcement, there was a frenzy of preparation -- of improvised packsacks being loaded with essentials, distribution of stashed food, and of putting on layers of clothing against the Silesian winter (below -20degC).

As the men lined up outside their blocks, snow covered the ground six inches deep and was still falling. Guards with sentinel dogs herded them through the main gate. Outside the wire, Kriegies waited and were counted, and waited again for two hours as the icy winds penetrated their multilayered clothes and froze stiff the shoes on their feet. Finally, the South Camp moved out about midnight.

Out front, the 2,000 men of the South Camp were pushed to their limits and beyond, to clear the road for the 8,000 men behind them. Hour after hour, they plodded through the blackness of night, a blizzard swirling around them, winds driving near-zero temperatures

JANUARY 27. At 9 P.M. given 1/2 hours' notice to move. Packed all kit, available food (very little) change of clothing, shaving kit. 3 blankets. Paraded about 10 P.M. hung around in snow for nearly an hour then sent back to barracks. Big industrial effort on sleigh making. Surplus cigarettes burnt, gramophone records broken so that the Germans couldn't use them.

[WWII veteran Fred Hooker recalls the Long March](#) WW 11 Veteran Fred Hooker video recalls his Long March recorded by Thomas Ozel August 2017

[WWII veteran Fred Hooker recalls escaping from his POW camp](#)

From Fred Hooker: Christmas 1944 heard they would move to another camp as the Russian forces were approaching. Fred heard and saw US air force planes.

27th January 1945 they were called to Parade, heads were counted to see no one had escaped. They stood in the snow dressed in the Red Cross coat they were given at their initial interrogation centre together with any woollen items they had and all their belongings. They were issued with shaving gear and wash items for which they were grateful as they couldn't wash for 2 weeks. Here they were informed they would be leaving camp later that day (destination unknown). Then they were sent back to their billets.

28th January 3am called to parade. It was snowing and very cold. At 8am they set off on a march which slowed more to a walking pace. They stopped a few hours later and camped in a farm building for the night.

JANUARY 28. Paraded again at about 5.30 – snowing – finally moved out of camp at about 7 AM. – about 1100 of us. 80 sick left behind. One Red Cross parcel per man issued on leaving camp. Passed through SAGAN where many civilian refugees on roads. Passed EAST and NORTH compounds which had been evacuated around 4AM. Marched [number missing] KMS and reached village of SORAV late in afternoon, where we were billeted in barn to sleep. Boots soaking wet from days march in snow – froze overnight. Learnt that total destination is 70 KMS.

JANUARY 29. Started marching again at 8AM. About mid-day Frank and I fell in with Jack and George who were dragging a sleigh. They wanted someone to share in the pulling so we were only too glad of the chance and put our kit on the sleigh. Going very much easier. Marched [number missing] KMS reaching village of [name missing] where we bedded down for the night in barns.

From Fred Hooker's memoirs spoken 2017:

The next day they walked till they came to a used brick yard. Some men were lucky to be sleeping under cover while the rest slept out in the open.

21st they were on the move again. Some hoped they could stay and make contact with the Russian forces. They tried to hide behind a pile of pallets but a German guard dog spotted them. They were thankful the guard controlled his dog so he didn't attack them. The guard then sent them to the front of the queue for the night march so they were in the sight of the guards and chief officer of the camp. Here they encountered how difficult it was for those leading the march having to work with snow up to their waist and needing to dig their way through. The night march started at 8 pm. During the night they were informed if they didn't get over the Oder River by 8am in the morning they would be left to the mercy of the Russian forces. For some unknown reason they got over the bridge with its many big holes from various bombings. At this stage Fred and his 3 mates (men part of his original crew from his shot down plane and also Prisoners of war with him) made a sledge from an old broken ladder found at the brick yard and with their suitcases tied on top. They climbed on top of this homemade sledge with all their clothing piled on to keep them warm when they suddenly realized they were all alone with no one else in sight. The snow was icy by then. They did eventually catch up with the tail end of the main group. Then a short time after 8am they heard the bridge being blown up.

