

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Winter 2003 Newsletter

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

Contact address 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE.

Dear Members, by the time you read this our soldiers, both male and female will be taking part in combat operations again in the Gulf. I am sure you will all join me in pledging our support for them during this difficult time. May God watch over them and bring them all home safely.

NOT FORGOTTEN. The 'Not Forgotten Association' was formed in 1920 (dear me, I was only one year old then!) and is dedicated to easing the lot of the disabled war pensioner by organising events of a most prestigious and entertaining nature. From time to time I am asked to nominate one or two members of our association as these events are arranged. Speaking from personal experience I can assure all that these events are truly not to be missed, should you be fortunate enough to be invited. My problem is that when I am asked to nominate a member I do not know who our 'war pensioned' members are. To get over this problem I propose that if you are a war pensioned ex-POW and would like to go on my short list, please let me have your name and address now. If you are invited your history will be asked for.

THE DOVE OF PEACE. Time and time again I am being asked whether the bird on our logo faces the left or the right! I must confess that this question has caused me a little quiet amusement and I feel an official explanation is required. The original design by Mrs Doris Allan had the 'Dove of Peace' facing to the right. Because money was (and still is) hard to come by, an engraved copy of the design was made on a Taylor Hobson Pantograph Engraving Machine, owned by D.Allan Engineering and Engraving Co of Slough. The engraved plate, used mainly for photocopying, headed note paper etc, was a perfect replica of the design *in reverse*, thus leaving the dove now facing to the left. Due to our financial situation a friend offered to provide free membership cards and these were produced on his lithographic printing press. Yes, you've guessed it, the dove on your blue membership card faces to the right. A trivial matter I know, but one that could be rectified if our financial situation was to improve.....

DONATIONS. We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to the welfare fund. All donations whether large or small are much appreciated. Mr C Ackerman £10, Mr D Abey £15, Mr J Aitken £5, Anonymous £20, Mr H Arnold £5, Mr John Baker £200, Mr P Barber £20, Mr R S Barma £5, Mr S Barthorpe £5, Mr J Batt £5, Mrs D Beaufort-Mrs A Burton £30, Mrs J Benedict £50, Mr M Bentley £10, Pauline Bevan £20, Mr L Bevan £5, Mr D H Bond £5, Mr H Buchanan £5, Mr L Bunyan £10, Mr C Burgess £20, Col P G M Callan £100, Mr T H Carpenter £5, Mr E A Cattermole £10, Mr Roy Cawston £20, Mr R Chaplin £15, Mr J Charters £15, Mr G Chrisp £15, Mr G Collins £5, Mr R Condon £5, Mr G Cook £15, Mr Sid Courtenay £5, Mr J Crouch £5, Mr J Cruttenden £10, Mr C J Duffree £20, Mr R Eaton £10, Mrs Wendy Edwards £10, Mr J R English £10, Mr D Evans MM £5, Mrs Fennell £15, Mr P Forden £5, Mr F Gill £10, Mrs J Gosling £10, Mr D Graves £10, Mr J

Greeves £5, Mr F Harding £5, Mr J Harper £20, Mr J Harrison £15, Ann Hayes £20, Mr J Hazell £5, Mr J M Hingston £50, Mr C Hoare £5, Mr T Holden £5, Mrs B Holden £5, Mrs Margaret Hume £10, Mr I Jaulmes £15, Mr H Jiles £5, Mr S Johnson £5, Mr J Johnstone £11, Mr B Jones £5, Mr M Jones £20, Mr J Kilby £5, Mr S Lake £5, Mrs D Lamison £10, Mrs M Lawrence £10, Mr R Lee £5, Mr E Marshall £15, Mr E H Martin, JP £25, Mr N Mathews £10, Mr F McGauley £5, Mr R Monk £3, Mr G Moore £15, Mr M Morecroft £20, Mr C Morris £5, Mrs J Murrell £10, Mr E Parrish £20, Mr J Plant £20, Mr J Proctor £15, Mr D A Ramsay £25, Mr R J Rees £10, Mr G Reid £10, Mr T Risk £15, Mr G Robb £25, Ms K Salt £5, Mr T Sankey £15, Mr Paul Saxton £10, Mr M Shand £5, Mr P R Shurmer £5, Mr J Siddall £5, Mr B Sims £5, Mr Frank Sinnott £10, Mr E Skipper £5, Mr J Smart £10, Mr A Smith £5, Mr G Smith £5, Mr D Spruels £5, Mr F H Stapleton £15, Mr G Staves £5, Mr C Stevens £10, Mr B Tingley £5, Mr H Tooze £10, Mr Ben Van Drogenbroek £10, Mr F Vokes £10, Mr V Walker £5, Mr B Warren £15, Mr H Welch £10, Mrs J Wellard £10, Mrs S Wilson £5, Mr C Winsor £5. Special mention must be given to Mr J Hardy who wrote an article for the press and received £35 which he has donated to the association. In addition Mr Peter Constable was invited by the Langley Parish Womens Institute and the Maidenhead Ladies Probus Club to give a talk on his POW experiences. He was presented with cheques for £20 and £30 respectively, both of which he has donated to the association. We would also like to thank those members who pay regular donations by standing order.

