

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Autumn 2001 Newsletter

[◀ Back](#) [!\[\]\(919a2cb85b99741a73c0c31a427236a8_img.jpg\) Home](#) [▶ Next](#)

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

First of all I must apologise for the short delay in the despatch of the Summer Newsletter. I returned home to find that a burglar had turned the place upside down and I had to take action to prevent any further visits. If you would like some advice on whether or not your home is secure, just ring the local Police station and ask their crime prevention officer to drop in and he will give you free advice.

JUNE 2002 GATHERING OF PRISONERS OF WAR. Every ex-German and Japanese prisoner of war in the UK has been invited, free of charge, to a party in the gardens of Doxford Hall at Chathill, Northumberland next June. (Around 21st). Mr Brian Burnie, the Chairman and Managing Director of P.E.S. Associates Charitable Trust told us about the opening of the Millennium Maze at the Hall last September. 1,000 children from first schools in Northumberland planted 3,200 Yew trees to create the maze, incorporating in its labyrinth 1,200 metres of grass pathways and an area of 1,735 square metres. 100 British ex-POWs attended the opening last year, but next year the welcome is to be extended to ALL British former prisoners of war. The media has expressed great interest in the 'Do' and they are planning to have a 'big named' entertainer on stage. Food, drink and entertainment will be free. If you would like to attend could you confirm in writing to Les Allan or Phil Chinnery. We may be able to arrange transport and overnight accommodation in the area. If any of the branches would like to arrange transport for a party to travel to Northumberland please let us know and we will see if we can help fill the seats.

OBITUARIES. Mr A W Manley late of the Royal Artillery and a resident of BAB21 passed away in West Glamorgan on 15th July. Mr John Harrison of Chelmsford advises us that his wife Pam sadly passed away on 9th May. Mr Edward Yallop, late of the Norfolk Yeomanry (Gunner 1452017 R.A.) a former resident of Stalag 4A passed away on 31st March. Mr Ron Venus in New Zealand advises us that his wife Joyce sadly passed away on 4th June aged 76. Joyce served in the Royal Observer Corps and in 1946 received a certificate of appreciation from the Secretary of State for Air. Mr Eric Marsh of the 4th Royal West Kent Regiment, a former resident of Stalags 20A and 17A, passed away on 18th July.

2001 MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION. We would like to remind those of you who would like to belong to Headquarters Branch and receive the quarterly newsletters that the 2001 £5 annual subscription was due on 1st January. (Associate and Overseas members £10). Please make cheques out to NEXPOWA and send to me at 99, Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE.

KALAMATA PILGRIMAGE. Mr Frank Gill in Liverpool has advised us that he has just returned from a spell in mainland Greece where he and his comrades held their annual service in memory of lost friends and colleagues at their monument erected in Kalamata. They also laid wreaths including one for the prisoners of war who died during their captivity. They also lay a wreath each year at the Aboretum at Alrewas in memory of prisoners of war.

SERVICE RECORDS. The War Pensions Agency, Tomlinson House, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP are handling all claims for compensation for former prisoners of the Japanese. They will also provide you with a copy of your German POW Record Card if you ask them nicely. Their Freephone Helpline number is 0800-169-2277. The Ministry of Defence Records Office, Dept CS(RM)2B, Bourne Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex UB3 1RF hold your service records and will provide copies free of charge. If you completed a Liberation/Interrogation form when you returned from your stay as a guest of Hitler you should also ask for a copy. We would appreciate copies of these forms for our archives – thank you to Fred Hirst who is the first member to send in a copy.

