

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Winter 2003 Newsletter

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

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First of all many thanks to Mary Kendall for the Christmas card reproduced on the front cover. It was sent home by her father Lieutenant Benjamin Weston Waters RNVR who was a resident in Stalag XB.

This will be our last newsletter for 2003, a year in which our membership has increased even though, in the great scheme of things, our numbers should be decreasing. If you come across any other former prisoners of war who are not members of our association, I hope you will do your best to recruit them without delay. I also hope that you will all renew your membership subscriptions in the New Year, to make sure you receive the Spring 2004 issue. We have decided to keep the subscription fee the same as previous years, even though the Royal Mail has increased its postage rates. However, if you do have any money going spare after the cessation of festivities, do send in a few bob to our welfare fund. As an incentive we are offering a copy of Douglas Arthurs book 'Forty men – eight horses' to one lucky member. We will put the names in a hat of every member who sends in a donation (however big or small) with his/her subscription and on 31st January we will pull out the winners name. The book will be sent by recorded delivery the following day.

I am glad to report that Jack Driscoll is now home after hospital treatment. Both he and wife Peggy are very keen supporters of our elite association.

If anyone is looking for ideas for Christmas presents, our Quartermasters Stores list appears below and Charlie Jago will be pleased to gift wrap your items in the finest brown paper and parcel tape.

On behalf of the members of the committee and myself, I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Raise a glass to old comrades and Christmas's past and count your blessings!

NEW MEMBERS. We would like to welcome the following new members to the association; **Mr J A Kingston** of the Hampshire Regiment who fell in the bag on the way to Dieppe and was a resident of Stalag 20A, Graudenz and the I G Farben factory at BAB20. **Mr Adam Lindsay** who fell in the bag at St Valery on 12th June 1940. **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.** **Mr Hayden Nash** whose grandfather escaped from Campo 53. **Mr Bill Smith** whose late father George was an artilleryman and former guest of both the Italians and the Germans. **Mr Paul Woolerton** whose father Eric was taken prisoner at Tobruk. **Mr Graham Johnson** whose father was a resident at Campo 78 at Sulmona and Stalag 4B. **Mr R Froud** whose father Stanley served with 4th Buffs prior to his stay at Stalag 4B. **Mr Martin Bashforth** whose father escaped in Italy and made it back to Allied lines. **Mr Desmond Boyle.** If we have missed you out, do let me know.

DONATIONS. We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to our welfare fund. All donations are welcome, both big or small. June Benedict £30, Mr D H Bond £5, Mr E A Cattermole £20, Mr Roy Cawston £15, C W Clasper £15, Mr James Darrell £5, Jack and Peggy Driscoll £15, Mr D F Garnett £5, Mr Graham Johnson £10, Mr J A Kingston £10, Mr E McNulty £5, D S Mowatt £10, Mr Hayden Nash £30, Mr Ed Norman £30, Mr Darren Payne £25, Mr Peter Rickenback £5, Mr Ewen Steele £25, Mr John V Trenchard £10, Francis Walker £5, Mr Robert S Ward £15, Mr Paul Woolerton £5. We would also like to thank Mr Desmond Boyle and the Northern Ireland Veterans Association for their donation of £30.

OBITUARIES. Mr Charles Burgess of the Argyles passed away on 6th September after an operation. More than 80 people attended the funeral, including the Provost of Stirling. Charles was taken prisoner near St Valery on 6th June 1940 and was a former resident of Stalag 9C. He tried to escape on three occasions and spent some months working in a salt mine as punishment. Charles' nephew will be joining us as an associate member. **Mr Norman Backshall** passed away in November. Our deepest sympathy goes to daughter Carolyn together with our appreciation of the £40 in donations sent in lieu of flowers by friends and relatives. Mrs Doreen Howard informs us that her father **Mr Francis David Taylor** of Petersfield, Hampshire recently passed away.

NEW WEBSITES. Member **Graham Johnson** tells us that he has written a journal of his trip to Campo 78 at Sulmona and it can be found, with photos on his website at <http://pages.zoom.co.uk/sulmonawebmaster>

QUARTERMASTERS STORES. We have the following items available: Intrepidus wall plaque £24 plus £2 postage and packing, Association tie £10, Blazer badge £10, Lapel badge £4, Associate badge £4, Car Sticker £5, Sew/Iron-on badge £5, Cuff links £4, Large diary £1.50 (not planoramic), small diary £0.75, Pen named £0.45, Ladies brooch £10. Please add 27p per item for postage and packing. Please make cheques payable to NEXPOWA and send to our Quartermaster Mr Charles F Jago, MBE, 63 Norfolk Road, West Harnham, Salisbury, Wilts SP2 8HQ. Tel 01722-333599.