That morning they went to a farm. For about an hour they all made hay for the farmer while he finished milking his cows. The farmer turned his cows out into the snowy fields. Fred and his 3 mates chose the cow stalls for sleeping. It was just big enough for the four of them to sleep in that area. As the cows had been there overnight they had to clear the area of cow droppings and cover the area with hay before lying down. It was hard and cold. They had no food. For a number of days they lay down in barns and cow stalls. At one stage they couldn't find their boots with the men shifting at night for various reasons the hay covered their boots. Eventually the boots were found. Maybe it was here Errol Green and the guard asked for apples.

Les Rutherford's diary:

JANUARY 30. No marching today. Spent day repairing sleigh, cooking, bartering cigarettes for bread and resting. Reported sick. Blisters on feet and one chilblain. Rumour that we are entraining at SPREMBERG. Goons issued 1/2 cups of boiled barley per man in the morning.

JANUARY 31. On the road again. Pretty rough going over hills. Few minor calamities with sleigh. Covered [number missing] KMS. Arriving at MUSKAV in evening. In barns again. Had first wash since leaving BELARIA.

FEBRUARY 1ST No march today. Heavy thaw during night continued during day. Ground unfit for sleigh pulling tomorrow. Goons issued 1/2 cup of barley per man and 1/5 of a loaf per man.

FEBRUARY 2. Set out today on what is promised as last lap of journey to train. Americans taken separately to a different destination. Sleigh abandoned and kit carried on back. Goons provided a horse and wagon to carry Red Cross parcels which were issued at BELARIA. Weather fine for walking. Walked [number missing] KMS. Spent night just outside SPREMBERG in barns. Goons issued 1/7 of a loaf per man.

FEBRUARY 3. Marched to Panzer training school barracks at SPREMBERG where we were given first respectable meal of march, a bowl of pig swill, refreshing if not appetizing. Joined by about 400 of the chaps from EAST COMPOUND. Left in afternoon for station. Entrained in cattle trucks, 45 men to a truck. Goons issued 1/5 of a loaf per man.

From Stalag Luft 3 Club: From The Story of Stalag Luft 3 Part IX The March Artefacts and Recollections:

At 2:00 a.m. on January 29, they stumbled into Muskau and found shelter on the floor of a tile factory. They stayed there for 30 hours before making the 15.5-mile march to Spremberg, where they were jammed into boxcars recently used for livestock. With 50 to 60 men in a car designed to hold 40, the only way one could sit was in a line with others, toboggan-fashion, or else half stood while the other half sat. It was a 3-day ordeal, locked in a moving cell becoming increasingly fetid with the stench of vomit and excrement. The only ventilation in the cars came from two small windows near the ceiling on opposite ends of the cars. The train lumbered through a frozen countryside and bombed-out cities. Along the way, Colonel Goodrich passed the word authorizing escape attempts. In all, some 32 men felt in good enough condition to make the try. In 36 hours, all had been recaptured.

From Fred Hooker's memoirs 2017:

Thankfully they were told the march was over and they would now travel by train ending with another small march. The train in reality a goods/cattle truck 65 men in each which was a bit crowded. As there was no toilet bucket a corner of the truck was left to relieve themselves. The stench was awful and as they were locked in the truck the men squashed closer together to get further away from 'the corner'. The night before they had discovered a tub of molasses which they thought was similar to treacle, but in reality was farm molasses used to make silage for the cattle. What a mistake in view of their situation now...it was no holiday for those who had eaten the farm molasses. Nearly everyone was affected. The trucks finally stopped in the countryside and they were allowed out. Most got out but had trouble getting back in as they had stopped by fields where there was no platform. They helped each other in and even the German guards gave a helping hand. Finally they reached their destination with a short walk to camp Luckenwalde. There were crowds of men at the gate to see who the newcomers were to Stalag 111A...an old army camp.

