

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Winter 2000 Newsletter

"I would like to wish all members of the Association a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"

From Les Allan, President & Hon Gen Sec and Founder of the National Ex-Prisoner of War Association.

COMPENSATION LATEST.

Further to the compensation issue mentioned on page 3 of the Autumn Newsletter. I have just received a letter from the International Organisation for Migration who are handling the claims against the New German Fund. They tell me that "POWs may be eligible for compensation if they were either discharged as a POW or were sent or transferred to a concentration camp." They also urge potential claimants to file if, as a POW, "they were sent to a ghetto, or another place of confinement, where they were subjected to inhumane conditions, insufficient nutrition and/or lack of medical care." If any member believes that he might come under that heading, please write to them and request a claim form. Write to the IOM, 26 Westminster Palace Gardens, Artillery Row, London SW1P 1RR. Tel. 0207-233-0001.

FEPOW COMPENSATION.

The War Pensions Agency is handling the claims for the £10,000 compensation awarded to Far East prisoners of war or their widows. Copies of the claim form and WPA leaflet 12 can be obtained from the War Pensions Agency via their free help line on 0800-169-2277.

Our Association is currently pursuing the refunding of money due to protected personnel such as doctors and medics. We will also be pressing for a similar compensation payment to that awarded to the FEPOWs, in view of the treatment accorded to prisoners of the Nazis.

NEW MEMBERS.

We would like to welcome Mrs Marjorie G Peachey (Associate) wife of the late Don Peachey, RAF 7 Squadron. Mr Andrew Lister taken prisoner at St Valery while serving with the Seaforth Highlanders. Mr Malcolm Morecroft (Associate) son of Private William Frederick Morecroft of The Buffs. Mrs Jacky Kingsley (Associate), daughter of William Hotston of 98th Field Regiment, Sussex Yeomanry. Mr Arthur Smith, of the Royal Engineers, a former resident of Stalag 20B. Mr Terence Kelly, Far East POW and author. Mr Graham Bailey, who served with the Glosters and is a former guest of the Chinese and North Korean Communists. Mr Stuart Brian, son of Stanley Brian Hailes of 3 Commando.

OBITUARIES.

We regret to report the passing away of Mr Thomas Graham of Woolwich on 15th November 1999. Mr Harry Price on 12th September 2000. Mr John Sorsby. Mr Don Luckett. Mr Walter Parrott on 18th September 2000. Members may recall his work in the theatre at Lamsdorf.

DONATIONS to WELFARE FUND.

We would like to thank the following for their donations to the association welfare fund; Mrs Goddard, High Wycombe Red Cross Centre; Mrs Marshall, Cheersley Womens Institute; Mrs M Trotman, Coles Hill Womens Institute. DONATIONS to FALLINGBOSTEL MEMORIAL FUND. £5 from Mr Geoff Bryden. £100 from Mr George Marsden. £200 from Devon and Cornwall Branch. £5 from Mr Scott Howes. All donations gratefully received.

WEBSITE.

The association now has its own website. If you or your family or friends possess a computer hooked up to the internet the address is as follows: <http://prisonerofwar.org.uk>. To contact me via 'The Web' my new personal address is PHIL@chinnery49.fsnet.co.uk The website contains details of how to contact us plus an advert for the annual reunion. Viewers can also read a shortened version of the latest newsletter and reviews of various books on POW subjects. As time goes by we will expand and improve the website and any suggestions would be welcome.

STAMPS PLEASE.

We would also welcome help with our high postal costs, whether it be a couple of stamps sent in with a letter, or a cheque for a couple of pounds made out to Post Office Counters. We try to reply to all members letters, sent in with our without stamped addressed envelopes. We also respond to enquiries from relatives of former prisoners of war, TV research companies, military museums, regimental associations and others. We are also planning a campaign for compensation, similar to that fought by the FEPOWs and that will increase our mailing costs even more. If you can help, please do.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FOR 2001.

