

# The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

## Summer 2005 Newsletter

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



FALLINGBOSTEL 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF LIBERATION



### **SUMMER 2005 NEWSLETTER**

**FALLINGBOSTEL REPORT** by Les Allan. "At the end of a very long march from Koenigsburg, East Poland I found myself incarcerated in Stalag XIB at Fallingbostel near Hannover. For this reason I have followed with interest the efforts of Allan Purcell to build a memorial befitting the memory of those who suffered and died within the confines of Stalag XIB. Allan, who is the catering manager for the Warrant Officers and Sergeants Mess, phoned me earlier this year to tell me that everything was in place for an Inaugural Dedication Ceremony of the Memorial Gates, made by 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. The symbolic gates, situated on the site of the Stalag guardroom are dedicated to the memory of the prisoners of war who were liberated by the Royal Irish 8<sup>th</sup> Hussars sixty years ago, on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

"I was accompanied by my wife Doris, our Standard Bearer Gary Moores and his wife and our Treasurer Freda Moores, as well as our Parade Marshal Eric Reeves and his wife May. Former Desert Rat Noel Mathews and his wife Dorothy made our party up to eight strong. We flew from Gatwick to Hannover on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> April and were met at the airport by two very active and efficient REME drivers with minibuses for our luggage. On our arrival at the Mess we were met by Allan Purcell who directed us to our living quarters. I learned afterwards that a number of sergeants had vacated their quarters in order to accommodate us. That evening our party sat down to an excellent lunch in the Mess, the fare being a little different to what I had experienced the last time I was in the area, the main meal at that time being whispering grass, and of course the appearance and state of the then company had also left a lot to be desired.

"After lunch we adjourned to the bar where many sergeants and their wives were quick to make us feel at home. I was surprised at the many questions put to me concerning the prison camp. Early in the evening we were introduced to RSM Mark Carlyle who, along with Mrs Wendy Carlyle made sure that we were all well looked after. Like all RSMs Mark carried his badge of office under his arm, I refer of course to his pace stick. The pace stick immediately attracted the attention of our Parade Marshal Eric Reeves, who explained that it had been his ambition to obtain one from an ex-service equipment outlet in the UK, but they had proven to be too expensive. As the evening came to a close the Battalion CO Lt Col Mitchell and his Lady joined us to make sure that all efforts were in hand to make our stay a pleasant one.

"The dawn of Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April was, weather wise, perfectly tuned to the Inaugural Dedication Ceremony of the Memorial Gates for the POWs who were liberated in Oerbke XIB. After a reasonably early breakfast the party was guided to where the memorial was located to witness a rehearsal of the afternoon proceedings, and I have to confess that the first sight of the memorial awoke memories of which I was both saddened to the point of tears and yet very, very proud of the infinitesimal part I had played in the fight for freedom. All that morning the REME lads were busily erecting marquees, not against rain but more against the sun. By mid-morning German TV crews and press camera men began to arrive and we found ourselves

being bombarded with questions ranging from the day of liberation to our thoughts of the present times. As the scheduled time of the Dedication Ceremony drew near a Warrant Officer called the assembly to order by saying before the dedication begins we have another duty to perform, will Eric Reeves come forward. Eric went forward and to his delight was presented with what he had wanted for many years – a pace stick. *[The upper photo on the front cover shows the parade of the standards of veterans organisations represented at the ceremony and the lower photo shows Eric with his new pace stick together with Les Allan. The photo below shows Ken Brown and Allan Purcell, the two project officers – Ed]*



Les Continues; "The ceremony opened with a speech from General Cooper, O.C. UK Armoured Brigade, followed by speeches from Herr Heinrich Baumann, District Commissioner of Oerbke, Mr Ken Brown who was responsible for collecting funds in the UK with which to build the memorial and finally myself. The curtains covering the bronze plaque on the right wall were opened by a young lady, after which wreaths were laid. After the ceremony was concluded the VIPs and guests due to the very pleasant weather were very slow in dispersing, thus giving more time to answer the many questions from TV crews and also to examine the museum exhibits collected by Kevin Greenlagh, Germany Guard Service. Kevin is an associate member of our association. After the ceremony we went back to the Sergeants Mess where we were ushered into a moderate sized room to find an excellent buffet had been set up. After the buffet preparations were put in hand to finish off the evening with a dance and by the time the evening closed I would venture to suggest that the Ladies in conjunction with the sergeants wives had danced the poor sergeants off their feet.