Before entering the gate they had to stand outside, be photographed for their identity cards. Eventually they got into camp Luckenwalde. These huts had no bunks. They were open huts to house 200 men to a hut. Once inside Fred and his friends found a spot to camp close together.

From Les Rutherford's diary:

FEBRUARY 4. Train left SPREMBERG late last night and arrived at LUCKENWALDE about 6PM today. Most uncomfortable journey ever. Not enough room to stretch legs so spent the night in cramped position. Train stopped frequently during day often for 1/2 hour to 1 hour. During these stops scrounged hot water from engine driver for brews.

Marched from station to camp (5KMS) arriving about 7 P.M. waited outside in rain for 1/2 hour and finally taken in. Promised a hot meal which did not materialise. Goons insisted that all 1400 of us should have a hot "de-lousing" shower and a search before passing into compound. Air-raid delayed the proceedings somewhat, but managed along with Frank to be in first batch for showers. Following search was very slipshod. Finally got to bed at 3AM the most uncomfortable I have ever been in. Bed-boards, a pallasse and very, very little straw.

REVIEW OF THE MARCH BY LES RUTHERFORD

It was good to get away from barbed wire for a few days. Unfortunately my shoes were a little tight on the first day and I had a couple of blisters and a chilblain at the end of the day's tack. I wore flying boots for the rest of the journey until the last day when it was dry and I managed to get my shoes on again. Sleeping in the barns was rather comfortable, and after a day on the march very welcome. The weight of kit to be carried, conditions underfoot, insufficient food and the low physical reserves of strength after 5 months on half parcels, were the main snags. The Doc's main worries were, Chilblains, blisters, rheumatism and stomach troubles, the latter particularly after the 24 hours in the cattle truck. Frank and I usually ate 2 slices of bread for breakfast, 2 slices during the day and two in the evening. The evening slices were the big meal of the day, being spread with corned beef or pilchards whereas the others had cheese or jam. Luckily we managed to barter bread for cigarettes en route so that the bread lasted out. We usually managed two hot brews during the day. German civilians usually good-hearted enough to bring out buckets of water for us as we passed. On the whole we had our fair share of "hardships" and it left us in no condition to stand up to a further march particularly as we have no decent food to build up our strength again. There are no Red Cross parcels and we live entirely on German rations which consist of 1/5 of a loaf, 1 cup of soup, either margarine or spread enough for about 8 slices of bread – per day. Sugar is issued at infrequent intervals and we have hot mint tea twice per day. The bread ration works out at 5 slices per man. We also receive about 4 medium sized potatoes, boiled in their skins. So that our menu for the day is:-
Breakfast. – 1 1/2 slices bread & marg. Cup of mint tea.

Lunch – 4 potatoes, and 1 cup of soup.

Tea - 1 1/2 slices bread & marg Cup of mint tea

Supper – 2 slices bread & marg.

The chief pastime is to talk of food we will eat when we get home.

Every day is so alike that no-one ever knows what day it is without thinking hard first. Almost everyone in the camp has a cold and rheumatism [sic] coughs, colds etc., are common – a reaction from the march.

Arrived in Luckenwalde camp 4th February 1945

From Fred Hooker's memoirs 2019:

On 22nd April the men woke up to discover the German guards had disappeared and a Norwegian had been put in charge of the camp. He gave instructions that no one was to leave as the Russian forces were approaching and very close.

On 23rd April the Russian tanks and troops arrived and drove through the centre of the camp. It was a sight never to be forgotten with men cheering. The tanks went further to the compound where the Russian prisoners were being held, picked them up and they travelled with the troops to Berlin.