NEW MEMBERS. **Mr E A Cattermole** of the Royal Ulster Rifles, who was put in the bag at Anzio. **Mr D E Boden** of 189th Field Ambulance, a former resident of Stalag 18A. **Mr John Edward Cutts** of the 2nd Bn Royal Fusiliers and a former resident of Stalag 20B. **Mr Bob Jones**, a former resident of Stalag 8B and now living in Australia. While at Stalag 7A Moosburg Bob took part in the 1942 shows 'Me and my girl' at Christmas and 'The Gang Show'. **Mr Cyril Henstridge**, Press officer of Salisbury Branch and former resident of Stalag 21B. **Mr Jack Batt** of 172 Field Regt, RA taken prisoner at Sidi Nsir and a former resident of Campo 66 and Stalag 4G. **Mr John Coles** a former resident of Campo 66 and 53 and Stalag 4B. **Mr Arthur C Evans**, CBE formerly with the Irish Guards and Stalag 8B. A review of his book 'Sojourn in Silesia' appears elsewhere in the newsletter. **Mr James Costen** of the 1st Bn the Buffs, captured at Gazzala and a former resident of Stalag 344 and Arb Kdo E711A Auschwitz. **Mr Walter Clasper** of the D.L.I. and Stalag 344. **Mr Ed Jury**, RAF, a former resident of Stalag Luft 1. **Mr Joe Ponting** of 3 Para who was taken prisoner at Arnhem. **Mr Ted Hatchett** a former resident of Stalag 18A who worked on the dams at Lavamund. Also **Mr Gordon Reid** and **Mr L J E Kallmeier**, service details to follow.

Associate Members: **Mr Ian Brown** whose father was a member of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, captured in Greece in April 1941 and a resident of Stalag 18A Wolfsburg. **Mr Ray Tolhurst**, whose father was with BAB21. **Mr James Smith** whose father David was one of the RASC captured on Crete and a resident of Stalag 8B. **Mr and Mrs Norman Knaptton** whose father in law was Driver Jack Hetherington of the Royal Engineers, a former resident of Campo 70 and Stalag 4B. **Mrs Meira Melamed** whose father Arthur Bardos was a member of the Palestinian Pioneer Corps and a resident of Stalag 8B. **Mrs Ann-Marie Simpson**,

daughter of John Bransgrove of the 9th Rifle Brigade. **Mrs Jenny Wright** whose father was in Campo 82. **Mr John Cruttenden** whose uncle served with the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders. **Mr Oliver Clutton-Brock** our RAF POW records expert. **Mrs Rita Hawkes**, lay assistant and treasurer of the St Georges Memorial Church, Ypres, Belgium.

DONATIONS. We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to the association welfare fund. **Mrs Janet Gosling** £10. **Mr Maurice Bentley** £25. **Mr G R McBride** \$NZ 30. **Andrea Waitschulies** £50. **Mr Jack Batt** £20. **Mr and Mrs Knapton** £10. **Mr Jim Childs**, Somerset Branch, Light Infantry Regimental Association £5. **Mr James Costen** £5. **Mr V Rosser**, ex-Green Howards £5. **Mr Yves Jaulmes** £10. **Mr G J Duffree** £10. All donations, large or small are more than welcome.

NEW TREASURER. As we reported in the last newsletter, Colonel Tom Jagger was taken ill in Crete and is now making a recovery at home. Under the circumstances we have appointed a new Treasurer, Mrs Freida Moores the wife of our Standard Bearer Gary Moores and would like to thank her for her willingness to assist us.

THE 'NOT FORGOTTEN' ASSOCIATION has kindly invited four members of our association to join them for lunch, followed by a concert on Wednesday 7th November 2001 at The Royal Star and Garter Home. Arrival time 12 midday, departing at 4pm. Carers/drivers are also welcome. If you would like to go please contact Les Allan on 01753-818308.

STALAG XIB MEMORIAL FUND. Allan Purcell sent us the latest news from BFPO 38. "We are now a registered charity here in Germany, the land for the visitor centre, donated by the German government, is to be cleared and funds are looking very healthy. Of course beurocracy will take its time and it does not help when our sponsors, in this case the 2nd Battalion REME are doing their bit for Queen and Country in Kosovo. EUCLID, a department of the Culture 2000 of the EU Commission has been approached and with four countries now on board (England, Holland, Germany and Belgium) we feel we have a very good chance of seeing the project finished by 2003. This project is for POWs and their families. Your grandchildren will one day want to know what you were doing. We will let them know." If you would like to donate to this worthy memorial to all who were prisoners of war in Germany please contact Alan at 2nd Battalion REME and Station Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess, BFPO 38 or Ken Brown, 25 Beechcroft Road, Ipswich, IP1 6BA.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

-

If you can help answer any of the questions below, please contact Mr Phil Chinnery, Newsletter Editor at 10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.

2341373 Signalman William Goddard of Stalag 18A is being sought by a lady he assisted in a very difficult situation while he was working in Rechberg near Frohnleiten, Styria, on the so-called Brandlhof in Austria. If you know the whereabouts of William please contact Phil Chinnery, Newsletter Editor.

