

# The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

## Summer 2002 Newsletter

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

**OBITUARIES.** It is with great sadness that we have to report the passing away of a number of members including our stalwart Treasurer **Lt Colonel Tom Jagger, MBE (Ret)**. Tom was from a humble background, the son of a dyer and a midwife living in a clifftop terrace home on Pickwood Scar, far above the mills of Halifax. At 15 years old, claiming he was 18, he joined the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. He enlisted as a Private on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1938 at Stirling Castle and began a military career which would span 40 years and four continents. Tom passed out first of his intake and quickly earned his first stripe. He went out to Palestine with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Argylls and thence to Sidi Barrani. In May 1941 the Argylls were one of a number of Allied units hurriedly sent to defend the island of Crete against an imminent German invasion. The battalion was dispersed on the Mesara Plain inland from the port of Heraklion. The Germans mounted a huge airborne invasion and although their paratroopers suffered heavy losses they caused chaos amongst the defenders. Tom and a fellow Argyll, Frank Proctor, were separated from their platoon and taken prisoner. They were put up against a farm house wall to be shot, like the pair of Greek partisans before them. Tom and Frank shook hands together, then they stood to attention and came to the salute, looking the men who were about to shoot them straight in the eyes. However, the Germans had a change of heart and set the two men digging graves in the farm yard. They suspected these might be for themselves, so agreed to take their time. The graves turned out to be for the two Greeks so the two Scots buried them. Tom was asked if he was a medical orderly and thinking that the answer 'no' might be perilous, he said 'yes' and found himself helping to organise a makeshift German field hospital set up in a farm house. He tended the wounded the best he could but was then taken away and set in harness like a beast of burden to drag one of the German hand carts full of ammunition. Suddenly a British mortar attack began and Tom threw off his harness and dived into a large hole, followed by two Germans who immediately surrendered to him as the Leicestershire Regiment retook the farm house.

Tom was lucky enough to get away from Crete on the last warship out of Heraklion and went on to fight at El Alamein and in Sicily and Italy. He was commissioned in 1946 and eventually retired from the Army at the age of 55. A tireless worker for a number of charities, including our own, he will be sorely missed.

We also regret to announce the passing away of the following former prisoners of war; **Major Patrick Kinmont, MBE**, 86, who died suddenly but peacefully at home in Cirencester on Good Friday 29<sup>th</sup> March. He was the former senior medical officer at Stalag 18A Wolfsberg in Austria. Captured in Greece, he was only 25 years old when he arrived at the camp and took on responsibilities far beyond his years. **Mr Frank Gleeson**, who was living in France. **Mr Ernest Hamlett** passed away in Canada on 27<sup>th</sup> May. He was 87 years old. Born in Manchester, England he served with the 1<sup>st</sup> Bn. Border Regt, 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division and he fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy before being taken prisoner at Arnheim. He was sent to Stalag XIB and spent seven months working down the lead mines with a broken ankle. He is survived by Anne, his wife of 62 years, son Christopher, daughter Jean and grandson Dane. The family wish to extend its sincere appreciation to the wonderful staff at the George Derby Centre, Burnaby, British Columbia who looked after him over the past four years. If anyone remembers Ernest, please contact Phil Chinnery who will put you in touch with the family, or email Jean on [jajames@direct.ca](mailto:jajames@direct.ca) **Captain Ian Bell** passed away recently. He was taken prisoner in the western desert in May 1942 and taken to a POW camp in Italy. He escaped twice and fought with the guerrilla's before being recaptured and

handed over to the SS and Gestapo at Parma. Eventually he was sent to a camp in Germany where he was liberated by the Americans. He later joined the War Crimes Investigation Unit at Klagenfurt. His two books *'And Strength Was Given'* tells of his time as a POW and *'No Place to Hide'* relates his experiences as a war crimes investigator. **Mr Jack Marshall** passed away on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June. His funeral service took place at Burnham Norton Church in Burnham Market, Norfolk. During the war he was a driver in the Royal Engineers and was held captive at the Sudetenland Treibstoff Werke, registered to Stalag 4C. **May they rest in Peace. We will remember them.**

**ASSOCIATION NEWS from Les Allan, Honorary General Secretary.**

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

I have received a reply to the Petition that our MP Fiona MacTaggart presented to the House of Commons on our behalf. It came on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May from the Secretary of State for Defence Geoff Hoon. It reads: *"We have made it clear that we recognise that for British Servicemen, being detained as a prisoner of war in any conflict was not pleasant and further, that many of those serving in the Armed Forces, including of course those held as prisoners of war, have had to endure great hardship at different times.*

*"It has been the policy of successive Governments not to make compensation payments to Servicemen for having been detained as a prisoner of war. Rather the emphasis has been on the provision of appropriate pensions and medical assistance to those whose health has suffered as a result of their service, including the time spent as a prisoner of war.*

