

# The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

## Autumn 2004 Newsletter

[◀ Back](#)   [Home ▶](#)

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

Contact details – 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. Tel/Fax 01753-818308.

As this issue of the newsletter goes to the printers we will be undertaking our annual pilgrimage to Belgium. This will be followed by the annual reunion at Hayling Island. I understand that bookings are up on last year and I look forward to meeting those of you who are planning to attend.

**NEW QUARTERMASTER.** I would like to welcome Mrs Judith Jackson to the committee. She has taken over the role of Quartermaster from husband Ken and also assumes the dual role of Vice-Chairman, positions held until recently by the late Charlie Jago.

**NEW MEMBERS.** We would like to welcome the following new members to the association; Mr Tommy Richardson, a former resident of Lamsdorf. Mr Jack Essom one of the British POWs who worked at the IG Farben factory at Auschwitz. Mr Bob Davies of the Queen Victorias Rifles taken prisoner at Calais. Mr Charles L Smith of the Black Watch, a former resident of both Thorn and Marienburg. Mr Norman Norris who fell in the bag on Crete and was resident in Stalag 3D. Mr Raymond Williams of the Royal Irish Fusiliers who was taken prisoner on Leros. Mr M A Kester, one of the RAF boys taken prisoner on Java and resident in camps in Ambon and Batavia. Mr James Sydney Taylor of the Royal Engineers, a former resident of both Thorn and Marienburg. Mr Leonard Mace of the Queens Own Royal West Kents, another resident of Thorn who was taken prisoner at Amiens in May 1940. Associates - Mrs Gillian Liakopoulou-Hatch whose father Bill was in Campo 73 and E715 Auschwitz. Marie Green, whose father William Durkin was a resident of Stalag 3A Luckenwalde. Mr Athony Forrest whose father Louis was captured at Calais with 1st Bn Rifle Brigade. Mr John McLoughlin whose late grandfather was a resident of Campo 73 and Stalag 4D/Z. Anne Willis, Mr Grahame Lee, Mr John Barnett, Mrs P A Shorey, Anna R Skipper.

**LETTERS TO HQ.** Just a reminder that we would be pleased to respond to any letters that may be sent in to us, but please enclose a stamp and mention your membership number, so we can give you priority over other correspondence from non-members.

**OBITUARIES.** We regret to report the passing away of the following members; Bert Dowty who was shot down in a 44 Squadron Lancaster on a raid to Augsburg on 17th April 1942. He was a resident of Stalags 7A, 11A and 357 after avoiding capture for about ten days. The rest of the crew including the skipper F/O A J Garwell fell in the bag at Augsburg and were assumed to be the first Lancaster operations POWs. Mr Jerry Evans informs us that his father Flight Sgt Paul Evans passed away in Raymond, Alberta, Canada on 10th August 2004. Paul was a Lancaster bomb aimer in the RCAF and a former resident of Stalag 4B. Anyone who knew Paul can contact Jerry at 1111, Bess Road, Dickinson, Texas 77539, USA. Mr George Stewart Cook has passed away in Campletown, Kintyre. We Will Remember Them.

**DONATIONS.** We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to the welfare fund; Mr Alan Allport £10, Mrs M Bannister £15, Mr and Mrs Blackburn £25, F J Bonner £5, Mr Ian Cameron £10, W E Clasper £15, C L G Cole £15, Mr G Doodward £5, Dr Peter Duffus £10, Mr Sidney Goldberg £5, Mr D Jeffries £20, S Miskimmin £20, N Norris £25, R D Payne £10, Frank Shatliff £10, Anna R Skipper £10, Mrs Elaine Webster £10, Mrs J Wellard £10, Mr Ray Williams £20, Mrs E

Wright £10. We must say special thanks to Mrs Barbara Duffy, who, having reached a 'milestone' birthday asked friends and family to donate cheques to two charities, including ours and as a result £120 was sent in to us. Thank You also to the following who sent in cheques In Memoriam; M P and K A Gibbard £20, N R James £95, A E James £20 and T E James £20. All donations are welcome.