GIFT AID. We now have stocks of Gift Aid forms, which allow us to claim a tax refund on donations sent in by anyone currently paying tax. The Gift Aid ruling allows us to claim 28p in the pound back from the inland revenue, thus converting your £5 donation into £6.40 If you send in a donation and are a tax payer (not retired) please mention this and we will send you a very short form to fill out, together with an SAE.

OBITUARIES. We are sad to report that **Mr Stan Holdway** from Enfield, Middlesex passed away in September. We are glad to hear that wife Pat will stay with the association. **Mr Groundsell** the Parade Marshall for the Salisbury Branch has also passed on. He lived in East Cowes, Isle of Wight. Jennifer Hope informs us that her father **George J Dale** from Pinner has passed away. He wore his association tie and badge with great pride and it will be passed on to his grandson who is serving with the Royal Signals in Northern Ireland. Betty Monk from Market Harborough tells us that **Bob Monk** passed away on Sunday 2nd February. They had been married for 54 years. We have been advised that associate member **John Parker** passed away last 10th April in Ayrshire. His father had been a prisoner of war in Italy. ***We will remember them.***

RADIO INTERVIEW. Member **Dennis Avey** was recently asked to appear on BBC Radio Derby. The interviewer John Holmes was very interested in his experiences and the interview went on for three quarters of an hour and elicited a good number of phone calls into the studio. Well done Dennis! I also had Channel Four drop by to talk to me about the chess set that accompanied me home from Lamsdorf. They have a 'Treasures' programme in which people describe items that are precious to them. The interview will be screened between 12th and 16th May at 7.55pm.

FORGERS WANTED! Whilst on the subject of educating the public about our experiences, we have received a request from a school that runs an after-school History Club. They are currently researching the 'Great Escape' from Stalag Luft 3 and wanted a sample of a forged identity card for the kids to copy. We have put them in touch with Jimmy James one of the Great Escapers and Roy Kilminster the primary forger at Stalag Luft 1.

CRETE. Member Cliff Hoare in Exmouth has sent us in a copy of the Crete Veterans and Friends Society Bulletin. It mentions that a Service of Remembrance was held in the British and Commonwealth Cemetery on Crete on 10th November 2002. Around 30 people attended and a wreath was laid on behalf of the Society. A contingent from the Frigate HMS Argyle arrived with their Padre and held a service of their own. Afterwards senior officers made a point of coming round and speaking to everyone. The Argyle was making a quick refuelling stop at the NATO base after sailing through the Suez Canal and was en-route to Malta. The Society will be holding their annual pilgrimage to Crete from 20th May to 3rd June 2003. Contact Hon Gen Sec Maureen Moss on 01452-750295 for further details.

ANNUAL REUNION. The association will hold its annual reunion at Warners Lakeside Holiday Village, Hayling Island between 3rd and 6th October 2003. Members, family and friends are all welcome. The cost is £109 per person half board. Upgrades to a 3-star room are available at £18 per room and to an Ambassador suite at £37.50 per room. Reserve your place now with Ken Jackson, Haere-Mai, 29 Highwood Avenue, Booker, High Wycombe, HP12 4LS. Telephone 01494-436978.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION. The 2003 membership subscription was due on 1st January. The cost remains the same as previous years; £5 for former prisoners of war and £10 for associate members and members living overseas. Please make cheques out to NEXPWA and send to Les Allan, 99 Parlaunt Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. Tel/Fax 01753-818308. Please include your membership card.

STAMPS. We would be pleased to reply to any correspondence sent in to HQ, but please send in a first or second class stamp as well. Many thanks to all members who have kindly sent in spare stamps with their correspondence.

NEW MEMBERS. We would like to welcome the new members of the association, including; **Mr Roy Gear** a former resident of Stalag 4C. **Mr Douglas Courtenay** who spent time in the L'Aquila work camp in Italy. **Mr David Lidstone** who worked with arbeit kommando E364 at Stalag 8B. **Mr Arthur Daw** of the 7th Royal Norfolk and a former resident of Stalag 20B. **Associate members;** **Colonel (retd) D H Bristow, OBE, DL** whose father Sgt W H Bristow served in the KRRC. **Mr Roy Cardus** whose brother was a Naval resident of Lamsdorf. **Mr Paul Saxton** whose father was guest of the Japanese on Java and Japan. **Mr Syd Boydell** whose father was taken prisoner in Greece. **Mr Irving Slavid** whose father Leslie was a Cameron Highlander and former resident of Stalag 8B. **Mr Ian Cooper** whose father Ernest was a resident in Stalag 17B. **Mr Michele Tagliavini** an Italian researcher with an interest in Campo 73 Modena. **Mrs Barbara Duffy** whose father William Kelly was in Stalag 8B. **Mr John Crowe**, nephew of Arthur Daw above.

