

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Autumn 2000 Newsletter

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ASSOCIATION NEWS by Les Allan, President & Honorary General Secretary.

Members will recall my letter of 29th April to the Prime Minister, as reproduced in the Summer Newsletter. I finally received a reply from a Mr G A Coupland, from the Direct Communications Unit at 10, Downing Street, which informed me that; "Mr Blair receives many thousands of letters each week and hopes you will understand that, as the matter you raise is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, he has asked that your letter be forwarded to that Department so that they may reply to you on his behalf."

The reply came on 26th June, from Mr J J Harding of the Army Historical Branch: "I can assure you that Ministers in the Ministry of Defence are well aware of your Association and of the several issues you have raised with us in recent years. We are aware of your Associations view concerning the experiences of those servicemen detained as prisoners of war or Protected Personnel in the European Theatre of War. Further, we are also aware of the hardships endured, notably in the latter stages of the war. In response to your point about the results of such hardship, as you know, any Serviceman whose health has suffered as a result of military service, including any period spent as a POW or PP, can claim a War Disablement Pension.

"With regard to the matter of campaign stars, as you are aware, this whole issue was debated at length in Parliament when the awards were decided upon. I must add that I have seen no evidence to support your claim that those decisions in any way sought to stigmatise or denigrate the service of those unfortunate enough to have been detained by the enemy. The reasoning behind the decision to extend the 1939-43 Star to cover 1939-45 can be found in the contemporary papers and in no way supports this suggestion.

"Turning to the matter of the Adjournment Debate in March to which you refer. I should advise that such debates are not initiated by the Government but rather by individual MPs. In this instance Martin Bell MP wished to raise the specific issue of compensation for former Far Eastern Prisoners of War who, he felt, were a unique case. I enclose a copy of the relevant pages of Hansard for your information as well as those of the subsequent Debate, again of Far Eastern POWs and Internees, called in June.

"Finally, I note your comments on the matter of deductions from the pay of Protected Personnel. Ministers are well aware of the views of your Association on this issue. As you know, the matter was the subject of a careful and detailed review the results of which were announced to Parliament in July 1997. An explanation of the contemporary decisions to make deductions from the home pay of Protected Personnel in respect of 'Convention payments' by the Detaining Power was included in this review. I must advise that we do not accept your view that such deductions were improper or illegal."

After reading the above letter, from a civil servant in the Army Historical Branch, I wrote to Mr Coupland at 10, Downing Street; "I left school at the age of 14 and at 17 joined the Buckinghamshire Battalion, Light Infantry. From May 1940 to 1945 I was a prisoner of war. I was beaten on one occasion and had my jaw broken. Being entitled to Geneva Protection I was dismayed to learn that the UK and Germany agreed NOT to exchange Protected Personnel as required by the Geneva Convention (both the UK and Germany proved to be quite expert at

breaking the Geneva Convention to my disadvantage). On discharge I returned to my civil occupation only to find that for physical reasons I was unable to continue. I then went self-employed until I retired after my 65th Birthday, being put into liquidation because of crippling taxes. All my life I have never claimed or received unemployment benefit, or any other kind of benefit (a fact I am not particularly proud of). I paid all due taxes both local and government. Am I so wrong then, to expect the Prime Minister to take a minute to read my letter?"

"Now Mr Coupland, my letter to the Prime Minister can only be answered by the Prime Minister and if he is too busy to just acknowledge that he had read it, then fine, but for you to send it to the MOD was at best ludicrous; justice from that quarter is quite unattainable. Mr Spellar and Dr Reid are witnesses to that. All you have to say is that the Prime Minister is too busy to read the letter.

"Incidentally, the letter I received from Mr Harding of the MOD began: 'Thank you for your letter of 29th April to the Prime Minister, which as you know, has been passed to us in the MOD for reply. I apologise for the delay in providing a full response.' That letter was dated the 26th June. Your letter telling me that my letter to the Prime Minister had been forwarded to the MOD was dated 12th July. Just think Sir, April-May-June-July, for one minute of Mr Blairs time." Les Allan, AM(inst)BE. Knight of the Order Leopold II.