Mr Don Simmonds would like to ask any former Stalag 20A Thorn members if they knew his uncle **Private James Booker** of the 4th Bn Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry who died 10th April 1945. Did he die on the march or in the hospital?

Mr Yves Jaulmes would like to contact **Sgt Arthur Thompson** who was with him in Campo 98 Sicily from February to April 1943.

Ann-Marie Simpson asks if anyone remembers her father, **Corporal John Bransgrove** of the 9th Rifle Brigade, captured in April 1941 in North Africa. A resident of Capua, Sulmona then Campo 122 Rome. Thereafter to Germany in December 1943 to Stalag 8B, then Stalag 357 and Fallingbomel. Ann-Marie would be pleased to hear from anyone who knew John or who were in any of the above camps.

Mrs Meira Melamed would like to contact anyone who knew her father **Private Arthur Bardos** of the Palestinian Pioneer Corps. He was a resident of Stalag 8B, possibly arbeits kommando E561/2/3.

Mr John Cruttenden would like to hear from anyone who remembers his uncle **Private William Horton** of the Queens Own Cameron Highlanders. He was taken prisoner in May 1940 and was a resident at Stalag 21B, then 21D and finally Stalag 8B. Family contact was lost after repatriation and his younger sister (Johns mother) is in failing health and is desperate to make contact again.

Mr Chris Manley would like to contact anyone who remembers his late grandfather Lance Bombardier A W Manley who was a member of **BAB21**.

Mr James Smith would like to contact anyone who knew his father **David (Pud) Smith**, RASC, who was captured on Crete and sent to Stalag 8B. He has a photo which includes POWs J Dunwoodie and J Henderson.

Mr Anthony Holden would like to contact anyone who remembers his father **Edgar R Holden** of the 7th Medium Regiment, RA who was in Campo 73 and Stalag 4B. Two colleagues were Ian McDonald of West Kirby, Cheshire and John Nicholson of Leeds.

Mr D J Bale is engaged on a project to commemorate the men of **North Tawton** who served in the 1939-45 war. Three of the men were prisoners of the Italians, captured in 1942. If you knew any of the following could you contact Mr Bale; Gunner Cyril Down (PG62 and 70), Private Lawrence Muller RASC and Private Jim Piper of the Queens Royal Regiment (PG62 and 70 and Stalag 8F).

Mr John Cutts was a member of **2nd Bn Royal Fusiliers** when he was taken prisoner on 28th May 1940 in Belgium. He was later a resident at Stalag 20B Thorn and marched from Konigsberg to Hannover in Jan/April 1945. He would like to contact anyone who was in his unit or who may have shared his experiences.

Mrs Janet Gosling would be pleased to hear from anyone who knew her late father **Trooper Leonard Sutton** of the 12th Lancers. He was captured in the Middle East and was in Campo 85 and 70 in Italy and Stalag 7A in Germany, eventually escaping with a Mick McAllister into Switzerland in 1945.

Mr G R McBride is looking for the following prisoners of war: R Campbell, (Huslington), E G Colvin (Acton W3), Norman Young (Pulborough, Sussex), T D Young (South Shields), D B Williams and C F Clayton, who were resident in **Stalag 383** with his father Ian McBride of 6th Field Company, New Zealand Engineers. Captured in Greece, Ian was in Stalag 18A and 17A in Austria before going to 383.

A request from Andrea Waitschulies. "ICH HABEN 3 CHEF: DU, VADER UND EMILI!" These were the famous words of **Fred (Charles?) Franklin** who, after being captured in Dunkirk in 1940, spent the next years in Stalag 20A near Thorn/Bromberg, Poland, from where he was sent to work on Lowin Farm (No 8?) for the Joseph Fode family, including his son Herbert Fode who would like to meet you now Fred! He has been twice back to Lowin since and it has become a long time dream of his to see you again! Does anyone remember Fred Franklin, who by his own words came from an island in the south of England and grew tomatoes before WWII. He might have been a lorry driver as well. Fred smoked Players and probably fell ill in the Stalag. A video of he Lowin House/Farm is available.[Note from Phil – could this be Signalman F W Franklin 2330784?]