Yes friends, its that time again to renew your subscription to Headquarters Branch. As you know we have formed the branch to provide newsletters and a means of contact to former prisoners of war and their relatives. We consider this to be an important welfare project as many ex-Kriegies live far away from their comrades, but would still like to remain in contact and keep up with the news. It is also a good way to keep up to date on the possible compensation situation, whether you were 'protected personnel,' a concentration camp inmate or part of the general Kriegie population. Associate members are also welcome to join us, to discover 'what Dad or Grandad did in the war' or to try to find old friends who shared his experiences. THE MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION REMAINS THE SAME AS LAST YEAR. That is £5 for former prisoners of war who live in the United Kingdom and £10 for those living overseas. Associate membership is £10. This subscription will cover you from 1st January 2001 to 1st January 2002. We will probably produce three newsletters during 2001 rather than four, so as to avoid clashing with the Autumn publication of the Annual Journal.

PLEASE SEND YOUR MEMBERSHIP CARDS TOGETHER WITH RENEWAL CHEQUE (Made out to NEXPOWA) to Mr Les Allan, Hon Gen Sec, at 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. The card will be signed and returned to you.

A comment from Phil Chinnery, Newsletter Editor. "This is your newsletter, produced for your benefit and containing (I hope!) items that may be of interest to you. Please support your newsletter by sending in your subscription, letters, articles etc. If you do not, we will have to close it down and Les and I will have to spend our time sitting in the pub or watching TV. And we would not want to do that....."

NEW YEAR RAFFLE.

To help support the funding of our newsletter we are holding a raffle. The prizes are 20 books that have been kindly donated by authors whose work we have reviewed in the newsletter over the last couple of years. The books include the following and most have been signed by the authors;

Ian Bell No place to hide

Ian Bell And strength was given

Pauline Bevan Travels with a Leros Veteran

Terence Kelly Living with Japanese (2 copies)

Ralph Churches A hundred miles as the crow flies

James McEwan The remorseless road

William Harding A cockney soldier

Brian Kitching Life and death in Changi

Philip Chinnery March or die (3 copies)

Gris Davies-Scourfield In presence of my foes

Cyril Poffley Remembering my twentieth century

Fred Hirst A green hill far away

Edward Lyme Soldier in the circus

Robert Calvey Name, rank and number

Martin Smith What a bloody arrival plus others still enroute to us.

How to obtain raffle tickets? The tickets are 25p each. When you send in your membership card and subscription (which is due 1st January 2001) simply add extra to cover the number of tickets you require. If you want eight tickets, just send in a cheque for £7 (£5 for the years subscription and £2 for the tickets). Your tickets will be sent to you with your membership card. A record will be kept of your ticket numbers. When will the prizes be drawn? We will ask our Treasurer Lt Col Tom Jagger to pick out the winning tickets at the end of January and the prizes will be sent to the winners by first class post. A list of winners and winning numbers will be included in the Spring Newsletter. So support your newsletter and try and win yourself a potential collectors item! Talking of which, read on;

ANTIQUES ROADSHOW.

Did anyone see the programme on 11th November? It was filmed at Wisbeach, Cambridgeshire and included a brief appearance of former prisoner of war Trooper Herbert Jackson of the Royal Armoured Corps. Prisoner of War number 1250, he was taken prisoner in Greece and was resident in Stalag 18A Wolfsberg. He took along to the roadshow a copy of Adolfs book 'Mein Kampf' which he had acquired in Austria. If anyone comes across Herbert, can you give him a membership form!

QUARTERMASTERS STORES.

Our Quartermaster Mr C F Jago, MBE has the following association goods in stock. All items bear the association logo, except pens which have the association name. Please send your orders direct to him at 63, Norfolk Road, West Harnham, Salisbury SP2 8HQ.

Wall Plaque £24 plus £2 p&p

National tie £10 p&p included

Blazer badge £10 p&p included

Lapel badge £4 p&p included

Associate badge £4 p&p included

Car sticker £5 p&p included

Sew/iron on badge £3.50 p&p included

Cuff links £4.50 p&p included

Diary Large £1.30 p&p included Planoramic Various colours

Diary Small £0.70 p&p included Various colours

Pens Named £0.40 p&p 26p for two

Ladies Brooch £10.00 p&p included

Please make cheques out to National Ex-Prisoner of War Association. All items will be sent by return of post whenever possible.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

If anyone can help with the following queries, would they please contact the newsletter editor Mr Philip Chinnery at 10, Lambert Avenue, Langley, Berkshire SL3 7EB.