DOXFORD HALL. Geoff Bryden attended the gathering in June and sent in this report; "The event was well attended with over 1,100 present, including guests and patients from Brian Burnies nursing homes, local hospitals, charity organisations and local school children. There were over 50 ex-POWs in attendance, mainly from the Northumberland Branch of our association, and including several from the local Far East POW branch. Charles Burgess, Stan Wood and myself were the only ones from Scotland. Jimmy Charters from Ashington had been rushed to hospital, but was out a few days later.

The cadets from the Northumberland Fusiliers were well in attendance and very courteous and attentive. The fish suppers arrived by vans (not helicopters). Coffee, tea and sandwiches and cakes were plentiful and were distributed by the cadets. Entertainment was similar to last year, with a Scots compere and the children sang well as usual." Note from editor: this is to be an annual event. As soon as we know the date for next year we will publicise the event in the newsletter.

HISTORIANS NEWS by Philip Chinnery.

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A Thank You to **Richard Vincent** who recently donated to our archives a selection of photos taken at Stalags 20A and 383. I will use some in future newsletters and display them all eventually on our website photo gallery. He also sent in a copy of a report of an interview that Adolph Hitler conducted with some of the POWs taken in Norway.

Feedback is coming in now regarding the now-finished ITV series 'POW.' From member **Doug Bond** who was with E715 at Auschwitz; "I was so disappointed with the presentation of life in a POW camp, that I have made a protest to the Broadcasting Standards Commission about the number of errors made during the programme. Has anyone else?"

Member Jim Pearce was amongst a group invited to meet the actors and attend a private screening of the series at the Imperial War Museum. He said; 'The series doesn't give a true impression of Prisoner of War life. Where did they get the cigarettes from? Chaps were so desperate for a smoke they would make cigarettes out of the fluff in their pockets.' Jim was captured with the 51st Highland Division and transported to Poland where he spent the next five years digging canals, shovelling snow and working on a farm 15 hours a day and living off two slices of bread and a cup of potato soup. 'All we thought about was food. I remember someone in the camp who was always talking about chocolate eclairs.'

An Account of an Interview with Hitler by 2nd Lieutenant W.K.Laing.

"Early the next morning, April 26th, my C.O. Lt Col Ford, was awakened by a German major, who said he had orders to take him immediately to Berlin with 3 other officers. The German said that the C.O. could choose who he liked to go with him. He chose 3 officers from his battalion; the Second in Command Major J.K.L.Roberts, Captain M.C.M.Athorpe and 2nd Lt W.K.Laing, who spoke some German. Two Other Ranks, Sergeant Harrison, 8th Foresters and Private Lowton, 1/5th Leicesters, came with us.

"We saw quite a lot of damage at the Oslo aerodrome and we had spent the previous night in the town jail near some barracks when there was a raid on the aerodrome. Little time was wasted getting us away, and we flew South down Oslo Fjord. There was a false alarm in the plane for a few seconds; what about I don't know. We came down after it, within a very short distance of the sea and flew thus to Copenhagen. The sea looked peaceful, the only signs of war being the guns on the bows of the small German cargo-boats ploughing across, unescorted. We stopped for about 20 minutes at Copenhagen aerodrome and continued South.

"We landed at Sakem? aerodrome some time in the afternoon. This lay or lies North of Berlin towards Oranienberg? We were met by an elderly Captain from the German P.O.W. Department, complete with sword. He greeted us with 'Gentlemen, for you the war is over'. He spoke English as well as any German I have ever met and told us he'd spent 18 years in our colonies and 3 as a P.O.W. in England. He said he'd been well treated. I'm bound to say he did his best for us, whether he'd had instructions to treat us well or not. He took us to the officers mess on the aerodrome where we met a Luftwaffe officer named Bismark. I think he had been at the German Embassy in London before the war. He spoke excellent English as did a tall Army officer, who was also there to meet us. In addition, there was the aerodrome commandant who gave us real coffee and schnapps and had the gramophone played for us.