*"Whilst we have instituted a special ex-gratia payment scheme for those Servicemen detained as prisoners of war by the Japanese, this reflects the generally agreed unique circumstances under which these men were detained. (25% of those Servicemen captured by the Japanese died or were killed during their captivity; the equivalent figure for those held in the European theatre during the Second World War was 5%. Note from editor – Government figures, not ours.)*

*"Accordingly, while recognising as we do the experiences of many of those detained in German hands, we have no plans to extend the ex-gratia scheme to cover Servicemen detained as prisoners of war in other areas during the Second World War or during other conflicts."*

The above reply simply reflects the standard answer that has been sent out to all members and the MPs who have supported our campaign. It takes no account of the fact that most prisoners of the Germans were in their second year of captivity by the time the prisoners in the Far East began to fall into the bag. Nor indeed the fact that twenty-five percent of the FEPOW deaths were caused by Allied submarines. I will be asking the Secretary of State for Defence for a detailed breakdown of the figures that they are quoting to deny us our claim. Our own research confirms the fact that a lot more than 5% of our comrades died or were killed whilst prisoners of war. In the meantime we are preparing a case to be put to the European Parliament. As far as Germany is concerned, they paid reparations at the end of the war and they insist that we should have been given compensation from that money. It is a fair comment and we would like the European Parliament to instruct the British Government to pass the money on to us, with interest.

**MEMBERS FEEDBACK.** From Eric Howe who wrote to Dr Lewis Moonie, the Minister for Veterans Affairs; *"You quote the lack of documents proving the large number of deaths on the march from the Lamsdorf region. It was not in the Germans best interests to log them and, given the conditions, it would have been difficult so to do. I was there – I know. Speak with the remaining survivors and they will give first hand accounts of their experiences. They are not likely to forget any of it. I collapsed, rolled over into a ditch, 'played dead' and then crawled on all fours to a nearby farmhouse. The (Polish) family mercifully took me in. They had lost a son who had fought the Germans on the Russian front. They kept me alive on goats milk and honey and, eventually I was repatriated by the Americans. I weighed 6 stone, 4 pounds. It is a miracle I made it to the farmhouse. I could have been another statistic making up the 'very large number of deaths' but who would have logged my demise? My generation gave of our best to achieve the freedom we enjoy today. Now we are in need we are pushed aside....."*

**COM.** Member Charles Dick has sent in a copy of a letter sent to him by the International Organisation for Migration, the body responsible for compensating people used for forced labour by the Nazis. Prisoners of war are excluded from this scheme, unless you were in a concentration camp and applications had to be in to them by last August. Apparently they are dealing with over 300,000 claims world wide and cannot give any idea whatsoever as to the length of time it will take to deal with individual claims.

**WELFARE.** We would be happy to consider any applications for welfare assistance. Ken Jackson is our welfare officer and he lives at 29, Highwood Avenue, Booker, High Wycombe, Bucks HP12 4LS. By the way, the War Pensions Agency has now been renamed the **Veterans Agency**. The address remains the same; Tomlinson House, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP. Their Free helpline number is 0800-169-2277.

**DONATIONS.** We are fortunate to have received a large number of donations lately, including some from members who are now paying their membership subscription by standing order and who include a bit extra as a donation. We would like to thank the following for their kind donations; J Aitken £5, Anonymous £20, Bert Arnold £5, Doug Arthur £15, D Avey £5, J Banfield (Sec RAF POW Assoc) £20, Pete Barber £25, R S Barma £10, W F Barratt £15, S Barthorpe £5, Mrs Andrea Bell £10, M Bentley £10, K Bolam £10, Mr Bonner £5, T Burke £5, Mrs Care £10, T H Carpenter £5, E A Cattermole £25, T G Chapman £5, J Charters £15, J Clinch £5, G H Collins £5, Peter Constable £25 (via Chalfont St Giles Womens Institute), C Cook £15, J Costen £5, Mrs Coxell £25, W S Crighton £2, G Crisp £15, J F C Crouch £10, J Cruttenden £10, G J Dale £5, Oscar D'Alcorn £5, Mr W Davies £10, G J Duffree £10, Dr Peter Duffus £100, D A Elliot £5, Arthur Evans CBE £5, D Evans MM £2, K Fuller £5, Mr N L Giles £5, F J Gill £5, Mrs J Gosling £10, J Green £5, Mr E J Haines £5, F C Harding £5, J Harper £20, E J Hatchett £5, Ann Hayes £10, Mr John Hazell £5, Mrs B Holden £5, H Jackson £5, Yves Jaulmes £10, Mr J R Johnstone £5, Bob Jones £5, T Jones £5, Mr Frank Knight, £15, Mrs D Lamisong £20, Mrs M C Lawrence £5, A Lister £5, John Lowe £5, K Manifold £5, E Marshall £15, Mr J Martin £5, F McGauley £5, E McNulty £5, Jim McQueen £5, E Mitchell £5, G L Money £5, S J H Morse £5, Mr Ed Norman, £20, M J M Orr £20, E Parrish £25, E Payne £5, Mrs M Peachey £10, W Pearce £5, J B Ponting £5, Mrs Ramsay £5, Real Life Media Productions £25, J Reeder £5, G Reid £5, G Robb £20, F Ruse £5, H Salmon £10, E Sankey £15, M Shand £5, P Shurmer £5, Mr F Sinnott £5, E Skipper £5, A Smith £15, R F Smith £10, Mrs Snell £10, Mrs V Taylor £5, H Tooze £15, F J Vokes £15, S Wade £25, F Walker £20, Mr V E Walker £10, N Warnke £5, H Welch £10, Mr T W Welton £5, Mrs Y Winson £10, W C J Witt £1, J Wort £5. All donations, large or small are welcome and will be put to good use.