"In between the dances one of our wall plaques was presented to the Sergeants Mess by our Standard Bearer Gary and a picture of the 'Last Ordeal' by myself. It is worthy to note that less than half an hour after Gary presented the plaque I was taken into the Sergeants Mess, where in that very short time the plaque already enjoyed pride of place over the bar. The evening came to an end and very reluctantly we bade farewell and retired to the sleeping quarters. The next morning after an excellent breakfast our party was escorted back to Hannover airport. Before we boarded the minibus Allan asked me if we would be going back next year. My answer was 'we certainly will'. Allan then said to make me feel more at home he would arrange for a bed of straw. My reply? 'All here now is so clinically clean in comparison to 1945 that I fear you will have difficulty finding the bugs and lice to keep me really warm.' With sincere hand shakes and thanks for all his hard and dedicated work involved in the building of this superb memorial, we bade farewell." PS Ken and Allan have acquired a building which will be used as a visitors centre, but still need funding to move it to the site. So if you have any spare money or have won the lottery please contact Ken Brown at 25 Beechcroft Road, Ipswich IP1 6BA. They have applied to the lottery fund but they will not give money to overseas projects. (Or Veterans organisations such as ours – Ed!)

**SURREY 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY.** Canon Peter Bruinvels, the RBL County Field Officer for Surrey tells us that a Special Service will take place in Guildford Cathedral at 3pm on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The week prior to this will be designated 'Veterans Awareness Week' and there will be a special Veterans Awareness Race Day organised by the Surrey RBL on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> July at Lingfield Park. If you live nearby you might like to attend.



**SPRING 2005 NEWSLETTER.** The picture on the front cover of the last newsletter brought back memories for many of our members, recalling their travels with the German railway system. The picture was kindly lent to us by Raymond Williams and it was one of the illustrations from his book 'The long road from Leros'. Taken prisoner on Leros, one of the Greek islands, Ray tells about his capture, life in Stalags 7A, 17A and 8A as well as the forced march at the end of the war from Gorlitz to Halberstadt.

**REUNION UPDATE.** The annual reunion will take place at Warners Holiday Village, Hayling Island as usual, between Friday 7<sup>th</sup> and Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Although the cut off date for tickets has now passed, if you would like to attend please contact our Treasurer Mrs Freda Moores at 17 Wallace Close, Marlow, Bucks SL7 1TY. Tel 01628-473832. Places may become available if we have a cancellation.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION.** The annual subscription for members of the association was due on 1<sup>st</sup> January. Members will receive four quarterly newsletters during 2005 plus the annual Journal. The cost has remained the same over the years and we plan to keep it so for 2005. The annual subscription for full members who were prisoners of war is £5, with the exception of those living overseas who are asked to pay £10 to cover the extra cost of airmail postage. Associate membership is available to family members at £10 for the year. Please send your cheques, made out to NEXPOWA, together with your membership cards, to Les Allan at 99, Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. Anyone joining us during the year will receive the back issues they have missed.

**NEW MEMBERS.** We would like to welcome the following new members to the association: Associates Mr Brian Hilton whose father was a resident of Campo 59 at Servigliano, Dr Richard Wynne whose father was Lt T.A.W. Wynne, Mr Brian Mitchell whose father served with 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Warwickshire Regiment, Mr James Hayworth and Mrs Barbara Watson the daughter and grandson of Gordon Watson who fell in the bag in Greece.

**STAMPS.** Always appreciated by the scribes. If you have any spare please send them in. Many thanks to Deirdre Naylor who also sent in the photo below. The man at the left hand end of the rear row is her father William Kelly of the 1/8<sup>th</sup> Lancashire Fusiliers. In the photo we believe is also L/Cpl M Dempsey of the Black Watch. The men were registered to Stalag 8B arbeits kommando E103/101.

