

On the afternoon of November 4th., 1943, we were briefed for a 'Gardening trip' in the Baltic. Bomber Command were sending 20 aircraft, including four from 75 Squadron, to mine the waters between the North of Denmark and Sweden, chiefly to make things a bit sticky for the 'Tirpitz' if she attempted to come down from Norway for repairs in the naval dockyard at Kiel. It was going to be a long trip with all tanks full and three mines. We were also warned of bad visibility over base by the time we returned, in which case we would pick up a signal while out over the sea, diverting us to Lossiemouth, therefore we were to take our toilet kit and some spare cash with us.

On going out to the kite we collected the rest of our equipment, harness, parachutes, K Type dinghys etc. Then, settled at our stations in the machine we had a short wait before we received the signal to taxi out. On the edge of the run-way we did our checks then Bill called to me '2800' and I eased the pitch levers right down. Bill gradually pushed the four throttles forward and with an increasing roaring of motors the heavily laden aircraft began to move forward. We were taking off right into the setting sun which did not make things any easier. As we gathered speed I noticed a red headed W.A.A.F. waving to us from the edge of the runway, - I presume wishing us good luck and all that sort of thing. I remember passing some comment to Bill about one of his girl friends seeing him off, or something of like nature. As we staggered up off the runway I immediately started to get up the undercart and bring the pitch down to 2400 and start the flaps coming in. The green lights showed the undercart to be safely tucked in then the flap indicator showed the flaps in and I settled to watch out for other aircraft while we were climbing. We did not climb very high but, if I remember rightly, set course at about 4000 ft.

After making my bombing check (which was very simple - only three stations out of twenty seven being loaded and no camera or flash) I climbed into the front turret, had another look at my guns, set the F. & S. to Fire and laid my black bag with maps, across my knees. As we were told to fly no higher than 10,000 ft., for the first time on 'Ops.' I flew without my heavy padded flying suit, but wore two complete sets of underwear and two pullovers instead.

We could not see the English coast when we crossed it as it was veiled over by low stratus cloud; however 'Bunty' did not want a visual pin point as his instruments were working well. Out over the North Sea we began climbing again and levelled out at 10,000 ft. approximately.

The sky was crisply clear above, while below, the stratus cloud had the colour of a grubby sheepskin mat. As the sun slowly sank the colour of the clouds became a soft mauve while the clear sky changed colour every few minutes. A deep ruby red gashed betwixt cloud and sky on the western horizon, the top line of the red softening into a tangerine colour which in turn, as it rose in the sky, merged into a deep yellow, progressively becoming lighter in colour but not in brilliance, until at about 50° above the horizon, the colour became a green gold. As the angle became steeper so did the warm colours fall off more rapidly until directly overhead and a bit towards the East the sky was blue with a strong tendency towards violet. Going down to the Eastern horizon the colours were not nearly as strong as in the West, more of pastel pinks merging into a soft cerise and on the horizon a very soft purple. I think it was one of the most colourful skies I had seen since flying, and remarked so to Bill, who agreed. As we droned steadily on towards the Danish coast the colours slowly deepened and the darkness of approaching night crept stealthily across the sky.

With darkness coming we lost sight of our three consorts - we were not flying in formation, but in the daylight kept in sight of each other - now we felt alone.

When we crossed the Danish coast the stratus cloud lay thick below but the navigational aids gave us our position. We altered course inside the coast and roughly parallel to it, and headed towards the Northern tip. It was pitch black now with bright clear stars overhead -

it seemed like an uneventful trip - we had been flying between three and four hours and saw nothing, not a single flak burst. Suddenly the peace was shattered by Reggie, our tail Gunner, calling up Bill. I heard him say "Twin glows far astern, I think it must be a kite." Bill replied "Keep your eyes on it and let me know when to cork-screw if he comes close." Reggie said "O.K." Then shortly after he said, "He's coming in fast, get ready to corkscrew - Quick, Starboard, Go." In my turret I could feel the violent twisting dive of the plane as Bill acted on Reggie's order. Over the intercom, I heard Reggie's four guns firing then I saw the red flash of cannon shell trace streaming past my turret. I was watching down on the port side hoping to get in a break-way shot. I heard Blackie yell out, "Do you see him Mac?" I saw a slightly darker form in the blackness below but did not think it was an aircraft. However, I gave it a burst and saw the orange red trace spew out from my guns. However, as I expected, nothing happened. Then I heard Reggie telling Bill to keep corkscrewing and then the noise of firing guns again. Reggie then said "She's all on fire astern here - I'm getting out to try and put the flames out with the extinguisher." Bunty then said to Bill, "I'll go back and give him a hand." Bill said "The rest of you keep a good watch." Shortly after Reg called up and said the fire was out. A few moments later Bill said, "What the hell's the matter with this plane," then "My God, she won't answer to the controls." I could hear his heavy breathing over the intercom. Bunty asked if there were any hope or had we better bale out. Bill then said, "Yes chaps, you had better bale out."

I brought my turret around to, what I thought, was nearly in line with the fuselage so that I could open the doors, partly to get my hand around the back of them in order to open the bulkhead door. Well my turret was not turned as far as I thought it was, with the result that when I opened the doors the wind caught one of them and strained it on its hinges. I pulled it in but it would not close tight and hit the side of the fuselage when I tried to centralise the turret. I realised I was trapped in the turret and in desperation jammed the controls hard over; the turret spun round and when the back of the turret was out in the space, I stopped it and pushed the doors open, hoping

that the wind would wrench the strained door off. I had ripped off my gloves and hanging half out into space I struggled with the door. By this time I hardly knew whether I was flying upside down or what was happening, but could tell by the way my body seemed to float up from the seat and then feel like a ton weight that the plane was certainly careering about in the sky. Then, too, the stars seemed to be spinning round and round in the blackness, sometimes above my head and then almost underneath me. If one had asked me where the earth was I would not have known in which direction to point. However, I was in no mood to answer questions then. As I could not get the door off I jammed the controls hard over starboard, the turret rotated back but came to a dead stop when the door caught in the fuselage - I had hoped to break the hinges this way. I felt a bit hopeless and on the verge of panic but, thank goodness, managed to keep under control. I called up and asked if someone could open the bulk-head door but did not mention the predicament I was in as I reasoned they could not help me from inside the plane and there was no use anyone risking their life trying to help. Hory came up and opened the bulkhead door and went back. Then, looking back, I saw Bunty open the front escape hatch in the bombing compartment and disappear, then Hory came down and slipped out through the hatch.

By now I had the turret round as far as the strained door would allow and decided to try and wriggle out in the space allowed by the other door. I pulled off my helmet and let my head and shoulders hang out over the edge of the turret and started to wriggle and squeeze. I think just then the plane must have reared up on its nose because suddenly I slid out in a heap over the bombsight, damaging the delicate mechanism of the sighting Head, if not smashing it. In the darkness I groped over for my parachute and found it in its compartment. I fumbled around with it and tried about a dozen times to slip it on the clips on my harness. I tried to feel if the clips had engaged but as my fingers were frozen I could feel nothing.

I was not sure if the 'chute were clipped on. I crawled over and opened up the hatch cover and looked out. Tiny points of light were showing out in the darkness - I really didn't know if they were stars or on the ground but they were spinning around as before - of course it was the plane that was spinning, not the lights. I presumed they were lights on the deck and thought we must be through the cloud and rather low. I thought, "I'm not sure if my 'chute is clipped on properly, but if I stay in the plane I'm going to get killed so I'll jump. Hanging on to the sides of the hatch with my feet dangling in space, I hesitated; I wished I had some one to give me a good push as it seemed to be a terrific effort to let go of the plane - in a few moments I would be dead or alive. I let go and went tumbling out into the blackness. It's an indescribable sensation to be falling through the air. After the roaring of four powerful engines the whistle of wind past your ears is not very loud.

After a few seconds delay I pulled the ripcord. The silk shot out past my face and above my head and then I felt a firm tug at my harness. Phew! Thank God the 'chute was clipped on O.K. I looked up and saw the canopy, like a huge umbrella, over me. Save for the drone of an aircraft far away in the distance everything was silent as I gently floated down. Although my hands were frozen and I had been cold with the wind swirling through the turret doors, beads of perspiration were now trickling down my temples. I also had time to think how only a few hours before I was in England, now I was floating down to goodness knows what. If I landed on the ground it would be on alien soil with the people speaking a strange language. When would I hear my own tongue again? Then my family would receive a notice from the Air Ministry saying that they regret to inform them that I was missing on operations; and friends I knew in England - when would I see them again? Some I had seen only the day before. I wondered what they were doing and thinking at the same instant as I was baling out. These and other funny little thoughts flashed through my mind. I looked down to see if I could spot land or water but all I could see was a black void, the stars were gone too, as I was below the cloud.

Then the darkness below began to intensify rapidly so realised the deck must be close. I drew up my legs about half way and turned the release block on my harness. I hit the ground with some force and as I tumbled over my shoulders and on to my back I gave the release block a hard bang, thus letting the harness fall away. I did not relish the idea of being dragged over half the country if a strong wind were blowing and caught the parachute. However, as I lay on my back I saw the canopy settle down. I could still hear the aircraft droning around then I heard a crash, then a terrific explosion shattered the night and the countryside was lit as by day by a blinding flash and in the glow of the flames I could see the white 'chute lying spread out over what seemed to me half an acre. It seemed so conspicuous that I thought some one would spot it even in that bad light so I pulled the shroud lines and dragged it towards me. My spine felt red hot from the jar of landing so I wriggled and feeling O.K., thought, 'no bones broken anyway'. My immediate reaction was one of relief and thankfulness. Then I thought, 'I must get away as quickly as possible.' I took off the Mae West and gathering the shroud lines of the 'chute in my hand, pulled out a knife and cut them thinking "Well the 'chute won't be much good to Jerry." Then I took some of the cords and put them into my pocket as I thought they might come in handy if I had to climb down a steep, high wall or something. Pulling the 'chute closer I cut out a large panel and ripped off the pilot 'chute thinking the material would come in handy if I needed bandages. Gathering everything up I placed it all in a ridge in the ploughed field and put some clods over to help conceal it, then, after crouching low to see if there were any fences showing against the dark horizon, I straightened up as well as my back would permit and got away as fast as I could.

Soon after I came near a road and heard voices in a strange language. Seeing some houses I skirted quietly around the back of them and crossed the road. Taking out one of my escape compasses I took a reading on a dark blob on the horizon - it was nearly south - and

decided to make towards it and then keep going approximately south for the rest of the night. When, after climbing a rise and coming closer to this dark mass, I could see it was a Radio Locator, perhaps the very one that picked us up and predicted the night fighters on to us. I wished I could have blown it up or something.

Some time later, while resting on the edge of a wood I heard a gradually increasing roar of aircraft engines, then the sharp crackling of cannon and machine. I looked out and saw the tracer criss-crossing in the sky then the bomber exploded and dropped swiftly to the ground, a mass of white and yellow flames. She hit the deck with quite a bump, so close that I could hear the roaring and crackling of the blaze. I continued my walk crouching low to avoid being silhouetted against the glow; I wanted to put some miles between myself and the remains of that kite. I thought it could easily have been us and we would have all been well cooked by now - one minute she was flying along O.K. and the next moment she was an aerial bonfire crashing earthwards.

During the night I stumbled into a couple of wire fences, scratching my legs a bit, slid down and climbed up some ditches and as the sky started to lighten a little, two or three hours before dawn I began to feel very tired. Also I decided to look for some likely cover in which to hide during the day. From what I had seen there was little cover around, the country being very flat and bare with an odd house and barn here and there. There seemed to be very few trees and no hedges. Fortunately, as it became a little lighter I saw a large wood not far off and in the stillness could hear the murmuring of water. On approaching the wood I came to a stream so took off my footwear and crossed it and had a drink then climbing up a small slope I dived in amongst the trees. After searching around for a good spot to hide and rest I came across a wall made of sods, where the low branches of the fir and pine trees stretched out over the top. Cutting a lot of tall dry grass I laid it down in a depression alongside the wall and then cut up the earth, where my hip would lie, with my knife. The finished job looked like a nice comfy nest and curling up in it I was soon asleep.