**PRISONER OF WAR MUSEUM AND RESEARCH CENTRE.** We would like to see the establishment of a museum and research centre dedicated to British and Commonwealth POWs. It would be a place where our Historian and our Archives could set up shop and be accessible to the general public. We are searching for a suitable location and of course funding for the project. If you have any ideas or think you may be able to assist, do contact me, Les Allan, or Phil Chinnery at the addresses listed within this newsletter.

**ARMY SERVICE RECORDS.** You can obtain a copy of your service records from the Army Personnel Centre, Civil Secretariat, Historical Disclosures, Mail Point 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX. Tel 0141-224-2826. Fax 0141-224-2144. Email [apc\\_historical\\_disclosures@btconnect.com](mailto:apc_historical_disclosures@btconnect.com) The contact name we have is Joyce Carlyle, Administrative Officer. Relatives can also request copies of the service record and you will be sent a Search Questionnaire to fill out. You will also have to send in proof of identity, such as copy of driving license or utility bill. They hold records of soldiers who were discharged between 1921 and 1997. Records prior to 1921, if they survive, can be found in the National Archives in Kew.

**QUARTERMASTERS STORES.** The following items are now available from our Quartermaster Mrs Judith Jackson, 'Haere Mai' 29 Highwood Avenue, Booker, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 4LS. Fax/Tel 01494-436978. Goods will also be on sale during the reunion weekend at Hayling Island.

Christmas Cards – hand made. Pack of 5 assorted with Association Badge. £3.00

Cuff Links per pair – boxed. £9.95.

Tie Clips – boxed. £6.95.

Tie Tack – with chain. £4.95.

Lapel badge – Full member. £4.00.

Lapel badge – Associate member. £4.00.

Members Tie. £10.00.

Souvenir Spoon with badge (boxed). £6.95.

Blazer badge. £10.00.

Embroidered Beret Badge. £3.50.

Car Sticker. £5.00.

Pen with Association Name. £0.60.

Wooden Wall Plaques. (Until current stocks run out). £27.00.

2005 Small Pocket Diary i/c Association badge. TBA

2005 Long Pocket Diary i/c Association badge. TBA.

Teak/Mahogany Gents Nic Nac Box with Association badge. £16.00.

Post and Packing extra minimum. £1.00.

To ensure your order reaches you in time for Christmas, please ensure your order reaches Judith by 7th November.

**WELFARE REPORT.** By Ken Jackson. We continue to assist our members in conjunction with other charities, this being the only way to maximise effort from all sources for the benefit of those in need. Our Association has managed to help members and their families in all parts of the UK. Of course we still get asked for the impossible and some of the requests are downright ludicrous! Like the one for a large sum of money to 'pay back the money I have borrowed from my son and daughter.' Needless to say, requests such as these are politely refused. Again I have to turn to our welfare credo so well practised by my predecessor Colonel Tom Jagger, 'need not want.' As an association we have to abide by the regulations laid down by the Charities Commission and our aim is to assist where there is a proven NEED.

From time to time I receive copies from Branches of their newsletters or circulars, which give me information, which I may have not received, from other sources. I then pass this on to all members

through this column. My thanks to Eileen Rodway, Bournemouth, Poole and District Branch for the following;

Fact Sheet 1, which is available from Age Concern has updated information on help with heating and other fuel costs. It is available free from Age Concern, Freepost (SWB30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ.

From October 2003 people who move into Care Homes and are liable to pay for their care and at the same time still have to pay rent on their former residence are now eligible to receive Housing Benefit paid for up to four weeks during the notice period of their tenancy. Details can be found in the Dept of Work and Pensions Circular 'Housing Benefits and Council Tax Benefit, HB/CTB A18/2004. March 2004.

**STALAG XIB/357 MEMORIAL PROJECT.** Ken Brown, the UK Project Manager tells us; "At last, we have achieved something. The project has gone through a number of changes since the original concept, mainly due to lack of funds, but thanks to Colonel Henderson and No 2 REME Workshops, to say nothing of the efforts of Allan Purcell, a Memorial has been erected. It takes the form of a brick structure with a centrepiece of open gates, thus symbolising the gates of freedom, opened by the Royal Irish Hussars on 16th April 1945. There remains cosmetic treatment of the site to be completed. The area is to be sown with grass, a rear fence is to be erected, a couple of benches to be installed and the descriptive brass plates in English and German to be fixed.

