

The National Ex-Prisoner of War Association

Winter 2007 Newsletter

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MEMORIAL ISSUE



WINTER 2007 NEWSLETTER



THE DEDICATION OF THE PRISONER OF WAR MEMORIAL AT THE NATIONAL ARBORETUM 21st JULY.



Above Reverend Tony Wood, Rural Dean of Tutbury with Standards.



Standards at The Carry as five doves are released, to represent the five years of war.



Above left, the Piper Duncan Thompson. Right, The original Stalag XIB gates in 1945.

Above from Left to Right; Reverend Tony Wood, Colonel David Bryson, Mr Les Allan, Mrs Doris Allan, Mrs Freda Moores.

Above from left to right; Reverend Tony Wood, Colonel David Bryson, Mrs Jeanette Bryson,
RSM Mark Carlisle.

Above from left to right; Les Allan, Bruce McAllister, Mark Carlisle Jr, John Murphy.

DEDICATION SPEECH BY LES ALLAN, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION.

“Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe you will be interested to learn a little of the history of events that led up to this service of Remembrance. Stalag X1B Fallingbostal was situated in an area which up to the end of World War 2 would have been occupied by the German equivalent of Aldershot. At this moment in time the prison camp area is occupied by Number Two Battalion, REME and The Desert Rats. Since the end of the war members of those regiments have learned from local civilians a little about the sub-human treatment the prisoners were subjected to. What WO2 Retired Allan Purcell of the Army Catering Corps

learned prompted him to set in motion the building of a Memorial to be erected on the foundations of the last X1B German Commanding Officers office, which still remains today.

"Throughout the war Stalag X1B and other German and Italian prison camps suffered from severe shortages of food, water and medical supplies. The limited resources were stretched even further, with the arrival of many paratroopers made prisoners as a result of the Arnhem battle. At this time there was also a huge influx of American soldiers from the Battle of the Bulge, so by February 1945 X1B was in a most deplorable state. Under constant threat from German guards in the winter of 1944-45 an army of ragged prisoners of war began to converge on routes leading westwards out of Eastern Europe. Along the way they lived off the land, foraging for food using all the skills and cunning for survival developed in the harsh school of up to five years of prisoner of war life. Harassed and strafed by units of the Russian Air Force in the East and then by Allied Air Force units in the West, temperatures of minus 25-30 centigrade and hopelessness caused many to fall by the wayside, never to rise again. This ragged army of men, who, with odds hugely stacked against them had refused to give ground in Land, Sea and Air battles on which the survival of the British way of life depended; Norway, Dunkirk, St Valery, St Nazaire, Dieppe, Tobruk, Greece, North Africa is to name but a few. Not for them the pleasure of medals and ribbons, for them 'The Paths of Glory' led to incarceration by a most cruel enemy and then for many to the grave.

"One column marched from Konigsburg, East Poland and three months and 1,000 miles later were only 40 miles or so from that infamous concentration camp at Belsen. Fortunately for the survivors of that march advancing units of the 6th Airborne and The Desert Rats forced the German guards to divert the column to Stalag X1B, where on the 16th April 1945, by courtesy of the 8th Kings Royal Irish Hussars freedom beckoned to those 17,000 prisoners from 17 nations held behind its barbed wire fences.

"These partially open Stalag X1B Memorial Gates dramatically illustrate the soul-destroying yearning for freedom by those held captive, that and the number of march-weary prisoners from Polish and North German prison camps held in X1B on the final days before liberation. A National Ex-Prisoner of War Association sub-committee decided a replica of the Stalag X1B Memorial erected in England would be appropriate. Permission to build the memorial in the National Arboretum was sought for and promptly given assistance, advice and encouragement under the guidance of site manager Paul Kennedy and all the Arboretum Staff has, as you will have observed today, proved to be invaluable. Colonel Mitchell the Commanding Officer of 2nd Battalion REME in 2005 and Colonel Bryson the present Commanding Officer were, and indeed are, very enthusiastic about the project.