Mr Stuart Brian of Clacton-on-sea would like to contact anyone who knew his father L/Cpl Stanley Brian Hailes who was taken prisoner 19th August 1942 at Berneval with 3 Commando. Stan was a resident of Lamsdorf and was on working party E579.

Mrs Marjorie Peachey of London NW7 asks "My late husband was shot down in 1942 while returning from a bombing raid. Only three crew survived; my husband Don Peachey, air gunner; Sgt Merrill Bailey, the Canadian pilot and one other whose identity I do not know and would like to. The plane was a Stirling, number N3706 from 7 Squadron. I know nothing of the other crew members who sadly died."

Associate member Malcolm Morecroft of Maidstone would like to contact anyone who knew his late father Private William Frederick Morecroft of The Buffs. William was captured at Dunkirk and was sent to Stalag XXA and later transferred to Stalag IV D/Z Heilag, being repatriated via Barcelona in May 1944.

Mr D H Bond of Midhurst would like to hear from any other member who spent time in work camp E715 Auschwitz. See also the item regarding compensation above. Ed.

Can anyone help Mrs Jacky Kingsley piece together her fathers time as a guest of the German Army? He is William (Pete) Hotston from the 98th Field Regiment, Sussex Yeomanry, Royal Artillery and a former resident of Stalag XXA Thorn. She asks; 1) Were you captured at Godewaersvelde (Godsville) on 28th May 1940? 2) 24 men from Stalag XXA Thorn were taken by train (possibly late 1942) to build a new Stalag in a very remote area. One of the builders was electrocuted. When it was put into use there were many POWs from the 51st Highland Division. It was next to a cemetery with a church in which one would-be escaped was buried. There was a civil prison for male internees who wore the striped uniform. Can anyone give me any details about the camp including its location? It is believed to be either Stalag 1A, 1B, 1C or 357. 3) Would anyone know the name of the German village where some men from Stalag XXA were liberated by two American tanks with coloured drivers from the valley barn?

Mr Arthur Smith was a Royal Engineer captured just outside Dunkirk. He was sent to Stalag 20B Marienburg and spent three years working at Reisenburg. He was a joiner and worked in the joiners shop making coffins for a Herr Lowe, the local funeral director. He also worked in a sugar beet factory. Arthur would like to hear from anyone who remembers him, or who can remember the route of the march to the west which began on 20th January 1945 when they left Reisenburg to march the 30kms to Faeystat.

Charlotte Hammond of Goring-by-sea would like to locate anyone who knew her Great Uncle Leslie Gordon Berkowitz who was last recorded at work camp PG146 and who also spent time at Campo 66 Capua. He was transferred to the Royal Ulster Rifles and posted to the 2nd Bn London Irish Rifles in June 1942. Captured 20th January 1943 he was presumed died on or after 5th October 1943 after escaping.

Mr Jim Sawyer of Norfolk would like to locate his old comrades from Lamsdorf/Working Party E750: Harry McGenn (Shap), Arthur ('Taffy' Davidge – London), Ron Young (Redcar), Alec McLeod (Dundee), 'Slim' Bridle (Harewood), Jimmy Pinkerton (Glasgow) and Stu Robertson (N.Z.)

Research Request. "I am researching a history of the campaign in North West Europe 1944/45 and wish to contact army veterans who were taken prisoner during this period. My intention is to produce a social history concentrating on the feelings and behaviour of men in captivity, and in particular the reaction to liberation. If you feel you could help, either by personal interview or by answering written questions, please contact Mr Sean Longden, 15 Carew Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 7RF."

Mr Scott Howes would like to hear from anyone attached to Stalag XXB Marienburg who worked on the state farm at Gross Waplitz. "There were 40 of us from September 1941 until 21st January 1945, when we were force marched across northern Germany, ending south-west of Berlin, Wittenberg where we were liberated by the Americans on 27th April 1945."

Research Request. "I am preparing a documentary film for BBC Wales and I would like to contact any Welsh prisoner of war who may have escaped from a prison camp and reached home safely. Would you please contact Kate Jones-Davies, Raw Charm Ltd, Ty-Cefn, Rectory Road, Cardiff CF5 1QL."

FOCUS ON ITALY.