"We were taken in a single-decker bus to Berlin. On the way we saw the Wannsee (a lake), the Olympic Stadium, the Charlottenburg (a Royal palace), the Brandenburger Gate, the Tiergarten

(one of the big parks), and the Prachtallee (an avenue through a park). A detour was made to show us the Wilhelmstrasse (in which was the German Foreign Office), the former British Embassy, the Chancellery (Hitler's residence and offices), the Ministry of Propaganda, and the Unter den Linden (an avenue and shopping centre). Perhaps we were some of the last Englishmen to see these places in their pre-war state.

"We eventually arrived at some barracks near Berlin's river, the Spree. The Grossdeutschland Regiment was stationed there and guarded us. We were 2 to a room. Our quarters and food were better than anything we had till liberation in April 1945.

"The next morning, April 27th 1940, Captain Glauber, the officer who had met us the previous evening, came and told me to get ready for an immediate journey. I didn't like this, and I didn't want to be parted from my companions and I had a foreboding that I was going to be interrogated. I was taken to another room where I was glad to find Sergeant Harrison and Private Lowton, also getting ready for a journey. They were going with me.

"A German Luftwaffe colonel came to escort us. He was the middle-aged German officer of fiction; tall, heavily-built, monocled, fair, with heels ever ready to click. He treated us all quite kindly and did not seem ill-disposed. He took us downstairs, where 2 taxis were hailed casually from the street. Guards were put in each and I was put in the first, and the men in the second. The German air force colonel travelled with me. When we were on our way, he asked; 'Do you know where you are going? You are going to see Hitler – surprised aren't you? We want to show you that we are not 'bose' (evil).' (The whole conversation was in German). I had little time to think about what he said. We were very soon at the Chancellery. We went through a carriage-door and into the private garden.

"When we got out, the taxi driver, who appeared to be taken by surprise, said; 'Dies ist ein ereignis.' (This is an event) or words to that effect. 'And for me also' said the colonel. 'I have seen Hitler and I have been to the Chancellery several times, but I have never been to the private garden.'

"Buildings were on three sides of the garden and on the fourth were demolitions. The garden was about the size of a fairly large Oxford quadrangle. There was no lawn, only longish grass in the Continental style, trees, shrubs, flower beds, an occasional bronze animal and fountains. One of the buildings had an arcade; another a large white bow-window, at ground-level, with a door. At the door were 2 footmen in white coats.

"A lorry arrived, containing British equipment taken or found by the Germans in Norway. This was laid out in the arcade. The German major, who had brought us from Norway, also arrived, and one or two A.D.C.s appeared. They were fine looking men in tight-fitting army uniforms with 'Adolph Hitler' in silver braid on the sleeve. One of them came up to me and said he hoped we were being well treated.

"Finally, there was movement at the bow-window and I was amazed to see Hitler (or his double) appear. I just couldn't believe it and wondered for a moment what I should do. Eventually I saluted. He acknowledged my salute by raising his arm level with his shoulder. He had with him a large retinue, in it Colonel-General, later Field-Marshal, Keitel.

"He went straight up to the arcade and we were taken up as well. The major, who had brought us from Norway, had to lecture on our uniforms and the equipment. In Norway he had been full of self-confidence and appeared a very capable officer, now he was like a nervous schoolboy. He started by pointing out the differences between a British officers and Privates uniform. The battle-dress was good, except round the lumbar regions, so was the respirator, but awkwardly placed for lying down. Every time it was claimed that German equipment was better than British, Hitler would give us a pitying look as if to say; 'Why did you ever try to go to war with us?' The thing which interested him was the anti-tank rifle. He picked up the clip of rounds and crunched them in his hands. He said very little beyond 'yes' and 'no'. The only time he ever approached a smile was when the German major suggested opening a tin of bully-beef. Keitel never said a word.

"When Hitler was about to leave, he was told that the officer spoke German. He asked 2 questions; 'Waren Sie in Berlin vorher' (Were you in Berlin before?). When I said 'no' he asked; 'Wo waren sie in Deutschland?' (Where were you in Germany?) I replied that I had been in Heidelberg several times. He then muttered something I could not catch and went away looking hostile. The Luftwaffe colonel asked if I had heard Hitlers last words, as he had spoken very softly. His version of them was; 'Dieser krieg war nicht notwendig. Sie konnen ihrer regierung dafur danken.' (This war was not necessary. You can thank your government for it).