I awoke to the first rays of the rising sun fingering across the tops of the trees. I felt cramped and darned cold. I stretched out and looking at the tree above me realised that everything of that night was not a horrible nightmare but reality. There for the first time I felt so lonely that it was almost a physical pain. However, I realised that feeling like that would not do me any good so I pulled out my escape kit and had a good look through it. On studying my maps I discovered that neither of them covered the area as far north as I was in and while I knew I was well north I did not know exactly where I was. I thought I would try and contact some Danes and find out my position and also get some food. As the day brightened I could hear the freshening breeze sighing in the pine trees. I began to explore the wood and near the edge saw a large farm house and a long low shed with some poultry running round outside. I thought, "If I don't get any other food I'll have a couple of those to-night." As I moved around a jay spotted me and started its incessant chattering and followed me around. I stopped for a few minutes then moved on but it still followed me. If I ever hated anything I certainly cursed that bird. Anyone else in the wood, knowing anything of bushcraft, would have heard that jay and known it was chattering because of something unusual, so I froze in my tracks and stood still, without a movement, for about twenty minutes. It soon went away and when I was sure it was well away I moved on.

About an hour later I saw a couple of adults and some children moving around the buildings, so walked over to a few trees beside the house. The man and his wife saw me and I saw them talking together and then the man came over to me and spoke in his own language. I told him "R.A.F." and pointed to the sky and then my wing. He nodded and then I indicated I wished to come that night. He seemed to comprehend but seemed, with good reason, to be afraid of my remaining

in the vicinity, so indicating towards the woods I made off in that direction.

I had just reached the cover of some thick low bushes when I heard footsteps and crouching low I watched a patrol of nine German soldiers go marching past. That was a close shave! It was my first close look at a German soldier. They marched past with rather a stilted step. Their uniforms were much greener in colour than I thought, otherwise they looked much like the photos I had seen of them with their black jack boots and steel helmets. The helmets were covered with netting and had pieces of foliage placed around the crowns.

Shortly after they had gone I heard an aircraft overhead and on looking out saw a single engined trainer, a greeny grey with black crosses. It was the closest I had ever seen a German aircraft in daylight, and made me feel a bit homesick for the roundels of the R.A.F.

Most of the day I lazed on a bank getting all the warmth I could from the sun. On searching through the wood in the late afternoon I came across a large number of bare apple trees; however, by scratching around I picked up about a couple of dozen withered apples, about half of which I ate immediately with great relish, being very peckish.

The surrounding country was slightly undulating, patches of green and brown with a few farm houses and outbuildings. A few Danes were busy in the fields, chiefly ploughing, to leave them lie fallow during the coming winter.

As evening drew on I heard a dog barking and wondered if the Jerries had dogs out hunting for me. However, after peeping cautiously around some bushes I saw some Danish people wandering through the outskirts of the woods so I dived deeper into the centre of the wood and stayed there until I thought they had gone. By the time I came out on the outskirts the sun had gone down, the shadows had deepened and the sky darkening, with the first stars beginning to peep down.

The birds roosting in the trees gradually ceased their chattering, the wind had dropped and there came over, that hush, that dead stillness, which precedes the night. It was then that I felt very much alone and homesick. I knew that by now my people would know that I was 'Missing on Operations'. Little could they guess if I were alive, where I was and what I was doing. To say the least it would be a very worrying time for them. However, I could do nothing to help.

When it was completely dark I went down to the farmhouse where the farmer's wife let me in. The smell of mangels and cows pervaded the house and I perceived that the long barn in which the cattle were stalled during the winter, was built with the house in one large unit. In the rather low ceilinged living room there was a small kind of sideboard along the wall with a tall fuel fired room heater in one corner and a rather small square table and some chairs in the centre. Strewn around on the floor were a few children's toys and picture books.

The tall rather bovine faced farmer and his two little children were in the room when I entered and his wife came in behind me, making sure all the doors were shut and blinds drawn on all windows. The farmer stood up and shook hands with me while his fair headed wife stood by smiling and the two little ones gazed at me in wonderment. I pulled out a pencil and indicated I would like some paper. The Danish woman immediately produced a pad and sitting down I told them who I was i.e. a member of the R.A.F. and what I wanted if I could get it. They replied with affirmatives or negatives or with explanatory sketches. One of my first questions was soon answered when large plates of food were laid out around the table and we began eating. I don't know exactly what I was eating and I was too hungry to care, but I think it was some sort of porridge

mixed with well stewed apples - it was hot and tasted good. As soon as I finished, my plate was filled again and by the time I had nearly finished it I had lost all my hunger. Just after the plates were cleared away a sharp knocking was heard at the outside door. The man and woman jumped quickly to their feet and looked at each other and me, in apprehension. The loud knocking was repeated, causing a look of fear in that woman's face which will always live in my memory. I had never seen such a frightened look before and I hope will never see another like it again. She hurriedly opened another door and beckoned me into a darkened room, then closing the door on me she went along to the outside and let the impatient visitor in. The visitor proved to be a friend of theirs and with a feeling of relief (I should say) she brought him into the living room. I was produced and we shook hands, then began a long discourse in Danish much of which I presumed was about me. About 10 o'clock I prepared to go and was given some bread and biscuits and a bottle of water, then after shaking hands with them I went out.

It was very clear outside with almost a full moon casting eerie shadows in the quiet forest. I had decided to make South West, the reason being that I wished to strike the coast in case I found the opportunity of nabbing a small fishing boat; failing this I would try and get across to Sweden at Flensburg.

I soon struck a road running South and began to walk briskly along it, leaving the woods behind and making across very bare and open country. I kept to the road as it made for faster and easier travelling. Much of the country was under the plough and, therefore, rather heavy to walk across in the dark in a pair of shoes. In the stillness my footsteps seemed to echo over half the country side - unfortunately my shoes were not rubbed soled. Suddenly in the distance I saw car headlights approaching and reckoned that as the Danes would hardly be allowed to drive around in cars - let alone at that time of night - it must be a German car. I hurriedly looked around for a place to hide, but I could see not the slightest vestige of cover, not even a ditch. I ran out into a field; down moon

from the road so that I would not be silhouetted against the moonlit landscape and then I curled up on the short grass, tucking my face and hands well under my body, trying to look like a boulder. I heard the car go past me and as the noise of the engine gradually faded away I uncurled and resumed my walking.

After some time I came to a few houses so kept to the grass to deaden my footsteps, then an embankment which I scrambled up. I found myself on a railway line near a small station with a siding or two and a goods shed. The crunching of the gravel beneath my feet made much noise despite the fact that I was trying to walk softly. Just as I reached the shadow of the goods shed I heard the sound of slow measured steps from across the station, then they quickened, coming in my direction. I stood hard against the wall of the shed, in dark shadow, very still. The steps came to just the other side of the shed, stopped, and then shuffled around a bit as though someone was searching about, then the sounds ceased. I could well imagine what had been going on - A German Sentry guarding a vital point such as this (I later was confirmed in the fact that the Germans guarded many of these places against acts of sabotage), heard my footsteps and hastened across to investigate. My footsteps ceased and after having a cursory look around some trucks out in the moonlight on a siding, he was not too keen to go prowling around in the shadows of the shed or among the adjacent bushes. Perhaps he feared something that might be lurking there and perhaps he thought that if it were someone coming to destroy the trucks or lines, well he would have to cross an open stretch to do it. Perhaps this sentry stood waiting to watch for someone emerging from the shadows. However, I was not going to be a target for anyone's rifle if I could help it, so I waited. After what seemed ages (but probably was only about ten minutes) I heard the footsteps start again and fade as they went further away. Then I decided to chance it and darted across the lines & soon left the railway and the crossroads well behind.

By now a breeze had sprung up and I could hear the high singing note in the telephone wires. The sky was still clear with the moon by now well across. Later on, as I was feeling rather tired, I lay down in a small open wood of pine trees on a rise and resting there I munched a couple of biscuits and had a drink from the bottle. I gazed out across the country. It seemed to be toned in dark shades of blue with a few blobs of blue white where the moonlight caught a white washed barn or farmhouse. The sky a dark velvety blue, pin pricked with stars and the only sound during the rest of the night was the whining of the wind. I moved on but still there was no sign of the coast and as by now the moon was sinking down on the horizon and deepening in colour I realised it would only be about two or three hours before dawn and I had better start looking out for a good comfortable place to hide up during the day.

After about an hour's walking I came to a large farmhouse surrounded partly by a large barn and outbuildings. I tried to make a nest for myself in a large haystack alongside one of the sheds but could not seem to get enough dry straw, it felt damp to touch and the top straw was covered with frost. That, coupled with the fact that a keen November wind was blowing from the North decided me to see if I could get under cover. After managing to get into a heavily bolted shed and finding it bare with no nooks in which to hide I thought I would try the large barn. When I found a way in to this huge building I discovered that for nearly half its length it was nearly filled to the ceiling with hay. I thought to myself "There's an ideal place to hide; up on top." I began climbing, digging my fingers into the bales and kicking my toes in. However, when almost to the top my fingers seemed to lose their strength and I slipped down to the floor with a jar. I had a couple more goes but with the same results as the first time and so decided to try and make myself comfy on the floor. I gathered up lots of loose hay and, snuggling into it, was soon fast asleep. I was warm and tired.

I awoke about two hours later feeling cramped and frozen and still very tired. The blackness through the windows had now turned to grey and hearing a door bang and a dog bark, told me that life was beginning to stir. I crept down to the far end of the barn and sat in some hay behind some farm machinery. The wind was whistling under the doors and through any cracks in the building and I was very cold and could not get warm.

A little while later I heard someone pottering around in the other end of the barn and then a dog began growling. It evidently knew someone was somewhere in the far end of the barn but after much growling and coming up about half the distance, returned to where it came from and contented itself with giving an occasional uneasy growl. I saw it from behind the machinery - it was a large Alsation. I decided to show myself - I needed more food if I could get it, anyhow - so I walked up near the dog and waited for the man to appear. The dog bristled up and growled and approached but I kept my eyes fixed on him and had my plan of action ready if he sprang at me. Perhaps he knew I was ready to fight because suddenly he dropped his ears, brought his head low and wagging his tail came fawning up to me. While I was stroking his head the man came up to me and after indicating to him who I was he went away and then another man came out, smiled, and shaking hands let me through a scullery to a back living room. Such a clean neat house with light coloured walls, a polished stone floor in the scullery and polished wooden floors, with carpets in the other rooms.

This man was between thirty and forty and about five foot eight in height. There were two rather attractive looking girls in the room and as I entered they came up and shook hands. Once again I got busy with pencil and paper and conversed with them chiefly in this way and with signs. They were about 18 to 22 years of age, one was dark and the other blonde. They both seemed quick on the uptake and before very long I was obtaining some very interesting

information from them. They also gave me a brew and placed much food before me.

I was shown a detailed map and found out exactly where I was. I was also told of the strength of the German soldiers in the nearby towns and what parts were most heavily guarded and given advice as the best part to make for in getting across to Sweden. Because of the very good perception of one of the girls, I was able to find out the Danish words for some verbs, adverbs, prepositions and the indefinite article (if I remember rightly they have no separate word for it as we have). With nouns, of course, it was comparatively simple to find the corresponding words.

After about an hour or so I was taken into the drawing room and made to lie down on the sofa and then had blankets and rugs thrown over me and tucked in. I was very warm and cosy and dropped off to sleep. Exactly five hours later I awoke. It was three o'clock by the large gilt faced clock on the wall - and almost immediately a hot meal was placed on the table by one of the girls and I needed no second bidding to start eating. My word it certainly tasted good. While sitting there at the table I looked out through the large windows across the flat country. What a bleak dismal land it looked to me just then. Not a vestige of life on the fields, many of which were turned by the plough to lie fallow for the coming winter. Along the sky line stretched a line of dark, almost black looking pines. The sky was just a flat unbroken grey and outside the cold North wind blew, increasing in force.

When I finished I went out to the back living room and the two girls and the man talked with me. The man produced the map again, which was torn but while I was asleep one of the girls had sewn it up very neatly; he gave it to me and indicated that I was to keep it. Then at five o'clock I lay down on the sofa and slept until I was wakened at eight.

It was now dark and I went into the other room, brightly lit with blinds and black outs drawn. The large table was well laden with good substantial plain fare. Around it were seated my host and about three other men who worked on the farm and one of the girls; the other girl was placing the hot dishes before each person. Then when she was seated we started eating. After making a glutton of myself I prepared to go. I believed in eating as much as I could as I didn't know where or when I would get my next meal. I wished I was like a camel and could store enough food in a hump, to last me a week. I was given a torch, a bottle full of rich creamy milk, a carefully wrapped parcel of sandwiches, and another parcel of biscuits and cake and then just as I was going out the door the dark haired girl pressed a pair of woolly gloves into my hands.