WELFARE NOTES from Ken Jackson, our welfare officer. "Time marches on and already the months of 2003 are slipping by at an alarming rate. As well as dealing with welfare cases as best we can with our meagre resources I am keeping my eyes and ears tuned to the information coming out of the welfare world. Do you know that you can now get interactive pensions advice through the television? N.T.L, TeleWest and SKY all offer this service. As an example, on SKY the way to find the information is as follows; Go to the Interactive Menu, select Sky Active, select Money, select Financial Services, select The Pension Service. There you will find up to date pension advice and information. Should you need more advice or are unable to get the above services, then write to IDTV For Pensions Project, Room 3C2, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UA.

The rise in War Pensions and allowances has recently been announced and all these payments will rise by just 1.7% on the 2002 level! With inflation running at 2.7% the War Pensioners have once again been sold short. WHY?

Not all councils disregard War Pensions when assessing Council Tax rebates and housing benefits. Recently East Northamptonshire Council proposed stopping this in order to save a miserable £55,000. It was pressure from the public which stopped this proposed action with some 85% of the residents objecting and making their voice heard. Isn't it time that the government, who seem to control everything else, gave a clear directive and made this disregard mandatory, instead of giving guidelines which can be followed or not as the councils wish?"

PHOTO ONLY AVAILABLE IN HARD COPY OF NEWSLETTER.

Above. RAF residents of Stalag 8B in 1944. Front row extreme left Dennis Wright, 2nd from left Bill Grimley, 3rd left Arthur Smith. Middle row extreme left Ted Meredith and to his left 'Gibby' Gibson.

ROYAL AIR FORCE NEWS.

Mrs Ruth Hubbard in Crewkerne, Somerset would like to trace **Squadron Leader K.N.T. Lee, DFC, RAFVR** who served with 501 Squadron during the Battle of Britain and was captured on Crete in 1943. He was a resident of Stalag Luft 3 and is believed to be living in South Yorkshire.

Does anyone know the whereabouts of William Stevens from Leeds and Kenneth Warren from Plymouth, both former residents of **STALAG LUFT 4?** American John Anderson is coming to England in May and would like to meet them again. The men were medics whom John befriended when he was in 'C' Lager from 9th September 1944 to 6th February 1945. John will be staying at the University Arms hotel in Cambridge from 22nd to 25th May and the Copthorne Tara in London from 26th to 28th May. Maybe one or two former Luft 4 Kriegies might like to drop by for a pint with John?

BOOK REVIEW - THE ELEVENTH PASSENGER by Joseph Millman. Along with every bomber crew of ten rides an eleventh passenger. Grim-visaged, Death awaits all ready to fall into his clutches. During the Second World War his harvest was great and escape miraculous. Joseph Millman experienced one such miracle, when, despite grievous injuries, he managed to bail out of his plane moments before it crashed. However, the eleventh passenger, undaunted, decided to travel farther with Joseph. In the mountains where he froze, in the various German hospitals where his wounds refused to heal, and on the interminable journey from location to location on speeding trains, Death was his constant companion. Now, fifty years later Joseph writes evocatively of his own descent into hell, letting the reader in on a world of torment and horror. Signed copies can be obtained from Joseph Millman, PO Box 383, Spring Glen, NY 12483-0383, USA. Hardcover, 355 pages with illustrations. ISBN No 0-533-11532-9. RRP \$19.95.

HISTORIANS NEWS by Philip Chinnery, Editor.

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

As members probably realise, I wear two hats for the association, one as the newsletter editor and the other as resident historian. Judging by the letters that arrive each day, you all seem generally happy with the content of the newsletter. However, I am always open to suggestions and would like to ask if anyone has any requests regarding the content of the newsletter? Is there anything you would like to see less or more of? It is not easy to please all of the people all of the time, but I am willing to try. Just drop me a line.

PRISONER OF WAR NEWSPAPER. Thank You to **Mr Richard Townsend** in Australia for the 5 issues of the *Prisoner of War* newspaper which reduces the number of issues needed to complete our set to half a dozen. The last few issues that we need are numbers 8, 31, 35, 36, 37. Does anyone have any of these issues and if so, would you like to donate them to help complete our archive set? Items from the newspapers will appear in forthcoming issues of this newsletter.