Julie Murrell would like to contact anyone who knew her late grandfather Wilfred Allen Turner who was in 'B' Company, **7th Bn Royal Norfolks**, attached to 51st Highland Division. He was captured at St Valery and was a resident at Stalag 21B at Schubin, then 21D at Poznan, possibly in Camp 9 until October 1944. Thereafter he went to Lamsdorf and finished up at Stalag 13C at Hammelburg.

Jack Fuller who served with 32 Field Ambulance, 1st Airborne Division would like to find **Aubrey Williamson** who came from the Kings Lynn area and was captured at Arnhem. He was last seen at Fallingbostal.

Peter Connor would like to hear from anyone who knew his father, **Thomas Francis Connor** of the Devonshire Regiment and the Kings Own Royal Regiment. He was wounded and taken prisoner by the Germans on Leros in 1943.

Mrs Audrey Neal would like to contact anyone who may have known her father **Corporal Richard Wallace**, Royal Corps of Signals, who died in July 1941. He is believed to have been in both Stalag 20A Thorn and 20B Marienberg.

A VISIT TO THE CENTRAL PRISONER OF WAR MUSEUM IN LAMBINOWICE (Formerly Lamsdorf). Associate member Ray Barnards son was due to go Prague in Czechoslovakia to teach for a year. They noticed that it was not far to drive from there to Poland and Lambinowice so off they went. Ray arranged the flight and hotel in Prague with Go Airlines at Stansted and contacted

the museum by email (cmjw@polbox.com) to arrange to stay for 2 nights in the hotel style accommodation on site. The road journey was longer than expected but the scenery made up for it. The museum was well sign posted from the road between Nysa and Opole. They also arranged an English-speaking guide, Anna, who showed them around the museum and took them to the site of Stalag 8B, now in a military area. The site was like an overgrown wood with a cobbled path running through the middle and there were few signs left of the past. They also saw a memorial to the Russian POWs at the nearby site of Stalag 8F. Rays late father, Private Harry Barnard was a month short of his 32nd birthday when he was captured at Oudenaarde in Belgium on 18th May 1940. He arrived at Stalag 8B on 10th June and was there in 1943 when it was renamed Stalag 344. He returned home safely at the end of the war. Thanks to Ray, Tim and Dan.

HISTORIANS NEWS by Phil Chinnery.

-

Contact address: 10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.

Regarding the small photo on the front of the Summer Newsletter taken at Stalag 18A. **Dennis Boden** tells us that the man standing to the right of Ivor Gordon is Joe Unthank from Heben by Jarrow. Others there at the same time, although not in the picture, were Lofty Saunders, Freddy Mills, Porky Powell, Sandy 'Jock' Baines and Man of Confidence Frank Minter.

THANKS YOU'S. I would like to say Thank You to **Jack Batt** for responding to my request in the last newsletter and sending in a 1942 issue of Prisoner of War newspaper, together with the leaflet 'Prisoners of War – Some Questions Answered'. Also a big Thank You to **Mrs Marian Rickman** for the three 1944 issues. They are a welcome addition to our archives. Are there any more copies out there?

Thank you also to **Oscar D'Alcorn** for the details that he sent in of his capture at Tobruk and time as a guest of the Italians. Also for the arbeits kommando anecdotes from his time at 2048L Hoffbauer arbeitslager. Thank you also to **Jim Harper** for the story of his sojourn in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war. Did any other member return home via Czechoslovakia?

Thank you also to **Norman Norris** who sent me two boxes of POW-WOW newsletters published by the New Zealand Ex-POW Association. They will help me compile the prisoner of war search index that I am working on. Does anyone have any Pre-1980 POW-WOWs?

STALAG 7A MOOSBURG. We have been asked to repeat the ordering details for the 50 year commemorative booklet published by the town of Moosburg about Stalag 7A. This very interesting 136 page booklet contains much information and photographs of former residents. To obtain a copy write to; Die Anschrift Lautet: Stadt Moosburg, Stadtarchive/Rathaus, Stadplatz 1, 85368 Moosburg an der Isar, Germany.

STALAG 20A. Thank you to **Jacky Kingsley** who kindly sent me in a copy of a two page statement made by the camp Kommandant describing the march of the Stalag to the west. It includes details of the route and the reasons for the disorganisation. If anyone would like a copy please send me an A4 size stamped addressed envelope.