~~Low cloud covered the sky, and as the moon was hardly up~~
dark. After walking about ten minutes, my guide pointed out the road and the direction I was to go, and shaking hands he left. I made good progress along this narrow road and after some time stopped at a little clump of small pine trees and had a short rest. I had a drink of milk and eat some of the sandwiches. They were egg sandwiches, and I distinctly remember that each slice of bread after having been buttered, had the sliced egg placed on top with pieces of greaseproof paper cut to size and placed on it. By this way I got almost double the amount of egg with the bread, as of course the ordinary sandwich has two slices of bread.

After about another two to three hours walking I came to a very large wood and sliding down into a ditch I checked up on the map with the aid of my torch, shading it carefully with my hand. On the map it showed a very large patch of dark green indicating woods and smaller patches around it also a couple of lakes on the far side.

I resumed walking through the woods. It was a very dark night with heavy low stratus scudding across the sky and the tall black forest seemed to close in and envelope me. The tops of the trees bowed over to the force of the wind whistling overhead but down below I was quite sheltered from it. Although anything could have been lurking in the woods I felt safer from discovery in the extra blackness, than on the open country. I came across a narrow track running off at right angles to the road. A notice board was standing on a stake there and flashing on my torch noticed it was a new one with fresh looking paint and among other German looking words was the word in red letters "Verboten".

Continuing on, I suddenly heard a cough so just slid down into the ditch at the side of the road and waited trying to peer through the darkness towards the noise, and with my heart thumping like a piston. Then a darker shape loomed up on the road and I heard the sound of slow pedalling and soft rubber tyres turning on the earth and gravel roadway. The cyclist had no lights and was riding very quietly. He was soon past and after a short interval I continued.

Thinking over the incident I began to convince myself that the cyclist was a Dane as he obviously heard my footsteps quite a way off and probably thought that no German soldier would be walking through that large forest, alone, late in the night. Therefore it would be another Dane or he might even have guessed it to be a fugitive from the Germans and he did not want to suddenly run into him. If he had warning he would hide but if suddenly run into in the darkness would draw a revolver and shoot, being hunted he would tend to regard everyone as his enemy. However, all this is conjecture.

Walking on to the echo of my footsteps and the moaning of the wind through the branches the loneliness of the place, the woods and the country, began to grow on me until I had to fight against it by not allowing my thoughts to wander too much as they willed. At that time too I could not help thinking "Well, this is what you sometimes see in a cinema, a fugitive in an alien country, travelling only by night; its supposed to give the audience thrills, well it's all right sitting in a comfortable theatre seat watching it but when it really happens to you and you are the player - but it's no play - it's not so funny". In fact, I thought "Anyone that says they want adventure are quite welcome to it but I never have and never will want it and perhaps they might change their tune when their life is at stake through a false move." Why any people go searching for these things is beyond me.

On leaving the trees behind I very shortly came to the shores of a lake. The waters stretched out from the gently shelving beach, until it merged softly into the dark sky. I saw no signs of life there, along the clumps of grass and sedges or out on the water and presume that any waterfowl would have fled south before the chilling breath of the North winds heralding the coming winter.

I had just returned to the road again when I saw the headlights of a distant car and therefore ducked into a clump of pine trees conveniently placed on the right. After it had passed I continued my travelling and after some time came to a large highway with a couple of shops and a few houses. I tip-toed quietly around and had a look around and came across a bicycle lying out in the open along the side of the highway.

I felt the tyres, yes they were nice and hard, the machine seemed in good condition. Then I debated in my mind whether to take it or not. It would be very useful as it would enable me to cover the distance more quickly and it would be quieter, however as soon as I came to a guarded point I would have to leave it and I knew I was not very far from guarded positions which I would have to get through if I was to make any further progress south. Then of course the cycle would belong to some Dane, perhaps a very poor man who could ill afford to loose it. And so I became a bit soft and left it where it lay.

After some time walking along the highway, I saw some dim lights on the horizon and reckoned that if my bearings were correct the town of Thisted should be there. Soon after the horizon began to lighten a little and against it I could see the dark shapes of a few farm houses and barns. Then in the distance I heard a cock crow. I must get under cover quickly before daybreak. I spotted a likely farmhouse and outbuildings and made towards them. After having a good prow! around I found an opening in the huge barn and got inside. While groping around in the darkness I blundered into some sleeping pigs and the noise they made, with their squealing and grunting was enough to waken the dead. Fortunately it did not bring half the German Army on top of me as I almost anticipated. I found a ladder and climbed up on the top of the hay and made myself comfortable and started to doze off. Suddenly I heard a scuffle and some rustling in the hay; I lifter my head and peered into the gloom. The noises ceased and I slowly settled down again wondering what was the cause of it all. Then the scuffling was resumed and I heard the pitter patter of tiny feet running along some wooden beam. It dawned on me, of course, why didn't I realise it before, rats! I was never very partial to them and did not love them any better now. So I dozed and wakened until day light. I was very cold and came down the ladder to have a look around and warm myself by the exercise. In another

part of the barn were about fifty or sixty stalls all occupied by fat shorthorn cattle. Then outside I heard a dog growling. When I looked out the door it came straight at me, a streak of deep red against the grey cobblestone. As it sprang to leap over the bottom half of the door I slammed the top half back and it smashed against its nose and jaws and front legs and by the yelping it made it must have bruised itself rather badly.

A little later a workman came in and when he saw me, did not give me a very friendly look. He went out and presently brought back a stout red faced man, obviously the owner, who also did not look very pleased to see me. After explaining who I was and indicating that I wished to stay until the night he took me into the house and sitting in warm room we exchanged questions, with the aid of pencil and paper. He then told me that he would ask a friend of his over, who spoke English. I then heard him talking over the 'phone. Then he sat down and pushed a cup of coffee and a plate of bread and butter and cake over to me. It was brought in by a rather good looking blonde girl, who as soon as she saw me stuck her nose in the air and walked about in a very haughty attitude. In normal circumstances it would have been amusing.

With a heavy knock three men walked in and one of them sat at the table by me and began to speak to me in my own tongue. He asked me some questions and knowing that I would have to trust him I answered. I hoped of course, that they were members of the Danish underground movement and that I would receive all the information and advice I needed, plus even some other help if possible. I did not want him to ask too many questions however, and countered him by asking questions about himself and conditions in Denmark, and I remember he told me that he had lived in the U.S.A. for quite a number of years and it was there that he really learnt to speak English. He turned

to the others and spoke to them at intervals and I noticed the farmer talking on the telephone again.

After some more talking I was politely informed that I was to be given to the Germans. "They are coming for you and will be here very soon". They looked very apologetic about it and I was told how much better it would be for me than to try and escape. "After all" he said "you are young and fit and will easily live through prison life". "You are quite well treated" etc.

I looked out the window, flat bare country with the nearest trees about two or three miles away; not much hope of getting into cover with the Germans on my tail, however I would give it a go if I could. On stating my idea to them to give me a sporting chance they shook their heads and said they could not allow me to go and as the odds were four to one plus extra men outside I thought it useless to try force although I would have loved to have jabbed my knee into the paunch of the fat farmer. He began to whine a bit and the other Dane translated what he said. He and his wife were old and would be sent to prison or shot if they did not hand me over.

Seeing as I would be in the hands of the Germans shortly I decided to destroy most of my escape kit and carefully sorted it out and put it in two empty pockets. The Danes watched me without comprehending what I was going to do. Then I walked over to the furnace, opened the door and began to put the gear into the flames. First the map the Danish family gave me, then the escape maps and a few other odds and ends, lastly I pulled out about six pound notes and as I shot my hand towards the furnace the old farmer dashed up and seized my wrist; he realised what I was doing, but it was too late, my hand was inside the door and I just opened it and the pound notes fluttered out and were burned. He shut the door and left me. I then dropped the two compasses on the metal plate in front of the stove and ground the heel of my boot in them until they were just small amorphous pieces of metal.

I heard a car draw up outside and then an imperative knocking on the door. One of the Danes opened it and in strode a German Luftwaffe Officer followed by a private. They were both of medium build, about 5 ft. 9 inches high and both wore the light grey uniform of the German Air Force. The officer, a handsome looking man, wore his smart cap at an angle and his long greatcoat was relieved only by a broad leather belt at the waist with a revolver in a holster attached. As he came towards me his blue grey eyes gazed steadily at me. To me they looked hard eyes, but not cruel or brutal. They were the eyes of a man from whom you could expect justice even if not mercy. Pointing his finger at me he said in fairly good English "Are you Morice?" I replied "No, my name is McGregor". Then he turned to the Danes and began talking to them. Shortly afterwards he beckoned me and following the driver we went outside where I stepped into a big grey car with the officer sitting beside me and the driver getting in, in front. We pulled out from the farmyard and were soon purring along the road to Thisted. The German Officer treated me fairly and justly. He did not draw his revolver or attempt to push me around. As we swept on through the narrow streets of Thisted I noticed the well dressed Danish people sauntering through the streets and the German soldiers in their field grey uniforms. What a contrast to the khaki of the British Army. We slowed up and entered some gates in a yard - a sentry checked us through. Then we went into a building to the noise of the barking and yelping of big dogs. As I entered the door of an office I saw an officer sitting at a desk near the centre of the room and a corporal standing by the window. Along the road window ledge lay some sub-machine guns and automatic rifles with a few general service rifles stacked in one corner. Standing at the desk I was made turn out my pockets and my first

captor ran his hands over my clothes to feel if anything was concealed there. The officer at the desk went carefully through the articles lying before him, sorting them into two small piles, one small pile he returned to me and the other he kept. While he was looking through these things I looked out the window across the yard and a road to where the calm sea faded away into a soft haze. A large lorry came slowly by laden with some of the smashed and crumpled remains of a Stirling. I noticed part of a fuselage and some wing. The sight had rather a depressing effect on me. I was recalled to the business on hand by the sharp hard voice of the officer asking me my name and number. I answered his question. Then he asked me my rank and when I said Flight Sergeant he said that I meant Flying Sergeant, or a Sergeant who flies. I said "No" and explained that it was one rank above Sergeant. He still did not seem to quite understand so I did not bother to explain any further. There was some talking between them and then the officer began to ask me other questions which I refused to answer. He got into quite a temper as was quite obvious by his shouting and yelling at me. As he could make no further headway he spoke to one of the guards and I was hustled along a narrow passageway and pushed into a cell, the heavy door clicking behind my back. I was in a room about 12 feet by 8 feet and about 10 feet high. There was a small heavily barred window at the top of the wall near the ceiling. The door had a tiny peephole shaped like a cone and with very thick glass. Looking through it from the inside one could see very little as it had a reducing effect. It probably had the opposite effect when looking in from the outside. From underneath the window came the barking of the dogs I heard when I was brought in. I lay down on the only article of furniture in the cell, a bunk with boards for a mattress. As I lay there alone with my thoughts I wondered what had happened to the others. The Germans had mentioned their names to me, all

except Champion's. To them of course I neither admitted nor denied that I knew them. I was told that a body was found beside the aircraft and wondered to myself who it could be although I realised that it might be a trap to lure me into admitting the names of the rest of the crew. Still, in the cell I wondered. I thought of my people and friends, what were they doing at that instant. / Then again there was so much I wanted to do - it would have to wait now. The worst feeling I think, was that of being trapped. I was not free to go where I willed and I was at the mercy of my captors. Right then I did long to feel my legs in long grass and a cool breeze on my cheek and to be able to look up and see the blue sky over head instead of the ceiling of a cell. At that time with the shock of everything in the last three or four days crowding on top of me I had just about as much as I could take and I had not yet taught myself that regretting what might have been and what I would have been doing if back in England, is not much help and that it's better to accept what's sent to you and try and make the most of it such as it might be.

A little later in the afternoon a guard in black uniform threw a couple of coarse woollen blankets into my cell. He seemed to do it with a very bad grace too.

In the evening I was taken out into the main guard room and had quite a good meal, considering the circumstances. I ate out of German Army utensils, with a couple of Luftwaffe guards and a guard in black uniform, probably a member of the S.S. A Luftwaffe corporal stood by. They chatted and laughed together and the black uniformed trooper looked at me and pointed to the food said "Good, good". "Ya?" and then laughed loudly. We had a large piece of meat each in a sort of stew and there was a spare piece in the pot. I noticed one of the Luftwaffe men gobbling up his meal and looking towards the pot. The Corporal noticed him and when I finished he picked up a knife and

stabbing the piece of meat on my plate and nodded his head. Needless to say I needed no second bidding. The look on the face of the German can be imagined.