Some items mentioned in the November 1942 issue of the newspaper are the ban by Italian authorities on the inclusion of playing cards in parcels sent to prisoners in Italian camps and news of plays and concerts put on in Germany. Apparently Canadian prisoners played the parts of American gangsters in a crime play called 'Jimmy Valentine' which was put on in the summer of 1942 at Marlag and Milag Nord. The camps actors also staged the big musical play 'The Vagabond King' and were also rehearsing 'Murder on the Second Floor' in August.

A next-of-kin in the Bristol area received from her husband in Stalag XXA a handsomely printed programme of a concert given by the New Stalag Orchestra. The eight items included a selection from 'Lilac Time' and a Strauss waltz – 'Tales from Vienna Woods' and also works by Mozart, Beethoven, Gounod and Finck. The personnel of the orchestra included six violins, a viola, double bass, flute, oboe, two clarinets, two saxophones, three trumpets, a trombone, euphonium, bass, piano and drums. Does anyone out there have any programmes that we can reproduce in the newsletter?

Thank You to **Eric Howe** in Nottingham for the March and October 1942 issues of the British Prisoners of War Relatives Association News Sheet. This is the first I have seen of this 16 page newsletter, which certainly was a morale booster to the families of those taken prisoner. Many Thanks also for the three copies of the Prisoner of War Newspaper that he kindly sent in, particularly the elusive issue Number 1.

Thank You to **Mr A F Richings** in Bristol for the photo taken in Campo 70 in 1942. It is the first that I have seen from the Italian camps – are any more out there? Thank You also to **Mr R S Ward** who sent in the photos from military hospital 201. Thank You to **Wally Pearce** for the British Free Corps leaflet and the two photos from Stalag 20B. Thank You to **Mr B R D Jones** for a copy of his memoirs 'A Prisoner of war in Poland' and accompanying photos. Thank You also to **Irving Slavid** for the Stalag 8B photos. Thank You to member **Tom Jones** for the copy of his memoirs covering his time with No 3 Commando in Sicily and his residency in Campo 66 and 73 in Italy and Stalag 18A/Z in Austria.

Sydney Barthorpe writes in about E3 Blechhammer. "If you look on a road map, find Gleiwitz and Kosel and you will see the Gleiwitz Kanal which joins the two. Blechhammer was about half way between the two and the Polish name is Blackownia. BAB21 and E3 were side by side. There was another oil refinery not far from us, by the name of Regersfeld. The oil refineries were still in

operation when we visited in 1989." Sydney was on the march from Blechhammer through Czechoslovakia to Moosburg near Munich.

STALAG 18A WOLFSBERG. I have just found a book that may be of interest to members who were resident at Stalag 18A in Austria. Published in 1975 by Victor Gollancz it tells the story of Elvet Williams and his escape from a working party near Marburg. Apparently 20 men escaped into Yugoslavia and were taken to the British military mission by the partisans, who shipped them home by sea. Arbeit kommandos A64/GW, A65/GW, A66/GW and A785/GW are all mentioned. If anyone living in Wales knows the whereabouts or fate of **Elvet Williams**, who in 1975 was a traffic officer in Monmouthshire, please drop me a line. Likewise the others mentioned in the book were George Cotter, George Cable from Dagenham who was a sick berth attendant from HMS Gloucester, Viv Harper a New Zealander, Sid Paling and Australian Sergeants Jennings, Adams and Poidevin.

STALAG 20A THORN FEEDBACK. Member **Bernard Hardacre** was with HQ Coy 1st Bucks Bn when he was taken prisoner at Hazebrouk. "I have never read anything about the sailors being at Thorn. They were off the submarine HMS SEAL sunk off the Skagerrak, Norway, earlier on in the war when their commander was killed. The crew were one of the first batch of prisoners at the fort and so had the best jobs going. Then one day they were told to pack up and were being posted elsewhere. Some of our lads got hold of some musical instruments and played them out of the fort. It was a sad day because we got on well with them, but some of their better jobs came our way and things started to look up for some of us." Does anyone else remember the sailors at Thorn, or were you one of them?

Ron Venus in New Zealand remembers the incident mentioned on page 6 of the winter newsletter, regarding the escaping air force officers. "I believe the sequel to this was that when the Germans at the officers camp called upon the other ranks who had exchanged places with the officers to step forward, not three but four stepped out. Another officer having escaped earlier!"

Bert Jones tell us that Torun (Thorn) was roughly the equivalent of a country town. The Thorn Complex was a sub-camp of the concentration camp in Sztutowic. It contained POW camps for non-commissioned officers and other ranks. Stalag 20A (XXA) and 20C (XXC) Thorn were also known as Stalag 312 and 357. The 357 designation was later transferred to Oerbke near Fallingbostal in the west. The story begins in late 1939 when Polish POWs adapted the towns defensive forts as prison camps. Work began on Forts 9 and 10 and later the following forts on the left bank of the River Vistula were adapted:

Fort 11 (XI) named after Stefana Batorego.