A second group of Russian troops arrived together with women. These Russian troops treated the POW's like prisoners with shortage of food and not being allowed out. Some did manage to escape. Several

went to the Russian compound as a cow had been killed and they hoped to be given some to cook up. But not much luck, they were given tripe which they couldn't eat and was horrible.

American troops came by and were willing to take some men to the American held territory 18 Kms away. As Fred and other men were waiting by the trucks the Russian guards told the men to get out of the trucks as they were prisoners held by the Russian forces. The Russians said they would send the men home via Odessa. So they had to get off the trucks and sent back to the camp. The Americans returned the morning and said they didn't want to cause trouble with the Russians. Fred with others again got into the truck but the Russians told them again to get out and fired ammunition. A message was sent around that if anyone was fit enough to walk the 18 kms the Yanks would wait there 24 hours for those who chose to come.

A number of men took to the woods to try to escape. They wandered around in the direction of the American forces. They heard some shooting and waited till it stopped. Five men then decided to return to the Russian camp. Those remaining were tired and hungry by the time they reached a village which drew them in with the smell of freshly baked bread. Russians were in the village who took them in and fed them mint jelly and milk and indicated they should sleep through the night, which they thankfully did. In the morning they wished to thank the Russian men for their hospitality and saw some men coming toward them with bikes. The POW's were not sure if it was the same men and were surprised when the 4 bikes were handed to the POW's so they didn't have to walk the rest of the way. On their way they came to a bridge guarded by Germans who wouldn't allow them to cross over so the POW's made contact with the Russians. One of the bikes they had now had a flat tyre. One of the Russians here snatched a good bike from a German lady nearby handing her the one with the flat tyre. The men made it over the bridge and after some distance hear grenades exploding and were unsure about going further when American forces emerged from the bushes. The POW's put their hands up calling out English, English and throwing their bikes on to the ground! Transport was ordered and they were taken to the American headquarters.

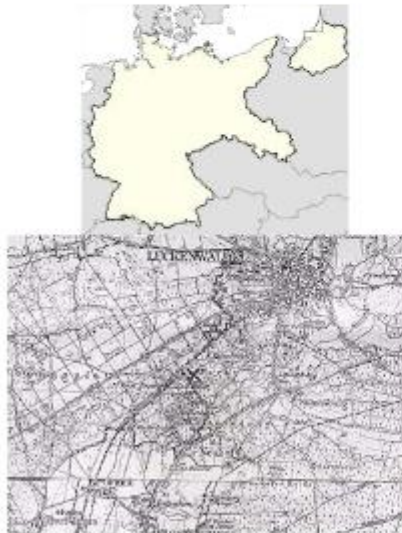
For those who chose to stay when the Russian forces took over the camp, those POW's had to stay an extra month before the Russian forces released them while Errol was already in England by then.

Stalag III-A Errol's last camp February-April 45

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Stalag III-A
Luckenwalde, Brandenburg

Former headquarters building of Stalag III-A
Luckenwalde, 2010



Map of Luckenwalde. The X marks the location of Stalag III-A.

Stalag III-A	
Coordinates	52°05′53″N 13°11′47″E﻿ / ﻿52.09806°N 13.19639°E﻿ / 52.09806; 13.19639
Type	Prisoner-of-war camp
Site information	
Controlled by	 Nazi Germany
Site history	
In use	1939-1945

Stalag III-A was a German World War I [prisoner-of-war camp](#) at [Luckenwalde, Brandenburg](#), 52 kilometres (32 mi) south of [Berlin](#). Planning for the camp commenced before the [invasion of Poland](#). It was designed to hold 10,000 men, was the largest in the [3rd Military District](#), and was considered a model for other camps