I was allowed to sit in the cosy guard room for an hour or so. A very good musical programme was on the air and for a little while I was able to forget everything of the last few days. I had a look at a beautiful calendar. I saw the best reproductions of colour photographs that I had ever seen. They were each about 10 x 8 ins. and were of different types of aircraft in the Luftwaffe.

Different guards came and went during the time I was there and as they entered they looked curiously at me and then began talking to the others. One spoke to me in English.

After I was taken back to my cell I curled up on the bunk and was soon asleep. I was very tired.

At about four next morning I was woken and ordered to come into the guard room where after a frugal meal a small pack was placed on my back.

A rather short Luftwaffe guard was looking through some papers, which he placed in a brief case. Rising he bade me come with him and together we went out into the darkness.

After a short walk we arrived at a railway station where we waited for some time for a train. I had time to take stock of my guard. He was a rather sharp faced man between 25 and 35 and about 5 ft. 6 ins. high. A heavy revolver was strapped to his belt and he wore a forage cap and black leather jack boots. Like some small men he was full of his own importance, and liked to show off. However, he treated me fairly and helped me to take off and put on the pack. It was not heavy but my spine still hurt from the jarring of the parachute landing.

When the train came we boarded it and went to a specially reserved compartment. After some shunting around we eventually started on our journey south; for Germany.

It gradually became lighter and I was able to gaze out the window at the passing countryside. For the most part it was flat, uninteresting country which to me, looked rather dreary. From what I had seen of the country on my wanderings I realised that Denmark had not been stripped of her stock and food as much as I had believed. The large barns all had their rows of fat shorthorn cattle, and their pigs and their immense quantities of baled hay and some ensilage pits or tanks. There seemed to be plenty of butter in all the homes I was in and better cake than I had tasted in England. Plenty of good rich milk too - not watery stuff. The Danish people seemed to be living better than the English people. It gave me something to ponder over. If people of an occupied country were living so well surely the Germans would not be wanting anything in the food line and would probably be living better. Later I was to find that things were different - that the Germans did not live as well as the Danes - however I did not know this at the time.

All that day we travelled and as we approached Flensburg the country began to undulate more with more trees including many deciduous types, which seemed much rarer up north.

We ran along the coast where the calm waters of the Baltic lapped. The water blended back into a haze which in turn merged into the sky. Passing by a long bank I thought the silver birches with their golden and reddish brown leaves

catching the mellow rays of the late afternoon sun, rather beautiful.

Entering into the Flensburg station we left the train and made our way to the street. I was struck by the similarity of the station to the American ones, it was clean with much tiled work and unlike the rather sooty and grubby ones in England. Coming into the street I was impressed by the very modern, clean and neat appearance of the shops and offices. Also I noticed the various cakes; including cream filled ones; in one or two bakers shops. The people looked prosperous and wore smart and good clothes. There were quite a number of cars too. Where did the petrol come from? Germany must have plenty of petrol to be able to allow people in an occupied country to run as many cars. The thought did not cheer me.

We arrived at a Red Cross Canteen and going to the counter, were given a bowl of barley soup - thick and hot and a cup of ersatz coffee. Sitting at a table we soon finished our meal and I was allowed to go and refill my bowl. There were many Germans in the room in the uniform of the Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe or Kriegsmarine and on the wall was a large picture of Hitler. I noticed some of the Germans on entering the room, clicked their heels and raising their arm in a Nazi Salute, muttered "Heil Hitler".

We went back to the station where we boarded another train, and went into a special compartment.

Waiting there I gazed out the window and watched the passengers hurrying to and fro, swaggering around, was a lad of about 17 dressed in a black uniform, and jack boots with a heavy revolver strapped to his side. He was quite small and his truculent air seemed to impress the Danes, who kept out of his way.

The train filled up with passengers crammed in the corridors although none were allowed in our compartment. A Danish girl standing in the corridor opposite the compartment door smiled at me. Immediately my guard saw her he tried to attract her attention and make a hit - she was an attractive girl. When she saw him looking at her she deliberately turned her back on him. This made him a bit mad but he couldn't do much about it. It made me laugh to myself, and so when he was looking out the window she would turn and look at me, trying to talk with her eyes. However, she meant well.

By dark we were at the frontier where we changed trains, after our papers were inspected by a steel helmeted soldier in grey green uniform. The train pulled out. I was in Germany.

Being tired I curled up on the wooden seat and dozed. From the increased lurchings and swaying of the carriage coupled with the faster "clackity clack" of the wheels I knew we were travelling considerably faster.

My guard did not attempt to sleep but sat opposite me very alert. He invited another German soldier into the compartment and then left for some time.

If I remember rightly we arrived in Hamburg at about 2 o'clock in the morning. As I looked at the gaunt shells of blasted buildings, black against the dark blue-moonlit sky, I remembered my last picture of Hamburg. When at about 17,000 ft I saw it below me, a great expanse of raging, multi coloured flames with brighter flashes of bombs bursting and flak guns firing. With brightly coloured T.I's cascading down on to the centre of the city. The river Elbe like some monstrous black snake twisted in agony in the flames. In a fleeting instant I

had even noticed ships alongside some docks. The smashed buildings gave me some feeling of satisfaction. If I could do no more, well I had repaid the cost of my training. I had helped to destroy the enemy and had often seen my bombs falling away from the bomb bays when I pressed the release. No matter what happened to me now it was not in vain. I was glad I was not shot down on my first op. These and other thoughts and memories passed through my mind as we travelled on to the main station of the mauled city.

On drawing alongside the platform we alighted and passed through the gates into the main station area. Here my guard left me in the care of a U-Boat sailor. Standing there I had a chance to have a good look around. The building seemed tremendous. It towered away up into a flat empty blackness, relieved only by large gaping holes through which the dark velvety blue of the sky could be seen. One end of the station looked to be completely wrecked and was shored up by heavy balks of timber. In fact almost everywhere I looked I saw patches and other signs of temporary repair work.

What I noticed more, however, were the people. They seemed well dressed. The women all seemed to be wearing good looking rayon (I presume) stockings - quite a contrast to the women of Britain in fact. The men were mostly in uniform. Officers looking very smart in their peaked caps, long, well cut great coats and short dress swords or daggers; many privates and N.C.O's walking around laden with big packs and equipment while the civilian men looked smartly dressed, most wearing three-quarter length coats and carrying a brief bag or small case. I saw very few women in uniform - as contrasted with England where every other woman seemed to be in uniform.

What struck me most forcibly was the different atmosphere as compared with that of an English station such as Waterloo, or Victoria. Gloom and depression were the predominate key-notes as against the cheerfulness and brightness on the faces of the people on the English Stations.

My guard returned and we went into a waiting room and after some time another train. Once more I curled up on a wooden seat and slept through the night. In the morning we arrived at Frankfurt on Main where we got off, and after the guard had sent a telegram, somewhere, we boarded a tram. The German civilians did not take much notice of me, for which I was very thankful - they had no cause to love us. Many of the civilians, on boarding the tram raised their right hand and said 'Heil Hitler'. On arriving at the terminus we began walking, but after going about a block were given a lift in an army lorry. I jarred my spine jumping out of the back, when we arrived at the interrogation centre. I will not forget my first impression of that place. As we walked along inside the barbed wire I saw the long drab coloured wooden barracks with every window heavily barred. It was not a happy looking place. I saw prisoners working there under the watchful eye of a guard; putting the finishing touches to new cells. I was taken into a small room adjoining an office where I waited for some considerable time feeling, to say the least, rather despondent about everything. An interpreter in the green uniform of the Wehrmacht and a Luftwaffe guard came in and escorted me down long narrow passages, to my cell. Here I was stripped and thoroughly searched, the interpreter carefully running his fingers around the seams of my clothing and looking knowingly at me as if to say, "See I know all the tricks, you can't hide anything from me." Then I was left there to brood over my fate.

The cell was about the same size as the one at Thisted with a heavily barred window with translucent but not transparent

panes. My bunk with wooden boards had a mattress of wood shavings and two blankets. There was also a stool, table and bucket to complete the articles in the cell. I was allowed to keep my clothes and a handkerchief but nothing else. Shortly afterwards a guard brought me a small plateful of water with a couple of pieces of cabbage leaf floating on top - soup, I presume - tasteless stuff. For the rest of the afternoon I was left alone with my thoughts - and I had plenty of them! There seemed to be no ventilation in the cell whatever, the windows being locked tightly as also was the door. The walls were also lined with a thick composite board in order, I presumed, to deaden any sound. It was very cold and I considered myself fortunate in that I was wearing two complete sets of underclothes and two heavy jerseys apart from my shirt and uniform. The moisture from my breath began to condense on the cold window panes and by the evening it began trickling down the wall from the small ledge.

Late in the afternoon a tall Luftwaffe Officer came in with a sheaf of papers in his hand and asked if I were comfortable and apologised for the fact that there were no heaters in the cell. I said nothing. He then asked me my name and number and then the names of the rest of my crew ('so we can check up to see who was killed' he said) also my squadron, type of aircraft etc. Needless to say I told him I could not answer these latter questions. He started to lose his temper a bit and began reading out the names of my crew, squadron, number and said I was flying a Stirling aircraft. As the information was correct it was rather startling and it came to my mind that we might expect this. Most of the information they had, but they wanted confirmation - amongst it would be a couple of guesses. When I replied that I could tell him no more he began to shout and threaten me and finally stormed out of the room saying "Do you take me for a sucker?" I reflected afterwards that he must have picked

up that expression when he interrogated American air crew. That evening I received two slices of black bread (actually its a dark grey brown colour) smeared with a little margarine, and a cup of black mint tea. Then about 8 o'clock a guard came around and took my shoes and placed them outside and relocked the door. The shutters on the windows were closed from the outside and about 9 o'clock the lights were switched out. It was pitch black - not a vestige of light creeping in from outside or from the passage. The blackness was so intense that it seemed like some solid medium. Although I was tired I lay awake most of the night thinking and wondering about many things. I heard a nearby steeple clock strike the hours as the night wore on - would day ever come! I think I must have dozed off because suddenly I was conscious of the fact that the shutters were open and the grey light of early morning came through the glass. Then some time later the guards came along the passage pushing a trolley. The cell door was unlocked and two slices of the black bread were thrust at me and a cup of bitter black coffee; my footgear was also returned. Later in the morning I was able to go under escort to the wash room and wash my face and hands although I had no soap or towels etc, nor was I able to shave off the prickly stubble I had grown. It was a treat though, to be able to look out an open window while there and see the sky and some muddy ground with a few small green cabbages. Then back again to the cell. I spent much time pacing from corner to corner in the cell - the only exercise I could get. If I remember rightly it was about six paces from one corner to the one diagonally opposite. Then I explored all the furniture, such as it was. I read many inscriptions such as "Keep your pecker up Chum" "Don't lose hope" etc., also many names with R.A.F. or U.S.A.A.F. Then I found a bent nail; what a treasure! I hid it carefully for future use. So with pacing and lying on my bunk I spent most of the day until a guard unlocked my cell door and beckoned me to come. He took me along through

long empty passages, our footsteps echoing from the bare walls and ceiling. We went out to another building and going inside stopped outside the room of a Hauptmann. I was ushered in and stood before a table where a German Officer was sitting with many books, papers and files strewn out in front of him. In my cursory glance around I noticed many R.A.F. maps, some charred on the corners, pasted on the wall. On them, of course, was the position of nearly all the air-dromes in England. The Officer was a very perceiving type of man, keen eyes that moved rather restlessly and nervous thin fingers. He offered me a cigarette, which I refused, saying I did not smoke cigarettes. He then asked me if I were comfortable and I replied that I was as comfortable as I could expect from them. Then began the questioning. As I refused to answer he began to alter his tactics - "Come come now, it is not very important but we must know in order to check on you; that you are a real airman and not a saboteur or a spy". After saying that I could not answer his questions he said if he could get no satisfaction from me he would have to hand me over to the Gestapo and if they could not get the required information I would probably be shot. "You may return to your cell, I'll ring for the guard" he concluded. He pressed a bell on his table and sat looking out the window with a sort of air of 'I've done my best for you but if you're going to be stubborn well its your funeral'. We sat in silence there for anything up to half an hour; I think the wait was deliberate. I was expected to be pondering over my fate and to be imagining all sorts of tortures the Gestapo had in store for me and my final shooting and then just as the guard walked in I would jump up and say "Just wait a moment and I'll answer, but don't turn me over to the Gestapo." When the guard came in the officer motioned me away with a wave of his hand so I turned on my heel and walked out followed by the guard. Returning to my cell, I had some more to think about.