MORE ASSOCIATION NEWS

NEW MEMBERS. **Mr Fred Hirst.** Captured in Tunisia while serving with the Sherwood Foresters and a former resident of Stalag 7A. **Mr Jim Aitken,** served with the Black Watch and was captured on Crete. A resident of Stalag 18A where he assisted the man of confidence until his repatriation on medical grounds in 1944. **Mrs Christine Lawrance,** (Associate), daughter of Army Chaplain Revd Ernest Howard Metherell, captured 28th May 1940 with 133 Field Ambulance, South London Division. **Mr Frank Gill,** of the Royal Engineers who was captured on Greece in April 1941. A resident of Stalag 8B Lamsdorf. **Mrs Alison Robertson,** (Associate) whose late father was a member of BAB20. **Mr J M McN Bisset,** (Associate). **Mrs Anne Hardy,** (Associate), neice of Private Gordon Chirside of the RAMC who was a resident of Stalag 4G. **Mr Paul Law,** (Associate), son of Private William Law of the 2nd Gloucesters. **Mr 'Jumper' Collins,** a Korean War ex-POW who was captured while serving with the Glorious Glosters at the battle of the Imjin River. **Mr George Elliott,** also a Korean War ex-POW who served with the Glosters and was a resident of Camp Number One. **Mr C Edwards,** (Associate). **Mr Ron Murphy** (Associate), nephew of Trooper Jack Brown. **Mrs Jayne Hills,** (Associate) niece of the late Frederick Hatch. **Mrs Dot Wildish,** (Associate) daughter of George Self of The Buffs. **Major Ian Shaw,** Royal Artillery, captured at Singapore. Formerly with 12th Frontier Force Regiment, Indian Army. **Mr John G Bryden,** RAOC, who was taken prisoner at St Valery and was a resident of Stalag XXIB. **Charlotte Hammond** (Associate) niece of the late Leslie Gordon Berkowitz of the London Irish Rifles and Campo 146. Welcome all of you to the Association.

COMPENSATION. We have recently received notification from the German Embassy in London regarding payments to former forced labourers and the procedure for registering claims. We have been sent a fact sheet produced by the Federal Ministry of Finance and the Commissioner of the Federal Chancellor for the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" which provides details of the proposed payments, application deadlines and the partner organisations to which applications can be made. However, the sheet quotes 'Detention as a prisoner of war is not a cause of entitlement' and the compensation appears to be directed more towards Jewish forced labourers. We will be writing to the appropriate authorities to clarify the position of British and Commonwealth prisoners of war, who were used as forced labourers or were detained in

concentration camps and will let you know the results. If you would like a copy of the seven-page fact sheet, please send a large SAE to either Les Allan or Phil Chinnery.

ODDS AND SODS. We would be pleased to answer any letters sent in, but would be grateful if you could include a stamp if a reply is required. Our IN trays are usually piled high with mail, so please be patient if you do not receive a reply straight away.

SPONSORS. We are looking for sponsors or advertisers to help us cover the cost of producing and distributing our newsletters. The newsletter is an excellent means of keeping contact with former comrades in the far-flung corners of England and Foreign Parts. If you can help, please let us know.

SQUADRON PRINTS are one of our sponsors this month, and samples of their high quality bookmarks are enclosed with each newsletter. Their range of 100 different bookmarks include 43 Fighter Squadron, RAF/Hurricane I; 467 Squadron, RAAF/Lancaster B1; 55 Squadron RAF/Victor K2; 814 Squadron, Royal Navy/Sea King HAS6; 22 Torpedo Bomber Sqdn, RAF/Beaufort 1 and 22nd Tactical Fighter Squadron, USAF/F-15C Eagle. Cost is 75p each, plus 40p post and packing. Discount for quantities. A full list of their range of bookmarks and other products can be obtained from Squadron Prints Ltd, The Sky Studio, 22 Chantry Road, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 8BE. Tel 01440-703212.

BRITISH LEGION BRANCHES. We would like to see our newsletters distributed to all of the Legion branches in England and Overseas. If you know the address of the branch near you, would you please send it in.

Members might agree with this thought for the day: "IF YOU LOVE YOUR FREEDOM THANK A WAR VETERAN NOT A POLITICIAN."