CAMPO 98 SICILY. Readers will recall that in our list of Italian POW camps in the Winter 2000 Newsletter we included Campo 98 Sicily as 'unconfirmed'. I am pleased to report that I have received a letter from Mr Yves Jaulmes, formerly with the 67th Regiment d'Artillerie d'Afrique who was taken prisoner in Tunisia in January 1943. His diary recalls that he was flown from Tunis to Palermo in a JU52 and driven by lorry on 14th February 1943 to Campo 98 in a mountain pass beyond Monreale, about 20km from Palermo. The residents of the camp were British, French, Americans, Foreign Legion. The camp consisted mainly of tents, sometimes blown down by the high winds in the mountain pass. The conditions were very poor, with dysentery, lice and malnutrition. Some POWs ate grass and others fought each other when 'food' was distributed. The camp was visited by Red Cross officials in February or March 1943 but they did not contact the POWs. The POWs were bedraggled except for a British RSM whose boots were always spick and span despite the mud in the camp. Can anyone add anything to the above? Do you know who the RSM was?

HEILAG 4D/Z. I have obtained a copy of a Red Cross visit report to this camp which became a transit camp in late 1944 for men earmarked for repatriation for reasons of health. As of October 1944 there were 60 British doctors and medical staff there, but few patients. Heilag is derived from 'heilen'- heal and lager – camp. IV stands for the military area and D is the alphabetical identification for the camp. Z means Zweilager, branch camp. The place was located at Annaburg, near Thorgau, 30 miles NE of Leipzig. Thanks to David Locke for above information.

PRISONER SHOT ON CRETE. Private Gordon Seward of the 215th Field Ambulance was captured on Crete and detained in the POW camp at Galatas. A couple of months later he was shot by a German guard supposedly while trying to grab a bunch of grapes from a vine. The guard thought he was attempting to escape. Can anyone shed any light on the subject? A relative has contacted us for information.

STALAG 17B KREMS-GNEIXENDORF, AUSTRIA. During WWII this was the largest camp for foreign POWs in Austria. More than 66,000 POWs lived and worked in this camp and its outlying working detachments. Among them were French, Belgian, Serb-Croatian, British, American and Soviet prisoners, about 4,000 USAAF NCOs as well as Italian military internees. About 1,600 Soviet POWs were buried in mass graves in the camp's graveyard that was situated in a small forest. Today, more than 55 years after the liberation of the camp and the end of the war, 17B has become invisible at first sight. Looking more closely however, it is possible to make out several traces of the Stammlager in the landscape of Gneixendorf and on the former campsite itself. On May 5th 2000 the Austrian artist Christian Gmeiner erected five steel slabs on significant points of the former camp to demonstrate the size of 17B. A sixth steel slab contains the word REMEMBER in 12 different languages in order to make us aware of an often forgotten chapter in history. On 24th November 2001 at Krems city hall, a special exhibition shall present the history of the camp. Photos, letters, souvenirs, memoirs, art and literature connected with the camp will be on display. For more information contact Dr Barbara Stelzl-Marx at Schoergelgasse 43, A-8010 Graz, Austria..

ARBEITS KOMMANDO STORIES. We would like to make this a regular feature, so if you can recall any interesting stories or anecdotes please send them in. Jack Batt was in **Arbeits Kommando L31** which came under Stalag 4G and was at Gaschwitz, 10 km south of Leipzig. "I arrived on 7th October 1943. There were 140 of us employed on the Railways and the camp was located adjacent to the railway station and its small marshalling yard. Leipzig was a major terminus and Gaschwitz was of some importance as a railway junction. Roll call was at 4.30am when we were woken by a whistle-blowing sentry shouting 'Raus! Raus!' and were given a bowl of thin soup before catching the 5.30am train to Leipzig Main Station (Hauptbahnhof). We were divided into various parties and sent to various sectors of the railway system around the city. To start with it was track maintenance, but as the bombing increased in the surrounding area we would have to go out and work through the night relaying the tracks or clearing debris. To say the least it is unpleasant to be under any bombing, particularly your own. When we returned to camp we would be given another bowl of vegetable soup, perhaps thickened with potato flour and a bread loaf between 3 or 4 of us. The bread had to see us through to the next day. Towards the middle of November 1943 we received our first Red Cross parcels, one per week and these contained such items as biscuits, condensed or powdered milk, chocolate, meat loaf or tinned bacon, coffee, small packet of tea, cocoa, butter or margarine, prunes or raisins and a small tablet of perfumed soap. Early in December 1943 Tom from the Lake District who occupied a bed a few spaces from me had been taken ill and was getting worse. We asked for Andrez from the Russian camp who had some medical knowledge to look at him. He said he was very ill and should be in hospital. There was no way to take him there and he got steadily worse to the point we decided to take him by handcart into Leipzig. Before we set off he died and was buried in the local churchyard. We had to dig our first grave outside the local churchyard because they thought he was a Russian prisoner and they were not allowed to be buried in hallowed ground. A second grave was prepared when they found out he was English. He was eventually moved to a War Graves Cemetery outside Berlin."