"The original proposal for an Information Centre has not been shelved. We have been given a 1939 Kreigie hut, which will be moved to site when funds permit and in this respect we are looking for a national sponsor. It is proposed to dedicate the Memorial on 15th April 2005, which will be the 60th Anniversary of Liberation Day. If you can make your way there, you will be most welcome.

Accommodation in the now vacated NATO blocks can be made available. It can be reserved by writing to Allan Purcell and sending a £10 non-returnable deposit to him at the WO and Sgts Mess, 2nd Bn REME, 29683 Fallingbostel, Germany. I shall also be writing to Leger Travel with a view to persuading them to lay on a trip. It may be worth your while to write to them for there is much to see in the area around Fallingbostel. You are also reminded of the funding under the Veterans Reunited programme and more information on the scheme is contained in the 'Heroes Return' booklet which is available if you phone 0845-00012 or alternatively ring the Veterans Agency help line on 0800-169-2277." PHOTO BELOW. The Memorial and the gates of Freedom.

Hard copy of newsletter only.

## **VOLUNTEERS WANTED. WORLD WAR II 60TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION.**

The Government has decided to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the end of the Second World War on Sunday 10th July 2005 with a National event in London to mark both VE and VJ days. A number of 'by invitation only' events will take place in London during the day and we would like to know if any full members would like to attend. There will be a service in Westminster Abbey in the morning, starting at 10am. Her Majesty the Queen and members of the Royal Family have been invited to attend. The main event will take place in Horse Guards Parade in the afternoon, in front of an audience of 10,000 veterans, relatives and VIPs. A parade of association standards will take place afterwards up The Mall to Buckingham Palace, followed by a flypast which will include some WWII aircraft. We are looking for 4 nominees and 2 reserves for the Westminster Abbey service, plus 18 nominees and 6 reserves for the Horse Guards Parade Event. If you would like to attend and live near to London or can overnight nearby, please contact Les Allan, our Hon Gen Sec at the address at the front of the newsletter. We must send our details to the MOD by 30th October, so please do not delay.

## **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

It is our normal practice not to include addresses in the newsletters posted on our website. This is to protect the privacy of the advertisers and restrict contact to serious enquirers only. Please contact our newsletter editor Phil Chinnery at 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB if you would like to assist with any of the requests below.

Mr Jack Essom in Epping, Essex would like to hear from any other British POWs who worked in the I G Farben factory at Auschwitz. (Arbeits kommando E715).

Elaine Webster in Wirral (Tel 0151-606-0352) would like to hear from anyone who knew the nurses at Obermassfeld, Stalag 9C, especially Cynthia Elliot who married Leslie Hore Belisha in 1944 when she was 20-years old. She has family connections with the Earls of Minto, Hawick, Scotland. Does anyone remember her? Is she still alive?

Gillian Liakopoulou-Hatch would like to hear from any former residents of Campo 73 or E715 Auschwitz, who may remember her father William John Hatch, known as Bill to his pals. A Scot from Portsmouth, he was dark haired and short in stature. A quiet man with an individual sense of humour. If you were in either camp please drop a line to Gillian at Sfiggos 74, A.g Sostis T K : 117-45, Athens, Greece.

Marie Green in Greater Manchester would like to hear from anyone who knew her father Private William Durkin of the KORR who was taken prisoner in Greece and was resident in Stalag 3A Luckenwalde.

Mr Richard Powell in Devon would like to hear from anyone who may have known his father Cpl Denis Powell of 1st Bn Rifle Brigade, captured at Calais and resident at Stalag 20A Thorn. He was employed as a translator and ended up at Stalag 357 at Oerbke.

Penny Smith in Sussex would like to hear from anyone who may remember Alan Percival Boddington of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, captured with the 51st Highland Division at St Valery and resident at Stalag XXID.

Mr John McLoughlin in Cuddington, Buckinghamshire would like to hear from anyone who knew his late grandfather Francis Joseph 'Paddy' McLoughlin, a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery. He was a resident of Campo 73 at Carpi and Stalag 4D/Z near Annaburg. Were you in either camp?