ADDRESSES; Membership and General enquiries to Mr Les Allan, Hon Gen Sec at 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. Newsletter or Historical enquiries to Mr Phil Chinnery, 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB

BOOK REVIEWS

IN PRESENCE OF MY FOES by GRIS DAVIES-SCOURFIELD. This recently reprinted book was written by a young officer who was commissioned into the 60th Rifles, Kings Royal Rifle Corps in 1938 and who went with their 2nd Battalion to defend Calais in 1940. Wounded four times in the battle and taken prisoner, he escaped one year later from a camp at Posen and was helped and sheltered by the Polish Resistance for 9 months until recaptured on his way to Vienna. He was sent to the special camp at Colditz in March 1942 from which he escaped the following year, but was

again recaptured and, after further travels and adventures, taken back to Colditz until the end of the war. After the war he remained in the Army, retiring as a Brigadier in 1973. A very good book, with lots of material on the infamous Colditz Castle. ISBN number 0 947 828 559. 271 pages softcover, illustrated with maps, sketch plans and photographs. Signed copies can be obtained direct from Brigadier E G B Davies-Scourfield, CBE, MC at Old Rectory Cottage, Medstead, Alton, Hampshire GU34 5LX. Price £14 including postage.

Mr Terence Kelly, one of our members, is the author of a number of books related to our shared war experiences. (The Genki Boys, Fepow, Voyage Beyond Belief, Hurricane Over the Jungle, Battle for Palembang, Living with Japanese). He has now written **The Jordan Saga**, a series of novels which are to be published by Severn House Publishers Ltd, with the first two "**The Cut**" and "**The Shuffle**" now on sale. The first three books of this series are titled 'The Cut', 'The Shuffle' and 'The Deal' (due October 2000) and are set in Ireland, Liverpool and London through the period 1916 to 1930 and comprise a saga of a family's triumphs, disasters and development set largely in the twenties. Later books in the series will take us through to the modern day. All of Terence's books are available from Public Libraries. To obtain a copy of "The Cut" just quote the ISBN number 0 7278 5466 6 to your local library and they will obtain it for you.

CRETE WAS MY WATERLOO by NEVILLE CHESTERTON. Subtitled 'A true eyewitness account of the sinking of the Lancastria, the Battle of Crete and POW experiences 1940-45.' The book is full of anecdotes, such as; "When I was on guard one day, the orderly officer came round to inspect the guard, which is the usual practice in any camp. The guard turned out and lined up - three were very tall and one was short. As we brought our rifles to the inspection position, one man accidentally fired a shot. Luckily, the man beside him was the short one, and the bullet shot over his head, but if the short one had had the accident, the tall man on his right would have had his head blown off." Another concerns the port of Piraeus in Greece. One day Neville and his mates met an elderly English lady outside a small cottage overlooking the port. She offered them tea and they had a nice chat. The next day the Germans declared war on Greece and bombed the port. The ship 'Clan Fraser' was blown up, with 200 tons of TNT in its hold and the ships propeller landed right in the centre of the town. They wondered if the English lady had survived the huge explosion which almost wrecked the town. Told with humility, humour and restraint, this memoir celebrates the daily life of the ordinary soldier - the struggle to stay alive against all odds, the pranks played on German guards, the comradeship that bonded men together in intolerable conditions. Softcover, 117 pages. Published by Janus at £6.95, ISBN number 1-85756-198-8.

IN CAPTIVITY by KEN WILLMOTT. The time period covered is from April 1941 when the author was captured at Kalamata in Southern Greece through his time at Stalag 18A Wolfsberg in Austria to his release near Salzburg in May 1945. Not surprisingly, Ken preferred to involve himself with camp entertainment rather than join one of the many working detachments sent out from the Stalag. Joining the band 'The Hottentots' Ken helped stage many of the shows held in 18A. With nothing more than paper and cardboard from Red Cross parcels and old blankets, costumes, decor and stage sets were produced. They excelled themselves in August 1944 when they convinced the camp commandant Hauptmann Steiner to allow them to hold a 'Roman Holiday' complete with 'elephant', heavily clogged 'ballet girls', Nubians, beautiful ladies and legionaires. In the 'Coliseum' where 'Caesar' was enthroned, gladiator duels took place together with fierce battles with Ancient Britons. The book contains rare photographs taken inside Stalag 18A, plus drawings and maps. A valuable piece of history and recommended reading for the many associate members whose relatives were incarcerated at Wolfsberg. ISBN number 0 9529772 0 6. Softcover 79 pages. Copies can be obtained direct from Ken Willmott at 5, Townfield Gardens, Altrincham, Cheshire WA14 4DT. Cost is £5 each.