A few humorous anecdotes from Len Murphy who was at **E711A Hyderbrech**. "One day quite a number of us were back in camp early and decided to have a game of football. I was in goal when the German Sgt Major who had been watching decided to take part, pushing me out of the goal and taking my place. Well the lads all thought this was funny and after a while decided to kick the ball at him. After several goes 'Peg Leg' as he was known, pulled out his revolver, pointed it at the lads and said 'The next one who tries to score will be shot!' We all thought it rather funny, but thought better of it, we did not know that he was joking! Another time we were working on a particular job which was digging out silt from a pit about 6 metres wide and 10 metres long. There were 21 of us, so we were allocated one metre per man. Dig it out and load it onto a railway wagon – accord arbeit – piece work. It sounded good so we started, finished and were back at camp before midday. Come about the fourth day things got worse. We were split into groups, one lot shovelling to three other groups. At 5pm we decided to go on strike. The guard sent back to the camp and out came 'Peg Leg'. I acted as interpreter and explained that the work had become too hard to finish. Meanwhile the others were gassing away and although he could not fully understand them he could hear them. He drew his revolver and said in German 'All those not working over there, and all workers over here.' Needless to say we all went over here and had to carry on working until 9pm. The next day when we went out to work 'Peg Leg' met us at the gate and gave us the day off. A pity there wasn't more like him."

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH. An Escaped Prisoner of War Bulletin issued by the Reichskriminalpolizei Office in Berlin on 8th September 1942. Two Polish and ten English prisoners of war escaped from Lamsdorf the previous day including new member Richard 'Tug' Wilson.

PHOTO. See hard copy of newsletter.

Caption;

E715 Auschwitz 15th July 1944. Left to Right standing; Mick, Tommy, Joe, Bob, Henry, George, George, Frank Merrill, George Saunders. Sitting L to R; Bill, Eric, Jimmy, Bill, Sailor, Jack, Harry, Jock.. Can anyone add their surnames?

PHOTO. See hard copy of newsletter.

Caption.

Danzig Railway Goods Yard 1944. Sent in by Stan Johnson, back row 4th from left. Recognise anyone?

CAMPO 66 CAPUA. Harold Whiting wrote in to tell me that shortly after arrival at Capua some newcomers found a way out through a sewer. The whole story was recorded in a song by an unknown scribe. Sung to the tune of the 'Mountains of Mourne.' THE PRISONERS ESCAPE—

<p>One night very late coming back from the shithouse</p> <p>Who should I see but my comrades stood there</p> <p>They all had their parcels and haversacks with them</p> <p>It put me in mind of the old barrack square</p>	<p>I approached and I asked them just why they were waiting</p> <p>They gave me the dope and said 'Don't tell a soul'</p> <p>We're all out here waiting, because we're escaping</p> <p>We're waiting our turn now to crawl through the hole</p>
<p>I gazed at the ground near the edge of compound</p> <p>We had to crouch low as the sentry appeared</p> <p>And as I was peeping they all started creeping</p> <p>I counted their arses as they disappeared</p>	<p>They came from their huts and fell in with the column</p> <p>The fellow in charge kept checking his roll</p> <p>Their spirits were high but their faces were solemn</p> <p>As the kept queuing up to crawl down the hole</p>
<p>Some carried blankets and some carried greatcoats</p> <p>One had his paliasse tied round his chin</p> <p>One of them rushed in front of the column</p> <p>And cried as he went – he'd forgotten his KLIM</p>	<p>Some carried oranges, some carried onions</p> <p>One had a mess tin, another a bowl</p> <p>It made me think of a Sunday School picnic</p> <p>As I watched them line up for to crawl down the hole</p>
<p>There were paratroops there queuing up with the Hampshires</p> <p>Commandos as well all intent on escape</p> <p>If they all got through, what a shock for the Eyties</p> <p>When they called the roll next morning at eight</p>	<p>The orderly officer would lose his commission</p> <p>The whole bloody guard would be put on parade</p> <p>The Camp Commandant was sure to go missing</p> <p>If everyone managed to crawl through the hole</p>
<p>They were still queuing up as I left for my hutment</p> <p>No doubt about it, these fellows had grit</p> <p>But someone would suffer I knew in the morning</p> <p>The poor RSM would fall into the shit</p>	<p>But later that night their plans miscarried</p> <p>One silly bugger had studs in his sole</p> <p>He kept scraping and scratching, the sentry heard him</p> <p>He was shot up the arse, as he crawled through the hole</p>
<p>Early next morning they had a check roll call</p> <p>They counted us over and over again</p> <p>There were 33 missing from number 5 compound</p> <p>And everyone knew they had crawled through the hole</p>	<p>They sent for a workman with pick-axe and shovel</p> <p>He took off his jacket and worked like a mole</p> <p>And while he was working, we stood around fretting</p> <p>There'd be no more escaping, he'd bunged up the hole.</p>