**NEW MEMBERS.** **Mr Jim McQueen**, Royal New Zealand Air Force and a former resident of Stalag 8B. **Mr Richard Townsend** an RAMC resident of Stalag 20A. **Mr Frank Knight** taken prisoner on Java in February 1942 and a former resident of Zentsuji camp in Japan. **Mr Alfred Solomon** a Telegraphist on MTB622 sunk in the North Sea off Terschelling. **Mr John Siddall** of the 4<sup>th</sup> Queens Own Hussars, captured in Greece and a former resident of Stalag 18A in Austria. **Mr Edwin Holt** of the KORR who was captured on Leros. **Mr M J M Orr** who fell in the bag at Boulogne. **Mr James Reed** formerly with the Seaforth Highlanders, who was taken at St Valery together with **Mr Frederick Coster** of the Royal Artillery, **Mr Albert Andersen** who served with the 152<sup>nd</sup> (H) Field Ambulance and **Mr Harold Walden**, MM of the Black Watch who later escaped from the march in 1945 and made his way to the British Embassy in Moscow. **Mr W E Saunders.** **Mr Ray Turner** from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Glosters, a former resident of Stalag 9C. **Mr Jim Roberts** a former resident of Stalag 20A Thorn and his wife Diana. **Mr Bill Barratt**, a Sergeant Major in the Suffolk Regiment and former resident of Obermassfield hospital at Stalag 9C. **Mr John Hazell** of the Royal Marines who was captured at Calais and ended up in Marlag. **Mr Fred Dillnutt**, formerly of 77 Squadron, RAF and Stalag 4B.

**ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.** **Mrs Annie Turner** in Australia. **Mr Ed Norman** whose father was a resident of Stalag 4B. **Mr Alan Burrows** whose uncle served with 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps in Singapore. **Mrs Michele Jewell.** **Mr Tony Page.** **Mr William Davies** whose grandfather was taken prisoner in Singapore. **Mrs Dawn Laycock.** **Ann Hayes** whose father served with the

60<sup>th</sup> Anti-tanks. **Angela Watson** whose father Stanley served with the RASC. **Audrey Southgate** whose father was captured on Crete. **Deirdre Naylor** whose father William Kelly was a former resident of Stalag 8B. **Mr Ted Berry. Mr Douglas Terrel**, son of one of our American liberators. **Dr Peter Duffus**, son of Stalag 20B Senior Medical Officer Dr G.M.Rae Duffus. **Mrs Linda Hook** whose father John was in the Royal Artillery at St Valery and a former resident of Stalag 20A.

**SERVICE RECORDS.** We have been informed that all enquiries relating to copies of service records of Ex-Army personnel will be handled in Glasgow as of 1<sup>st</sup> July. Casework relating to Royal Navy and Polish ex-servicemen will still be handled for the time being by the M.O.D. Record Office in Hayes, Middlesex. If you would like to obtain a copy of your service records, or are seeking a copy of a relatives service record, please send your enquiry to **Army Personnel Centre, Historic Disclosures, Mailpoint 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX**. If you are a former prisoner of war, also ask them for a copy of your liberation/interrogation report, if you filled one out after liberation.

**STAMPS.** We would be pleased to reply to all letters sent in to us, but please include a stamp to help keep our costs down. Thank You to those members who regularly send in extra stamps with their letters. Out of interest, Les and Phil are currently receiving around a dozen letters and a dozen emails each and every day.

### **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

If you would like to respond to any of the requests below, please contact Phil Chinnery at 10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB by mail or by email at [PHIL@chinnery49.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:PHIL@chinnery49.fsnet.co.uk) It is our policy not to include members addresses.