The following three days I was left alone in the cell with the exception of the guard bringing my meagre rations. In the cell next to me I could hear one of our officers wailing to the guard when he came and I could have kicked him for it - if I had the opportunity. Even if I did feel depressed and miserable I would not give the Jerries the satisfaction of seeing me so. This man would say "I am an officer, understand, tell your officer that; I should not be here." I heard the Guard mumble something in German and slam the door. After a day or so the officer realised he was to stay there so he would say, "Tell your officer to see me, give me some books to read" etc. (He evidently could not realise that he had no hope of getting anything to relieve the monotony as that would defeat the ends the Germans hoped to gain from solitary confinement.) His moans got on my nerves a bit and I wished for the opportunity to tell him what I thought of him and to say that I could not see why he should get better treatment than Sergeants and Flight Sergeants who did the same job just as well and took just as much responsibility and took the same risks.

A day or so later I was moved to another cell and to my surprise I noticed a room heater inside. This was switched on at nights and left on although the cells became uncomfortably hot and I lay on my bunk with nothing on. One evening the guard opened the door and took me along the long passages again and to the interrogation room. The same officer was there sitting at his table with a shaded desk lamp providing the only illumination to the room. He hardly noticed me for some time, apart from a quick glance, and a motion of his hand to me to be seated. He was busily glancing through a large book. Then he smiled at me and said "Another of your propaganda books written by a Jew", he mentioned the name but I cannot remember

it now. Turning over the pages he would quote passages and point out what he believed to be their obvious untruths. The general idea was that Germany and England should not be fighting against each other but that they had much in common and that "Red" Russia was the country England should be fighting - and so on. After about three quarters of an hour he began asking me questions again and again. When I said I could not answer him he said that he already knew but he wanted to see if my answers were correct so he could check that I was a genuine airman. He then proceeded to give me information about myself and my training etc., which really amazed me in its accuracy. There were a few bits, however, that were very inaccurate. He particularly wanted to know the names of any ships I had travelled in from New Zealand. "Come now" he said "it's not important now as it is quite some time ago". I could not help answering "Well, if it's not important why ask me?" He answered, "Because I must know". I replied that I could not tell him and so a few minutes later I was dismissed and taken back to my cell by a guard.

The next day passed the same as the others except that by now I was busy some of the time working out Theorems in Geometry on the table top and bedboards, scratching the diagrams with my nail; this helped to pass the time and kept the old brain box from going rusty. I also managed to unpick the locks in the windows and open them enough to let fresh air come in and yet they looked closed. Sometimes I would open them a little wider and have a look at the sky and the clouds and the earth. To me these things represented freedom. Then I would shut them when I heard a guard walking along the passage. I was getting used to a permanent hunger, so that it was not quite so bad as the first couple of days although by now I was feeling slightly weak in the legs. I used to chew the bread very slowly so that it would last longer and in order to gain the maximum calorific value from it.

All things, temporal, come to an end and so in a days time my period of solitary confinement came to an end. I had been in a week but it seemed more like a year. A guard collected me and took me to a room where there were about fourteen to eighteen other prisoners, chiefly American aircrew. Naturally enough there was quite a lot of talking going on as the men got to know one another, and the relief from "solitary" tended to make them talk. Their topic matter was very general and I think that the fact, perhaps rather remot but still a possibility, that a German spy might be put amongst them, kept their tongues off "shop". We were told that we were going to Dulag Luft on the other side of Frankfurt and shortly afterwards were marched out under a strong guard armed with sub-machine guns.

After going a little way we came to a tramway stop and shortly afterwards an old tram, specially reserved for us came and we clambered in. Passing through the city of Frankfurt we obtained quite a good look at the town. I cannot remember much about it, on that trip, that impressed me, except that I saw very little bomb damage; the town itself up till then had received no major raid although certain important objectives outside the town had previously been attacked. When we arrived at Dulag Luft we were shepherded inside the wire and into a barrack room where we were thoroughly searched. Then we waited some time until a young German officer came and gave us a little talk on the do's and don'ts, mostly don'ts, in a prison camp. I think most of us were amazed when he opened his mouth. "Listen, you guys" he began - we could hardly believe our ears. Not a trace of foreign accent - he sounded as though he came straight from America. Apart from the uniform one could not have picked him out from the American aircrew who were prisoners.

During the time I was at Dulag many other prisoners came into the camp and about two batches were sent out to their permanent camps. The Majority of those who came in were American aircrew, mostly shot down at Swienfurt where I think about 60 Fortresses were lost. There were also some R. A. F. ground crew captured at Leros and Cos and brought up in cattle trucks through Greece and Austria into Germany, the journey taking them two weeks. One American in my room was a gunner in a Liberator shot down on the raid to the Polesti Oilfields, another an R.A.F. chap flying in a Baltimore in Italy. His kite collided with another in the air. He saw the two kites coming together the next thing he remembered was that he was hurtling out into blue space. His chute was fortunately clipped on so he pulled the ripcord and floated to earth where the Germans were waiting to receive him. Quite a number of the Americans were wounded, some in action, with cannon shell, flak or fire and others badly battered, chiefly around the head as evidenced by swollen faces, noses and lips and half closed eyes and discolouration; these latter injuries were the result of being captured by civilians, until rescued by the German soldiers. Most of the cases of the wounded in action were amputation cases - a leg or an arm missing. Some were even carried in by their fellow prisoners. It was one of the risks they took when they flew over enemy territory and most of them seemed resigned to make the best of what was left instead of regretting what they had lost.

One night, after I had been there about a week, the sirens began to wail. All the lights immediately went out and in the darkness we began to speculate where the raid would be and hoped to goodness that it would not be Frankfurt. We crowded around the windows - a dangerous thing to do in an air raid - and watched some orange coloured flares come floating down some miles away, also tiny points of light flickering afar off showed us that flak was being shot up. A faint distant rumble seemed to smother any sound from the distant guns. Soon afterwards as the sound of approaching aircraft became louder we also heard the sharp crack of guns as ones nearer to us opened up. Then we were suddenly shaken by a terrific roar as a battery of heavy ack-ack guns immediately behind the camp, opened up.

Everything in the barrack seemed to shake, the windows worst of all. From then on except for occasional peeps, we kept well away from the windows. Now, too, we could hear the shrapnel tinkling down on the roof. Outside we could see the searchlights feeling around in the dark sky like the tentacles of an octopus searching for a victim. Far off, we saw a searchlight fasten on to a plane and quickly others came to its aid so that in a very short time about a dozen or so had formed a large cone. The trapped plane, a tiny speck, began twisting and turning and suddenly disappeared into the friendly cover of the blackness. We were glad. After about half an hour things became quieter and then the all clear sounded. We all breathed a sigh of relief and realised that some aircraft, a bit off the track, had come within the range of the Frankfurt defences. I well remember some of the Americans saying to me "You can have your night raids, flying alone, we wouldn't want to do them, you can't see what's coming after you and you might collide with any other of the hundreds of aircraft up there." I said they could keep their daylight stuff. They had many more engagements with fighters and they had to fly in formation right over the target - a huge target for ack-ack - we at least could weave as we began our run up. Whether it was any safer I don't know, and rather doubt, but the psychological effect was good. So, as I mentioned, we each preferred the task we were set to do and did not compete, but complimented each other.

A night or two later we had a repeat of the previous alarm in a much stronger form. This time we saw red T.I. markers cascading down over on the far side of the city so we knew what to expect. Fortunately for us the aircraft were making their run in from the other side so that by the time they reached our camp they would have their bomb bays empty. The sharp crackling of the guns was being merged more and more into one continuous sound as the roar of the heavy bombers became louder. Then all this noise was punctuated by heavy explosions which rocked the camp and sent a lot of the Americans racing out of the barrack in a panic and into the half formed slit trenches with no thicker cover on them than the roofs of our barracks. The

rest of us lay on the bottom bunks and hoped for the best. Of course we took occasional peeps out the windows, which we took the precaution of opening so that they would not be shattered by bomb blast. The sky across the city began to assume a rosy hue, and orange and yellow night fighter flares slowly drifting down, added to the all-over glow. The intense blue white of the searchlight beams stabbing out into the sky looked bluer than usual, being accentuated by the surrounding warm tones. As soon as an aircraft was found by one beam others would switch on to it until it was in the apex of a large cone. Then we would see the apex become one mass of bursting flak as every gun possible trained up into it. We saw these aircraft, with one exception come tumbling down out of the sky, blazing wrecks, and we felt for their crews. One came twisting and diving madly, right overhead, trying to escape the clutches of those cold blue fingers of light that remorselessly exposed it for nearly five minutes to any lurking night fighters and the ground gunners. It was the exception that night as suddenly with a quick slip out, it eluded the apex and got away in the darkness. The searchlights frantically waved round and then gave it up and began to search for further victims. Fortunately for us no aircraft overshot much in the release of its load. I knew that the invariable tendency was, if anything, to undershoot, so that it would be unlucky if we were hit. The raid only lasted for a little over half an hour so I presumed it was only a diversionary raid, which was quite enough for us though; a major raid probably took place somewhere else at the same time, and we were all very relieved when it was over. The lights went on again with the big spotlight swinging around the camp, scrutinising the wire and barracks. The Americans crawled back into their rooms, wet and covered with sticky clay. They had plunged headlong into the trenches only to find them half full of water. Next morning the sun rose a dull red ball, trying to pierce the smoke cloud carried low across the city by the wind. Looking at the smoke we thought "We've hit something that will be a loss to them."

One morning a call was made for volunteers to bring in some Red Cross parcels so I put my name down. At about 9.30 a dozen of us with two German guards, boarded a lorry and were soon outside the wire and travelling at a fast pace along the cobbled streets. Sitting in the back of the open truck we got a good view of the shops and houses although the bitingly cold wind tended to blur our vision by making our eyes water. Arriving at the railway siding we jumped out of the truck, and, with the guards, went across and opened up a railway truck. It was crammed with Red Cross supplies - about 1,500 food parcels and some sacks of clothing etc. We formed a gang and soon had the lorry filled with about half the parcels. While it went back to camp and unloaded we sat around and talked. From a nearby truck coal briquettes were being shovelled out into a cart. I noticed an old German woman come hobbling along, and when she thought she was not being observed she hurriedly popped some briquettes, lying around, into her large shopping bag. Then she hurried away. It was here that I saw my first Russians. Two prisoners were working in a truck very near us and some more were further along the line. These two looked like pictures I had seen of Tibetans, very dark with narrow eyes, inclined to be short in stature, dirty and unkempt and dressed in rags with clogs and sacking around their feet. They were obviously underfed and ill-treated. Then some Italian prisoners came along and began taking large coils of heavy wire and loading it into a cart. They also were of rather small stature and were undernourished as shown by the difficulty they had in lifting the wire. Their greenish yellow skin colour, their shrunken looking faces with prominent bones, their overbright, dark staring eyes and the slowness of their movements all showed the state they were in. I had read that there were approximately 20,000,000 prisoners in Germany such as these. Slaves - we all were at the command of the enemy, but what a contrast from the well-fed, healthy, Italian prisoners working on the farms in England. If the court reports in the English papers were true some of them were happy with the affections of a few of the English land army girls. If they were found with a German girl the penalty was death and the girl's head was shaved. We discussed all this as we watched them and waited for the truck to return. We saw some locomotives which, to me, looked very similar to pictures I had seen of French Locos. In size they were between the American and English, although nearer the

American than English. Many of their auxiliary and working parts were outside and not enclosed as in the English locomotive. Streaks of rust discoloured their boilers, and some of the side plates, but from what I could see their driving rods and other moving parts seemed to be liberally smeared with a thick black grease. The buffers on the truck we were working in, were thickly covered with this grease too. The Germans seemed to have more of this stuff than I was led to believe. When the truck returned I had a good look at the springs - yes, they were well lubricated too. We got all the boxes and gear aboard on the third trip and piled aboard in the back with our guards. Back at camp we unloaded it all into a store. For the size of the camp there seemed to be a tremendous store of parcels and one of the permanent staff said that there was nearly enough to last them a year.