For the troops taken prisoner in North Africa, prisoner of war camps in Italy awaited. Most of the prisoner of war camps and holding centres in North Africa were squalid affairs with the treatment by the Italian guards abysmal. Transportation onwards to Italy was also a hazardous affair. Rifleman George Coulson of the 2nd Bn, KRRC explained: "I was captured with the rest of my battalion by a German panzer division on 24th January 1942 at Agedabia. I left Tripoli on 13th February in a ship called the 'Ariarsil' together with 500 other prisoners, bound for Italy. Just off the coast of Morocco we were torpedoed about 2300 hours. The Italian crew left the ship and took to the boats. We were locked in the hold, but managed to break out and a large number of us immediately jumped into the water. Many of us remained on board until 0200 hours when the ship seemed to be breaking up. I then jumped into the water and clung to an old oil barrel. I was in the water about eight hours and was finally picked up by an Italian cruiser which had been sent to rescue us. In all, about 250 men were saved."

So what was captivity like in Italy? How did it compare to captivity in Germany? Guy Morgan gave his opinion in his 1945 book 'Only Ghosts can live'. He was wounded and captured by the Germans in a partisan fishing boat off the Dalmatian Island of Lussin on 13th November 1943. He was repatriated via Sweden in September 1944. "It may surprise many people that prisoners who experienced captivity under both Germans and Italians were unanimous in their preference for captivity in Germany. In Italy, a prisoner of war was always exposed to the pettiness, meanness, dishonesty, excitability or self-dramatisation, of individuals, and in a country where the general standards of hygiene and medical attention are so much below that of other civilised countries, the prisoner, with the best will in the world, gets a raw deal.

"True, the German scale of rations was much below that agreed under the Geneva Convention, but it was enough to support life and it always arrived, scrupulously measured to the last gram; in Italy rations, at whatever scale, were always uncertain. A prisoner prefers to know where he stands.

"The Germans too, were always at great pains to impress on their service prisoners their honesty in small matters, and it was a common belief in prisoner of war camps that cigarette parcels that failed to arrive were more likely lost on our own than on German railways. In Italy pilfering was the rule, in Germany it was the exception."

Jim Sawyer: "I was captured in June 1942 on the retreat to El Alamein. After a most uncomfortable time being transported by boat and truck, standing up all the time under the African sun, from Mersa Matruh, hundreds of miles along the North African coast via Tobruk, Derna, Brace, etc, I ended up in Benghazi Camp, an expanse of sand surrounded by barbed wire, occupied by what seemed like thousands of POWs. My mates and I spent the next 5 months there, living in the open with little cover, food or water, and practically non-existent medical and sanitary facilities. For much of the time it was the peak of the African summer and very hot.

"Eventually, we struggled down to the harbour in pretty poor condition and were packed into the hold of a cargo ship. For the hundred of us, this was to be home for the next fortnight, once again with a minimum of food or water – perhaps luckily, as sanitary arrangements were a few oil drums which were full to overflowing by the end of the first day and, as I recall, never emptied. The alternative to these drums was to queue up on a rope ladder to a hatch some 50 feet above, to be allowed out on deck one at a time. As many were suffering from dysentery and unable to control their bowels the resultant squalor can be imagined. On arrival in Italy, after a short stay in hospital in Taranto, I was sent to Campo PG65 Gravina, and after some months there, to Campo PG53 Macerata. I won't bother to go into details of my lice, flea and bug-ridden stay in Italian camps and my subsequent removal to Germany, but suffice to say that my time spent in Greater Germany was relatively speaking the most comfortable of my POW career." From Mr R V Allen "Campo 73 was a very large camp which was a bit of a quagmire in the winter, built on a clay field, which in summer huge cracks appeared in the ground."

Campo 12 Vincigliata, near Florence. Visited by Red Cross June 1943: "This camp for British Generals continues to be satisfactory. A few minor complaints were brought forward and settled on the spot. No British chaplain has yet visited the camp."

Campo 47 Modena. Visited by Red Cross June 1943: "There are over 1,000 officers here, and this camp is slightly overcrowded. Extra beds have been placed in the dormitories, and space is generally restricted. Electric light has been improved. Kitchen boilers were being repaired and water pressure made sufficient to prevent further burst. Cold showers can be had at any time, and warm showers twice weekly. Medical service is described as quite satisfactory. Dental treatment is given by two surgeons, but materials are lacking. The impression gained by the visiting delegates was that the camp had improved since the previous visit."