Mr John Kallmeier in Gloucester would like to contact **Leonard Hardman** who came from Egremont, Wallasey, Cheshire. Born in November 1919 he was taken prisoner on Crete in 1941 while serving with the RAMC.

Mrs Janet Savage in East Sussex would like to hear from anyone who was in **Stalag XIA Altengrabow** in March 1945.

Michele Jewell is looking for anyone who knew her grandfather **Leonard Tucker**, nickname Sam or Sambo. He was a gunner and a resident of Campo 70 Monturano and Stalag 8A Gorlitz. Please contact Phil Chinnery or send Michele an email at [vincemj@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:vincemj@globalnet.co.uk)

Mr John Pook on the Isle of Wight would like to contact anyone who was in the repatriation camp at **Retsina**, Naples, Italy before being flown home.

Mr W F Barratt in Surrey would like to hear from anyone who was at the hospital at **Obermassfeld**, Stalag 9C. A Sergeant Major in the Suffolk Regiment, he was repatriated in October 1943.

Mrs Jennifer Snell in Cumbria would like to contact some of her late fathers mates. He was **Driver Maurice Robinson, RASC** who was taken prisoner in Greece and was a resident of **Stalag 18A** in Austria. His mates were; from the UK – A.Taunton, J.McLean, Lawrence Homshaw, Harold Strong, Bernard Gibson, G.L.Healey, C.Garratt, Gordon Farr, E.W.Davidson, M.E.Ellis, John Blair, A.Jones, H.C.Wells, J.McDougall, Ernest T.H.Blake. From New Zealand – Donald Jack Alexander and C.P.Moore. From Australia – L.J.Pye and A.Joudge.

Mr Ray Turner in Dorset would like to hear from anyone who was in **Stalag 9C**, especially kommando 1401.

Howard Kushner in New York, USA would like to trace **Anthony Esposito** who he knew in the British Compound of Stalag 4B between 25<sup>th</sup> December 1944 and 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1945. Tony was a former prize fighter and his family owned restaurants in London.

William T Minor in Missouri, USA would like to trace **George Luke** who he met in Stalag Luft 1, Barth. Georges 1945 address was Handcross Nurserys and he was captured near Dunkirk.

Mr Leon Greenman would like to locate Sergeant ? **Aldridge** of Woolwich, whom he met once at Monowitz in Auschwitz in the summer of 1944. Mr Greenmans last words to Mr Aldridge were "I might be shot for talking to you, if we never meet again do please get my message to your commander." If you know the whereabouts of Aldridge please contact Phil Chinnery, or Kate Rhodes at the Imperial War Museum on 0207-416-5285.

Mr Manuel F Van Eyck in California, USA would like to contact any former resident of **Stalag 8B/344 Lamsdorf** who may have been involved in the recovery and burial of the crew of an American B-24 Liberator bomber which was involved in a mid-air collision and then crashed on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1944.

Mrs Linda Hook in Portsmouth would like to borrow any photos of **Stalag 20A** Thorn to make copies. Her father John Hall, Royal Artillery was a former resident.

Real Life Media Productions are making a documentary for Channel 5 about German attempts to propagandise Allied prisoners and would like to hear from anyone who was in the 'rest camps' at Stalag 3D/517 or Stalag 3D/999 (officers) Genshagen, or Stalag 3A Luckenwalde. Were you approached by the Germans to join their cause? Did you receive Nazi propaganda pamphlets or attend lectures given by Germans or by British traitors such as John Amery? All replies will be treated in confidence. Ring Charlotte Kirkbright on 0113-220-6926.

### **HISTORIANS NEWS.**

**Contact address; Mr Philip Chinnery, 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.**

I try to encourage all former prisoners of war to write about their experiences, for their friends and family and for our archives too. If you have already done so, please send in a copy. If you have not yet put pen to paper, how about it? It would be a new excuse to get you out of gardening or painting the bedroom again. I would like to say a **Thank You** to Major Jimmy Howe, MBE who sent in the special souvenir programme for the first Grand Reunion Concert of POWs on 25<sup>th</sup> June 1976 at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. A **Thank You** to Henry Owens for the copy of the 7 pages depicting the march from France to Oflag 7C and the two photos taken at the propaganda camp at Stalag 3D near Berlin. **Thank You** to Alan Davis for the pictures of the WW1 prisoner of war camp at Giessen. Also **Thank You** to Ruth Schlette for the list of WW1 camps and commanders. **Thank You** to Syd Barthorpe for the copy of the booklet 'Memories of Camp 103/6' a work camp in Italy. Does anyone have any photos of the prisoner of war camps in Italy?

**PRISON CAMP SPIES.** The spare copy of this book was won by Member Number 2796, Mrs J M Snell in Ulverston, Cumbria, who correctly named Wolfsberg as Stalag XVIII A. Copies are still available from the publisher and a review can be found on our website. Others who sent in the correct answer included Harry McLean, Dennis Boden, Oscar D'Alcorn, Colin Stevens, Michael Booker, Ralph Churches and Jim Aitken.