TRACING DADS FOOTSTEPS by Stephen Wilkins.

My Dad, James Leslie Wilkins of Belper, Derbyshire passed away in the autumn of 1985. He served with the 42nd RTR as a tank driver and was in several actions around Tobruk during 1941-42. On 1st June 1942 he was captured after his Matilda tank was destroyed by anti-tank fire during the fighting against the Afrika Korp within the 150th Brigade Group Box at Gazala, Libya. The Germans, as would appear to be the norm, handed him over to the Italians and he soon found himself in Italy in Campo 66 at Capua before being sent on to Campo 73 at Carpi.

At Christmas 1942 the Vatican provided Dad with what I would describe as a calendar booklet. In this booklet Dad made many pencil notes, including places visited, important dates, friends, food issues in Italian camps and the contents of Red Cross parcels. I used to be fascinated by what Dad told me about his experiences, on the rare occasions he wanted to talk about them. Now I wish I'd had a tape recorder to hand.

Following Dads death, I was able to use the pencilled notes in the Vatican booklet to follow his route during his service. He recorded that he arrived at PG 73 Carpi on 21st July 1942 and left on 21st July 1943, arriving at Stalag 4B on 24th July 1943. Then via Stalag 8B Lamsdorf he was put to work in arbeits kommando E714 Blechhammer, Upper Silesia. Like many others he was on the 'Death March' to the west in early 1945.

Dad always wanted to return to Italy. I never knew why but was informed by my Mum, prior to her death, that Dad managed to get out of Carpi and was looked after by an Italian farming family. This of course is possibly why he was taken to Germany some 6 weeks prior to the Italian capitulation in September 1943. Unfortunately Dad became very ill and never had the opportunity to go back.

In any event, this year my own son was 16 and taking advantage of the recent innovation of the 'no frills' airline, I travelled to and based myself in Bologna (nearest city to Carpi). It is a fine city to stay in, with plenty to see and do. The food was excellent and I must say an improvement on when Dad was there. On Saturday 31st August we visited the town of Carpi, near where Dad had been a POW. It is a medium sized town, dominated by the vast Piazza dei Martiri, apparently the third largest Piazza in Italy. Walking across it with temperatures in the 90's I can believe it.

In the courtyard of the 16th Century Castello dei Pio (Palace) that stretches along the Piazza is the Museo al Deportato. The museum mainly commemorates some 40,000 of Italy's Jewish population who were kept in transit at PG 73 following its use as a POW camp, before they were transported to Death Camps in Germany during 1944. The museum also contains information about the history of what they call Campo de Fossoli from its initial inception in 1942 for allied prisoners. Unfortunately on the day of our visit, the museum was closed for the afternoon.

However, in a quiet courtyard at the rear are monuments to those who were deported to the death camps.

I was a little disappointed at my bad planning, because I was aware that the visible remnants of Campo PG 73 still exist just north of the town and that escorted visits can be arranged via the museum. But it was still a moving experience to know that David and myself had more than likely followed the same route by rail via Modena that Dad would have taken.

The cost of the trip was quite reasonable. The return airfare from Stansted to Bologna was £80 each, including taxes. We stayed for 7 nights in a good 4 star hotel opposite Bologna railway station, which worked out at about £500 for the both of us, although there are cheaper alternatives. The rail journey from Bologna to Carpi takes about 50 minutes, but you do need to change trains at Modena. The fare is a cheap 7 Euros.

There are a number of Italian web sites that relate to the camp and include then and now photos. Two of them are www.itc-belotti.org/fascismo/fossoli.htm and www.fondazionefossoli.org
Below – Carpi 1942. (Hard copy of newsletter only).

THERESIANSTADT CONCENTRATION CAMP by Phil Chinnery.

This excerpt is taken from a chapter in my forthcoming book 'Nazi Atrocities' due for publication in the Spring. It describes the experiences of prisoners of war who found themselves in concentration camps.

Driver Harold Glanville of the Royal Artillery was living in Kent Avenue, Slough, Buckinghamshire when he joined the Army. Not more than a couple of miles from where I sat typing this story more than sixty years later, although the boundaries had shifted and Slough was now in Berkshire.