Campo 49 Reggio Nell, Emilia. Visited by Red Cross June 1943: "540 officers and other ranks are detained in a large new orphanage, a four storied stone-built house, standing on a plain, surrounded by fields and vineyards. The building is modern with up-to-date installations. The officers quarters are on the first and second floors. The interior arrangements are described as comfortable. Other ranks sleep in long dormitories and have their own mess room and common room. The building is spacious with marble staircases, tiled floors. Mail delays have been experienced owing to transfers from other camps. Kitchens are up to date and well equipped. The wood rations seems hardly sufficient. There are canteens for both officers and other ranks. Clothing conditions are on the whole satisfactory. Sanitary installations appear to be satisfactory, with ample water supply."

HOME RUN. Rifleman George Coulson at Campo 53. "About 9th September 1943 we heard that the armistice had been signed, but were forbidden to leave the camp on the orders of the SBO and the camp commandant, who told us that British troops would be arriving in a few days time. On 15th September the Italian sentries were withdrawn and about 3,000 men walked out of the camp. I went in a party of 6 with Corporal Ball and four others. We walked until 0300 hours the next day, when we slept in a vineyard. We then decided to split up and I continued south with Ball. I had with me a map I had made in the camp containing the names of the large towns, main roads and rivers we would have to cross on our journey and this proved of invaluable help to us.

We kept along the foot of the Gransasso mountain ridge and made our way to Lettomanopello which we reached about the middle of October. We found shelter with a farmer who was willing for us to remain with him until our troops arrived. While I was there, I met Lance-Sergeant Fraser, Scots Guards, and planned to reach our lines with him. Corporal Ball chose to remain behind. We left at the end of November dressed in civilian clothes provided by the farmer. We were arrested at Guardiagrele the next day by two German soldiers and taken to Chieti where we were placed in the old prisoner of war camp 21.

A few days later we escaped over a 14 foot wall by means of a ladder I had made from sections of the wooden beds in the camp, and returned to the farmer at Lettomanopello. I stayed with the farmer who had sheltered me previously, while Fraser found shelter elsewhere. While we were here we made a point of finding out as much information as we could about gun emplacements,

ammunition dumps etc. On 2nd March 1944 Fraser and I set out again. On the way we were stopped by German soldiers who asked for our papers, but we managed to bluff them into thinking that we were Italians and were allowed to go on. The next morning we reached the British lines near Casoli and were picked up by MP's of the Airborne troops. We were sent to Naples where we were interrogated at No 2 PWTC. We left Naples on the Highland Chieftain on 4th March and arrived in Liverpool on 17th March 1944."

MONTE SAN MARTINO TRUST.

In the autumn of 1989 the Trust legally came into being and was accepted by the Charity Commissioners. Its purpose is solely to grant Bursaries in Britain to young Italians to allow them to come to England to study English. The students are carefully selected and are chosen from the young relatives of the brave Italians who helped escaping prisoners of war. All of them risked their lives to feed and harbour the fugitives and many paid with their lives when the Germans or their Fascist helpers caught them. The Trust is trying in a small way to do something for the families who did so much for them in those dark days of 1943 and 1944. All the funds which have been generously given are spent to that purpose or carefully invested to ensure that the income can continue in future years to give such Bursaries in memory of the spontaneous generosity and courage of the Italian people in the most strange of circumstances. The only moneys spent by the Trust other than for School fees and accommodation for the students is for Auditors fees and third party insurance which the Trust was advised to take out. All other costs are met privately. If you would like to contribute to the Trust, please write to The Honorary Secretary, Flat 7, 18 Lambolle Road, London NW3 4HP. Registered Charity No 328352.

SAN MARTINO FREEDOM TRAIL.

WW2 escape lines researcher Roger Stanton has organised a walking trip in Italy that may be of interest to members. The challenge of the San Martino Freedom Trail will take place over the period 17-20 May 2001. It will be based on the town of Sulmona. Roger tells us that "A reconnaissance has now taken place with our main contacts in the Sulmona area. The event will take place in the Abruzzo and Maeilla National Parks, in some of the wildest and most beautiful country in Italy. The Abruzzo area has 261 communes, of which only 23 are below 1600 feet. It is the most completely mountainous area in the country. Due east of Rome and only 2 hours driving time, the park is the last major refuge in central Italy for the bear, wolf and Apennine Chamois. It is also a bird watchers paradise, which includes Golden Eagles. The flora in the area is rich in both Mediterranean and Alpine wild flowers which carpet the whole area.