Anne-Marie Simpson in Norwich would like to contact anyone who remembers her father John Walter Bransgrove of 9th Bn Rifle Brigade who was a POW in Italy and Germany, especially Sgt D Bird, a Royal Artillery artificer, Sgt Tim Whybrow of the Royal Tank Regiment and Cpl A Scott of the Sherwood Foresters all at Stalag 357 Oerbke near Fallingbommel.

Author Mr Alan Allport, 73 High Street, Hook, Goole, East Yorks DN14 5PA would like to talk to any ex-POWs about how easy or difficult it was to return to normal life in 'civvy street' at the end of the war. Did the government provide resettlement support? What were your experiences on returning home? How did your family and friends respond to your homecoming? Was it easy to find work again? If you can contribute to this important research please drop him a line.

Mrs Lorraine King in Glasgow would like to hear from anyone who may remember her grandfather William Sproule, who was captured at St Valery in 1940 and taken to Lamsdorf. A Gordon Highlander, with the nickname 'Walla' he worked in a salt mine.

Mr James A Fox, 45 rue de Lourmel, 75015 Paris, France is writing a book about the British civilians interned in France and Germany during the war. If you were interned or have any information on the lags, please drop him a line.

One of our new associate members Helen Machin in Bedford has sent in the photo below, of the men of Stalag 8C, arbeids kommando 4017 living in a wooden barracks on the outskirts of Oels at Christmas 1944. Her father L/Cpl Stanley (Shortie) Boyce is seated in the front row, second from right. Did anyone know him or any of the others in the photograph? There were 41 men in the kommando, employed by the Heeres Verpflegungs Amt loading and unloading foodstuffs, hay pressing etc. S/Sgt E Gould was the Man of Confidence. We think that the two smaller photos are of Stalag 8C. Can anyone confirm this?

Photos in hard copy of newsletter only.

## **HISTORIANS NEWS by Phil Chinnery.**

Contact details – 10 Lambert Ave, Langley, Berks SL3 7EB. email [PHIL@chinnery49.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:PHIL@chinnery49.fsnet.co.uk)

**ADDRESS CORRECTION.** My apologies to Fred Kennington the author of 'No cheese after dinner' for missing a digit from his address in the spring newsletter. To order a copy of his book please write to Fred at Northumbria House, 35 Corbar Road, Stockport SK2 6EP. In his book Fred relates the story of how Jim Charters, one of our members, gave a note containing his details and home address to 28 year-old Marcelle Grenier a French lady whilst on the march in June 1940. A letter from Marcelle arrived at his mothers house before official notification arrived that he was a POW. During Freds research he located her son, Paul who told him that Marcelle had been deported to Poland by the Germans in 1942 for helping British soldiers and for being a member of the resistance. She was freed by the Russians and came home in 1945. She was awarded the Croix de Guerre and bar; Legion d'Honneur and the Medaille Militaire. On her death in 1996 she was given a full military funeral.

A Thank You to Bert Martin for his two page summary of his time in the lazarette at Obermassfield, also known as kommando 1249, Stalag 9C. It will be logged into our archives. Thank You also to Jack Foster for the archive copy of his memoir booklet entitled 'Report My Signals'. Jack was with the 5th Duke of Cornwalls Light Infantry and was awarded the Military Medal just after D-Day, prior to a spell in Stalag XIB Fallingbomel for the last six months of the war.

**CAPTIVE DRONES FEEDBACK.** Jack Batt and Harry McLean have answered my question on page 6 of the summer newsletter. The RAOC rank of Cdr/Condr is actually Conductor, the highest non-commissioned officer rank in the army. Apparently the RAOC had a Conductor and Sub-Conductor rank, just above that of RSM. The holders wore officers uniform, complete with Sam Brown and we believe a laurel leaf surrounded the usual RSM badge. Richard Vincent has identified some of the men in the top photo on page 6 of the spring newsletter. From the left are Captain Reverend Grant, VC; CQMS Bill Chartrey; CSM Jim Savage; PSM L J Sheppard; the other two men in the tent are unknown. SQMS Harry Adams is standing behind the two unknown men kneeling outside the tent. Captain Grant, VC was in the Canadian Army and was taken prisoner during the raid on Dieppe, where he won the Victoria Cross.