BATTLEGROUND EUROPE - CALAIS. 'A fight to the finish - May 1940' by Jon Cooksey. At £9.95 excellent value for this soft cover book. ISBN number 0 85052 647-7. Published by Leo Cooper, Pen and Sword Books Ltd. In 190 pages this profusely illustrated book tells the story of the defence of Calais in May 1940. The content of the book is best described by the Foreword by Brigadier Grismond Davies-Scourfield; "The Battle of Calais in 1940 has never attracted the attention which perhaps it deserves. This is hardly surprising; it took place when other more dramatic events were unfolding - the catastrophic defeat and occupation of France and the British Expeditionary Forces evacuation at Dunkirk. Calais, on the other hand was fought on a comparatively small scale, just one panzer division against one mechanised brigade. Nevertheless there are features of the battle which justify considerable interest and study when brought out into the open.

"It was a forlorn hope in that one British brigade, including one tank battalion, without artillery, engineer or air support, was pitted against a complete German panzer division backed by the resources of a whole panzer corps and the support of the German air force. As a very young platoon commander, my lasting impressions of the battle are mainly of the professional acceptance by my riflemen of what was fairly obviously a hopeless situation, we being outnumbered, outgunned and trapped against the sea. They recognised and accepted that they had been sent to do a job and they were quietly determined that they were going to do it, to the best of their ability, right up to the end. No one questioned the job itself or the order received, and no one ever asked me whether we were going to be evacuated and if not, why not. It was professionalism at its best, laced with plenty of cockney humour. Arthur Bryant was only too right when he once said that the natural home of the British Army was 'The Last Ditch, where it always excelled itself'.

"This book, attractively written and carefully researched, provides a need which has long existed. It also provides a wealth of valuable information on how best to visit the battlefield, the places where the major actions took place together with the best viewing points, and with additional information on hotels, restaurants and car parks. Yet all this wealth of detail does in no way obscure Jon Cookseys clear explanation on how and why the battle was fought and his very balanced view on what the importance of the battle may or may not have been, so that the reader can, without too much difficulty, draw his or her own conclusion." Order direct from Pen and Sword Books Ltd, Freepost SF5, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2BR. Postage and packing free in the UK and EEC.

HISTORIANS NEWS. By Phil Chinnery.

INCOMING MAIL. Thank you to **Oscar D'Alcorn** of Fort William, Inverness-shire who sent in a three page account of his time as a guest of the Italians at Campo 65 Altamura and Campo 73 Carpi de Modena. Does anyone else have any recollections of their time as a POW in Italy? The next (Winter) newsletter will concentrate on Italy and the prisoner of war camps. Any photographs, stories, maps, sketches would be welcome.

Thank you to **Edgar Haines** who sent in details from his diary of the three-month march from the working camp at Grosse Schonbruck near Stalag 20A Thorn to Miesterhorst. He stayed in a lime works and was taken to Hameln to help clear up after a bombing raid. Were you in the same area? Any other accounts would be gratefully received.

Thank you to **John Sorsby** for a copy of his booklet describing his march to the west from Stalag 8C which began on 8th February 1945.

VISITS TO OLD CAMPS. We have received one or two reports of visits to the sites of old prisoner of war camps. Please keep sending them in and we will include them in a future issue. Thank you to **Stan Johnson** for the report on his trip to Poland.

STALAG IVB. Harry McLean has put me in touch with Peter Liddle of Sheffield, who drew the excellent plan of Stalag IVB mentioned in the last newsletter. Copies of the plan are now available for the price of a £5 cheque made out to 'The International Red Cross' plus two first class stamps. Anyone interested please contact me at **10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB**. We have also received copies of the plans of PG21 Chieti in Italy, Oflag 79 Brunswick and Oflag 8F Mährisch Trubau from new Australian member **Courtenay Smithers**. We may be able to offer copies of these once we have checked out the copyright situation.