The challenge is based on a route that will pass that will pass through former safe-house village areas where evaders and escapers were hidden on their way south from prison camps in Italy, to reach the Sangro River and freedom. The route has been chosen to pass through villages where many local people were executed for assisting escapers and evaders on the run. Many villages were also totally destroyed.

The event is not intended to be a race, a competition between nations, or anything other than an arduous commemorative walk dedicated to the Italian contadini who assisted Allied escapers in WW2. It is intended that this challenge will lay the foundation stone for an annual commemorative event.

The objectives of the Freedom Trail are: 1) To raise much needed funds by sponsorship for the Monte San Martino Trust. 2) To complete the route from Sulmona to Castel di Sangro, via former WW2 safe-house villages in four days. Total distance approx 65 miles." For more details contact Roger at 5 Tansy Road, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG3 2UJ.

HISTORIANS NEWS.

A thank you to Cyril Symons for the story of his POW days. Also thank you to Mr C J Quartermaine for the story of his time in Campo 65 and 73 and E715 Auschwitz.. A thank you also to Geoff Bryden for his report on the 51st Highland Division at Saint Valery. All accounts gratefully received.

POEM.

We have received the following poem entitled 'Prisoner of War' from Mr Peter Chalmers. It was in the possession of his late elder brother George and Peter would like to know if anyone has seen it

before. George Chalmers served with the 6th Bn, Gordon Highlanders. He was wounded in North Africa and taken prisoner at Anzio. He was a resident of Stalag 9B. Peter can be contacted at Apt 115, 903 Mohawk Road East, Hamilton, Ontario L8T 2R7, Canada.

Barren waste of scrub and sand, Dry unfertile desert land

Spiked wire on every hand, Prisoner of war.

Bullied and driven like flocks of sheep, Treated like dirt from dawn till sleep

Hearts heavy filled with hatred deep, Prisoner of war.

Shut off like rats in cage and pen, Shut off it seems from human ken

Thus did they treat the King of men, Prisoner of war.

Finding new meanings in higher things, In life, in Christ and the hope he brings

Thus did they treat the King of kings, Prisoner of war.

Finding at last if you've eyes to see, The glorious truth fixed by God's decree
As long as a soul is unclaimed you are free, Prisoner of war.

In my fathers footsteps by Malcolm Evans of Auckland, New Zealand who sent in a report on his trip to Italy to meet and greet the Italian people who played such a big part in his fathers war. After being captured at Sidi Azeiz in North Africa in 1941, Major Hill Evans was transported with others to Campo 29 at Veano in Northern Italy. "We started our visit in Rome where Dad ended up after escaping and then we went up to Veano to the former prison camp. We managed to make a mark on my fathers behalf and indirectly on behalf of all POWs who were helped by the Italian people, when we presented the village of Vallepietra with a bronze plaque I had made. Commander Loftus Peyton Jones who was my fathers companion for three months in the Italian mountains in 1943, came down from Hampshire to be with us in Vallepietra. He lead the formal presentation of the plaque, which records the bravery and selflessness of the people of Vallepietra and of the Rotondi family in particular. The ceremony took place in the only restaurant in the little village capable of holding the 30 or so members of the extended Rotondi family who turned up for the event, and it was a very memorable occasion.