Harold was taken prisoner at Kalamata, Greece on 29th April 1945 and spent time in various prisoner of war camps in Greece and Germany before ending up in Stalag 18B at Spittal in Austria. In October 1943 he escaped and made it as far as the frontier with Italy before he was recaptured. He was taken to the SS barracks at Ponterba and spent ten weeks there, before he was moved to Stalag 7A at Moosberg. In order to get out on a working party he assumed the rank of serjeant-major and escaped again on 2nd April 1944 with eight other NCO's and was on the run for two weeks before he was recaptured.

From Moosberg Harold was moved to Stalag 8C at Sagan where his knowledge of the German language helped him escape from a working party at Hammerfeld together with an American was using the name Nash, but who was in fact Technical Sergeant Victor Gasquire, USAAC. This time he got as far as Czechoslovakia and was captured there on 10th September 1944.

After eight weeks at the prison in Yitchin Harold was sent to the SS prison at Prague where he joined up with seven other escapers. On arrival at Prague the SS guard told the prison commandant that they were prisoners of war and ought to be sent to Germany. The commandant, however, replied that he did not give a damn and that they must go on the next transport. The word transport in those times usually meant a shipment of people to a concentration camp. In November 1944 the men found themselves on the way to Theresianstadt concentration camp.

Some men received worse attention in the SS prison in Prague than others. In February 1945 escapee Private George Klauber of the Palestinian Pioneer Corps was held there together with 25 other British prisoners. They were kept in a cell 12 feet by 12 feet and had only a dozen

blankets between the lot of them. One day there was an Allied air raid on the city and Klauber asked the German guard if they could be taken down to an air raid shelter. As a result of his request Klauber was taken out of his cell and made to stand facing a wall for four hours. During that time a German Feldwebel and other guards beat him around the head and body.

One day Klauber was taken to the main Gestapo headquarters in Prague for interrogation. One of the others in the car was a British prisoner from another cell. In a very frightened voice he told Klauber that the Germans were accusing him of being a special forces Parachutist and he was beaten every day. He showed Klauber his stomach where there was an open wound, which was not dressed and smelt badly. The Germans refused to give him any medical treatment.

In the meantime, Harold and his comrades had reached Theresianstadt. On arrival at the camp all their kit or personal belongings were taken from them. The American Gasquire tried to keep hold of a religious medallion suspended from his neck by a chain, but it was discovered and he was severely beaten. They were then issued with blanket, spoon and bowl and were given a welcome hit on the head with a rubber truncheon. The treatment given to the civilians around them was worse. Old men and cripples had their sticks and crutches taken away from them and broken over their heads. One Jew was told to take his boot off and was beaten over the head with it until his head ran with blood. This all took place in front of the camp commandant.

That night was spent in a small cell with 200 other men. There was not enough space for all of them to lie down and Harold and many others spent the night standing up. In the morning their hair was shaven completely off and their uniforms were taken away and convicts clothing was issued instead. When they objected they were told that they had escaped and had therefore lost their status as prisoners of war and were now civilians.

The men were taken to a small tunnel-like room that would normally contain 20 men, but now had a total of 45. The cell was very wet and the men had to sleep on concrete floors. After a couple of weeks they were moved to a larger cell.

In the cell next door were 12 Jews who were only fed once a week. Each Thursday they received a litre of soup and were made to crawl on their stomachs towards where the food was being handed out and the guards would beat them as they did so.

During their time in the camp the British prisoners received very little food. It was the same menu each day; black coffee at 0700 hours, so called soup at midday which was little more than hot water thickened with a little barley or flour and about 300 grams of black bread with another three quarters of a litre of soup in the evenings.

In the first week of January 1945 an SS NCO ordered them out of their cells and made them run around the yard for an hour and a half. The weather was so cold that Trooper Roper got severe frost bite in both hands. After huge blisters had formed he lost all the nails on both hands. Two weeks later another party of Jews arrived, including two more British prisoners. Twenty of them were put in a separate cell and the next morning fifteen bodies were taken out of the cell and burnt. This was observed by a Belgian escapee in Harold's cell, who was peering out of the window above the door of the cell. A guard outside saw him and fired a shot at the window, sending shards of broken glass into the startled man's forearm.

On one occasion, one of the British prisoners was very ill with malaria and pneumonia and his plight was brought to the attention of the guard. The guard went away and returned with three others and proceeded to beat the sick prisoner and the Palestinian interpreter George Klauber. Afterwards the sick man was delirious and appeared to be in a coma.