Regarding the photo of the Scottish and Dominion Students on page 6; Front row extreme left is Tom Vallis, a New Zealander taken prisoner on Crete and third from left is Don Heron of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He was Richard Vincents best mate and he passed away in the USA in 1999. In the second row, second from the left is 'Nappy' Henderson of the Royal Scots, the leading trumpet player in the Stalag 383 Orchestra. Fourth from left is CSM Jim Savage. Richard shared the same hut as Savage, Adams, Chartrey, Henderson, Vallis and Heron.

Geoff Goldsmith has sent in a copy of his Captive Drone membership card and tells us that the camp, Stalag 383, was formerly Oflag 3C. He was one of the original members of the club and after he got home he became the proud owner of 12 hives and was fortunate enough to be living in a road lined with lime trees. He was very fortunate in other ways as he returned home with rampant tuberculosis and was given six months to live. He took a further five years to recover from it. Hopefully we will feature some of Geoff's photos from Stalag 383 in a future issue.

**STALAG 20B WILLENBERG.** Douglas Nelson wrote in about Stalag 20B Marienburg/Willenberg. He noted in his diary that he arrived at Stalag XXB Willenberg Camp at 2am Saturday 19th October 1940, coming from Fort 13A at Stalag XXA Thorn. He wonders if Willenberg was a district of Marienburg? His diary further notes that they were issued with British uniforms and boots at Willenberg in 1941, to replace the odds and sods they had been wearing since arriving at the camp. The Germans took away their worn out British uniforms on arrival and issued them with badly fitting items of clothing looted from the countries that the Germans had overthrown. Douglas was given Belgian cavalry trousers, a French Jacket, a Polish hat and a pair of wooden Dutch clogs.

Fred Kennington writes; "A lot of research for my recent book 'No cheese after dinner' was done with men who were held there. It was certainly located at Willenberg, just south of Marienburg. Dick Taylor in York who had been in solitary confinement there, described its location on the banks of

the River Nogat. Another source was the late Stuart Brown, in his book 'Forbidden Paths'. He spent a long time in a village opposite the camp and where he took up with Dora, the farmers daughter. He brought her back home at the end of the war and settled in Edinburgh. They visited the area in the 1970's at which time the camp had vanished without trace."

**CAMPO 29.** I have just purchased a book entitled 'Manders March on Rome' by d'Arcy Mander. Published in 1987, ISBN No 0-86299-383-0. Major Mander of the Green Howards was taken prisoner in the 150 Brigade Box in the Gazala Line in the Western Desert in May 1942. He was sent to Campo 29, a monastery in the foothills of the Apennines to the south of Piacenza, overlooking the Po valley. It was an officers camp, with a number of British Other Ranks as cooks or orderlies. He spent 15 months there and eventually escaped and made his way to Rome where he was liberated in 1944.

**REDDIGS FARM.** Member George Chrisp was in the 2nd Bn Northamptonshire Regiment when he was captured near Ypres on 28th May 1940. They were marched until they caught up with a lot more POWs and then put into barges where they were packed so tightly in the holds that it was very hard to breath. After a couple of days they were transferred to cattle trucks and then days later they arrived at Stalag 20A at Thorn. They were billeted in tents before being sent out to farms at Praust and Zipplau. Then they were transferred to Stalag 20B at Marienburg and in January 1941 were sent out to work on farms at Zeyersvorderkampen. George and his mate Mick Burrows went to the Burgermeisters farm, where they stayed for a year, then George was transferred to Reddigs Farm where he worked with Ian Dunbar. George was there for about 20 months and then went back to Marienburg for six months before going to a farm at Shroop for nine months. Thereafter all POWs were called in for the march back to the west. The two photos below show the lads who worked at Reddigs Farm. George is in the bottom photo, middle row, fourth from the left and Ian Dunbar is fifth from the left.

Photos in hard copy of newsletter only.

**FRONT PAGE PICTURE.** Features an advertising poster for the play 'Sweeny Todd' staged in December 1944 by some of the British POWs of arbeits kommando E715, who worked in the I G Farben factory at Auschwitz. It was brought home by Rifleman Fred Carr, who played one of the two cockneys and who appears in the photograph on page 9 of the summer newsletter.