"My father was involved in two escapes from Campo 29. The first was to help the escape of another New Zealander, Brigadier George Clifton who got away from a first storey window. He got as far as Lake Como before being caught and later wrote a book 'The Happy Hunted.' My fathers own escape, which has been compared by some to the 'Wooden Horse' was a more audacious plan. He buried a tea chest in the middle of the courtyard garden, not 10 yards from the perimeter wall. In there a man was concealed each day, later to be joined by another as the shaft got bigger, to first dig down and then tunnel out under the wall. Their activities were disguised by others working in the garden above and where much of the soil from the tunnel was dispersed. Fourteen (some say 8) escaped from that tunnel on an evening when films were being shown in the courtyard and though they deserved a better fate, all were recaptured almost immediately except Evans who was caught four days later."Following the Italian capitulation in September 1943 my father walked south through the mountains from Veano to arrive at Vallepietra near Rome shortly before Christmas. Aldo Rotondi, a member of the family which befriended my father at that time, was my guide in Vallepietra and he introduced us to other members of the community who recalled those days and he also showed me significant locations, with which my father was associated. We visited the small stone barn or cassetta at the head of the valley, in which my father and Loftus Peyton Jones were sheltered, and also the cave higher up the mountain, which they shared for some weeks when things got too hot down in the valley. In addition, Aldo took me to the spot where my father was involved with a company of Indian troops in an action against German soldiers, up on the escarpment. Most memorable among the people who recalled my fathers association with Vallepietra, were two sisters who remembered him visiting their modest home to listen to the news from London on their wireless. We were invited into the home and shown the radio, still in working

order. And we were delighted as they recalled those days and together hummed the famous 'V' for victory call sign 'Da Da Da Daaa!' which preceded those broadcasts so long ago."

If you were at Campo 29 or remember Major Hill Evans, his son Malcolm would like to hear from you at 39B Cape Horn Road, Hillsborough, Auckland, New Zealand.

FREEDOM GATE.

This section contains items of interest to our Korean War vintage members. Another South Korean soldier, taken prisoner by the North Koreans during the Korean War has made his way to freedom. Associated Press in Seoul announced on 27th November that the 66-year old veteran and two family members left North Korea in October and recently arrived in Seoul after travelling through a third country believed to be China. Many North Korean defectors have passed through China on their way to asylum in South Korea. The ex-soldier, whose name was not released, was a private in the South Korean army and was captured in 1951. He was forced to work in a coal mine in Onsung, a city on the North Korean border with China. He was the 17th South Korean POW to flee North Korea since the war ended in 1953. South Korea believes about 300 South Korean veterans of the Korean War are still alive in the North and that 454 other South Koreans, mostly fishermen, were abducted over the years by the North. Pyongyang has denied the allegations....

Reverend Sam Davies wrote to me from Exeter. He had just received a copy of my book 'Korean Atrocity' which includes some of his experiences whilst a prisoner of the Chinese Communists. Sam plans to revisit South Korea in April 2001 for the 50th Anniversary commemoration services at Imjin and the Pusan United Nations Cemetery organised by the British Korea Veterans Association. He will be 83 years young then. He is also due to go to Bristol for a BBC interview for a TV programme in April 2001 on the Korean War and the 50th Anniversary of the Imjin River battle. This battle involved the 29th British Independent Brigade comprising a battalion each from the Gloucestershire Regiment, the Royal Ulster Rifles, the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers and a Belgian battalion. They were attacked by 30,000 men from the Chinese 63rd Army, but slowed the enemy advance so that defensive positions could be established further south. Sam was the Chaplain to the Glosters and he wrote a book in 1954 about his experiences entitled 'In Spite of Dungeons.' Missing In Action Recovery Operations. Our contacts in the US Pentagon tell us that remains believed to be those of 15 American soldiers, missing in action from the Korean War, were repatriated on Veterans Day. This equals the largest number of remains recovered during a single joint recovery operation. The remains were flown on a US Air Force aircraft from Pyongyang, North Korea, under escort of a uniformed US honour guard to Yokota Air Base, Japan, where a United Nations Command repatriation ceremony was held. A joint US-North Korea team operating in Unsan and Kujang counties, about 60 miles north of Pyongyang, recovered the remains during an operation that began on 17th October. The area was the site of battles between Communist Chinese forces and the US Army's 1st Cavalry Division, and 2nd and 25th Infantry Divisions in November 1950. The 20-person US team is composed primarily of specialists from the US Army's Central Identification Laboratory in Hawaii. This years work in North Korea was the most productive to date, recovering 65 sets or remains during five operations. As a result of negotiated agreements with North Korea, led by the Defence Departments POW/Missing Personnel Office (DPMO), 107 sets of remains have been recovered in 17 joint recovery operations since 1996. However, only five servicemen have been positively identified and returned to their families for burial with full military honours. Discussions are currently taking place to establish a schedule of operations for 2001. Any British relatives of missing men are invited to contact Phil Chinnery for more details.

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

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