STALAG 21D. Douglas Evans was one of the members who requested copies of the report on this camp. He was camp interpreter at Warthelager, Krotchin and Kosten and sent in an interesting letter describing one or two incidents. "Initially the camp was numbered XXIB, but certainly by 25th September 1941 it had changed to XXID and appears as such on my German record sheet. Photos sent from Warthelager in February 1942 are stamped by the XXID censor. I was quartered in the same room as RSM 'Frank' Jolly, the Vertrauensman. When the year 1942 (or was it '43!) began, RSM Jolly arranged with the Kommandant that the British could leave their huts for a while to welcome in the New Year. Three trumpeters, Private Mathews, Sgt Parker and PSM Travers, went to the end of the parade ground cum football pitch and blasted out the Last Post and Reveille. Just at the end of the Last Post shots rang out from outside the wire and from a large Kommandantur building a few hundred yards away. (Warthelager was a training area, particularly for Panzertruppen). To put it mildly we were surprised by the shooting and the next morning Jolly went to see the Kommandant to lodge his complaint. The Kommandant was highly amused and assured RSM Jolly that 'We celebrate the New Year too' and that the guards and officers were celebrating in their own peculiar way. During my time there was a good radio working in the camp and once a week a news bulletin was taken around the huts. At Kosten one day a man in RAF uniform was brought in to overnight with us. He was said to be on the way to Berlin to serve a sentence for sabotage. He asked for the latest news, but was treated with suspicion by RSM Jolly. His name was Larson and he was a New Zealander. In the London Gazette of 11th October 1945 he was decorated for his bravery!"

CAMP HISTORIES AND RED CROSS REPORTS. I now have a copy of a Red Cross report on their visit to BAB 20 in September 1944, which includes a report on the air raid casualties of 7/7/44. Would anyone like a copy?

STALAG 20B MARIENBURG. I also have a copy of a three-page report on a Red Cross visit to this Stalag on 25th July 1944. Also a nineteen-page report dated 19th October 1944 on the outlying work detachments. The detachments are listed below. If anyone would like to cover the photocopying and postage costs, I would be pleased to provide them with copies.

Work detachment No 53 Gross Bellschwitz, farm work; 56 Rosenau, farm work; 64 Gross Jauth, farm work; 93 Pietzkendorf, building construction; 98 Sonnenwalde (Brennecke), farm work; 110 Klein Jauth (Hobein), farm work; 125 Polken Schoeneich, farm work; 132 Gutsverwaltung Faulen, farmwork; 151 Gutsverwaltung Gross Brunau, farm work; 173 Domaene Oschen, farm work; 198 Reichenberg, farm work; 236 Michelau, farm work; 240 Rittergut Stangenberg, farm work; 290 Holzkontor, timber work; 314 Praust, sugar factory, 328 Stolzenberg, 337 Hanh and Co, timber factory; 369 Finkenstein, farm work; 372 Saegewerk Vogel Rosenberg, sawmill and dairy; 412 Gross Krebs (Diethelm), dairy work; 476 Ohra, railway work; 494 Tiegenhofer Oelmuerle, rape processing; 511 Riesenkirch (Neumann), farm work; 552 Engel, Gross-Krebs, farm work; 524 Zerrel, Gross-Krebs, farm work; 565 Muenster (Wachsmut), farm work; 569 Riesenwalde, farm work; 571 Karlswalde Domaene, farm work; 572 Stadtverwaltung Rosenberg, various jobs (40 working parties with 800 prisoners in Rosenberg district); 598 Riesenkirch, farm work; 618 Klein Plaut (von Puttkammer), farm work; 630 Ortmann Steinberg, farm work; 694 Klein Tromnau, farm work; 747 Neuendorf, farm work; 778 Reckfort, barrel factory; 790 Brambach and Son, wood factory; 910 Scharfenort, farm work; 964 Aktien Brauerei, brewery work.

WORKING CAMP E393 UPPER SILESIA. Were any members resident in this camp? Around 600 British prisoners were evacuated from this camp and spent the night of 25th/26th February 1945 at the German camp for Russian prisoners at Tabinskin Grubi (Mines). The following morning the British, Russians, Poles and others (a total of 2,000) were marched off towards Ratibor, accompanied by an SS Armoured Unit. Allegedly, as the column neared the River Oder the Russian pincers closed in, whereupon the SS unit indiscriminately opened fire on the prisoners, killing most of them. This report was made by British prisoner of war 5048001 Gunner W Green, who was left behind when the column moved off. It was told to him by three separate sources, although he did not witness it himself. Can anyone shed any light on the incident?