**BOOK REVIEW – DETACHMENT W** by Derek Richardson. In the chaos that followed the fall of France in 1940 many hundreds of British soldiers escaped from their German captors, or evaded capture altogether, and were helped to reach the unoccupied south of France. Here, however, they were rounded up by the French authorities who were forced to detain them under Article 10 of the 1940 Armistice Convention. They were joined in 1941 and 1942 by dozens of RAF airmen who had baled out or force-landed in France. The French authorities named them 'Detachment W' and imprisoned them in various forts and camps. Gradually there grew up a clandestine escape network with the object of helping men to leave France and return to Britain. This book records how the French military tried, with only limited success, to prevent escapes by moving the Detachment to more and more secure places of internment. Finally, in December 1942 the remaining men and officers were shipped across the frontier to POW camps in Italy.

The author has certainly done his homework, talking to veterans and searching the archives in Britain, France, Switzerland and America. I was particularly pleased to see the 20 pages of appendices, listing the names of the escapers and evaders who passed through occupied France. This is a well researched book which I heartily recommend. Softcover, 232 pages with photographs and maps. ISBN No 1-904959-00-8. Signed copies can be obtained for £12 including postage and packaging, direct from the author at 16 Fairford Avenue, Luton, LU2 7ER. Email [djr@fairfordave.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:djr@fairfordave.fsnet.co.uk)

**BOOK REVIEW. WIRE AND WALLS.** Subtitled - RAF Prisoners of War in Itzehoe, Spangenberg and Thorn 1939-42. By Charles Rollings. This very well researched book was ten years in the making and gives for the first time in print, the full story of the forgotten aircrew of Itzehoe, Spangenberg (Oflag 9A/H) and Thorn camps. Who were they? How were they captured? How did they manage to live and overcome the indifference of the War Office to their plight? How did they continue to fight an epic battle of their own from within the walls of converted castles and fortresses? All this and more is revealed in this illuminating text which is based on first-hand correspondence and interviews with survivors, as well as unpublished diaries and manuscripts. Also included are fascinating contemporary photographs and illustrations, and 'shot down' stories which appear in published form for the first time. Published by Ian Allan ISBN No 0-7110-2991-1. Hardcover 264 pages with photos and maps. Price £19.99. Available from Ian Allan Mail Order Dept, 4 Watling Drive, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 3EY. Tel 01455-233747.

**BOOK REVIEW. BATTLEFIELDS OF LIFE** by Fred Goddard. With a foreword by The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP. Seven-year-old Fred Goddard's life suddenly changed on a summer's morning in 1924 when he was taken away from his foster parents to his own family. Broken schooling and an apprenticeship in retailing that he loathed were followed by a job with the Central Sussex Electricity Company and many other part-time jobs, ranging from riding stables to cinema projectionist. He enlisted in the army in 1938 and saw service with a tank unit in France. His escape from Normandy in 1940 has all the excitement of a thriller. Transferred to North Africa, he was seriously wounded and taken prisoner. Fred was unfortunate enough to spend some time in Tarhuna Camp before being shipped to Italy where he settled into Campo 66 at Capua. After a very painful operation on his leg, Fred was selected for repatriation and transferred to Parma near the Swiss border. It was supposed to be a transit camp but he was to spend a year there. Eventually in April 1943 the exchange of 200 injured prisoners went ahead and Fred travelled home through Spain to Portugal. In Lisbon the formalities were completed with four Italian POWs being exchanged for one English POW and they boarded a hospital ship for the journey home to England. The final three chapters of the twelve describe Fred's return to work as a civilian and his marriage to Doris and continues up to the present day. As members will recall, Fred has organised our charity dance at Haywards Heath the last two years and was photographed with Vera Lynn in the last newsletter. Published in softcover, 146 pages. ISBN No 1-900467-20-8. Signed copies are available from Fred at 1, Ash Grove, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 4PZ. Price £10.50.

FAR EAST NEWS.

**BOOK REVIEW.** A Postal history of the prisoners of war and civilian internees in East Asia during the Second World War. Volume 1. Singapore and Malaya 1942-1945. The Changi Connection. By David Tett. I was extremely impressed when I unpacked the review copy of this book. It is BIG and contains 387 pages and hundreds of illustrations. It is the first in a series of books on Far East POW Postal History; the second, covering the Dutch East Indies, was reviewed in the last newsletter. This book, Volume 1, is subtitled 'The Changi Connection' and was published in February 2002 to mark the 60th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. Its subject matter was Singapore and Malaya and the book has received international acclaim, winning gold medals in Atlantic City and Chester and a special prize in Melbourne. The forthcoming Volume 3 will deal with Burma, Thailand and Indochina.