**MILAG AND MARLAG NORD.** We have received the donation to our archives of a crib board that was owned by Frederick Waller and used in Room 7 of Barrack Room 25 in MILAG, the Merchant Navy part of the prisoner of war camp known as Milag and Marlag Nord. These names were on the back; Eric Plumb, - H. Mockett, A.C. Sallio, T Stevens, - C. Ashton, - Hatchwell, S Coulson, J J Herbert, J MacLennan, G King, K Mackenzie, - Dickson, Ginger Beck-. If any of these men are still around we would like to hear from them. Sadly Fred Waller was repatriated in 1944 due to chronic asthma and bad health and died shortly afterwards.

**CAMPO 78 SULMONA.** Thank You to **Jim Greeves** who sent in the plan of the camp. If you were there and would like a copy please write to me for details. Address above. Jim recalls "The plan was got up by two prisoners who had surveying experience, they may have been M.I.Y. or H.A.C.

There were some brainy lads in Hut 81. One chap was working on a clock system of water drips from one container into another. I often wonder if he had any success. Then there was old blowers for brewing up and sandals made from webbing, with the soles made from plaited string from the Red Cross parcels. We in Hut 80 were mostly labouring types. We provided the wood party and Bob Hale and I were the water party. Our duty was on the stand pipe opposite the kitchen, outside Hut 12. When the water was turned on at the Italians discretion we had the job of filling the dixies for the kitchen. This was priority before the brew cans and washing tubs for general use. We thought the cook house staff were a bit fussy where we placed the dixies, but after the exposure of the collapsed tunnel we knew the reason, we were not told before!"

**CAMP PLANS.** A Thank You to **Ben van Drogenbroek** who sent in plans of Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan. Also to **Michael Booker** from the Colditz Society for the plan of Oflag VIB Warburg.

**RED CROSS REPORTS.** I have unclaimed photocopies of a number of Red Cross visit reports, that I am now offering to members. Details and prices including UK postage are listed below. Overseas members add £2 for higher postage rates. Please make cheques out to Mr P Chinnery and send to me at 10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB. If you are seeking reports on a specific camp, please drop me a line.

Campo 51 Altamura. 21<sup>st</sup> April 1942, 9 pages. **£5.**

Campo 52 Chiabari. 7<sup>th</sup> Sept 43 - 6 pages and 1<sup>st</sup> Apr 42 - 9 pages. **£7.50.**

Campo 59 Servigliano. 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 42 - 5 pages and 12<sup>th</sup> June 43 - 4 pages. **£5.**

Campo 85 Tuteurano. 15<sup>th</sup> May 43 - 5 pages and 8<sup>th</sup> March 43 - 8 pages. **£7.50.**

Stalag 3D. 17<sup>th</sup> June 1943 arbeids kommandos 329 Wuhlheide (railway work) and 730 Falkensee (saw mill). 329 was formed from members of 517 and 520 - 12 pages. **£7.**

Stalag 8A Gorlitz. 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 44 - 4p. **£3.**

Stalag 8B arbeids kommando E561 Jaworzno 9<sup>th</sup> March 43 - 4 pages. Members moved to E593 Schonberg Oct 43 - 3 pages. These were Palestinian kommandos. **£4** for both.

Stalag XIA Altengrabow. 10<sup>th</sup> April 1945 - 5 pages. **£3.**

Stalag 20B Thorn. 25<sup>th</sup> July 44 - 3 pages plus 12<sup>th</sup> Oct 44 - 3 pages, including arbeids kommandos in Danzig area 328, 337, 93, 314, 198, 778, 964, 747. **£3.50.**

Stalag 357 Oerbke. 11<sup>th</sup> Feb 1945 - 6 pages plus 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 44 - 12 pages. **£10.**

BAB20 Heydebreck. BAB20 and 40 amalgamated on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1943 and named BAB20. 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 44. (E711, E711A) - 5 pages plus 12<sup>th</sup> March 43 - 2 pages, 9<sup>th</sup> May 42 - 2 pages, 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 41 - 3 pages. **£7.**

BAB21 Blechhammer. 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 44 - 3 pages plus 23<sup>rd</sup> June 44 - 2 pages. **£3.50.**

BAB40 6 pages covering Feb to Dec 42. **£3.50.**

Oflag 79 (Previously Oflag 8F) report dated 7/12/44. 15 pages plus detailed camp history of 13 pages. **£13.50.**

Stalag Luft 1 Barth. Report dated 22/2/45 14 pages including list of men in hospital. **£10.**

**FIRST WORLD WAR POWS.** I now have some information on all of the German 1914-18 POW camps, plus a listing of all British officers who were taken prisoner. If any member knows a family whose relative was a prisoner in the First World War, please drop me a line.