**GERMAN POW RECORD CARDS.** These were recovered at the end of the war and now reside with the Veterans Agency at Tomlinson House, Norcross, Blackpool, Lancs FY5 3WP. Mr Derek Montgomery in the customer service office (Room 6129) can arrange for photocopies of the cards to be sent to you. His phone number is 01253-333600. To obtain a copy of someones **Military Service Record**, you will either need to be that person or his next of kin. Contact the Army Personnel Centre, HQ Secretariat, Historical Disclosures, Mail Point 400, Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street, Glasgow G2 8EX. Tel 0141-224-3303/2023. Last but not least, after decades of waiting the Ministry of Defence has finally released the liberation/interrogation reports that many returning prisoners of war completed in 1945. These contain all sorts of interesting information. They can be found in the National Archives, Ruskin Avenue, Kew, Surrey TW9 4DU. Tel 0208-392-5200. Take your passport if you visit the place, in order to obtain a readers ticket to access the files.

**NORTH-EAST BRANCH TRAVELS.** Mrs Betty Herschel has sent in a report on their 'Heroes Return' trip to France and Belgium. "The coach company said they could give us a good deal but we needed 40 members to travel. By chance I mentioned this at my ATS meeting and was amazed to find that five of the girls were thinking of going out to France and Belgium as they had served in Ack Ack batteries there during the war. We went out at the end of August for five nights. We had several ex-POWs with their carers and five widows whose husbands had been POWs and of course the girls from the ATS. My son George planned the whole trip and apart from getting lost a few times we had a marvellous time. Our first visit was to a civilian cemetery at Wormhoudt. In the corner is a war graves commission site and one of our friends, Mr Brian O'Neil was able to visit what he believes is his fathers grave. He died before Brian was born. We then went up to the Dunkirk Memorial where we laid a wreath to Ex-POWs and the Black Watch Tyneside Scottish.

"The following day we travelled down to Arras where we visited the war graves in the city. This site is very impressive, we then went on to visit a small cemetery at Fichaux and the grave of the brother of one of our friends Mrs Molly Collender. We brought Molly with us a couple of years ago, but she was unable to attend this time. Also in this cemetery is the grave of R Chambers whose son lives in Newcastle. We were able to lay a wreath at his grave and took some photos of the ceremony. They were posted to Mr Chambers and as luck would have it he received them on his birthday. We then moved on to Vimy Ridge where my husband Stan took cover before they tried to get back to Dunkirk. However he was captured and taken to Lille. The Vimy Ridge memorial is a Canadian memorial and while we were there we met the Canadian minister for veterans affairs and we had a good chat with her and it really made our day.

"In the evening we went to Ypres for the last post ceremony and we were invited to lay wreaths on behalf of our association and the ATS and Black Watch. This is usually a very moving ceremony. We then had some free time to visit Brugge and Ostend as some of the ATS girls were stationed at Ostend during the war. However it did not stop two of them getting lost!"

**DONATIONS.** We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to the welfare fund. All donations whether large or small are gratefully received. Bill Baird £5, J Baker £100, Air Vice Marshal Barry H Newton CB, CVO, OBE £20, Col D H Bristow £5, Richard F Budd £5, Walter Clasper £5, T P Collins £25, W S Crighton £15, K Fuller £5, Mrs Janet Gosling £10, P M Harrison £10, James Heyworth £10, Joyce Isherwood £25, Doug Johnson £15, Mr Keith Killby £20, Mrs D Lamisong £5, R Melhuish £5, Stewart Miskimmin £15, Gary Moor £10, Arthur Roebuck £5, W Saunders £5, Frank Shatliffe £10, Anna R Skipper £5, Mrs P Smith £10, Mrs Barbara Watson £50, J W Wetton £5, George Wilson £5, Clifford Winser £5, E C Wright £10.

Just as we went to press we received a very generous donation of £1000 from Mr John Hardy, raised from the proceeds of his book 'By The Green of the Spring'. We will of course review the book in the Autumn newsletter, but in the meantime we would like to say a very hearty **Thank you** to Mr Hardy.