In mid-September 1939 the first Polish POWs arrived, and were housed in large 12 m (39 ft) by 35 m (115 ft) tents, and set to work building the barrack huts before the winter set in. Once their work was complete the Poles were relocated, the first inhabitants of the camp were Dutch and Belgian for a brief time before being replaced by 43,000 French POWs, who arrived in mid-1940, remaining the largest group of prisoners until the end of the war. The French were joined in 1941 by Yugoslav and Russian prisoners, then in late 1943 some 15,000 Italian military internees arrived, though most were quickly dispersed to other camps. In late 1944 small numbers of American, Romanian, British and Polish prisoners arrived. More than 200,000 prisoners passed through the Stalag III-A, and at its height in May 1944 there were a total of 48,600 POW registered there. However, no more than 6,000-8,000 were ever housed at the main camp, with the rest sent out to work in forestry and industry in more than 1,000 ("Work Companies") spread out over the entire state of Brandenburg.

The camp was generally run according to the guidelines of the [Geneva Convention](#) and the [Hague Regulations](#), and was regularly inspected by representatives of the [International Committee of the Red Cross](#) (ICRC). Russian POWs were excluded from this on the grounds that the USSR was not a signatory of the Geneva Convention and suffered significantly poorer conditions as a result. Generally, treatment of prisoners depended on nationality. The French, British and Americans were treated relatively well, while the Italians, and particularly the Russians, suffered from the consequences of maltreatment.

Italian prisoner Michele Zotta later reported that for the first few days of his imprisonment he slept on the ground in a small tent. As to rations, on the first day he received one kilogram of [rye bread](#) to share with fifteen other prisoners, with some butter and [jelly](#). From then on the daily routine was for the Germans to distribute a bucket of potatoes to be shared between twenty-five prisoners. However, there are also accounts that the Germans were low on food themselves. Regardless, Stalag III-A remains an example of poor conduct on the part of the Germans towards prisoners of war. In February 1945 other prisoners were evacuated to Stalag III-A, adding to the already overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Finally, as the Russians approached the guards fled the camp leaving the prisoners to be liberated by the [Red Army](#) on 22 April 1945.

On 22nd April 1945, as the advancing Russian forces approached, the German guards fled from Stalag 3A camp. Dad was not keen to wait for the Russian takeover of this camp, so he escaped from the camp into the refugee masses and was found by American forces and sent back to England. In England, Errol was given time in rehab before being discharged from the air force. Prior to returning to Australia, Errol married Margaret Miller on 4th July 1945. Margaret a 22-year-old, had to wait for a passenger ship to become available, as ship priority in those days was in transporting military men back from the war—there were no commercial planes at that time. The appointed time came for Margaret to leave England and as she stood on deck, she saw a little sparrow hopping around... Margaret spoke to the little bird: Well little Chap, I won't be seeing you ever again—now that I am going to the other side of the world'!!!

Margaret sailed as a 'war bride'—all expenses paid travelling via the Suez Canal. The trip took six weeks with her first stop in Australia being Fremantle, Western Australia before disembarking at Melbourne. Margaret was helped and guided to the correct train to travel to Sydney where Errol was waiting for his bride to drive her to the family home on Woodford Island, near Maclean.

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FROM: B.23 AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY
 TO: BUREAU ENQUIRY SERVICE
 No. Rank, Name, and Unit: 402795 F/LT E.E.GREEN - RAAF ATT RAF - (N.S.W.) Date 16/5/46
 Remarks: Prev. P.O.W. at Stalag Luft 3 Germany now safe in U.K. - liberated
 by the Allied Armies

John Maclean

Action taken Date

34

69421
 ordinary
 Telegraphic acknowledgment delivery
 PERSONAL: MR. C.J. GREEN
 BOX 51, MACLEAN
 CLARENCE RIVER N.S.W.

402795 F/LT. E.E. GREEN SAFE STOP PLEASED TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR
 SON FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ERROL EDWARD GREEN HAS BEEN LIBERATED BY THE
 ALLIED ARMIES AND IS NOW SAFE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM STOP ANTICIPATE
 YOUR SON WILL COMMUNICATE WITH YOU DIRECT.