**ARBEITS KOMMANDO NEWS.** IN THE BAG! We often include stories of how members fared once in a prisoner of war camp, but we do not often mention the circumstances of capture itself. Can you remember how you fell in the bag? If so please write in. Richard Townsend was a First Aid man with the 1<sup>st</sup> Lincolnshire Regiment when his turn came in 1940. "The Allied troops were holding the Germans back in Belgium when suddenly the Belgians capitulated, leaving the way clear for the Germans to continue their advance across Europe. I was given an old Pickfords furniture removal van as a medical truck and the axle exploded with a loud bang, sending bits of axle right up in the air. There were four of us in the van, myself, a Sergeant Armourer, a Mess Caterer and a cook. We were told to stay put and someone would be sent to relieve us.

"We were there four days, then one of our officers came through in a jeep and told us that Belgium had capitulated and we were to burn everything and get down to the coast as quickly as possible. While we were doing this a German Y Division came through and a soldier in a half-track was told to look after us. He made us change his tyres which were red hot owing to the speed at which they were travelling. He then made us empty our pockets and we had to stand in line. He then loaded his gun and pointed it at us. Luckily for us he gave one last look down the road and there was a German truck coming containing a German officer. He reprimanded the soldier as he wanted us for interrogation.

"We were then taken to a church yard where we were questioned by an officer who was born and grew up on the Kingston Bypass in London. Of course we said nothing, but he was able to tell us more about the state of the war than we knew. There were a lot of Belgians in our group and one of them was so scared he cut his throat. We walked for three days and nights without food or rest and eventually reached a Belgian POW camp of 60,000 men. None of us Brits were given any food or drink and had to march for another 37 kilometres in one day until we reached Maastricht. We stopped at a Dutch pottery where the Dutch workers spat at us. We who had come to Europe to help them! Here I found some dog biscuits which we shared amongst the 24 of us. There was a huge urn of steaming hot coffee waiting for the night shift workers. Seeing plenty of pottery mugs we each grabbed one and dipped it into the coffee and drank greedily. Hot or not it was a life saver."

Richard eventually ended up in Stalag 20A Torun and was finally repatriated as a medic (sanitator) in 1944. Before he came home he worked in Annaburg Hospital where he met Douglas Bader, the legless pilot. He had spare legs all round his bed and if he felt happy he would wear tall ones and if he was down in the dumps he wore short ones!

**ESEVITZ.** Edmund Mitchell from the 4<sup>th</sup> Bn Royal West Kents found himself working in the village of Esevitz, now named Lascovice, 10 kms from Stalag 20B Marienburg (Malbork) and 35 kms from Gdansk and 15 kms from Stutthof, the notorious concentration camp. He recalled; "There was a small gauge railway that ran through adjoining villages from Marienburg to the towns of Nuetiech and Tiegenhof, mostly for the sugar beet factories and the transport of grain. The farm on which I worked was the largest in the district, about 1,000 acres, with 40-50 workers; 10 British, 25-30 Polish and a dozen elderly German.

"When we started work in August 1940 we worked as a gang in the fields with the harvest and then the root crops, sugar beet, potatoes, etc. Eventually they put us to work on individual jobs which most suited us. I was a herdsman, so I was handed over to the German herdsman for his team of hand milkers. There was a herd of 60 dairy cows and 30 to 40 young stock. Sandy Donald drove a team of four horses; Doddy Hay was a lorry driver and mechanic so he worked in the smithy with the Polish blacksmith. Herbert Nurse worked in the large farm house vegetable garden and later, when the older Germans were called up, in the piggery.

"James Hunter, Bill Wilson, Percy Pearce and Bob O'Neill worked on the farm wherever they were needed. Six of the twelve of us were sent back to Stalag 20B after the harvest and root crops had been gathered in. One man, Ted Stillwell of the Loyals had been shot rather badly a few weeks earlier for arguing with the guard. We carried him about a mile back to the farm where I plugged the hole in his chest with the only shirt I had, plus an old lace curtain from the farmhouse. He was then taken by the guard to the lazarette on a farm cart with a fast horse. The road was not very smooth and it is a miracle he survived. I met him a week after liberation at the Hildesheim Luftwaffe airfield, waiting for a Dakota to bring us home. He was minus one lung but he looked quite good considering the three month march we had just endured."

Corporal G.R.'Doddy' Hay died in Aberdeen in 1976 at the age of 64. Bill Wilson settled in Canada and Sandy Donald was last heard of working on a farm in Peterhead on the east coast of Scotland. All were from the 5<sup>th</sup> Bn Gordon Highlanders. Does anyone know their current whereabouts? Also James Hunter 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Gordons; Corporal Bob O'Neill Durham Light Infantry; Herbert Nurse, 7<sup>th</sup> Bn Royal Norfolks; Percy Pearce Leicester Regiment. Please contact Edmund Mitchell at 10 Newhouse Terrace, Station Road, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6HJ.