**FRANCO BAGLIONI TRUST.** New associate member Brian Hilton informs us that he has founded the Franco Baglioni Trust in honour of his father 'Franco' a young paratrooper who was adopted by the Baglioni family in Servigliano in March 1943 and whose ashes now lie in the family crypt at Servigliano cemetery. The Trust has been established to raise funds for those in the local Italian region who may be suffering severe physical disabilities. If you would like to contribute Brian can be contacted at 16 The Eye, Barrier Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4SD. Tel 01634-817559.

## **WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

Jocelyn Jones, would like to hear from anyone who was resident in Stalag XIB Fallingbostel, especially if you knew her father Vic Read who was taken prisoner at Arnhem with 3 Para, J Section Signals.

Stewart Miskimmin, 54 Minster Road, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1SR would like to hear from anyone who served with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Royal Scots Fusiliers who were a part of the rearguard at Dunkirk, or anyone who knew his father Robert Smith Miskimmin who was taken prisoner south of Ypres and was a resident of Stalag 20A Thorn.

Mrs P A Smith, 1 Rocks Cottages, Burwash, Sussex, TW19 7HN would like to hear from anyone who knew her father Alan Percival Boddington of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Taken prisoner at St Valery Alan was a resident of Stalag 21.

Miss Ann Stevenson, 130 Whalley Road, Read, Nr Burnley, Lancs BB12 7PN would like to hear from anyone who knew her father L/Cpl Ronald Stevenson of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Royal Tank Regiment. He was captured in Greece on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1941 and was a resident of arbeits kommando 236/L registered to Stalag 18A in Austria. The farm was near Graz and/or Hohentauern.

Mr Earle Sandilands, Williamstown, Ontario, Canada K0C 2J0 (email address [Glenbrook@webtv.net](mailto:Glenbrook@webtv.net)) is seeking information on F/Lt. G.H.Tulloch who served with R.A.F. Bomber Command during WW2. He was a close friend of a Canadian P.O. J.C. MacGillivray who was lost over Berlin on 20/1/44 . The MacGillivray family would like to contact F/Lt. Tulloch and any information would be much appreciated.

Mr W Saunders, 2 Penmere Road, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 3PE would like to hear from anyone who worked with him at the milk factory just outside Marienburg. Known by the nickname 'Trotter' he spent some years there with 60 other POWs.



Photo above sent in by David Welch. Can anyone recognise the location? Alf Welch his father can be seen immediately behind the man standing in the front row, 6<sup>th</sup> from the right.

Mr Brian R Mitchell, 127 Watlington Street, Grendon, Nr Atherstone, Warks CV9 2PH would like to hear from anyone who knew his uncle, Private Walter Chetwynd Mitchell who was taken prisoner during the rearguard fighting outside Dunkirk. He was serving with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was sent to Stalag 20B at Marienburg where he died on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1941 aged 23. If you were in the camp between March and October 1941 or knew Walter, Brian would like to hear from you.

Mrs Barbara Watson, 27 Willaston Avenue, Blacko, Nelson, Lancs BB9 6LU would like to hear from anyone who knew her father Gordon, a gunner in 155 Battery of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment. Wounded and taken prisoner on Crete, Gordon was a resident of Stalag 383.

Member Rod Arnold would like to hear from anyone who may have known his father Arthur Arnold. He served in 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Warwickshires and was captured in May 1940 at the Ypres-Comines Canal. He was moved from Trier to Stalag 20A then to Stalag 20B and spent time on farm working parties at Elbing, Danzig and Stolzenburg including the 'Karthaus' working party. He came from Birmingham and was known to his fellow POWs as 'Brum'.

Mr Richard Powell, The Old Church School, Talaton, Devon EX5 2RQ would like to hear from anyone who may have known his father Cpl Denis Powell of 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

Member Barry Jackson was a Sgt in the Glider Pilot Regiment who fell in the bag at Arnhem and took up residence at **Stalag 8C Sagan**. If you were also at Sagan he would like to hear from you at Landview, Bratton Fleming, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4TJ.