A couple of times while I was there I took my turn at peeling potatoes in the kitchen. It was quite a convivial affair with about a dozen of us sitting around a huge iron container telling stories, and incidents of our homelands and travels. It was here - behind the scenes - that I noticed that the permanent staff looked after themselves very well. Although prisoners like ourselves they obviously fed better than we did and if we averaged one Red Cross parcel per week per man they must have averaged more than one per man per week. We saw no milk for instance, except what might be used in cooking and the very little that was put in the tea, coffee or cocoa, but they always seemed to have tins of condensed milk on the table and if some of them were having a meal it would be poured liberally on their large plates of porridge or sweet. They had very good quarters too. I was glad to see that at least some prisoners were living in good quarters, four in a room with separate beds with sheets and pillows and well stocked book shelves. Later on when at another camp I remember a former member of the permanent staff at Dulag telling me how he used to drink about half a tin of condensed milk nearly every morning, in fact they had just about anything they wanted. Personally, I did not begrudge him the extra but I doubted if it were something to boast about to others who were always hungry when there.

After a stay of about two weeks I found I was on a batch of about ninety men to go to Stalag IVB at Mulhberg. At about 9 o'clock in the morning we paraded with our meagre kit and after answering our names we slowly filed through a large room where we were thoroughly searched. Then the 'baggy pants' Colonel arrived with a couple of 'stooges' and addressed us, and warned us not to try and escape, "My guards are well armed, and will not hesitate to shoot to kill without warning." He continued, "They are also there for your own protection; in Frankfurt there are very many people who have lost their homes and loved ones as a result of air raids. These people have been evacuated from Essen and other towns in the Ruhr Valley, and would like to kill you if they got the chance." Going outside we were handed a Red Cross (English) parcel each and then we piled into our transport. A couple of bales of wood straw were thrown in after us and then we left the camp.

Once again I saw some of the streets of Frankfurt on Main. Some were a bit different to what I had seen before, with damaged buildings and piles of broken material and glass still lying in heaps. Reaching the Railway Station we were taken to the Goods Yard and after being lined up, were left without guards for some hours. Later we were taken to two railway wagons. One was a special prison carriage with heavily barred windows, wooden seats and a separate compartment for off duty guards. The other was a closed-in truck with a notice, which translated from the French was written "10 horses or 40 men." It had two sliding doors and two slatted ventilators and a little stove in its centre. We spread out the straw on the floor and then 48 of us got in. After about four hours in the siding we were shunt-ed about the yards and in the evening began our journey to Mulhberg.

I had positioned myself near a small hole in a crack in the door opposite to the one we entered by, and when I jammed my eye close to it, I could see quite well the passing views. For a while we seemed to be travelling alongside a river, and the further we went, until we left the town, the greater the destruction seemed to be. There seemed to be far too much of Frankfurt's large buildings still

standing but it was some satisfaction to see some damage in the factory area of the town. We were all lying in the straw, so cramped that two chaps had no room to lie down and had to stand, taking turns with others to do so. We travelled all through the night with numerous stops. It was bitterly cold with a strong wind blowing. It whistled in through the crack and down my neck and back. My feet were at times uncomfortably warm as they were jammed up against the stove which was kept going most of the night with some odd blocks of wood supplied for that purpose; so, like most of the others, I did not sleep during the night but only dozed at times. Once during the night those who wished were allowed out of the truck, for obvious reasons, and were watched by two guards. The night seemed very long but eventually it came to an end with the dawning of a grey day.

After slow travelling during the morning we came to a stop on a siding near a signal box in the early afternoon. In the far distance I could see the roof tops and spires of a small town. The flat country side, mostly lying fallow, had about two ragged hedges and some scattered trees looking as though they had lost the will to live and merely existed, bowed in submission to the prevailing wind. From a village on the other side some of our guards obtained some large cans of a barley porridge for us from the German Red Cross Canteen there. As it was hot and there was plenty of it, it was greatly relished by all. In the early evening we started off again, and about 9 o'clock that night reached our last stop, Nuef Burxdorf. Here we remained on a siding for the rest of the night. Through the crack I could see a large camp with many shaded lights encircling its perimeter and a number of powerful spotlights flashing and turning. We all guessed it was to be our future home.

Day dawned with low grey cloud and a fine drizzling rain. We lined up in threes and began our march to the camp. Carrying our kit and the remains of our Red Cross parcels we trudged along the muddy roads feeling rather depressed and each man keeping his feelings to himself and, by this, contributing to the silence of the party. Unwashed and unshaven, with torn and creased battledress or flying jackets or pullovers, we must have looked a rough lot of men with all semblance of smartness gone.

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When we got closer to the camp I began to get a better idea of its immense size. Later I was to know that there were much bigger camps than this one, but up to now it was the biggest congregation of men I had seen in a small space. Coming to the entrance of the camp I was struck by the semblance to some Indian Stockade, by the fact that the main searchlight platform and the supports, which were the dominant feature, were built of unbarked logs. A large clock underneath the guards lookout and above the words M.Stammenlager IVB showed the time to be round about 8 o'clock, as far as I can remember. As we waited by the entrance, to be handed over by the Luftwaffe to the Wehrmacht, I saw a batch of prisoners waiting to go out. By their side walking up and down was a broad man of medium height. He had a strong face with very good colouring, a jet black beard and moustache and bright dark eyes. I did not know then that I would meet and know this man - the most dynamic and the finest man it has been my good fortune to meet. My impressions then were far from happy - not enhanced with the scene before me. The huge gates thickly criss-crossed like some spider web with barbed wire, the long muddy main road through the camp with the long low grey huts at close regular intervals until they merged into one formless blur in the distance, the drab clumps of dejected looking prisoners scattered about, the green uniformed German soldiers with their steel helmets and rifles and bayonets and then the greyness and bleakness of everything, the sky, the rain, the barracks, the ground - all the same flat colour. The Luftwaffe guard marched away and we entered the main road of the camp under the escort of some German soldiers in command of a German Senior N.C.O. This man was old, with grey hair, rather bandy legs and a thin sharp pink face with hard, pale blue eyes. He had a high pitched voice and, like everything else about him, we learnt to dislike it intensely. He shouted at us in his own guttural tongue and when we showed we did not understand him, he began to scream at us, his face becoming livid and his head jerking about like a bird's.

By the way he handled some of us it was certainly evident he did not love us.

We eventually arrived at a barrack where, after waiting some time in the rain, we were searched and then, using a stencil, red triangular patches were painted on the right leg of our trousers and on the backs of our jackets and greatcoats. We felt properly branded. Then we went past a long line of tables in another hut where British Army prisoners took our particulars down on cards which, apart from name, rank and number, included name and relationship of next of kin, home address, age and religion. Then in another room we were photographed in batches of about a dozen at a time. When that was all over we were marched to the De-louser and showers. Here we stripped off all our clothing and, with our kit, it was wheeled out of the room by Russian prisoners who worked there. We queued up and filed in under the showers about thirty at a time. Filing out again we passed by two Russians who painted parts of our bodies with a sticky colourless liquid, the odour of which was very strong. As we had no towels we crowded around a huge hot air fan and were soon dry. Soon after our clothes and kit were returned, permeated with an almost overwhelming smell of some type of cyanide which soon had us all coughing and spluttering, and scrambling all over the gear, pulling it and sorting it out, did not improve matters. Then we were inoculated and then, going over to another hut, we were X-rayed. I noticed that the X-ray was taken more quickly than I had ever seen before and the equipment looked better; also instead of using large sheets of film in a holder for each man a Contax (miniature) camera was used which, I think, is much better for the job.

It was now mid-afternoon and at last we were finished, being taken to the barracks we were to be quartered in, and dismissed. Crowds of other prisoners swarmed around us asking us questions and as they were almost all R.A.F. types the bulk of our draft found some former friends and were soon in animated conversation. The appearance of the other prisoners did not cheer me up as I noticed their dirty rough clothing, their pallid cheeks with generally a few days growth of bristles. The comparison between the plump rosy cheeks of

Our chaps and them, was most marked and I wondered how long it would take before we had the same drawn white faces. Inside the barrack in which I was to live I was appalled by the crowded and filthy conditions. I sat on the edge of a bottom bunk, after being told it was mine, and looked around. The pervading colour of everything was a dirty grey, through brown to a dull brick red. Looking at the ceiling one could see that a long time ago it had been whitewashed but now the whitewash that had not flaked off was a dull grey. The bunks were very rough affairs made of wood and in three tiers. They had about nine 6 to 8 inch boards fitted in two ledges for a bottom and then a sack with some wood shavings for a mattress. Needless to say everytime one moved the mattress, clouds of dust arose. The uneven floor consisted of bricks with earth in between, the result, of course, was that the barrack always had a certain amount of fine penetrating dust floating around which increased the difficulty of keeping clean. There were two brick stoves in the hut with hot plates of approximately 4 by 5 feet also some long rough looking tables and benches. At one end a corner was partitioned off with some sacking and it was here that those in charge of the barrack lived. Strung across the ceiling in various parts of the hut were makeshift clothes lines from which hung a lot of grubby looking underclothing. There were about eight windows along each side of the barrack but as most of them had lost their glass panes they were boarded up with the result that it was very dark inside. We were badly overcrowded, with approximately 200 men in each hut. This was certainly evidenced by the stale smell in the atmosphere, very noticeable immediately on entering.

After sitting there a short while another prisoner of a different nationality approached me with some old cutlery in his hand and indicated the price in cigarettes. For about ten cigarettes I was now the proud possessor of a spoon and fork. I could eat in a slightly more civilised fashion now as the Germans did not issue us with any equipment at all and evidently expected us to use our fingers. The first meal I had there consisted of a type of porridge made of broken barley and rye and when sweetened with the remains of my Red Cross sugar it tasted very good to my hungry palate. I thought, if

we get food like this every day from the Jerries, we will not fare as badly as I had thought. Unfortunately I was to find out that the "skilly" as I heard it called, was normally not nearly as good.

Lying down in my bunk that evening I watched the others filling in their time. Some were doing a little cooking on the stove, others were mending their well worn clothes, others reading, others playing cards and games with Red Cross equipment and others were talking. Among the R.A.F. chaps were a number of paratroopers as evidenced by their khaki uniform and maroon berets. I was thinking too. I remembered the Agricultural and Live Stock Shows back in my hometown. The cattle in concrete stalls and the pigs in clean concrete pens and I thought how those animals lived in cleaner and better conditions than we did. It took some time to realise that we lived under worse conditions than many animals, but as I saw more of our conditions I realised it more. It was in this frame of mind that I was suddenly greeted by a "Hullo, Mac, it's good to see you again" and my hands were seized. Reg. and Hory, two of the crew, were there. They had heard of some new arrivals and so searched the huts to see if any more of the crew had been captured and brought to IV B. Needless to say I forgot my despondent thoughts and we talked for some time, exchanging experiences. They told me that they were captured the next morning and met our skipper, Bill & 'Blacky' - the mid-upper, who were also captured at about the same time. They had also been told that a body was found beside the remains of the plane and Hory said that he had feared it was me as he knew I would have been late baling out. So it was either "Bunty" the navigator of "Bill Champ" the Wireless Op. who had "got the chop". I was also told that 'Blacky' had broken his ankle in two places when he landed and therefore they had to half carry him about when changing trains on the way down from Thisted. The Danish people had been good to them at Flensburg and when they gave them good food including cream cakes, the German guards were decent enough not to prevent them giving it. Evidently Hory and Reg had left Dulag just before I arrived there, as they had been at IV B just over two weeks.

I went with them to their hut which was just next door to mine. They had just cooked a tasty supper of issued potatoes mashed up with a tin of salmon from their Red Cross parcels, so I put in a tin of peas - about all I had left from the parcel issued at Dulag, and we ate the lot. We decided that I should try and transfer to their hut as soon as possible and we would all 'muck in' (another term I learnt since being a prisoner) together. I went back to my quarters and arranged with the barrack chief to be transferred to the other barracks the following day.