In March 1945 the men were taken out by their SS guards to work on anti-tank ditches, work forbidden under the terms of the Geneva Convention. Harold complained to the officer in charge of the guards and he said he would see what he could do to help. That afternoon they watched helpless as a civilian overseer used a pick axe handle to bludgeon two Jewish civilians to the ground where they were shot by an SS guard. The guards were apparently from an SS Cadet Corps who were being trained to be officers.

With the evacuation of Silesia through the Protectorate many columns of prisoners were on the march and a number escaped, to be recaptured and sent to Theresienstadt. Flight Lieutenant Sandman of the New Zealand Air Force and Captain Dettre of the USAAC also joined the 140 British prisoners now in the camp.

Towards the end of the month the British prisoners were told that they were going to be taken away and were put in the transport cell. There was no room to lie down to sleep and they had to sleep in a sitting position. Two Russians slept in the lavatories which were overflowing due to the shortage of water. The cells had previously been used to keep Jews in solitary confinement and there was blood, hair and brains on the walls.

Two British prisoners were recognised as Jews, Gunner Rubinstein and a Czech Palestinian and they were kept separately and beaten many times. The Germans said that they were not going to be released with the others, but Harold and Flight Lieutenant Sandman complained and managed to achieve their release. On 4th April 1945 178 British prisoners of war finally left the camp and travelled by train to Falkenau.

The camp commandant was SS Hauptsturmführer Yockl, a well-fed six foot specimen of the superior Nazi race. About 45 years old, he wore two gold stars on his epaulette and the Deaths Head on his collar. He had a habit of standing with one leg in front of the other and his head on one side. The Chief 'Jew Killer' of the camp was Royko, an SS Oberscharführer who would kill without a second thought. He was about five foot seven inches tall, of slight but strong build with dark receding hair. His age was about 35 years.

After the war it was reported that Yockl and Royko had been captured in the American Zone and handed over to the Czech War Crimes Investigation Team. Their subsequent fate is not known.

Member Ted Sankey was one of the unfortunate POWs to spend time in this death camp. He returned with his son in April. "The small fortress was still being sorted after the floods, it is now a memorial and very well preserved. I stood at the entrance with the large cemetery to the right. Many of the stones have names on them but a lot have none. I choked up a bit, but went through the entrance and was told that most of the bodies in the cemetery had come from the mass graves exhumed in 1947. The area inside looked a lot better than when I was there last and they have built a large restaurant just inside. I walked to the guardroom where we had been searched on entry and then through the stone tunnel into the IV courtyard, where we were held. I stood in front of the isolation cell and thought it all happened a long time ago. I walked into the cell to where I used to squat down on the stone floor to sleep and the memories came flooding back. We visited the execution area and also the site of the mass graves that are outside the fortress. We had helped to dig them, although we thought they were tank traps at the time.

"When the day came in 1945 to leave the fortress we did so with foreboding as most of the other occupants of the IV courtyard had gone, we thought afterwards, to the mass graves. We walked some kilometres and were put into a passing column of POWs. After a week or so we parted company with them and managed to seek help from a local family who really looked after us. A couple of days later we met up with the Americans and stayed with them for another week. Eventually we had to go to a holding area at Regensburg where we caught a C-47 to Rheims in France and then by Lancaster bomber to Wing in Bucks where the story ends."

BOOK REVIEW. FORTY MEN – EIGHT HORSES by Douglas Arthur. My first impression on unpacking the review copy of this book was "Good value for money. 335 pages for around nine quid. Who can I send one to at Christmas?" Not only that, the book deals with life in one of the Austrian camps, Stalag XVIII A (18A) at Wolfsberg, about which not enough has been written. The opening chapters record in detail the tragic loss in April/May 1941 of the '106th of Shaw Street' a Liverpool Territorial Yeomanry Regiment. They relate how almost half the full complement of the

unit was killed during the retreat from Greece. The exhausted survivors, evacuated to the island of Crete, became prisoners of war when the island fell to General Students paratroopers. After a perilous sea journey, running the gauntlet of Allied submarines, the narrative goes on to give a startling description of the squalor, starvation and brutality of life in a concentration camp, followed by a nightmare journey into the unknown on a stinking ghost train. Four years of life as a prisoner of war in German *arbeits kommandos* or labour camps, and an overcrowded Stalag, are graphically related. The cruelty and compassion of the enemy; the unique comradeship of the prisoner of war; the thwarted passion in the power station and the sinking of Frau 'Dreadnaught'; the fun and frolics of a Stalag Theatre, the outwitting of the SS; the friendly fire of the American Air Force. Oh yes, and by the way the title refers to the sign found on the side of the railway cars used to transport the prisoners; 'Hommes 40, Chevaux 8' – Forty men or eight horses. Published by Vanguard Press. Copies can be ordered by phone on 01223-370012 or visit the website at www.pegasuspublishers.com ISBN No 1-843860-70-8. £8.99 softcover. 335 pages with illustrations.