We have received a request from Susan Balfour at the British Red Cross concerning the Hotel Bristol in Chianciano, near Siena, Italy. She has been contacted by Carla Casagni whose father worked at the hotel and he made friends with some British prisoners who were held at the hotel in 1940. The group was kept under surveillance by the Police and their records note that on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1940 there was a telephone conversation between 'E.T.Max Simon-Eberhard and his wife Enrica Eisenhach.' Possibly he was one of the prisoners. Can anyone shed any light on this group of men? There is also a memorial nearby bearing the names of Lt Col Guy A D Taylor, the CO of 1<sup>st</sup> Bn Scots Guards and from 2<sup>nd</sup> Bn Coldstream Guards Captain The Honourable William H Vestey and Guardsmen William McLeod, Leslie Howard, Leonard Bean and William Cox. They are presumed to have been killed during fighting in the area. The hotel is shown opposite;

### **HISTORIANS NEWS.**

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**Contact Mr Phil Chinnery, 10 Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.**

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I have acquired at auction copies of the hard to find books 'Backwater – Oflag 9A/H' printed in 1944 and 'Interlude – the story of Stalag 8A Gorlitz' printed in 1945 as well as 'As you were' a caricaturists anthology of Oflags 7C/H, 6B and 9A/Z. I already have copies of these books in our archives, so I will be offering them to members at the price that I paid for them. Please drop me a line if you are interested.

**Photo** below shows the 1942-43 boxing team of arbeits kommando E25 from Stalag 8B. The back of the photo is marked E479 and was sent to us by the family of L/Cpl Ron Clark who is shown standing at the left hand end back row of the second photo, which is also marked as E479. Both pictures appear to be taken in a quarry.



Lance Corporal Ron Clark was called up in December 1939 and joined the RASC 'C' section of 7 Division as a despatch rider and trained at Moreton In The Marsh and Chesterfield before embarking for France. The war ended for him around 21<sup>st</sup> May 1940 when he was wounded at Etaples. He was apparently going there from Boulogne to tell the men to pull back to Boulogne. After some time he was taken in the back of a lorry to hospital in Cambrai. He knew it was a lorry because when he opened his eyes he could see the tree tops on the road side. He was badly wounded in the leg and having had no treatment he was not too good. He was in Cambrai until 31<sup>st</sup> January 1940 when he was transferred to Stalag 8B. He worked in arbeit commando E25 from 24<sup>th</sup> February 1941 until he was moved on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1943 to E578 at Peiskretscham. On 27<sup>th</sup> September he was moved to E479 at Tarnowitz. It is believed that he escaped with nine others and was picked up by Mongolians in the Russian army who gave them worse treatment than the Germans. Eventually he returned home via Odessa on the Duchess of Richmond, sailing on 27<sup>th</sup> March 1945.

**Request from Association Historian.** I am always looking for stories, anecdotes or photographs for our newsletter. I am also the keeper of our archives. Members may have sons or daughters to whom they can bequeath memorabilia, letters, photos etc. On the other hand you may not and if so it would be a shame to see these items consigned to the dustbin one day. If you would like to ensure the long-term safe keeping of such items you might consider sending them in to us. If the day comes when we close down the association we will pass on the archives to the Imperial War Museum. We still have the dream of having our own prisoner of war museum some time in the future, in which case the archives will be available to the public then. If you win the lottery and do not know what to do with the money, give a thought to our museum fund!

**QUARTERMASTERS STORES.** The following items can be ordered direct from our Treasurer Mrs Freda Moores at 17, Wallace Close, Marlow, Bucks SL7 1TY. Tel 01628-473832. They will also be on sale at the reunion in October. Support your association and purchase something!