Fort 12 (XII) named after Wladyslawa Jagielty.

Fort 13 (XIII) named after Karola Kniaziewiczza.

Fort 14 (XIV) named after Jozefa Dwernickiego. (Hospital).

Fort 15 (XV) named after Jaroslwaw Dabrowskiego.

Fort 16 (XVI) named 'Kolejowy' or 'Railway'. (Prison).

Fort 17 (XVII) named after Michala Zymierskiego.

The first HQ was in Fort 17, but during the first half of 1940, the camp authorities were moved to a two-storey house, now in Okolna Street, opposite Fort 13. Known as Komendantury Stalag 20A it remained the HQ until the end of the war.

Stalag 20A was enlarged in the second half of 1941, from Torun-Podgorza in the direction of Glinki. This was to accommodate Russian POWs in a new barracks complex known as Stalag 312/XXC. The 7 forts above which comprised Stalag 312 were also administered by Stalag 20A.

Over 60,000 inmates were processed through the Stalag 20A complex over a five year period, including Poles, French, Belgians, British, Yugoslavs, Russians, Norwegians, Italians and Americans. British POWs were held in Fort 13; French POWs in Fort 15 with small groups in Forts 11 and 13; Russian POWs were kept in Stalag 312 Glinki: Italians were first held in Stalag 312, but at the end of 1943 most were transported to Rzesz where they stayed in Fort 13.

British POWs were buried in the garrison military cemetery while Russian POWs were buried in a mass grave in the forest near Stalag 312, between Glinki and Cierpice. About 14,000 men are buried there.

BRITISH FREE CORPS. The recent television documentary about the 'British prisoners of war who fought for Hitler' has prompted **Wally Pearce** to send in a copy of the leaflet handed out in the camps by the 'recruiters'. It read as follows;

As a result of repeated applications from British subjects from all parts of the world wishing to take part in the common European struggle against Bolshevism authorisation has recently been given for the creation of a British volunteer unit. The British Free Corps publishes herewith the following short statement of the aims and principles of the unit.

- 1) The British Free Corps is a thoroughly British volunteer unit, conceived and created by British subjects from all parts of the Empire who have taken up arms and pledged their lives in the common European struggle against Soviet Russia.
- 2) The British Free Corps condemns the war with Germany and the sacrifice of British blood in the interests of Jewry and International Finance, and regards this conflict as a fundamental betrayal of the British people and British Imperial interests.
- 3) The British Free Corps desires the establishment of peace in Europe, the development of close friendly relations between England and Germany, and the encouragement of mutual understanding and collaboration between the two great Germanic peoples.
- 4) The British Free Corps will neither make war against Britain or the British Crown, nor support any action or policy detrimental to the interests of the British People.

Published by the British Free Corps.

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I thought members might like to read **SOMEWHERE IN GERMANY**, a letter written by Ralph Kitson to his mother on 14th April 1944. Reproduced with permission.

"My dear mother, well, here I am, turning up once again like the proverbial bad penny, having been liberated by American tanks on Wednesday April 11th at 2.30pm after an exciting and breathtaking climax to my prisoner of war life.

I had better put your mind at rest at once by saying I am completely well and fit and, of course, in the best of spirits. Since January the Germans have marched us over 1,000 kilometres – right from Graudenz and Thorn which were in the path of the advancing Russians – to the heart of Germany. You can have no possible conception of that march – a veritable nightmare. We set off in the middle of a severe Polish winter, we slept in barns, often tumble-down derelict places, often on wet floors, sometimes nearly 1,000 prisoners, Russian and British, crammed into places that would appal the heart of the stoutest.

On many occasions we slept in open fields – open fields mark you! With the snow three feet deep and the temperature more than twenty below zero. And the food! Day after day went by and we received nothing from the Germans but three or four potatoes, not always good ones, cooked in their skins one per man per day. In one period alone we went eleven consecutive days without any bread at all. When we received bread eventually we were allowed a ration of sometimes 200 grammes (6 ounces) and sometimes 300 grammes per man. It was of course the usual black bread frequently baked without salt, but nevertheless tasting like manna to us half starved derelicts.

Over fifty percent of us, myself included, contracted dysentery, that horrible soul-killing disease that makes one lose faith in God and humanity alike. Lice started to crawl on our dirty clothing (for over three months we had no opportunity of bathing), boils and skin complaints were commonplace. Many died, many just fell by the roadside, too utterly exhausted to be driven further. Some were lucky and managed to get into a civilian house and thus receive treatment. For the majority it was just 'carry-on' with a belief that eventually the 'boys' would come smashing in to free us.