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Mr Paul Law of Milton Keynes would like to hear from anyone who knew his father **Private William Charles Law** of 2nd Gloucesters. Captured on 29th May 1940 at Cassel, he was a member of BAB40.

Miss Helen Sharman of London would like to hear from anyone who was in **Stalag Luft 3 West** in 1944-45, was on the January 1945 march to Spremberg, then travelled to Moosburg via Nurnberg, or was in Stalag 7A when it was liberated. She would also like to have information on Camp Lucky Strike in France.

Christine Lawrance of Southport would like to contact anyone who remembers her father, the **Revd Ernest Howard Metherell**, R.A.Ch.D. He was captured 28th May 1940 and was resident in Stalag 7C/H, then Stalag 9C and Oflag 9A/H as of March 1942. By 1944 he was in Stalag Luft 3 and left the camp in the company of American airmen in January 1945 arriving in France in April 1945.

Mrs Barbara Moyce-Jones of Norfolk would like to know if anyone remembers **Sgt? Cliff Jones**, Airborne, 6ft 3in, Army number 4927883, who was in Stalag 11B between September 1944 and May 1945.

Mr William F Helm was an American prisoner of war and he is now looking for a British POW whom he met at a clinic run by a British POW Doctor Harry Barker at a revier called Pokau, which was located in the town of Usti nad Labem on the River Elbe in Czechoslovakia. The clinic may have been under the control of Stalag 4B. The POW was **Derek E Griffiths** who had been a tea taster in peacetime and as of 1948 was living at 29, Sheridan Mansion, Hove 3, Sussex.

American Ray Engstrand arrived at the Wetzler prisoner of war camp on 25th March 1945, just in time to join march out of the camp two days later. There were about 70 prisoners, mostly American but a few British including **RAF Wing Commander Carling-Kelly**. The 4th Armoured Division liberated them on 30th March at Neideraula. If anyone knows Wing Commander Carling-Kelly can they contact me.

Mr Alan Dezzani living in California would like to trace the following South African prisoners of war, whom his family in Mura, Northern Italy, helped following their escape from a camp near Vestone. **39897 Pte L Cloete, 195939 Pte W.P.Louw (William), 25728 L/Cpl G.E.Rose (Giles) and 32127 Cpl N.A.Wallace.** If any members have any contacts in South Africa, could they please put the word out. Any replies to me please.

Ms Margaret Metcalfe of Essex would like to hear from anyone who remembers her father **Lieutenant D B W Claye**, West Yorks Regiment, who was a resident of Campo 38 and Oflag 79.

Mr Jim Sims of East Sussex would like to know if anyone remembers which German General inspected Stalag XIB around the end of 1944?

Mr Ron Murphy of York would like to contact anyone who knew his late uncle **Trooper Jack Brown** of the Yorkshire Hussars, who was captured on Crete in 1941 and was a resident of Stalag 4C. He died 8th July 1944 and is buried in Prague war cemetery.

Mrs Jayne Hills of Merthyr Tydfil asks "I would like to locate other POWs who may have known my late uncle. He was with the Welch Regiment and captured in January 1942 at Benghazi. He spent two years in Italy in Campo 66 and 65, then transferred to Stalag 8B via Stalag 4B to 1945. His full name was **Frederick Hatch**, born October 1915 in Cardiff, he married Ethel Stannarad and had two children. They moved to Swansea after the war, but he died in 1948. Any information would be gratefully received."

Mrs Dot Wildish of Kent asks "I would like to contact anyone who knew my father **George Edward Self** who was in the Buffs and was captured on 15th December 1941 at Al Gazala, Libya. He was in work camp E393 at Katowice and also may have been in E711a which were both under the administration of Stalag 8B/344 Lamsdorf. His POW number was 24650".

American Horace R Hosbach writes in; "I am a former POW having served with the USAAF as a gunner on a B-17. I was shot down over Boulogne, France on 28th February 1944. I was in Stalag Luft 4 and 6. While in **Luft 4 (Lager D)** I joined the church choir. The leader of our choir was a British airman. I might add that we had 800 of your chaps in with us. However, he was a wonderful guy but the passing years have erased the memory of his name. Just before we evacuated our camp on 5th February 1945, we were rehearsing the hymn 'Jerusalem' in preparation for Easter. If you were in the church choir I would like to hear from you.