"When he was made aware of the intended building of the Memorial – God, er! I do apologise, you see in the days before the formation of the REME I was a soldier in the P.B.I. – present veterans will know the meaning of PBI, namely the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and as all infantry of my generation know 'God' is the awesome form of the Regimental Sergeant Major. RSM Mark Carlisle from 2nd Battalion REME asked if it was possible for the foundations of the replica memorial to be laid ASAP? After enquiries to a Mr Jamie Tweddle of Scott Developments, a very capable, enterprising and versatile company, I was able to inform the RSM – Mark, that the foundations were laid. After a short period of incessant rain and service duty Marks reaction to the news was nothing short of phenomenal. He informed the Memorial Committee that he would come over from Germany on the Friday with the Royal Engineer Volunteer Bricklayers and all the materials required for the Memorial brickwork, along with the Memorial gates and plaques, these having already been manufactured to a very high standard by 2nd Battalion REME. Mark estimated that they would complete all the brickwork over the weekend. Having seen the X1B Memorial on two occasions in Fallingbostal I considered Marks estimation to be a little optimistic. However, Mrs Allan and I visited the Arboretum on the Saturday and was astonished and delighted to find the Memorial brickwork already halfway completed and the expertise and quality of the work involved had left nothing to be desired. I later learned that Mark returned to Fallingbostal at 0300 hours Monday morning, leaving completion in the very capable hands of the Royal Engineer brickies –

Sapper Ian Porter, Sapper Webb and Brother. There was however one last very important operation to perform which was the sealing of the walls with decorative granite slabs. Bruce McAllister, an expert in the world of granite and Tommy, the brother of RSM Carlisle journeyed all the way from Edinburgh two weeks ago and left the Memorial as you see it now.

“On a very personal note I would like to thank the Memorial Committee; Our Treasurer Mrs Freda Moores, Vice-Chairman/Parade Marshal Eric Reeves, Standard Bearer/Events Organiser Gary Moores, Union Flag Bearer Hugh Ashton-Moores. Also Colonel Mitchell, Colonel Bryson, RSM Mark Carlisle and Other Ranks of 2nd Battalion REME, Bruce McAllister, Tommy Carlisle, Allan Purcell, Jamie Tweddle, Paul Kennedy and all those who have contributed to the building of our Memorial and whose names at this moment in time, old age being my only excuse – I do not remember. As I stood in front of the gates proud memories tinged with a little sadness of wartime intrepid, loyal comrades in arms rose before me and as I turned to leave, a silent thank you for all those who have now made it possible for me to pay homage and respect here and not some foreign land entered my thoughts.

“Finally if you look closely there is one very small plate on the Memorial bearing a simple legend ‘Built by soldiers for soldiers’. Yes, a very simple legend indeed, but one I feel sure when read by the visitor will cause him or her to reflect on the reasons for the Memorial and will induce him or her to offer a silent prayer ending with the words ‘We will remember them’. Honoured Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Thank You.”

THANK YOU FROM THE COMMITTEE. After the unveiling of the Memorial we received many letters from people who attended saying how impressed they were with everything that had been done. Unfortunately there are too many to publish, so on behalf of the Committee Thank You to every one who helped to make the Memorial happen and Thank You to everyone who wrote with their comments of appreciation.

MEMORIAL DONATIONS. Mr Sid Seal kindly made some framed prints of the Memorial Gates which he sold at £20 each in aid of the Memorial Fund. Thanks to Sid for his hard work and generous donation and to the following people who purchased the prints; Mr Payton, Mr and Mrs Les Allan, Mr and Mrs Eric Reeves, Mr and Mrs Gary Moores, Mr Wenham, Mrs Lillian Lindsay, Mr John Robson (Evacuee Association), a total of £140 raised for the Memorial Fund. Further donations received from; Mr Payton £100, Mr Harry Salmon £15, Mr Bill Wastell £20, Welch Guards HQ £250, Tom Lewis £25, Frank Shatiffe £90, S Miskimmin £20, Ruth Gardner £20, Darcy Lock £15, W E Speak £5, Maurice Newey £25, T N Grimes £100, Grenadier Guards £250, Miss Clotworthy £20, Margaret Hume £30, Miss K Salt £10, R Powell £15, R S and Mrs Blackburn £30.