BOOK REVIEW. FROM COASTAL COMMAND TO CAPTIVITY by Wing Commander William James Hunter, with assistance from his son Dr Allan Hunter. Flying Beauforts with 217 Squadron, Jim Hunter's war took a turn for the worse on 25th July 1941, when he succeeded in hunting down the German battleship *Scharnhorst* and her escorts in the Atlantic. Displaying almost reckless bravery he and his fellow crew members pressed home their attack amidst heavy flak before succumbing to the inevitable; a swim in the Atlantic! Rescued after a mercifully short time, Jim became a POW, but his war was by no means over. He describes his time in Oflag XC Lubeck on the Baltic and thence to Oflag XXIB at Schubin in Poland. His final move was to East Compound at Stalag Luft III at Sagan, 100 miles south-east of Berlin. Despite huge risk he kept a diary throughout his captivity, which now forms the basis of this memoir. Jim was not only a gifted writer but an artist of talent. His skill was put to good use as a master forger of escape documents. His description of the hardships suffered during the closing stages of the war make poignant reading. Although six foot tall, Jim weighed a mere 90 pounds when liberated. Two interesting items in the book are the description of the escape of forty men from Schubin on 3rd March 1943 and the water colours of camp scenes. Sadly, Jim died in 2002, before his book was published. ISBN No 0-85052-991-3. Hard cover, 152 pages with illustrations and maps. Price £19.95. Copies can be ordered from any book shop or Pen and Sword Books, Freepost, 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorks S70 2BR. Tel 01226-734555. Web site www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

BOOK REVIEW. 'A.A.DUNCAN IS OK' by Meg Parkes. Captain Atholl Duncan of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was a prisoner of war in Java and Japan for three and a half long years. The first part of his story was told in Meg's book 'Notify Alec Rattray' which was published in 2002. This second book covers the years 1944 to 1946 and deals with some of the issues which faced returning Far Eastern prisoners of war and their families, both at the time and for the rest of their lives. Meg Parkes has used both his secret diaries and family correspondence to tell a story of survival in wartime. Most of the material has never been published before and comprises many of the artefacts collected and bought back from her father's captivity in Java and Japan. Inside the cover can be found a plan of Zentsuji POW camp on the island of Shikoku, Japan. Bit puzzled about one thing on page 179; the top photo caption reads 'Meg with Susan Rattray Scott, Kansas City, 1 May 2003.' However, there is only one person in the picture... ISBN 0-9541428-1-0, softcover, 194 pages. The book can be ordered from Kranji Publications, 34 Queens Road, Hoylake, Wirral, CH47 2AJ. Email mm.parkes@btinternet.com Price to be advised.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

As usual we are omitting the addresses for the requests below. If you feel you can help please contact the editor.

Mary Kendall writes in; "My father Lieutenant Benjamin Weston Waters, RNVR was captured at **Suda Bay** around 27th-29th May 1941. He was senior officer of three tank landing craft at Suda Bay and two of the captains went with him to Marlag 'O', Marlag and Milag Nord. They were Lieutenants Allen Howarth of the A-20 and John Digby Sutton of the A-6. If you knew them, or were at Marlag or Suda Bay please write to me."

Mr John Coles in Kings Sutton would like to trace George Jowett who was with him in hut A5A at Stalag 4B at Huhlberg-am-Elbe. They were both members of 39 Squadron flying Beauforts at Luqa (Malta) and LG86 in Egypt. He possibly lived in Bradford in Yorkshire.

Mr Hayden Nash in Ware, Herts tells us that his grandfather Driver George Nash, was captured at Tobruk and escaped from **Campo 53**, Sforza Costa near Macerata. He would like to hear from anyone who was in the same camp.