ROYAL AIR FORCE REPORT.

-

Edward Gill (RCAF) would like to trace Arthur George Eperon who was a Flight Lieutenant Observer shot down over La Palice in 1941. Edward met Arthur in Stalag Luft 3 Sagan after he was shot down in July 1944. Email Edward at eghyll@msn.com or write to Phil Chinnery, address elsewhere in this newsletter.

I have been given a complimentary copy of John Golley's paperback book 'The day of the Typhoon' which has just been published in the Airlife Classic series. I would be pleased to donate it to the first of our RAF members who might like to write in to me.

Whilst on the subject of books I have received hot off the press a review copy of **'Moonless Night'** by **B A 'Jimmy James'**. Any prisoner of war deep inside the Third Reich who attempted to escape deserves the highest praise for courage and determination. Remarkably Jimmy James took part in no less than twelve attempts, including the Great Escape, which so angered Hitler that 50 of the 76 POWs involved were callously murdered.

In 'Moonless Night' he describes in the most graphic and gripping terms not only his own experiences and emotions, both in captivity and on-the-run, but also the achievements of his fellow prisoners of war. The Authors style is so disarmingly modest that readers may find themselves almost taking for granted the extreme risks involved. After capture, following the Great Escape, he and a small group of colleagues experienced appalling conditions at the notorious Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Yet they utterly refused to accept captivity even when recapture carried the real prospect of execution. Indeed they were sentenced to death by

Himmler after a further unsuccessful escape, but this was commuted to five month solitary confinement in the Death Cells. In the closing stages of the war, Jimmy James passed through Flossenbug and Dachau.

In the front rank of World War Two escape stories, 'Moonless Night' is an inspiring, exciting and utterly compelling book which demands reading. Hardcover, published by Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire S70 2AS. ISBN number 0-85052-828-3. £19.95. 225 pages incl photographs.

FAR EAST REPORT.

-

Mr A Jordan, Higher Lodge, North Molton EX36 3HP would like to contact anyone who was in **Kuching** POW Camp or who served with the 35th LAA Regt, RA. Mr Paul Bedborough, 38 York Road, Selsdon, South Croydon CR2 8NQ is seeking information on Aircraftsman 1st Class John Ephraim Slater who was captured at the fall of Singapore and taken to **Changi** where he died 2nd June 1945.

Tony and Sheila Beaton who have been running the **Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum** in Thailand are returning home to Australia following two years hard work which raised the number of visitors from 44,000 in 1999 to 73,000 this year. The address of the museum is PO Box 61, Kanchanaburi 71000, Thailand.