ARBORETUM PLAQUE FUND. Les Allan is working on a sketch of a plinth about 3 feet high, to enable a bronze plaque to be displayed bearing the legend; ‘To the Glory of God and in memory of those made Prisoner of War in Norway, Holland, Belgium, France, Greece, Crete, North Africa, Italy, Germany 1939-45 who never returned.’ A print of the ‘Last Ordeal’ will also be displayed with the plaque, which would be located at the beginning of the lead-up to the NEXPOWA Memorial. Thank You to Bert Arnold for his £10 donation to the plaque fund. All donations are welcome.

ANNUAL REUNION REPORT by Freda Moores. “This years reunion was held in October at Hayling Island and we were once again joined by The Evacuee Association. The whole weekend was a great success with both parties joining together. The Evacuee Association

also joined our parade on Sunday making it the biggest parade for a few years. The raffle was well supported and we raised £394 thanks to everyone who donated prizes and bought tickets. The reunion dates for next year are Friday 3rd October until Monday 6th October. Booking forms will be available from January 2008. Contact Freda Moores on 01628-473832 if you require a booking form. Look forward to seeing you all again next year.”

HAYLING ISLAND WEEKEND by Len Townsend of the Evacuees Reunion Association. “Another great weekend at Hayling Island with members of the NEXPOWA. This year was even better than the last, in that we were honoured and privileged to be invited to join in the memorial parade and service. We were welcomed and looked after by your members by arranging transport to and from the venue and we also extend our thanks to The Royal British Legion for their hospitality on the occasion. I would also like to thank your President Les for his kind words regarding the effect of the war on we evacuees but our trauma was small in comparison to what your members went through and we all express our grateful thanks in recognition of their fighting and suffering in the effort to keep us children safe and free from oppression. We all look forward to next year in the hope that we can all meet up again in the friendship of people who know the effects caused during and after the war.”

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL. It is also that time of year when we remind members that their annual subscription for 2008 will be due on 1st January. The cost is £5 for former prisoners of war and £10 for family and friends and for former POWs living overseas. Please make cheques out to NEXPOWA and send to Les Allan, 99 Parlaunt Road, Langley, Berkshire SL3 8BE. For enquiries please ring or fax Les on 01753-818308. Please note that we have kept our subs the same as previous years.

WELFARE FUND DONATIONS. We would like to thank the following for their kind donations to the welfare fund; W Wood £15, S Wade £20, C Ackerman £10, E J Barton £10, T W Whetton £5, Mrs B Holden £15, J Underwood £5, P Fordon £10, W J Sheriden 5, P Child £10, L Mace £5, R Arnold £10, B Jones £5, R Hall £5, S Ward £5, A Lindsay £5, E J Haines £5, G Moor £15, W S Crighton £15, K Kilby £20, D Nelson £10, P Liddle £5, D Worthing £5, George Buchan £10, M Newey £25, J A Johnstone £10, T N Grimes £100, R Child £5, D Welch £50, F C Dillnutt £10, Ms K M Salt £5, Miss Clotworthy £5, J K Reed £15, Anne McKenzie £10, Mrs M J Kendall £5, John Baker £100, J K Banfield RAF POW Assoc £25, D A Johnson £5, Ed Norman £10, C D Courtenay £5, K Mitchell £20, F J Vokes £15, J Green £5, Janet Gosling £15, J Redman £15, Mrs Patricia Batt £25, F McGauley £10, W E Clasper £5, Mr and Mrs Roberts £45, Miss J Kavanagh £15, H Nash £30, Mrs Simpson £5, L Ellwood £10, Mr Payton £100, H Salmon £15, C Rigby £20, J F Crouch £5, Mrs Hume £10, R Lee £10, Co-op F French £55, J Houston £40.