Wall Plaque	£27	Tie tack with chain	£4.95	Nexpowa blazer badge	£10
Cap badge	£3.50	Full member lapel badge	£4.00	Tie clips	£6.95
Nexpowa tie	£10	Associate member lapel badge	£4.00	Pens with logo	£0.60
Cuff links	£9.95	Small pocket diary 2005	£1.25	Large pocket diary 2005	£1.75
Nexpowa car sticker	£5	Nexpowa souvenir spoon	£6.95		

Photo above; OFFICERS FROM OFLAG 4C COLDITZ 1941. Left to right front row; Lt Teddy Barton RASC, Capt P R Reid, Capt Dick Howe RTC. Second row; Flt Officer Keith Milne Canadian, Padre Platt, Col Guy German Leicestershire, Capt Harry Elliott Irish Guards, Capt Rupert Barry Light Infantry. Back row; Lt 'Peter' Allan Camerons, Flt Officer Don Middleton Canadian, Flt Officer Howard Wardle Canadian, Lt Tommy Elliott

Northumberland Fusiliers, Padre Heard, Lt Peter Pugh West Kents, Padre Hobling, Lt Geoffrey Wardle Royal Navy, Capt Kenneth Lockwood QRR.

**A SERGEANTS STORY.** Sgt Walter Lively's story begins with the fall of Tobruk in 1942. A member of the Royal Signals he escaped with his Corporal Charlie Marsh and a Signalman by the name of Charlton. Sometimes walking along the beach and sometimes swimming towards Bardia they got clear of the area. Eventually they spotted an abandoned officers lorry, which contained a huge jar of brandy. By that time their water bottles were empty and they refilled them with the contents of the jar. Walter continues;

"After a few days we spotted an oasis about half a mile inland. My two colleagues wanted to go for water, but I advised them that water was scarce and that the Germans would be there and they would be made POWs. However, they insisted that they would go and refill our bottles. After tossing a coin Charlie lost the toss and he set off for the Oasis. When he was a few hundred yards away we heard a gun shot and from our position lying in the desert scrub we saw Charlie fall. About ten minutes after this a truck came towards our position. It became obvious to me that three water bottles meant that there were two other people present and the truck went backwards and forwards looking for us. Fortunately by this time we had dug two holes in the sand and buried ourselves completely and they did not spot us. When night fell we walked as fast as we could and were ten miles further along the North African coast by morning.

"To our surprise we found a plot of melons and started to tuck-in to them. As we did so an arab man appeared and with my limited arabic I got him to understand that we were trying to join our British units. He informed me that they were at least a hundred miles away! He said that he knew of a cave where we could stay and offered to bring us water and rice on a daily basis. This he did and after staying in the cave for about a week he took us to an Italian ammo and food dump at night. To our delight we found boxes of tins of tunnie fish and carried as many as we could manage back to our cave.

"About a week later, despite my instructions to Charlton not to go out of the cave in daylight and while I was asleep, I was awakened by machine gun fire, whereupon Charlton came running back to the cave. This was followed by a lorry arriving at the cave entrance and a concussion grenade was thrown in to us. We were both knocked out and when we came to we were tied with rope across our ankles and wrists. We were POWs! Our captors were Algerians in Italian uniforms. We eventually ended up in a POW camp in Sulmona, about 40 miles north east of Rome.

"After about two months in this camp a notice appeared on the camp notice board informing us the camp was closing and we were to be moved in groups to various other camps. We were told to bring one blanket plus our belonging on the checking parade the following morning. However, that evening one of our Royal Signals CSM's came round the huts and asked if there were any Royal Corps of Signals men here. In our hut about six or seven of us put our hands up and he suggested that it would be a good idea if the Signals lads kept together and would we assemble in the north east corner of the compound after the morning check parade. This we did and were joined by men from other compounds, there were about 40 of us, when suddenly, a small section of German troops, armed with hand guns surrounded us, forced us to form up in twos and quick marched us to the camp exit where two lorries were awaiting. We were told to get on board and these vehicles took us to the local train station, where one carriage had been made ready for us.

"We were taken to Rome where we were marched around the streets for about an hour with women throwing eggs, tomatoes and spittle at us, after which we were taken back to the rail station and put back into our carriage. Next stop was Stalag 7A at Moosberg! By this time, I had concluded we were to be interrogated, maybe to find out what signal codes we were operating. At this time I spoke fairly fluent German. I decided not to let the interrogators know this. They spoke to me in German, but I said 'I speak English, I don't understand you, please speak to me in English.' I was to learn that our own CSM was on their side and had tricked us at the Sulmona camp, he was no-where to be seen. What I also learnt was that the interrogation was all about radar, they wanted information about it.