Do you recall a salt mine in the **Leipzig** area? A party of 12 Army POWs were sent to the working party from Stalag 4B in June 1944. Six of the men were actually RAF aircrew, having exchanged identities and uniforms with their Army colleagues. Two of them managed to escape within a week and were on the loose for five to six weeks. Fred Dillnutt is looking for anyone who was there or who may know the location of the camp.

Mr Paul Woolerton in Coalville would like to hear from anyone who knew his late father **Corporal Eric Woolerton** RASC of 200th Guards Brigade, 903 Company MEF. Captured at Tobruk, Eric passed through Campo 60 at Servigliano and Campo 70 at Monturano before going to Stalag 4B. If you also went through those camps why not drop Paul a line.

Martin Bashforth in York would like to hear from anyone who was at **Sulmona**, especially Finley Donald Martin, a Scotsman who was his father Ray's companion on their escape home. He plans to visit the site of the camp and the village of Pacentro to meet some of the Italians who aided his father.

Mrs D A Hemmins from Watlington would like to hear from anyone who may have known her grandfather **Trooper Clarence B Stibbe** of the 4th Queens Own Hussars, a resident at Stalag 18A Wolfsberg and Stalag 344 Lamsdorf. He lived in Maidenhead after the war and worked at Jacksons in Bourne End. He used to attend the DVA visits to France and Belgium with Len Brown and John Hill.

Mr Stefaan Calus, Wiedauwbos 48, 8310 St Kruis-Bruges, Belgium asks; "I am doing some research on **Lamsdorf** POW camp. Can anyone remember the presence at the camp of the legless RAF fighter pilot Douglas Bader? When did he arrive and what sort of influence did he have

on the other residents? Also can anyone recall the names of any German guards or the camp commandant?"

Mr Ewen J Steele from the Western Isles, Scotland would like to hear from anyone who may remember his father **Donald John Steele** of the Cameron Highlanders. He was taken prisoner at St Valery and was resident in Stalag 20B Marienburg. He had two good friends, Arthur Babbs and Leslie Parish.

Mr Peter Rickenback in London NW3 is writing about the forced labour camps in the Dresden area of Saxony. So far he has identified 140 of them. If any member worked in the area he would like to hear from you.

Mr Martin Sugarman, the Archivist of the Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen tells us that he is currently compiling a list of Jewish POWs of the Germans, to accompany the list of Jewish POWs of the Japanese that he has been working on for some time. He has kindly sent in copy of the list for our archives and would be happy to look up names for anyone who sends in an SAE. Martin tells us that; "Prisoner information given to the Red Cross and neutral governments by the Japanese – who had not signed the Geneva Convention on POWs – was minimal and often inaccurate. Add to this the desire of the Japanese to hide the names and numbers of POWs who died in their hands, to obstruct the War Crimes investigators, then it becomes clear that we will never truly know how many missing Jewish personnel died as POWs in the Far East. Anyone with any information can contact Martin via Ajax House, East Bank, Stamford Hill, London N16 5RT.

Finally, we would like to thank our good friends at Vario Press in Berkshire for their excellent work in the production of this newsletter during 2003. They can be contacted on 01753-548944. All the best for 2004!

Photo section below available in hard copy of newsletter only.

OFLAG VIIC LAUFEN. This officers camp was situated in Ober Bayern – Upper Bavaria and came under the control of Army Corps Area VII – Munich. The military residents were eventually moved elsewhere and it became an Iilag, a civilian internment camp from January 1942 until the end of the war. The two winter photographs were taken in 1941 and appear to show the residents trying out their home made ice rink. The smaller photo shows a party leaving for Posen in 1940 with General Fortune. Do you recognise anyone?

STALAG 383 HOHENFELS. A selection of photos sent in by Richard Vincent. The three on the left were taken in 1942-43. Top right shows British and German officers waiting for the arrival of American troops in April 1945. Middle right is a scene from the play 'I killed the count' put on for the residents in Autumn 1943. Bottom right Sergeant Jimmy Mara and others mob the driver of the first American jeep to enter the camp.

MARLAG AND MILAG NORD Middle East Contingent. Mary Kendalls father Lieutenant Benjamin Weston Waters, RNVR is standing fifth from the right as you look at the picture. See 'Where are they now?'

BELOW – RESIDENTS OF OFLAG VIIC LAUFEN PERFORM A PANTOMIME IN 1940. CAN ANYONE TELL US THE NAME OF THE SHOW OR IDENTIFY ANY OF THE CAST?

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