OBITUARY. Mrs Angela Langdon and Mrs Karen Vowles are the very proud daughters of our member Fred French who passed away on 5th October at 91 years. Fred was a driver in the RASC and was taken prisoner in North Africa on 2nd June 1942, eventually ending up in Stalag XIB where he remained until the end of the war. He later wrote a book about his experiences. He was a keen member of the association and attended several reunions at Hayling Island. Freds daughters sent in a donation collected in his memory and will continue membership of the association. We will remember him.

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

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If you can assist with any of the enquiries please contact the enquirer direct or via the editor Phil Chinnery at 59 Pinkwell Lane, Hayes, Middx UB3 1PJ.

Rene Siegert, Turnstr. 40, D-09126 Chemnitz, Germany wrote in to ask "I am researching the allied air raids on my hometown Chemnitz in 1944/45. In connection with this, also the fates of all airmen from all nations involved who lost their lives or became POW. I would be very pleased if I can receive information about the POW's from two RAF bombers which crashed near Chemnitz on 5th March 1945."

Lancaster III ME392 PM-Y No. 103 Squadron;

Sgt. G.H. Wilson, F/O J.H. McKenna RCAF, F/S F.P. Monaghan, F/S J.L. Cooke RCAF,
W/O D. King.

Halifax III NA204 6U-J No. 415 Squadron

F/L William Richard Mitchell, RCAF J/20559, F/O R.C. Barteaux, RCAF, F/S A.E. Ridley,
F/O R.D. Loveridge, RCAF, P/O F.T. Mudry, RCAF, P/O W.D. Mosey, RCAF, F/S W.B. Gill,
RCAF, P/O J.H. Gendron, RCAF.

Kevin Heyes wrote in to tell us; "I have just come across your website and in particular the Autumn 2006 Newsletter. Of particular interest to me is the photograph of the Stalag VIIIB boxing club. The man seated on the floor, extreme right in the photo bears a striking resemblance to my uncle Frank Heyes, late of The Border Regiment, who was taken prisoner between 6/10 June 1940 at Fecamp. I had the letters and cards he sent home during his internment and his POW ID tag. He started captivity in Stalag XX1 B and sent a card dated 14 July 1941 from Stalag VIII B. The last card I had is dated 28 June 1944 and he arrived back in the UK 16 May 1945. I did have letters and other documentation from his time in the army and captivity and he does mention his boxing activities in the camp. I also had a photo of him and his regimental boxing team which was taken at the gates of Carlisle Castle, the Border Regiments HQ, before the war. It is that photo from which I make a tentative recognition of him. Unfortunately I no longer have the documents and photographs relating to my uncle as I have donated them to the Regimental Museum in Carlisle. I did scan a Christmas card Frank sent from the camp and submitted it to the following site: <http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/pow/stalag8b-2.html>. I hope this is of interest and perhaps can add something to your work."

My name is Patrick Gibbon. I am writing a book about my father in law. On or about the 1-4th June, he was captured after defending the Dunkirk Perimeter and was abandoned and told to head south. His name was Private Dennis Henry Minter. Born 1.12.1919. Army Number 6093969. Regiment 2/7th Queens Royal Regiment. His German POW number was 6161. He was taken to Stalag 20A at Torun where he was photographed and processed. He was then sent on to Stalag 20B at Malbork and worked in farms and factories for the duration. He was sent on the forced long march away from the advancing Russians in January 1945 and was liberated in April 1945. I was wondering if you could help me in tracking down information about him. I would like an aerial picture of Stalag 20B or larger overall camp shots, also the

name and picture of the commandant and officers. Is there a book written by anybody that is available? Dennis can be contacted at 7, Woodham Waye, Woking, Surrey GU21 5SW.