Greg Standen from Down-Under tells us that the **60th Anniversary of the Fall of Singapore** weekend reunion will be held at Bathurst, New South Wales on the 10th/11th August 2002. If anyone from the UK would like to attend they can contact Greg by email on standen_lrtc@yahoo.com

I have received review copies of two recently published books on the subject of the fate of Japanese prisoner of war transport ships, many of which were sunk by the Allies. **POW83** is an unusual title for a book, until you realise that the subject of the book, John Mackowski, was one of only 83 American prisoners of war to survive the sinking of the *Shinyo Maru* on 7th September 1944. Taken prisoner on Corregidor, John was imprisoned in Military Camp Number 2, Davao, Mindanao, Philippine Islands from May 1942 to September 1944. In August 1944 he spent three weeks undergoing punishment and starvation for an alleged violation of camp regulations. Afterwards it was touch and go whether or not he would live. One month later he spent 19 days in the hold of the ship before it was torpedoed and sunk by the *USS Paddle*, an American submarine. Amazingly he managed to swim out of the flooded hold and get clear of the sinking ship, despite the attempts by the Japanese guards to shoot the men as they struggled helpless in the water. John swam three miles to the nearby island where he and other survivors were rescued by Filipino guerrilla's. Written by John W Wallace and published by The Gray Rider Publishing Company, 143 Longview Drive, Chatham, New York 12037, USA. ISBN 0-9673733-0-1. Softcover 264 pages.

DEATH ON THE HELLSHIPS by Gregory F Michno. Although the Japanese treatment of prisoners of war during World War II has been written about before, only with this detailed chronicle will readers come to appreciate the true dimensions of the Allied POW experience at sea. It is a disturbing story; many believe the Bataan Death March pales by comparison. Survivors describe their ordeal in the Japanese hellships as the absolute worst experience of their captivity. Crammed by the thousands into the holds of ships, moved from island to island and put to work, they endured all the horrors of the prison camps magnified tenfold. Gregory Michno draws on American, British, Australian and Dutch POW accounts as well as Japanese convoy histories, recently declassified radio intelligence reports, and a wealth of archival sources to present for the first time a detailed picture of what happened. His findings are startling. More than 126,000 Allied prisoners were transported in the hellships with more than 21,000 fatalities. While beatings, starvation and disease caused many of the deaths, the most, Michno reports, were caused by Allied bombs, bullets and torpedoes. He further reports that this so-called friendly fire was not always accidental – at times high-level decisions were made to sink Japanese ships despite the presence of POWs. The statistics led Michno to conclude that it was more dangerous to be a prisoner on the Japanese hellships than a US Marine fighting in the campaign. His careful examination of the role of US submarines in the sinkings and the rescue of POWs makes yet another significant contribution to the history of the Pacific war. Hardcover, 365 pages incl photos and a very good appendix listing the ships and POW casualties. ISBN 1-55750-482-2. Price \$32.95. Available from Naval Institute Press, 291 Wood Road, Annapolis, MD 21402, USA. www.NavalInstitute.org Tel 800-233-8764.

FREEDOM GATE - KOREA.

We have been sent a copy of a US Central Intelligence Agency report distributed on 2nd September 1952 to certain US Army, Navy and Air Force intelligence departments. The subject is the 'Location of certain Soviet transit camps for Prisoners of War from Korea'. Paragraph 9 reads; "From December 1951 up to the end of April 1952, several railway transports of American and European (probably British) POWs were seen passing at intervals of 10 to 20 days through the Komi-Parmyak National District in

Northwestern Siberia. These transports were directed to Molotov, Gubakha, Kudymner and Chermos on the Kama River north of Molotov. The prisoners were clad in cotton-padded gray tunics and pants and wore civilian caps. They had no military insignia. They spoke amongst themselves in English, and they knew no other languages, except a few words of Russian. During the journey they remained locked in heavily guarded wagons and were not allowed to leave them. They received their meals from MVD (the forerunner to the KGB) guards. Each wagon had small windows on two levels. Each window was barred and covered by opaque glass."

The 12th and final paragraph reads; "In some camps situated near the Gubakha railway, about 150 Americans were kept, probably soldiers and NCO's. An interesting thing was that from these camps one to three POW's were taken every few days by officers of the MVD for transportation to Gubakha or Molotov. They never returned to their camps and their fate remained unknown. According to the supposition of persons acquainted with MVD methods these POW's had been observed in the camps by specially assigned agents of the MVD, who knew the English language and thus were able to find out those who were very hostile to the Communist regime and ideology and those who could be considered sympathetic. Those belonging to the first group were most probably sent either to prison or to especially hard labour camps for extermination; the others were probably sent to special political courses in Molotov.'

If anyone would like a copy of the three page report, please send an A4 size SAE to Phil Chinnery.

Copyright Philip D Chinnery. 2001 ©

**The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association is a member of the Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations.
Code: 948, Registered Charity No 292804**