Eventually, the beginning of April found us between Hannover and Brunswick, clothing in rags, boots burst and completely worn out, but still staggering along. Then on one never to be forgotten day we heard from the direction of Hamelin, not the music of the Pied Piper but the music just as magical, just as lovely, the distant thunder of American guns. The Germans turned us back in the direction we had come and wearily we took to the roads once more. But the end was in sight though even the most optimistic dare hardly believe it. Daily the guns grew louder, more menacing. Still the Germans forced us on. Food was becoming even scarcer. We were living on soup made from shredded sugar beet, bread when we could get it. The boys sold their wrist watches for a few slices of bread.

Still the guns came nearer and nearer. Then one day when our spirits were at their lowest ebb – for two days we had received no food at all, except half a pint of their soup – we heard the crackle of machine gun fire! No more than two or three miles behind now! And yet we dared not voice that opinion. After five years of imprisonment, five of what should have been the best years of our lives, the thought of freedom was almost too much to bear. We marched through a village that was busily engaged in putting up white flags in token of surrender. Marched into the inevitable barn to sink wearily on the ground.

Some of the boys were eating raw potatoes they found heaped in a corner. We were in a sorry plight, there, with hollow cheeks, dirty, unkempt and lice-infested. The machine gunning grew louder, incredibly close. Our guards were uneasy. The atmosphere was electric. Suddenly, there was an even louder burst and a crashing roar of a mortar in a nearby orchard; the guards dived into a ditch by the side of the road and then the whole side of the barn was riddled by machine gun bullets – the roar of the tanks rose to a crescendo mixed with the crashing of the undergrowth. We half-ran, half-scrambled, to the doors of the barn to see majestic, effortless, the shape of a huge American tank come crashing through the fence and hedge that surrounded the neighbouring orchard. It was followed by another. The rest of the scene I can't even describe. Everyone just went

mad. Laughing, crying, cheering even kissing the tank, the boys just lost themselves in the moment for which they had waited five long years.

I shall never know such a moment again. There was a lump in my throat and the whole scene seemed to swim before me. The crews of the tanks were throwing out cigarettes to the delirious boys. Imagine it, we had had no cigarettes for weeks and weeks. Our erstwhile guards were coming towards the tanks with their arms raised. What a day and what a sight! Free once more. Liberated! And now I must close. I will tell you in my next letter what has happened in the last two days. Events as strange and eventful as any in my life. So for the present, Goodbye and all my love to everyone. Ralph."

Editor – Can you remember the day you were finally liberated? If so why not write in and tell us.

BOOK REVIEW.

ESCAPE FROM ITALY 1943-45 by Malcolm Tudor. Subtitled 'Allied Escapers and Helpers in Fascist Italy' this book is a follow up to Malcolms earlier 'British Prisoners of War in Italy: Paths to Freedom'. Two in every three escapers and evaders who returned to active service with the Armed Forces of Britain and the Empire before the end of the Second World War came from Italy. In this book Malcolm shows the crucial role played by ordinary Italian men and women in sheltering and helping the fugitives under the noses of Fascists and Germans. Resistance fighters also set up escape routes and passed the servicemen from one safe house to another until the final dangerous crossing to Switzerland or through the enemy lines. In liaison with the partisans, agents of British and American military intelligence undertook dangerous search and rescue operations. Many of these covert actions are described here in gripping detail. Published on the 60th Anniversary of the Allied invasion of Italy, the book is a tribute to the resilience and ingenuity of Allied servicemen and to the courage and generosity of their Italian helpers. During the war, Malcolms mother and grandparents assisted a group of British and South African prisoners of war in the mountains of northern Italy. 116 pages, softcover. ISBN No 0-9538964-1-2. Price including postage and packaging (UK and EEC) £8.99, rest of the world, Airmail, £9.99 from Emeila Publishing, Woodlands, Bryn Gardens, Newtown, Powys SY16 2DR.

LADY POW's. We are planning an article on some of the servicewomen taken prisoner during the last war, in particular those brave ladies who worked for the Special Operations Executive. We are currently seeking photos of the ladies. If you have any information that we can include in the article please send it in.

PHOTO CAN BE SEEN IN HARD COPY OF NEWSLETTER.

Above. The gang from E162 Oderthal, Stalag 8B with Fusilier William Kelly 3rd row from top, 2nd from the left. Sent in by daughter Deirdre Naylor. Does anyone recognise any of the others?

FAR EAST NEWS.

As some members may know, I am currently researching a book on Japanese war crimes and subsequent trials. On a recent visit to the public record office I came across a good map of the Burma-Siam Railway, showing the various camps along its route and the Japanese units responsible for them. If you worked on the railway and would like a copy please drop me a line. I have also found some photographs of both POW and Asiatic labour camps at Chungkai, Kaorin, Tamuang, Nakom Pathom and Kanburi, which appear to have been taken after the Japanese surrender. I am trying to obtain copies for our archives.