Ms Ellen Dobbie, 6B Abbotsford Place, Dundee, DD2 1DJ would like to visit Marlborck (Marienburg) the site of Stalag 20B and Thorn/Torun the site of Stalag 20A. Are any tour operators running trips to the area? Have you been and can you suggest an appropriate means of travel?

Above; extremely scarce photograph of Palestinian prisoners in Stalag 344. A note on the back says 'Souvenir of a friend, Max Fishler'. We believe this may be Private Menaghern Fishler of the 602nd Palestinian P.C. who ended the war in Stalag 7B at Memmigen. If you recognise anyone please drop a line to the editor.

Mr Ian Cameron, 4 Blakeley Heath Drive, Wombourne, Wolverhampton, West Midlands WV5 0HW would like to get in touch with any men that served in the following two ships of the Houlder Line; the *Upwey Grange* and the *Duquesa* both in the 2nd World War period. My late brother Duncan Cameron served as an Officer Cadet in both ships. He was in Milag Nord POW camp between 1941 and 1943 when he was repatriated home by the Red Cross for ill health.

My father Andrew Jeffrey Evinou, was a WW2 Veteran with the British Eighth Army, Desert Rats. Sadly he died last year, aged 86. Like so many veterans, he did not talk of his years nor did he keep any memorabilia he might have had at one time. He was a tank driver with The Fourth Royal Tank Regiment. He was rescued off the beaches of Dunkirk. Dad served in North Africa and was captured at Tobruk. He was a Prisoner of War, first in Italy, then Germany, Stalag 8B being the longest. I think also in Stalag 8A and 8C as transit camps. He worked in the coal mines and survived the Death March during his Germany internment. I have no information of where he was in Italy. Would you happen to know to which camp the majority of British POWs were taken to in Italy, after Tobruk? Dad also attended a hospital in Italy. Would you know which hospital these prisoners would be sent to? Thank you, Jan Thompson.

Maureen Pierce, 3 Dickins Road, Warwick, Warwickshire CV34 5NR is looking for information on her father George Victor Gibbons. He was in 7th Bn, Royal Warwickshire Regiment and was taken prisoner on 28th May 1940 near Ypres. He appears to have been in Stalag 20A fort

3A and 13A and also Stalag 20B. She plans to visit the areas where the camps were located next year and would appreciate any information about her father, the camps, working conditions, route of the march back home and any suggestions of areas to view.

George Herschel from Newcastle sent in the photograph above, taken at the Dunkirk Memorial. He told us; "When my father Stan died in February 2006 we took his ashes back to Dunkirk and have been back many times since. However on this last visit we were outraged at the state of the memorial. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission have contacted me and have assured me they will clean it up as soon as possible. Next year the War Widows Association are thinking of going out to France and Belgium with some of the older and the younger war widows (Iraq and Afghanistan). Can you imagine what it would have been like had they found the memorial in that state?"

Above, a drawing believed to be of Italian POW camp PG78 sent in by Norman Raddon, son of Leonard Alfred Raddon of the Green Howards, believed captured at the Battle of Gazala in June 1942. He was a POW in Benghazi then PG78. When the Italian Armistice came into being in September 1943 Leonard joined the partisans but was later recaptured and sent to Stalag 8B/344 where he spent the rest of the war. If you knew Leonard or recognize the location above please contact Phil Chinnery the newsletter editor or Norman Raddon at Nordoro, 10 Abbotsbury Road, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 2HG.

Menu Above from the late Thomas Darby
122nd Field Regiment, R.A. (T.A.)
HQ, 278th (5th West Riding) Bty: Halifax

Japanese POW camps in the far east, Singapore
Kindly sent in by
Anthony Darby (Dunblane, Perthshire)

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