**FAR EAST NEWS.**



An interesting article that appeared in the News of the World on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2000 has been sent in to us. Entitled 'Soldier who rose from the grave' it was written by John Staples and read: *"To the Japanese prison camp guards, Private Records was just another British soldier being buried in the compound. He was given a guard of honour as fellow POWs bowed their heads respectfully by his graveside. But the dead soldier was not all he seemed. For in the coffin lowered into the grave was a diary detailing Japanese atrocities. Its authors, Royal Signallers Major Eric Beaver and RSM Feltham, had dreamed up the ruse to save the 'private record' of 504 men killed by the Japanese after capture. After the end of the war it was exhumed from its grave in Changi, Singapore and used by the War Office to trace relatives of the men who died. Now the crumbling old diary has been given a final resting place at the Royal Signals Museum in Blandford, Dorset. It was presented by Mary Beaver, daughter-in-law of Major Beaver, to the museum director, Colonel Cliff Walters."* If you have a copy of the list of the 504 names or can shed any more light on the story, please drop us a line.

Mr Alan Burrows is seeking information on his uncle **Corporal William (Bill) Fredrick Burrows**, C Company, 17 Platoon, 18<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> Bn, The Loyal) Regiment, Reconnaissance Corps. He was reported missing after the fall of Singapore and no news of his fate was ever conveyed to his family. If you knew him or were indeed a member of 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment please contact Alan Burrows via Phil Chinnery, address in Historians News section.

**BOOK REVIEW - UNSUNG HEROES OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE** by Les and Pam Stubbs. This is the type of book that Historians yearn for and wish they had the time to research themselves. The only way to describe the book in one sentence is to say that it tells you everything you would wish to know about RAF prisoners of the Japanese. Les Stubbs was one of the 5,102 RAF men who became prisoners of the Japanese in the Far East and he has spent ten years researching the story. Two hundred of the pages list the fates of the other 5,101 men, of which over 1,700 died. The first seventy pages of the book explain in seven chapters, the circumstances by which the men fell into Japanese hands. Hong Kong, Borneo, Thailand, Malay, Singapore, Sumatra, Java are all covered. Even the RAF men serving behind enemy lines in Burma with the Chindits are included. Work in the various camps is also described, from the Burma-Thailand railway to mining, smelting, shipbuilding, land reclamation and dam building. The movements of the prisoners from place to place are covered in depth, with plenty of detail on the prison ships, including those that were sunk enroute. A very comprehensive bibliography lists the many books which have been written about Far East prisoners of war. For those who would visit the public record office in Kew, there are detailed instructions on how to decipher the Japanese POW record cards filed in WO342/1-58. I am very impressed with the book and heartily recommend it. Les and Pam - how about turning your hand to a similar book on the Army Far East Prisoners of War? 288 pages, softcover, with maps. ISBN number 1-903172-21-7. Copies can be obtained direct from the authors at 143, New Road, Bromsgrove, Worcs B60 2LJ price £15 including post and packing.

### **ROYAL AIR FORCE NEWS.**

Mr Jim McQueen in New Zealand would like to contact **W E Braddock**, the navigator on Wellington BJ767 who bailed out near Liege on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1942. A former Pharmacist and resident of Stalag 8B. Also **Harry (Henry?) Whelan**, navigator and a former resident of barrack 18B in the RAF compound at Stalag 8B. He worked with Jim on a newsletter until the beginning of the long march in January 1945, a former language teacher. Jims email address is [rayma.jim@extra.co.nz](mailto:rayma.jim@extra.co.nz)

Mr Pete Barber in Watlington, Oxon would like to hear from the following crew members of his fathers Wellington; Sgt Leslie Birrell Brown, Sgt Richard George Goldsworthy, Sgt Arthur Victor Rimes, Flt Sgt Joseph Anthony Hordon, Flt Sgt Thomas Robert Nelson. The **37 Squadron** aircraft from Middle East Command crashed 18<sup>th</sup> Sept 1942, 80 miles inland between Mersa Matruh and Tobruk.

Mr Eric Horton in Birmingham would like to trace **Sgt W Keenan**, RAF of 78 Squadron, flying in Halifax III LV877 EY-S which crashed on 10/11<sup>th</sup> April 1944 at Pierricourt, near Dieppe. It is



understood he was the sole survivor of the crew.