The book begins with a Foreword from Martin Bell, MP who served in the Suffolk Regiment. They lost their 4th and 5th Battalions in Singapore, part of the ill-fated 18th East Anglian Division, which arrived just in time to surrender to the Japanese invaders. Although they treated their captives with the utmost brutality, they complied in limited fashion with Article 26 of the Geneva Convention of 1929 and allowed prisoners of war to send home postcards containing messages limited to 20 words.

The book comprises fifteen chapters. Chapter One describes the background to the war in the Far East and the fall of Malaya and Singapore. Chapter Two deals with the prison camps, including Changi which housed 4,500 civilians. 87,000 Allied servicemen fell in the bag in Singapore and most were eventually caged in former barracks in the northwest corner of the island. From 1942 onwards they would be sent to work camps in Singapore or to destinations overseas. Chapter Three describes the mail that was returned to sender after the island fell. Chapter Four tells the story of the situation at home at the time, where the relatives of the men of 18th Division were still

under the impression that they had gone to the Middle East. Chapter Five describes the establishment in Singapore of the Bureau of Record and Enquiry (BRE), originally an unofficial organisation to track the whereabouts of the POWs. Eventually it included civilians and covered Sumatra, Java, Burma, Thailand, Taiwan and Borneo.

Chapter Six features a Bren Gunner named Roy Housden and describes his experiences before and during his time as a POW in Singapore. He was later sent to work on the Burma-Thailand Railway and his story will continue in Volume 3. Chapter Seven deals with the postcards sent by the POWs in Singapore. Chapter Eight tells the story of Captain David Nelson who worked to establish the BRE and who flew out of Singapore in September 1945 with 711kg of records. The mail sent to Civilian Internees in Singapore is described in Chapter 9 and cards sent by them in Chapter 10. The story of Dr Stanley and his family in Chapter 11 illustrates the situation faced by many internees. Chapter 12 describes the mail sent to those who were not interned. Chapter 13 covers the very interesting subject of Unauthorised Mails, sent outside the Japanese system and between prisoners. Chapter 14 summarises the various marks and censor hand stamps used by the Japanese. The final chapter is a happy one, with the survivors returning home.

One of the seven appendices contains a very useful listing of the movement of parties of POWs from and through Singapore and another has a long listing of the cards and covers addressed to POWs in Malaya and Singapore.

The ability to communicate with relatives is one of the precious lifelines for prisoners in any war. In East Asia in the Second World War it was especially critical. It literally provided for many the will to live and a tenuous hold on life in those desperate years. This series of books provides for the first time a history of communications between the prisoners and their families, often imprisoned elsewhere. Hundreds of messages are reproduced, illustrating the anguish and instability of these lives tragically caught up in the conflict. Thus the book is more than just a postal history. It provides an insight into the meaning and importance of these communications both to those at home and those imprisoned.

There is much detail on the various prisoner of war and civilian internment camps, of great value to the researcher. I highly recommend this book and urge anyone with an interest in POWs in Singapore to add one to their library without delay. The book is available from the publishers BFA Publishing, PO Box 34, Wheathampstead, Herts AL4 8JY. Tel 01438-832849. [www.Fepowmail.com](http://www.Fepowmail.com)

A visit to Germany in memory of my Father Harold Forden, Gunner 886934, Stalag IVB & IVG  
By Paul Forden.

I have been researching my Fathers army career for over two years; he died when I was very young so I never got the chance to talk to him about any of his POW experiences. During this search I have made contact – mainly via the internet, with many people who have helped me greatly. One such person is Graham Howard. We have been in contact over a year now, sharing information about our Fathers who were both in the same German camps – we do not know if they knew each other or in fact whether they met, but we made a connection and have continued to correspond. Graham had visited the area last year so he knew all the locations. We arranged to meet in Germany.