DNT 12/5/45 AIR FORCE 391 LT. COLLINS ST. MELBOURNE.

785-10/10 140551/2

103700

PART I

TOP SECRET

M.L.G./Genl

MIS-X

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR BRITISH/AMERICAN EX-PRISONERS OF WAR.

1. No. 32795 RANK P/Lt SURNAME GREEN
 CHRISTIAN NAMES ERIK EDWARD
 DECORATIONS _____

2. SHIP (R.N., U.S.N. or MERCHANT NAVY) _____
 UNIT (ARMY) _____
 SQUADRON (R.A.F. or A.A.F.) 7590N RIF

3. DIVISION (ARMY), COMMAND (R.A.F. or A.A.F.) BOMBER

4. DATE OF BIRTH 8.6.16

5. DATE OF ENLISTMENT 15.10.40

6. CIVILIAN TRADE OR PROFESSION GRazier
 (OR EXAMINATIONS PASSED WHILE P/W) _____

7. PRIVATE ADDRESS Box 51, Macleay, N.S.W. Australia

8. PLACE AND DATE OF ORIGINAL CAPTURE BENTHEIM, GERMANY 26.6.42

9. WERE YOU WOUNDED WHEN CAPTURED? No

10. MAIN CAMPS OR HOSPITALS IN WHICH IMPRISONED.

Camp No.	Location	From	Till
<u>STALAG LUFT III</u>	<u>SAGANSI, POLAND</u>	<u>JULY 42</u>	<u>FEBRUARY 45</u>
<u>BUCKENWALDE</u>	<u>50 KM. S.W. OF BERLIN</u>	<u>JAN 45</u>	<u>MAY 45</u>
<u>STALAG III A</u>			

11. WERE YOU IN A WORKING CAMP?

Location	From	Till	Nature of Work

12. DID YOU SUFFER FROM ANY SERIOUS ILLNESSES WHILE A P.W.?

Nature of Illness	Cause	Duration

(b) DID YOU RECEIVE ADEQUATE MEDICAL TREATMENT?

YES

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE PART II. TOP SECRET.

TOP SECRET

M.I. 9/Gen/

MIS-X

1. No. 402795 RANK F/Lt SURNAME GREEN

CHRISTIAN NAMES KNOX EDWARD

2. LECTURES before Capture:

(a) Were you lectured in your unit on how to behave in the event of capture? (State where, when and by whom).

YES, - (DARKINGTON, CAMBS. - FEB 1942 - INTELLIGENCE DIVISION)

(b) Were you lectured on escape and evasion? (State where, when and by whom).

NOT IN ENGLAND. LECTURED IN POW CAMPS

3. INTERROGATION after capture:

Were you specially interrogated by the enemy? (State where, when and methods employed by enemy).

INTERROGATED AT DULAG LUFT - FRANKFURT GERMANY
1-3 JULY 1942. MILITARY CONFINEMENT.

4. ESCAPES attempted:

Did you make any attempted or partly successful escapes? (Give details of each attempt separately, stating where, when, method employed, names of your companions, where and when recaptured and by whom. Were you physically fit? What happened to your companions?)

WORKED ON THE GENERAL ESCAPE ORGANISATION
IN CAMP AT SAGAN - STALAG LUFT II. I DID
NOT ESCAPE AND 70 OFFICERS ESCAPED BEFORE TUNNEL
WAS FOUND. SO ALL THE OFFICERS WERE SHOT.

5. SABOTAGE:

Did you do any sabotage or destruction of enemy factory plant, war material, communications, etc., when employed on working-parties or during escape? (Give details, places and dates.)

6. COLLABORATION with enemy:

Do you know of any British or American personnel who collaborated with the enemy or in any way helped the enemy against other Allied Prisoners of War? (Give details, names of person(s) concerned, camp(s), dates and nature of collaboration or help given to enemy).