**BOOK REVIEW - ONE WAY FLIGHT TO MUNICH** by Assheton F Taylor. These are the personal memoirs of the authors experiences during WWII, including service with 460 RAAF Squadron at Binbrook, where he was posted as a navigator in a substantially Australian crew. Whilst on a night raid on Munich in 1943 his Lancaster was attacked by fighters and within minutes had exploded with four crew members, including the author, still inside the aircraft. The book graphically describes Asshetons capture, interrogation and life as a POW in Stalag IVB Muhlberg, followed by his escape from Russian 'custody' and his crossing of the Elbe River to the safety of the American zone on the western bank. Highly recommended and a must for any former residents of IVB. Published by AMHP. ISBN No 1-876439-37-8. 273 pages softcover. Price 33 Australian dollars (£9.90) from The War Book Shop, 13 Veronica Place, Loftus 2232, Australia. [www.warbooks.com.au](http://www.warbooks.com.au)

**STALAG 4B.** I have recently obtained a 13 page history of the camp, including details of the main RAF personalities and the casualties. If anyone would like a copy please send a cheque for £6.50 made out to Mr P Chinnery, address in the Historians News section.

**REMINDERS.** Have you booked your place at the annual reunion 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> October at Warners on Hayling Island? If not, contact Charlie Jago on 01722-333599. The annual subscription for the newsletter was due on 1<sup>st</sup> January. £5 for members, £10 for associates and overseas members. Please make cheques out to NEXPOWA and send to Les Allan at 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. Tel/Fax 01753-818308.

**THE FALKLANDS.** June 2002 marks the twentieth anniversary of the liberation of the Falkland Islands, seized by Argentinian forces two months previously. It was 4.25am on the morning of 3<sup>rd</sup> April when Governor Rex Hunt announced a state of emergency. Argentine commandos were about to land to attack the Royal Marine barracks at Moody Brook, while a full invasion fleet steamed towards the harbour at Port Stanley. The commandos launched a ferocious attack on the empty barracks, its occupants now deployed around the outskirts of the town. The Royal Marine force was small, two 40-men detachments, less two dozen who had been taken to the island of South Georgia. The commandos now moved on to Government House where the defending Royal Marines kept them at bay, killing at least two of the invaders. As the main landing took place at 8am, one of the landing craft was hit with an anti-tank weapon before the Marines there joined their comrades at the governors residence. Half an hour later, with enemy armour coming ashore, Rex Hunt ordered the Marines to surrender. The Argentinians radioed news of the surrender to Lieutenant Mills and his men on South Georgia. Two hours later they sent a corvette and a troop carrying Puma helicopter towards the harbour at Grytviken. The Marines opened fire and hit the helicopter forcing it to beat a hasty retreat. The corvette was hit by three 84mm anti-tank rockets and more than 1200 rounds of small-arms fire. Two hours later, with a much superior enemy force now ashore and with one British NCO badly wounded in the arm, Mills surrendered his force. All the men taken prisoner that day were taken to Argentina and repatriated via the Red Cross. Mills returned to a heroes welcome and the Distinguished Service Cross. When the task force returned to the South Atlantic to throw the invaders out, many of the Royal Marines went back with them.

**CAMPO 73 CARPI.** Every other month the association committee meets in the Royal British Legion in Cippenham, Berkshire. On the last two occasions we have been very pleased to see Harold Hewitt, who had been driven up from Wiltshire by his daughter Annette. After his first visit I found a Red Cross report on his Italian camp – number 73 at Carpi which was visited on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1943 by Captain Leonardo Trippi who was the Attache at the Swiss Legation in Rome. At the time of the visit the Camp Commander was Colonel Giuseppe Ferrari and the senior British NCO was RSM J Exall. There was 4,457 prisoners of war in the camp at that time and 200 others were out on a labour detachment at Ca Venier, Porto Tolle, 124 miles away, with 50 others about 75 miles away at Selva Maldezza. Captain Trippi noted that a few prisoners of war were being punished, some because they had lit fires in the barracks in order to cook and others for lack of respect towards their own NCO's. An attempt to escape had been made by Sergeant Harold E Hawith (their spelling of Hewitt). He had tried to escape in an Italian uniform with stars on the collar and a

medical badge on the hat. He was committed for trial by the Military Tribunal on a charge of improper use of the Italian uniform. He had been in solitary confinement for 59 days and during the first 47 of which he had been taken out of his cell for an hour a day. An efficient counsel was to be appointed for his defence. The report did not mention the constant toothache he had suffered for the two months prior to the Red Cross visit! However, you cannot keep a good man down and Harold eventually made good his escape and later appeared on the front cover of the Evening Standard being tossed into the air by an enthusiastic crowd in Moscow on VE Day.

A number of photographs appeared in the hard copy of the newsletter. To obtain a copy of this newsletter send £2 in stamps to Phil Chinnery.

THE END.

THE AUTUMN NEWSLETTER WILL BE POSTED ON THIS WEBSITE IN SEPTEMBER. SEE YOU THEN!

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**The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association is a member of the Council of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations.**

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