"The fact that I told them I could not understand German paid off, because in between questions they spoke to one-another in German and I knew what the next question was going to be. They got nothing because we were attached to armoured divisions or infantry, the boys that operated radar were not front line troops. We were subsequently returned to Sulmona via a working camp in Munich where we spent a couple of nights.

"On or about the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> of September 1943 we learned that Italy had asked for peace! We got this information from lads in the working camp who were road sweepers and one of them had access to a German girls wireless where he daily tuned into the BBC Overseas Service! Italy had agreed to declare war on Germany as part of the peace deal!

"Subsequently we awoke one morning to find that all the camp guards had disappeared! I and a friend named Ken Wood left the camp and went into the Appenine Mountains and started a long walk to Regio Calabria where we thought the allies had landed. We fed like lords, after each evening coming down the mountain side where there were grapes and tomatoes in plenty. We also stole a few chickens which we roasted over our fire.

"After many days we eventually got to the ankle of the boot of Italy, with Bari on our left and Napoli on our right. Since the gunfire was still slightly ahead of us we decided to stay put until the Allies had advanced. This would save us the problem of going through German lines. We did not have long to wait and that evening the gunfire was behind us, so we descended to the lower slopes of the mountain where a squadron of British tanks were coming out of action to refuel and reload their ammo for the following day. As one of the tanks drew close to us I shouted to the Sergeant sitting in the turret and he said 'Who in the hell are you!?' We were in civilian clothes but he told us to jump on and we did.

"We reached their harbour area in an olive grove and I spotted a signal wireless car where a Sergeant was writing his section positions on a map. His name was Stan Cressy, an old friend of mine from Catterick Camp in 1940. I poked him in the back and he drew his pistol and told me in no uncertain terms to \*\*\*\* off! Not only was I in civvys but I had a beard so he did not recognise me. When I told him who I was he got on to the wireless and told all his sections that 'Wally Lively had turned up dressed in civvys!' It was my old unit and within minutes there were a dozen jeeps lined up. After reporting to Major Betts I was given a new set of clothes and that evening we had one hell of a party!" Wally eventually returned to England and found himself in Germany again after D-Day. When the war ended he was close to the Polish border and with his fluent German he was seconded to the Military Government. He was given the job of visiting all the farmers in the area and confiscating all their firearms. He was eventually demobbed in April 1946.

**STALAG 4B ASSOCIATION REUNION.** The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion of the liberation of Stalag 4B was held in The Moat House Hotel, Peterborough on the weekend of 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> April 2005. Lew Parsons sent in this report; "We had an excellent reunion with 92 people attending, the most ever in the 8 years we have been going to Peterborough. Among the several guests we had Hannalore Brendel the former Burgermeisterin of Muhlberg, accompanied by four of her compatriots from the Riesa area. We also had Charles Marshall, Chairman of the National Ex-Prisoner of War Association accompanied by Mrs Marshall. Charles was in Hut 34B. Among those attending were 23 ex-Kriegies with their wives, 8 widows and several sons and daughters, together with a number of friends. Unfortunately Wally and Maxine Gaterman were unable to come this year from the USA, but together with other old friends from at home and New Zealand and Canada they sent their best wishes.

"Among the first-timers at Peterborough we welcomed George Harper with Mrs Harper and their son Chris and his wife. George was captured on the island of Kos in 1942. We also had Paul and Alison Forden; Graham and Cynthia Howard; Lofty Snell's son Richard and grandson Andrew; also Doug Gillams grandson Alex, a serving RAF Sergeant on Nimrod aircraft flying from Kinross. All were backed up by our old stalwarts.

"We started off the reunion with an excellent display board, 7 feet high and 7 feet wide, provided through the good offices of and erected in the foyer of the hotel by our friend Lt.Col Edward Waite-Roberts. The board depicted the main gate of Stalag 4B in the centre surrounded by photographs of some of the inhabitants and scenes inside the camp. Later Edward gave 12-inch square Photostat copies of the display to members.