7. WAR CRIMES:

If you have any information or evidence of bad treatment by the enemy to yourself or to others, or knowledge of any enemy violation of Geneva Convention you should ask for a copy of "Form Q" on which to make your statement.

(Note: Form Q is a separate form inviting information on "War Crimes" and describes the kinds of offences coming under this title.)

GENERAL QUESTIONNAIRE, PART II. TOP SECRET.
(continued)

TOP SECRET

M.I.9 Gen/

MIS-X

8. Have you any other matter of any kind you wish to bring to notice?

SECURITY UNDERTAKING.

I fully realise that all information relating to the matters covered by the questions in Part II. are of a highly secret and official nature.

I have had explained to me and fully understand that under Defence Regulations or U.S.A.R. 380-5 I am forbidden to publish or communicate any information concerning these matters.

Date 18-5-45

Signature

E. F. Green

e. State if you saw it yourself. If you did not see it, who told you about it?

f. Give brief story of crime Between the approximate dates 28.1.45. to 5.2.45. the compound known as Bolaria (Stalag Luft III) was evacuated under appalling conditions to Stalag 3A. (Luckenwalde). The POW's were not warned of the evacuation and so were not prepared for it. They were marched in very cold weather with insufficient clothing and food to Spremberg. From Spremberg they were transported in cattle trucks (45 to a truck) to Stalag IIIA. The Germans failed to supply medical treatment etc. required for the good health of the POW's at Stalag 3A from 5.2.45. until our release by the Russians on 22.4.45.

1838

68A

When completed this document must be classified as SECRET and handed to Room 255.

WAR CRIMES QUESTIONNAIRE

ATTENTION: (The completion of this Form WILL NOT DELAY YOUR REPATRIATION)

1. SERVICE NUMBER A.402795

2. RANK & NAME (Capital Letters) P/Lt. E.E. GREEN.
(State above or if officer, branch)

3. NEXT OF KIN Wife

4. AT WHAT ENEMY CAMPS AND HOSPITALS WERE YOU CONFINED AND WHEN WERE YOU AT EACH?

Dulag Luft. 27.6.42. - 2.7.42.

Stalag Luft III. 3.7.42. - 28.1.45.

Stalag IIIA (Oflag) 5.2.45. - 22.4.45.

5. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION ABOUT ANY ATROCITIES AGAINST, OR MISTREATMENT OF AUSTRALIAN OR ALLIED PRISONERS OF WAR, CIVILIAN INTERNEES OR THE CIVILIAN POPULATION FOR WHICH YOU THINK THE PERPETRATORS SHOULD BE PUNISHED? (Answer by stating YES or NO in the spaces provided below).

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| (a) Killings or executions | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (b) Torture, beatings or other cruelties | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (c) Imprisonment under improper conditions | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (d) Massacres, wholesale looting or burning of towns | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (e) Use of prisoners of war on enemy military works or operations | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (f) Exposure of prisoners of war to danger of gunfire, bombing, torpedoing, or other hazards of war | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (g) Transportation of prisoners of war under improper conditions | <u>Yes</u>
Yes or No |
| (h) Public exhibition or exposure to ridicule of prisoners of war | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (i) Failure to provide prisoners of war with proper medical care, food or quarters | <u>Yes</u>
Yes or No |
| (j) Collective punishment of a group for offences of others | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |
| (k) Any other atrocities not specifically mentioned above for which you think the guilty persons should be punished | <u>No</u>
Yes or No |

IF ANY QUESTION IS ANSWERED YES, THEN STATE THE FACTS BRIEFLY ON REVERSE SIDE OF THIS SHEET.