Next morning I wakened to the sound of an army bugler playing reveille at about 6:30. Among the recumbent forms I noticed a few stirring and heard some muttering and cursing and about quarter of an hour later a couple of chaps emerged from the enclosed space at the end of the hut and began walking up and down, banging the bunks and shouting "Wake, wakey, rise and shine." "Out of those pits" and sundry other expressions. Needless to say there were a lot more curses coming from the bunks, directed chiefly at the Jerries. Just on seven o'clock we were all lined up in fives inside the hut and a couple of Jerries came through and counted us. Then began the usual routine of the day which I was to know so well. A fatigue party went to the cookhouse and brought back some large containers full of hot water, another party began sweeping up the floor with short brushes made out of twigs and thin branches. Although water was sprinkled about, much dust arose, settling on our bunks and on the tables. A few of the men were lighting the two stoves and soon the bulk of the chaps were crowded around them for warmth and trying to make a "brew" or cook some of their food from Red Cross parcels. Other men took rubbish out to the incinerator, while another party went to collect the ration of coal briquettes from the coal shed. After folding up our two blankets and generally tidying up we were sent out to walk around the camp until the inspection was over. A strong bitter wind was blowing from the East.

The surrounding country was very flat and bleak looking, with

the same miserable looking trees, as I had seen from the train, dotted along the roads and bent to the winds. On the western horizon lay the little town of Muhlberg and a tiny glint of silver revealed the position of the Elbe river. On its far bank was some low undulating ground. A streak of dark green along the northern horizon indicated pine woods, beyond, about 60 miles away, lay Berlin. On the East the pine trees were closer with the village of Nuef Burxdorf while to the South were the same uninteresting looking pines with a few farm houses and barns scattered across the fields. I saw the Nazi flag fluttering from a flag pole in the centre of a group of buildings a short distance down the road leading into the camp. I had often seen pictures of it in newspapers and in newsreels at the cinema, but to me it seemed, with all it stood for, as some fictitious story, something to read about, something to laugh and joke about, or to say "How awful" depending on one's mood, but now it was something very real. I could not rub my eyes and find it had all disappeared. It was a concrete fact to me now and no abstract thing.

After about an hour at the outside we returned to our billets and a fatigue party brought in the day's skilly from the cookhouse. It was a horrible, greasy, liquid stuff with a few lumps of tasteless turnip in it. I went to the wash-house. Here I found only one tap working on our side and one for the other side. As the next hut had no water on during the day they came into our wash-house for water. One tap for approximately 400 men. Needless to say, I had quite a wait in a queue before I could wash and fill my "dixey".

By early afternoon I had made the change over from hut 45B to hut 43A and had a top bunk near the wash-house door. About mid-afternoon another fatigue party brought in the dry rations. These were all divided up evenly amongst the men. I cannot remember the exact ration for that particular day, but a typical day's ration at that time would consist of about 350 grams of black bread (5 men to an 1800 gram loaf) an inch cube of margarine, a teaspoonful of sugar and about a 1" cube of fish or liver paste. When we did not get sugar we received the same quantity of turnip jam. We received bread every

day and the margarine about five days a week. The bulk of our food was, of course, made up by a 10 lb Red Cross Food Parcel which we were supposed to receive every week. We were also supposed to receive 50 cigarettes per week and to one who did little smoking these were useful to trade for extra food from the German guards or other prisoners. For about nine months after I was a prisoner we received our full Red Cross issue each week but after that time they petered out. Later in the afternoon I went to the Red Cross Clothing Store and received some more underwear, a scarf and some socks. As I had no pyjamas I now kept the long silk and wool flying underwear I was shot down in for that purpose. I now had enough clothing to keep me warm for the winter and a change as well. Hory, Reg, and I, were now "mucking in" and they showed me how they cooked their food. Each evening we mashed up all our German issue potatoes and mixed it all with a tin of salmon or Sardines or Bully Beef, and putting it all in an aluminium bowl they had, we put it on the fire. When it got hot on the bottom we mixed it up with a fork until it was evenly hot. Then, dividing it in three, we ate it from our dixie lids.

In the evening also we had another roll check, the Germans carefully counting us as in the morning. For about the first month I did little apart from doing my share in any fatigues and finding my way about and getting to know what life was like in a large prison camp. The camp held prisoners from many different countries. At that time there were approximately 8,000 British, 2,000 French, 1,500 Dutch, 8,000 Russian, 1,000 Poles, 500 Yugoslavs and 2,000 Italians, thus making up roughly 23,000. The population of the camp fluctuated considerably ranging from 20,000 to as high as 36,000; generally it was near the 30,000 mark. In one large compound were kept the Russians but they seemed to filter out into the rest of the camp despite the locked gates and sentries patrolling the wire. The bulk of the camp was quartered in about sixty long low barracks holding about 400 men in each. Then in a separate compound were four barracks in which we of the R. A. F. were quartered.

Normally we were as free to wander around the camp as any of the other prisoners, but sometimes on some pretext or other, the Germans would lock us in the small compound. There was no attempt made to segregate the different nationalities, apart from the Russians, and to many of us it was a very interesting experience to meet and know people from most of the countries of Europe. About six huts near the entrance of the camp were known as transit huts or sometimes, transit compounds, although they were in no way fenced off from the rest of the camp. They got their name because they were reserved for British prisoners who were liable to go out on working parties or, as the Germans said, "Kommandos". The barracks all along the central part of the camp housed the French, Dutch and other nationalities, while all the huts at the end of the main road housed the British Army N.C.O's. There were two large cookhouses staffed by prisoners, and it was in them that the "skilly" and potatoes were cooked and the dry rations issued. Each hut collected its rations daily.

As it was difficult to keep a diary, paper at the beginning being very scarce, and anything of a bulky nature being difficult to hide in a search, I decided against the idea of keeping one, and consequently much escapes my memory now. Without going into a day by day memorandum I will try and give some idea of life and activities in Stalag IV.B.

GUARDS:

The guards were all men useless for active service. They were men who did not pass the required standard of fitness or were too old, or had been wounded in action and were permanently unfit for further active service. There were all types among them ranging from out and out Nazi types who hated us, and only looked for some excuse to take a shot at us, to Germans who would do almost anything for us - at a price - provided they would not be found out. About 50% of the barter for German food, particularly bread, took place with the German guard or "Postern" as he was sometimes called. Invariably they would come

to the barrack doors under cover of darkness and contact one of the prisoners. If the prisoner in question was not interested, he would shout out in the hut, "Jerry outside with a couple of loaves to sell - 60 fags each", or, "he wants a bar of chocolate and 20 fags." Some of the chaps would usually go out and after a bit of haggling, would come back with the bread, or whatever else the Jerry was selling.

Their green uniforms were badly cut and of poor quality, and as I had always been used to seeing pictures of tall, smartly dressed German soldiers, the sight of a lot of them, of small stature, and poor physical development, in ill-fitting uniforms was rather a surprise. So this was some of "The Master Aryan Race." The first I had come into contact with at IVB was the old Ober Feldwebel who shouted at us and generally showed how pleased he was to see us. I saw him many times since, often raving at prisoners and calling guards to take some particular man, or men, to the "cooler, or strafe barrack. One day I saw him in a high temper driving an Air Force prisoner before him at the point of a revolver. I often used to wonder what his home was like, and if he ever laughed - to see his grim face as he cycled down the main road of the camp certainly made one wonder.

For about the first ten months we in the R. A.F. compound, saw a lot of a German corporal, whom we called "Blondie". He was a handsome fellow of about 26, and about 5' 8" tall. As his nickname suggests he had wavy blond hair and, like most Germans I had seen, he had blue eyes. He wore a wound medal and a couple of service ribbons - one, I knew, was for service on the Russian front. He spoke a little English and, I think, understood more of it than he let on. He was a soldier and imbued with Nazi principles, although not to the extreme of a fanatic, and it did not blind his sense of justice or, to a lesser extent, his sense of humour. In the mornings he very often did the inspection of our billets armed with a big stick, apart from his revolver. With this he knocked down any lines or

clothes hanging from the ceiling and sometimes the extra shelves the chaps built over their bunks. At a distance the men would boo him but later on they changed their tactics and cheered him every time he knocked a clothes line down. The madder he got the louder they cheered with comments such as "Go on you great big brave soldier" etc. I think he began to realise how foolish he looked, providing such entertainment for soon afterwards he began to leave us more to ourselves and in the end it was the exception rather than the rule for him to tear anything down.

Another Jerry we disliked, a shorter dark man, was very methodical in his inspections. We disliked him chiefly because although he would not touch us he was always searching around our huts for Russians who used to come around for the purpose of barter. When he found any he would kick and beat them to the accompaniment of boos and catcalls from us. I have seen Russians beaten to their knees and with blood streaming from their noses and mouths but I did not see any of them cringe under the German, like I have seen other prisoners. In the faces of those I saw, there was only a dogged sullenness and impotent defiance. This Jerry we called the 'Iron Cross' for the obvious reason that he wore one.

Another Jerry with slick brushed back hair and dark skin, obviously a Southern German, was quite pleasant when he came through the huts. He would talk to us and say how he thought wars were not good and that Germany was finished. The way he carried on gave us the impression that he was a bit feeble minded. If there were any other Germans present he would act very nastily. We did not like him and we trusted him least of all.

One guard was a funny little man with quite a sense of humour for a German. He was inclined to be bandy legged and had a fresh coloured complexion and bright blue twinkling eyes. His face tended to wrinkle and crease up on the slightest provocation and his mouth always reminded me of the mouth of a chimpanzee. We called him 'Tiger Tim'. He was fairly easy on us and what was more to the point was consistently so. If he found Russians in our compound he would drive them out but I never saw him attempt to beat or hit them as many of the other guards did. He could take a joke against himself, as when we outwitted him - another German would have lost his temper.

Schmidt was another guard who was very fair to us and although he did not seem to see any humour in our trying to fox him, he had infinite patience with us. Like 'Tiger Tim' you could not barter with him but we could see that he was trying to do his duty with the minimum of irritation to us and so make our lot a little easier. I doubt if any of the prisoners would want to take advantage of him and if they were going to do something that was likely to get a guard into trouble for, say, lack of vigilance, they would wait if possible until another guard was on duty. Schmidt was a good looking fellow but rather slow witted. He always had a pipe in his mouth and sometimes the chaps would give him a little tobacco for which he was very grateful, but we knew, and did not expect him to feel in any way under a sense of obligation.

I well remember one morning when he and 'Tiger Tim' having dismissed the other guards after the morning count in the compound, decided to stand guard over us for about an hour or so, keeping us out in the cold wind because we were late forming up. We were in two large groups forming a T. The men at the end of 'Tiger Tim's' batch began to edge towards the huts. When the line had almost formed an L 'Tiger Tim' trotted along and began to try and push them back. When he was down there the other end began to bend back thus forming a rough Z. Then these men began creeping along behind the back ranks and with a short spurt were getting into one of the huts and from there filtering back to their own huts. Quite a lot got back before little 'Tiger Tim' realised what was going on, the rows of prisoners immediately in front of him blocking his view. Also by now Schmidt's column had bent at the bottom of the T, towards the huts, while the men at the other end had spread right up to 'Tiger Tim's' column and were nipping behind it and along the back to the huts. When 'Tiger Tim' went to one end the other end would start streaming off into the huts until suddenly all the ranks broke up and made one huge stampede into the huts. I saw 'Tiger Tim' and 'Schmidt' running round in circles trying to stop it or catch someone. They caught

one although I doubt if they made any real effort. They looked so comical I could not help laughing at them. When we were all in the huts we all poked our heads out the window and laughed at the way we had eluded them. They walked out of the compound and I could see them laughing about it as well. If they had been any of the other guards, revolvers would have been drawn and possibly some men shot, or if not, we would certainly have been reported and punished in some way. I often wonder what happened to those two guards.

Another chap we called "The Nazi" - a very bad tempered type. I think he only itched for an excuse to take a shot at us and he was always on the lookout to catch a chap doing some little thing wrong, such as smoking in ranks on roll call; then he would march him off to the strafe lager. Some of the guards seemed to be of rather feeble intelligence and I remember one old chap who used to look at the feet of the chaps in the front row and never look up as he walked along. I presume he counted them, divided by two and then multiplied by five. One or two just rushed down the front rank at such a speed that if an odd chap were missing in the back rank his absence would not be noticed. Then they would work out the number with pencil and paper and they seemed to make quite a mathematical problem out of it. Taken on a whole we certainly disliked the guards although we made use of any of them we could and through them we got many other things into the camp apart from food - almost anything required for escaping, cameras, films, mapping requirements such as pens, inks, tracing paper etc. Towards the close of the war Hungarian soldiers did part of the duties on the outside wire. They were dressed like toy soldiers in navy blue with tall shako type helmets and smartly cut greatcoats and close fitting jackboots. Traitorous wretches we thought them, just collaborating with whichever side they thought was winning. At least you knew where you were with a German. He was a soldier and a fighter but these pansy fellows - !