Day 1. My wife and I flew from Stansted to Altenburg Norbitz airport. We booked our flights, car hire and hotel online all from the same site. You arrive at a small airport with one luggage belt and one passport control. We got through this with no problem, then came the part I was dreading. I had been told that in East Germany they speak very little English – we speak no German, so armed with my phrase book I headed to the Hertz car rental booth where we were greeted by a chap who spoke good English, gave us a free upgrade and passed me onto the tourist information booth next door, where again the German lady could understand me with no difficulty. She gave me a map of central Leipzig (we had chosen this as our base for the 4 day trip) and a further map with directions from Altenburg Nobitz airport to Leipzig. I found driving in East Germany not to be problem; the roads are very quiet until you hit the main cities. We were lucky with our choice of hotel The Westin – it was one of the tallest buildings in Leipzig so was quite easy to find once the city ring road was negotiated.

We met up with Graham and his wife at our hotel, this would be our first meeting – two sons of POW's returning to the place our Fathers were held. We planned our next few days over a few drinks.

Day 2. Visit to Colditz. You can go on a guided tour of the castle which takes approx 1hr. There is



limited access, but it is very informative, showing sites of the French tunnel, the prominent prisoner cells, chapel and museum which has original artefacts including a wooden type writer and a wooden sewing machine. From there we headed to the location of where one of the POW huts for Stalag IVG would have stood at a small village called Grossweitzschen. Then onto Oschatz the site of Stalag IVG Administration building. It is being turned into flats – but it was easy to imagine this building as it had been. The thought of my Father being marched through the doors of this place – how must he have felt? I managed to get inside to have a look around – again felt a strong link to Dad.

Day 3. We had agreed to have a day on our own – this gave my wife and I a chance to explore Leipzig. Including some shopping for Allison. I had read a book by D.Kidd called POW where he describes his POW experience as a medical orderly – he references several sites of Leipzig, one in particular the hospital where he worked.

Day 4. We had again agreed to meet in Oschatz where we left our car and travelled to Muhlberg in Grahams. We met a German lady at the town hall; she took us to the archive room. This is where Graham's wife proved to be very useful as she spoke German. I would say this is one area where English is not spoken very much. The lady showed us original photographs – unfortunately none with our Fathers on. She also showed us 2 volumes of a book written by the daughter of a reverend who was held in IVB, this was a very detailed account of life in the camp – Graham took the details down with a view of trying to obtain a copy. Following this the lady offered to take us to the site of the camp. The camp is largely overgrown, but some areas have been cleared to reveal the foundations of huts. You can get a real feel for the size of the place- but I don't think you can ever experience what it was like. The latrine blocks are still there and the site of the pool which is now overgrown and looks like a small lake. Very peaceful, again I felt a link to my Father. There is a memorial stone near the entrance of the camp – remains of the gate foundations are still there. We left the site after I had placed a letter to my dad at the memorial stone, felt really emotional at this point. We continued our journey to Nuborxdorf – which is the site of the cemetery for allied prisoners. Time to reflect on those who did not get home. The IVB association have laid a stone here. Finally we travelled to Zethain – here there is an impressive memorial to the Russians and a complete POW hut. Unfortunately the hut and information centre were closed. This is where we would say our goodbyes to Graham & Cynthia. All that was left to do was to head back to hotel and pack.

In summary, I would recommend this trip to anyone, for me it was a way to close the loop on my fathers experience and to feel a strong link to his past. East Germany is a nice place to visit; it is not over-commercialised at the moment. Leipzig was a good base for the sites we wanted to visit. As mentioned it was a very emotional trip but not all sadness. The flights were good and quite cheap. Driving was no problem – apart from the city centre.

I must thank Graham Howard & his wife, without them I don't think I would have ever made the trip. I feel that this is my way of repaying all the kindness I have been shown while searching for my Fathers army history. I hope the enclosed details lead to someone else making the trip. Next year it will be the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the camp on the 23 of April, we are planning to go back

Below are useful website links and my email address if anyone would like more information.

Email [paul@rfornden.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:paul@rfornden.fsnet.co.uk)

Websites - [www.ryanair.com](http://www.ryanair.com) . Where we booked flights, car and accommodation in Germany.

Approximate distances.

Altenburg to Leipzig 30miles

Leipzig to Colditz 63 miles

Leipzig to Oschatz 40 miles

Leipzig to Mhulberg 56 miles

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