6. DETAILS OF ATROCITIES:

a. Kind of crime

b. Where it happened

c. Who was the victim? (Give complete description including name and whether military or civilian personnel)

d. Who was the perpetrator? (Give as complete description as possible)

e. State if you saw it yourself. If you did not see it, who told you about it?

f. Give brief story of crime Between the approximate dates 28.1.45. to 5.2.45. the compound known as Bolaria (Stalag Luft III) was evacuated under appalling conditions to Stalag 3A. (Luckenwalde). The POW's were not warned of the evacuation and so were not prepared for it. They were marched in very cold weather with unsufficient clothing and food to Spremberg. From Spremberg they were transported in cattle trucks (45 to a truck) to Stalag IIIA. The Germans failed to supply medical treatment etc. required for the good health of the POW's at Stalag 3A from 5.2.45. until our release by the Russians on 22.4.45.

7. Have you previously been questioned by any military or naval authorities about atrocities or mistreatment? Yes If YES by HCM, WHEW and WEMY
Yes or No

M.I.9. May 1945.

8. Did you make a signed statement? Yes
Yes or No

(Sgd.) E.E. Green.

(sign your name here)

No. 11 P.D.R.C. Brighton.

(Present organization and its location)
(Please Print)



The **1939–1945 Star** is a military [campaign medal](#) instituted by the [United Kingdom](#) on 8 July 1943 for award to [British and Commonwealth](#) forces for service in the [Second World War](#). Two clasps were instituted to be worn on the medal ribbon, **Battle of Britain** and **Bomber Command**.^{[1][2]}

For all overseas operational areas in World War 2- The first in a series of eight bronze stars issued for service in the Second World War, it was awarded to personnel who had completed six months' service in specified operational commands overseas, between 3rd September 1939 and 8 May 1945 (2 September 1945 in the Far East) - RAF air crew will qualify with 60 days service in an operational unit including at least one operational sortie.

Ribbon- Equal stripes of dark blue to represent the service of the Royal and Merchant Navies, red, to represent that of the Armies and light blue to represent that of Air Forces- Worn with the dark blue stripe furthest from the left shoulder. The six pointed star has a circular centre with the GRI/VI monogram, surmounted by a crown and inscribed THE 1939-45 STAR round the foot.



Ribbon bar (left) and rosettes for the [Battle of Britain](#) (centre) and [Bomber Command](#) (right) clasps

The **Air Crew Europe Star** is a military campaign medal, instituted by the [United Kingdom](#) in May 1945 for award to [British and Commonwealth](#) air crews who participated in operational flights over Europe from bases in the [United Kingdom](#) during the [Second World War](#).^{[1][2][3]}

Awarded for operational flying from UK bases over Europe, for a period of two months between 3rd September 1939 and 4th June 1944- Entitlement to either the Atlantic or France and Germany Star was denoted by the appropriate clasp. This star is by far the most coveted of all of the Second World War Stars.



The **War Medal 1939–1945** is a campaign medal which was instituted by the [United Kingdom](#) on 16 August 1945. All fulltime personnel of the armed forces wherever they were serving, so long as they had served for at least 28 days between 3rd September 1939 and 2nd September 1945 were eligible for this medal.

Narrow red stripes in the centre, with a narrow white stripe on either side, broad red stripes at either edge and two intervening stripes of blue

Obverse) effigy of King George VI; (reverse) a triumphant lion trampling a dragon symbolising the Axis Powers



The **Australia Service Medal 1939–1945** recognises service in Australia's armed forces, Mercantile Marine and [Volunteer Defence Corps](#) during [World War II](#).

 Ribbon bar	
Related	Australian Service Medal 1945–1975 , Australian Active Service Medal 1945–1975



The **Accumulated Campaign Service Medal** and the **Accumulated Campaign Service Medal 2011** are medals awarded by Queen [Elizabeth II](#) to members of her Armed Forces to recognise long campaign service. The original Accumulated Campaign Service Medal, instituted in January 1994, was awarded to holders of the [General Service Medal \(1962\)](#) who had completed 36 months of accumulated campaign service. The replacement Accumulated Campaign Service Medal 2011 is now currently awarded to holders of various campaign service medals who have completed 720 days of campaign service.