Clifford Morris has sent in details of his time as a POW in Korea in Keijo (Seoul) camp and Jinsen (Inchon). He recalled a Captain Isobe and the extra food they received on Christmas Day 1943, that they were told Isobe had paid for. At the war crimes trials one of two of the POW officers went out to speak on his behalf. Clifford also sent in a roll of the members of 122nd Regt RA who died in action or while interned in Japanese prisoner of war camps.

During my visit to the public record office I also came across a report on some of the Japanese POW camps in Thailand. The report covered the following camps in No II Group; Wan Lung, Tarkelin, South Whampo, 211 (228) Km Camp, 230 (247) Km Camp, Krian-kri and Kamburi (Kanchanaburi) officers camp. If any members or relatives are seeking information on specific camps or incidents I would be pleased to help if I can.

Mr Paul Saxton, 11 Tarongo Way, City Beach, WA 6015, Australia would like to hear from anyone who knew his father or who passed through the same places. He was **Gunner Frank Saxton** of 69 Bty, 21 LAA, Royal Artillery, captured at Tasikmalaya, Java 9th March 1942. He remained in Java until August 1942 then went to Singapore and on to Japan via Saigon and Formosa onboard the Dainichi Maru, landing at Moji 27th Nov 1942. From then until Dec 1944 he was probably at Kumamoto constructing the Kengun airfield. From 4th Dec 44 until July 1945 he worked in the Ube coalmines, then at Motoyama in August and September.

FREEDOM GATE – KOREA 1950-53.

Member **John Underwood** was one of the Royal Marine Commandos taken prisoner in Korea whilst serving with the US Marines around the Chosin Reservoir. The 7th US Infantry Division was decimated at the same time, caught by surprise as the Chinese entered the war. John tells us that the remains of 11 missing American soldiers have been found by a recovery team from the Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii and were flown home at the end of October. Some were from the 7th Division and others were recovered in Unsan county, about 60 miles north of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea. The area was the site of battles between the US 1st Cavalry Division and the 25th Infantry Division and Communist forces in November 1950. Twenty-five recovery operations have taken place in North Korea since 1996 and the remains of 178 US soldiers have been recovered. So far 13 have been identified and returned to their families. 8,100 US servicemen are still listed as missing from that war, together with over 100 British.

Our Canadian comrades have asked whether any of our Korean war POWs recall meeting a Richard Toole of the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry who was reported missing in action in October 1951. If you can help please contact the editor.

Our American friends are also seeking information on the crew of a Douglas B-26 aircraft that did not return from a mission on 22nd March 1952 in the Sin(n)yon-Ni area, southeast of Pyongyang. A North Korean farmer reported that a twin-engined bomber had crashed in that area and that four men had bailed out, although one chute did not open. Later that same day he saw three Caucasians in tan uniforms being marched past his home under escort. One of the men, Airman Wayne Lewis was seen in Branch 3, Camp 2 (Chang-ni) in April 1953. However, he did not return home at the end of the war and is still listed as missing together with pilot Cecil Brandsted, radar observer John Zimmerlee, navigator Wilford Cook and bombardier Raymond Bennett. Does anyone remember meeting any of the men?

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

We do not always include private addresses on the website, but if you can help please contact the editor, Phil Chinnery.

Adults Learning – the monthly journal of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education – is dedicating a special issue to the theme of learning in-extremis. Its editor Paul Stanistreet would like to hear from ex-POWs who have a story to tell about how they managed to learn and keep themselves intellectually alive in spite of the extremity of their situation. If you feel you have a story to tell please contact; The Editor, Adults Learning, NIACE, Renaissance House, 20 Princes Road West, Leicester LE1 6TP. Tel 0116-2044211. Email paul.stanistreet@niace.org.uk

An Italian researcher and new associate member is looking for information on **Campo 73** Modena (Fossoli di Carpi). Memories, pictures, drawings or just comments would be welcome. The study has been commissioned by the Italian Fossoli Foundation, which preserves the heritage of the Fossoli Concentration Camp in 1944, but is also interested in its previous history as a British and Commonwealth POW camp. Please contact Mr Michele Tagliavini, Flat 013, Ground Floor, Northwood Hall, Hornsey Lane, London N6 5PF. Tel 0208-342-5484.

Mrs Eunice Wright in Northern Ireland would like to hear from anyone who may have known her late father **James Hay** of the Royal Scots who was a resident of Stalag 20A and then Stalag Luft 3 in the winter of 44/45.