"Photographs were taken when we went in the dining hall, for sale later in the evening. Thanks to Martin Bird Photography we include one below. Tony Drewitt did a great job of Master of Ceremonies for the evening and started the proceedings before the dinner, with a video display on a large screen of the meeting of the Americans and Russians at Torgau, just up the river Elbe from Muhlberg. He followed this with a telephone link with Olivia Hopper in Muhlberg played over speakers around the dining hall so that all could hear the conversation and while this was in progress we had a video display of the camp in Muhlberg as it is now.

"After an excellent dinner we had the loyal toast to The Queen and then toasted Absent Friends. We were then treated to Harry Drewitt singing a song, followed by Alexandra, Helena and Charles Waite-Roberts giving us a very entertaining individual song and dance routine and our friends Bill Rae and Nat Hoffman, the 'only Scottish Jew in captivity' did some of their Empire Theatre jokes. Yes, they were the same jokes too, matured with age of course!

"The raffle was a great success with a lot of prizes kindly donated by those attending and brought in the magnificent sum of £300 for our funds. This was added to by the generous contribution by Peter Liddle for the auction of his frame line drawing of Stalag 4B which brought in further £65. At the end of the evening it was quite apparent that everyone had enjoyed a good reunion and we all retired to bed well pleased.

"On Sunday morning at 10am we met again for a short church service conducted by our association chaplain Reverend Michael Whelton. This was well attended and was followed by a meeting to discuss the proposal by Mac White that we should disband the Stalag 4B Ex-POW Association and reform with a new group called Friends of Stalag 4B Ex-POW Association. Fortunately Tony Drewitt and Lt.Col Edward Waite-Roberts have agreed to pick up the reins and the new group will continue."

Photo above, attendees at the Stalag 4B reunion. Unfortunately we did not receive a caption for the photo, so if you are in the picture please let us know where you are and we will include a list in the next newsletter. We have identified our Chairman Chas Marshall as 6<sup>th</sup> from the right in the front row.

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**OBITUARIES.** We regret to report that Major James 'Jimmy' Howe passed away at home on 16<sup>th</sup> March after a long illness. He will be sadly missed by his wife Peggy and children Kate, Alan and Stephen and all those whose lives he touched.

Mr R A Morse of Swindon, Wilts passed away in October. Mr James McEwan died on 16<sup>th</sup> April in Edinburgh. He was the author of 'The Remorseless Road' an account of his time with the Japanese.



**Betty Herschel**, Newcastle Branch Secretary/Treasurer reports that **Mr W (Bill) Howstan** (photo above) passed away just after Christmas. Betty tells us that "Bill was in the Black Watch Tyneside Scottish and was an active member of the Newcastle branch. He had been back to France/Belgium with our group 5 times. Recently, through the Heroes Return we took 38 members/widows for 5 days laying wreaths at Ypres, Dunkirk, Arras, Vimy Ridge (where we were met by the Canadian Minister for Veterans Affairs), Fichaux and of course Tyne Cot. We may be able to secure funding from a Newcastle charity that will enable our group to return yet again to France/ Belgium in September this year. We have been using the same hotel on all our visits so with her good rates we should be able to travel out again. The hotel is an old Abbey owned by Anny, called the 'Oude Abdij' at Lorenninge, Belgium. It is only 14 miles from Ypres and 45 minutes by car from Calais. She has had lots of ex servicemens groups staying and from her comments book all of them enjoy their stay. Its a lovely place to visit and ideal for visits to all war grave sites."

**HAYWARDS HEATH DO.** Fred and Jean Goddard organised a social evening on 23<sup>rd</sup> April at the St Francis Social Club, The Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the end of the war. The guest of honour was Dame Vera Lynn and President Les Allan and other committee members attended. The evening was well supported and everyone had a good time singing, dancing and eating the buffet supplied. The event also raised a staggering £1,100 for the association welfare fund. Thank you and well done Fred and Jean.

Photo below; Second from left Fred Goddard, President Les Allan, Patron Dame Vera Lynn, Standard Bearer Gary Moores, and at the right hand end Eric Reeves. Our apologies for not naming the others in the picture. If you would like to drop us a line with your names we will include them in the next newsletter.

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

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