Mr Peter Gronow of Swansea would like to hear from anyone who was a prisoner of war in Stalag 20A Thorn, who may have known or served with 7887387 **Trooper H Thorness** of the East Riding Yeomanry. He served in the TA prior to the war. Would anyone know where he was captured?

WHERE YOU IN **STALAG 4F HARTMANSDORF CHEMNITZ?** Or can you help with any of the requests for help above? IF SO, WOULD YOU PLEASE DROP ME A LINE. Phil Chinnery, 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, SL3 7EB.

NEWS report; HUNGARIAN POW RETURNS HOME AFTER 56 YEARS. Andras Andreyevich Tamas has been found alive and well in a Soviet psychiatric hospital in Kotelnich, 600 miles east of Moscow. Who is he? A Hungarian soldier taken prisoner by the Russians in 1944 and sent to a prisoner of war camp in Siberia. About 150,000 troops fought in the Second Hungarian Army under Nazi command in the Don River region of southern Russia during World War II. Two thirds of them were killed and many others died trying to make it back to Hungary on foot. Tamas recalled 'a hail of grenades and being transported by train to Siberia'. On 19th February 1947 he was transferred to the hospital suffering from psychological problems and has remained there ever since. He was unable to speak Russian and the hospital staff mistook his Hungarian for gibberish. Last year a Slovak doctor recognized some of the words as Hungarian and an interpreter was summoned. Following an examination of Tamas by the director of Hungary's National Psychiatric and Neurological Institute, plans are being made to return the poor man to his homeland.

THE DIARY. A second hand book dealer recently offered me a diary that once belonged to a Far East prisoner of war. There was no name in the small book, just 3 inches by 4, but it told of his departure from Avonmouth on 27th October 1941 on the SS Oransay and his arrival in Bombay two months later. Embarking on the 'Empress of India' in January 1942, the writer describes the sinking of the ship and his rescue by the Australian sloop 'Yarra' just ten miles from Singapore. Ten days later he was captured and imprisoned in Changi prisoner of war camp. The diary describes the living conditions and travels of the owner until his liberation in September 1945. I paid the book dealer £50 for the diary, with the express intention of finding out who the owner was and returning it to his family or regiment. Friends from the Far East Prisoner of War Association are assisting with the investigation and I hope we will resolve the mystery in due course.

FREEDOM GATE. This section will feature items of interest to our growing contingent of former Korean War ex-POWs. *Battlefields Review Magazine* will be featuring the Korean War in its next couple of issues. The cover of Issue No 8 features a painting by Terence Cuneo of Royal Engineers working on **The Hook** defences in April/May 1953. Commemorative events taking place in South Korea in the near future include the UN Cemetery Tribute on 24th April 2001 at Pusan UN Cemetery, hosted by the USA. Details from Nigel Lloyd, Korea National Tourist Office, Tel 0207-321-2535.

BOOK REVIEW. 'American POWs in Korea' edited by Harry Spiller. It is a sad fact that the United States was not ready when North Korea invaded the South in June 1950. Their armed forces were run down, their equipment was out of date and the men had grown soft on occupation duty in Japan. Thrown into the deep end, the young GI's suffered from poor weapons, inadequate training and incompetent leadership and they were no match for the tough North Koreans, trained and equipped by Russia. When the Chinese Armies crossed the border to join in the war, they overwhelmed the American, South Korean and Allied troops facing them. Over 7,000 Americans were captured during the three years of the Korean War. They were taken to prison camps on the border of North Korea and China and nearly forty percent of them died there. Some were murdered or starved, others died from poor medical treatment or from the severe cold. Despite brutal conditions, most of the POWs survived the isolation, cold, hunger and disease. The book contains sixteen personal accounts from men who fought the North Koreans and Chinese and then faced life as a prisoner of war. They talk about the psychological effects, the living conditions, the medical situation, the day to day details and finally liberation. ISBN number 0-7864-0348-9, 179 pages softcover. Published by McFarland & Co, Inc, Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, USA. Price \$23.50 plus \$5 shipping and handling. Payment in US money order or by credit card.

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