Mr Ian Cooper in Derby would like to hear from anyone who can remember his father **Ernie Cooper** of the Leicestershire Regiment, taken prisoner following the Battle of Kasserine and a resident of Stalag 17B in Austria.

Mr Robert Black, Albert Pey 13, 17230 Palamos, Girona, Spain would like to locate the following members of **8th Argylls**; Duncan Ferguson, Shonan MacDonald and Farquar MacNeil.

Member Mr R S Ward in Saltburn-by-the-sea, a former Green Howard and resident of Campo 201 and Lamsdorf would like to hear from any member living near his neighbourhood.

Nowhere in the Regimental Histories of the **Durham Light Infantry** covering the Second World War is the subject of prisoners of war given much attention. It is intended to correct this by the publication of a book detailing the stories of DLI soldiers who became prisoners of war in Germany and Italy. Would any member who served in the DLI and was a prisoner of war and who is willing to tell of his experiences, please contact Mr Ian R English, Dale Cottage, Preston-Under-Scar, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 4AH. Telephone 01969-623966.

Mr Roy Cardus in Wrexham would like to hear from anyone who knew his brother **G.E.Cardus** during his service as a telegraphist on the destroyer HMS Bedouin, which was sunk on the 'Harpoon Convoy' to Malta in June 1942. He was thereafter a resident of Stalag 344 Lamsdorf and Stalag 383 Hohenfels. On 16th April 1945 he escaped with three others and took up residence in the town of Hohenburg until the Americans arrived. One of the men, a commando sergeant made himself the Burgomaster. Were you one of the other escapers?

Mr Roy Gear in Exeter would like to hear from any of the members of his working party in a stone quarry at **Practovice**, registered to Stalag 4C. They were billeted in a school and one of his mates was Jim Medicott.

Member Bob Monk would like to hear from any POWs who were with him in camps Friedricschein and Stolzenberg, Danzig. Also on the long march from Danzig.

Graham Stone in Essex would like to hear from anyone who may have known his late father **Private Sidney Albert Stone** of 2nd Bn Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. If you were in working party E209 at the Grafin Johnnaschacht coal mine at Bobrek or a resident of Stalag 8B Graham would like to hear from you.

New associate member from Down Under Mr Syd Boydell would like to hear from anyone who knew his late father **Lieutenant M G Boydell**, 1st Anti-tank Regt, Royal Australian Artillery, who was taken prisoner in Greece in April 1941. He was held in Oflag XC at Lubeck and Oflag VB at Biberach in 1941, Oflag VIB at Warburg until Aug 1942, Oflag VIIB Eichstatt from Sept 42 to April 44 and Oflag 79 at Braunschweig until April 1945. Were you in any of these camps? Syd lives at 21 McKean Street, North Fitzroy, 3068 Victoria, Australia.

Julie Murrell in Marlow would like to hear from anyone who may have known her grandfather **L/Cpl Wilfred Turner** of B Coy, 7th Bn Royal Norfolks who was taken prisoner at St Valery and was a resident of Stalag 21D Poznan. Julies grandmother will be 100 years old next month and would appreciate the information.

Mr Geoff Crighton in Milton Keynes would like to hear from anyone who remembers his uncle **Edward Victor Simpkins** of 'A' company, 1st Battalion, Kings Own Royal Regiment. After capture on Leros on 17th November 1943, he was interned in Stalag 17A from Dulag 135 and later

transferred to Stalag 17B. His widow Gladys is still alive. Photos of the camps would be of special interest to the family.

Ms Kathy Salt in Derbyshire would like to hear from anyone who knew **Gunner Jack Salt**, 30HA, who was captured in either Sumatra or Singapore and had to work on the Burma Railway until the end of the war. He was thereafter sent to India and South Africa.

Were you in **Stalag 17B at Gneizendorf in Austria?** An American ex-POW is searching for the British POWs that helped him back to US lines when the camp was evacuated. If you were in 17B please drop a line to the newsletter editor, Phil Chinnery, 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.

Mr Barrie Tostevin in Lincoln has a Bible which once belonged to POW **Robert Crawford** a former resident of Stalag XXA. Robert was born in 1904 and lived in York Park, Belfast. If he or his relatives are reading this perhaps they could contact Barrie.

Mr Arthur Daw in Kings Lynn served with the **7th Royal Norfolk**s and was taken prisoner at St Valery. He was a resident of Stalag 20B and 21B and worked on a farm in Budisch in East Prussia. He would like to hear from his old comrades including Arthur Waters, (REME) a magician and member of the Magic Circle and Peter Faulkner of the Seaforth Highlanders.

Photo below. Residents of Stalag 20B Marienburg in 1940. L/Cpl Wally Pearce is in the middle row, 3rd from right. Recognise any of the others?

PHOTO AVAILABLE IN HARD COPY OF NEWSLETTER.

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