Other Jerries I knew well by sight, although they had little to do with us in the R.A.F. compound, included another "Blondie" about 5'6" with a sharp face. We all reckoned he was brother to our "Blondie" but I think it was a guess rather than by any actual knowledge. He was in charge of the Russian compound. They were much freer with their revolvers in that compound than in the rest of the camp. The Russians, unlike any prisoners of other nationalities had no International Red Cross or Government who was interested in their welfare or what happened to them. 'Blondie' would beat some of them up on the slightest provocation.

Another guard we knew well by sight used to patrol along the main road looking for Russians who had managed to get out of their compound or had slipped out of a working party going out for the day. He, too, treated them roughly but he was not quite so brutal as some of the others. He was a tall man, a good 6' with a lean face with skin like a lightly tanned leather. I've seen him draw his revolver on them but never saw him press the trigger. One day I remember a Russian had slipped out of the compound and was discovered by this guard creeping under the cover of a few little bushes to get into the main body of the camp. He shouted to the Russian who stood up and slowly moved towards him. This guard had his gun drawn and I think he must have had some trouble with Russian prisoners earlier in the morning. To say that he was in a state of suppressed fury would describe his feelings fairly accurately. High light coloured eyes were hard under his drawn brows and glared with an intentness as would begrudge the split seconds required for blinking. If that prisoner had made one false move he would have been a dead man. Sometimes a Jerry would draw a gun for bluff but not always and as you couldn't tell the difference if paid to take no chances. I've seen British prisoners shot. By the way we named this particular guard 'Long John Silver'.

There were also two Russians in the uniform of the German Army. One was an officer and the other a private and they had a badge on the left arm with the words P.O.A. They were disliked intensely, most of all by the Russians. I would not like their chances of living after we were liberated.

We saw very little of the German officers. They were very smartly dressed and inclined to be stiffly correct and formal. The captain, who acted for the C.O. - a Colonel, was a Captain Koeing and until we had a new C.O. sent to the camp, his orders were not too hard or unreasonable, considering it was a prison camp and not a holiday camp. In the middle of summer they often wore a white uniform which, of course, made them very conspicuous when they walked around the camp.

DISCIPLINE & RESTRICTIONS -

Discipline was at a minimum among ourselves. Unlike most of the army huts, rank did not count in the selection of hut commanders, quartermasters etc., in the R.A.F. huts. If, say a hut commander was proving unsatisfactory, the men would turf him out, hold an election and vote in a new one. The hut commander was responsible to the Germans for the condition of his hut and the punctuality of the men on parade. Sometimes if things were not correct with his hut he would be sent to the cells to do punishment that was really due to the others in his hut. The fatigues for each day were worked out and posted up the previous evening and unless excused by the doctor or because of being on a permanent fatigue, every one had their turn. Apart from the fatigues in the hut each day such as sweeping, getting the hot water and wet and dry rations, each hut had to supply a compound fatigue party about once a week. This usually amounted to between 20 and 60 men and the duties consisted of cleaning out the rubbish dump and incinerator and carting the rubbish away, also straightening up paths, filling in holes etc., and often supplying a party of men for the Pioneer Park where odd labouring jobs connected with the camp were done.

Inside the three high, heavily wired fences ran a low wire about four feet from the inside fence; this was known as a warning wire and anyone stepping on or across it was liable to be shot. About nine months before the end a large number of metal plates with the skull and crossbones, were fastened to these wires and the inside fences. Right round the outside fences were high shaded lamps at short intervals and also about ten or twelve high watch towers, each fitted with a revolving searchlight. The outside fence was about three feet off the middle one and the space in between was one mass of coiled and tangled barbed wire. The space between the middle fence and the inside fence was kept clear for a good reason. When the sirens wailed, indicating an air raid, all the lights went out. The prisoners all had to be in their barracks and extra guards patrolled the camp. Dogs were set loose between the inside and middle fences. Despite these precautions quite a number of prisoners escaped through the wire during air raids. Guards were also always on duty on each cookhouse and at nights on the coal house. Roll calls, when I first arrived in LVB, took place inside the huts - it being winter time; 7 o'clock in the mornings and about 8 in the evenings. After that time prisoners were not allowed outside their barracks until the first whistle sounded by the German guard about half an hour before the reveille bugle. In the spring we paraded at 6.30 a.m. outside in the compounds and about 6 in the evenings. From then onwards we always paraded in the open and it was not too pleasant in the following winter with heavy snow and driving winds, especially when at times we were deliberately kept out in it for times ranging from an hour to a whole morning. We in the R.A.F. were punished more this way than any other prisoners in the camp, particularly, we noticed after a heavy air raid on a major nearby town such as Berlin, Dresden or Leipzig. We used to take a delight, though, in seeing old German guards standing in the intense cold and

penetrating winds and obviously suffering from it. I've seen more than one guard hobbling around the fence on a stick and one even had a crutch.

At times we were locked in our compound for periods up to two weeks. This was also a punishment which was meted out to the R.A.F. only. In any case it could not easily have been given to the Army or prisoners of other nationalities apart from the Russians, as they were not in separate compounds but lived in the main body of the camp.

At night, after lights out, the Germans patrolled inside the camp in pairs, apart from the guards outside the wire. By about November '44 only single guards were starting to go around accompanied by large dogs - every possible man was being needed for the front. Almost all the German soldiers were armed with a rifle, usually a French model with a triangular bayonet. All the N.C.Os and officers were armed with revolvers.

Once a year our captors were allowed, by the Geneva convention to hold a general parade and march past of all their prisoners. I experienced one of these. We assembled in our respective positions at about 9 o'clock one morning in the largest open area in the camp. Some nationalities marched from their quarters to their positions and I will always remember the large Russian contingent. They marched with a steady determined tread all singing one of their battle songs in deep, strong voices. Although only dressed in nondescript and ragged clothing they were most impressive. It certainly helped to confirm my belief that it was the man and not his clothes that showed him for what he was. When all the men were assembled, the "review" took place. We marched out in batches of about 500, 5 abreast down along the main road. A large number of German soldiers lined the road watching us, some of them taking photos. The Commanding Officer and his satellites stood stiffly to attention as we marched past at the eyes right. We all hated doing this but as it was according to the rules of the Geneva Convention there wasn't much we could do about it.

According to the Convention we were supposed to salute German Officers but it was very rarely that any prisoner, particularly a Britisher, did so despite the notices that came out from time to time ordering us to do so, backed by threats as to the punishment we would receive if we didn't. If we saw an officer coming we would usually avoid him or else turn our backs to him. They tried to bring us to heel in this respect by putting a few prisoners in the cells for about two weeks, hoping that these examples would make us change our attitude. However it did not have the desired effect and in the end the Germans left us alone and tolerated our attitude. I well recall an incident regarding about 200 Dutch Officers who, as prisoners, arrived in our camp. We called them toy soldiers as they were dressed very smartly in a rather old fashioned style of uniform which did not look very practical under modern battle conditions. They were also disliked by most of the other prisoners as they acted rather arrogantly and seemed to have a high opinion of themselves. These men, I was told, complained to the German Commandant that they were not getting the respect due to their rank, from the other prisoners. The Commandant simply said to them, so it was reported, "I cannot get any salutes from the prisoners so what can you expect."

Escapes & Escaping Activities -

Although escape from IVB was not a simple matter, it was comparatively easy compared with Luft Camps and Concentration and Punishment Camps. One factor which helped was the large size of the camp with all the nationalities mixing. A camp of this size and composition was rather unwieldy to manage and keep checked especially when it was coupled with the fact that a large number of the guards were rather dull witted. Another factor to our benefit was the fact that there were always quite large movements of prisoners in the camp, either coming from, or going out on working parties. These also were

of various nationalities.

Some parties were, for long periods of time, at considerable distances from the camp, in mines, factories, railways and sometimes farms; other parties, chiefly Russian, Polish or Yugoslav, would leave the camp daily to work on nearby farms and return in the evenings. From these men we would obtain much information regarding the outside world and matters pertaining to escape, such as the best type of disguise, safest routes to travel, whether certain spots were extra hot i.e. guarded more heavily than usual. For instance we got to know that the area within a radius of about 50 miles of the camp was more closely watched and patrolled than previously. The extra armed men required were largely drawn from civilians and Hitler Youth Movements. These people wore a special yellow arm band.

For some months, with a few other prisoners, I spent much time in preparing maps for intending escapes. Thus I obtained some idea as to the number of escapes and realised why the Germans were generally, throughout Germany, tighter in their security of Luft Kriegesgefangener Camps than other camps. A good 90% of the escapes from our camp were by R.A.F. prisoners, about 6 to 8% by paratroopers and the rest by regular army prisoners.

The most common way of escape was for an R.A.F. chap to exchange identities with an Army private due to go out on a working party. Once out on an average working party, escape was not very difficult. Another way was by the obvious method of hacking through the wire. A pair of wire cutters was a big help but so long as the horizontal wires were broken away from the vertical wires, the wires could be forced apart sufficiently in places, to allow a man to get through. The next thing to do apart from equipping oneself for travelling across Germany, was to wait for the R.A.F. Wailing sirens on the camp and at Mulzburg would give ample warning of the approach of the "heavies" and so long as they were within a hundred miles of the camp all lights would be doused from the main switchboard. As the R.A.F. only

made their sorties on the darkest of nights this was to the advantage of those attempting to make the break. To frustrate escapees the Germans let loose dogs between the inside and middle fences but I never heard of any of our chaps being caught or unduly trouble by them.

Quite a number got out in the rubbish or tin cart until Jerry found out and from then on used to stop the cart at the gate and stab through the rubbish and tins with a bayonet. To illustrate how they actually got away from the cart let me give an instance:-

'Miles' and 'Buck' planned to go this way. One morning they went out into the compound with the fatigue party who were to load tins into a cart. When the guard, who was not vigilant on a job inside the camp, was not looking 'Miles' and one of the fatigue party crawled into the bottom of the cart. 'Buck' took part in the fatigue party. The reason he did this was that because of his height (over 6ft) it would be difficult to hide in the cart; how he was to change places and escape will be apparent later. The cart passed out the main gate without incident, after the fatigue party were carefully counted. The party with their wagon and escort made their way to the tin dump situated nearly a mile away in a large compound with two or three empty barracks and a large brick shed. This was all enclosed by a 7 ft barbed wire fence with some lower wire criss-crossed on short stakes outside and guarded by one soldier on duty at the only gate. As the party made their way inside the compound they were once again checked. Then as they proceeded to the tin dump their escort stayed, as usually happened, at the gate and chatted to the guard on duty there. The tin dump was partly hidden from their sight so the rest was easy. The two chaps climbed out, the tins were dumped and the fatigue party went back with the wagon to their guard, still talking at the gate. 'Buck' and 'Miles' were lying low on the far side of one of the barracks. As the guard stayed at the entrance there was little risk of discovery when hacking a way out through the wire - usually in a spot hidden from his view by the barracks or shed.

Normally they would wait until darkness could hide their activities but, if I remember rightly, 'Buck' and his cobbler hacked their way out through the wire during the day. Unfortunately they were spotted later in the day making across the fields and were recaptured.

Another way of escaping was by breaking away from a wood fatigue party. These parties were usually quite large and each hut sent its required number of men who in turn brought their own wood which they had collected in the forest, to their respective huts. Naturally only a certain number of huts were able to be represented on each trip so therefore the huts were divided into groups, each group taking its turn. As the name suggests the purpose of the party was to collect wood for fuel, this commodity being in extremely short supply. The party, after being checked, would leave the camp under the escort of a number of guards. On arriving at some woods the prisoners were shown the area in which they could "scrounge" for broken and dead wood. The guards would station themselves on the outskirts. The prisoners would then dive into the area and gather all the wood they could possibly carry. The one or two prisoners who had decided to escape would watch for a favourable opportunity and then dive off into the woods. The other prisoners would take as long as they could to line up when the German in charge had decided that it was time to go back to camp. Thus the escaping prisoners would have half an hour or more start before their absence was discovered. Usually the escaping prisoners had decided on a hiding place, determined from information given to them beforehand. They would usually hide there until nightfall and then make their way South. Sometimes they would lie low two or three days until the hue and cry had died down, before starting to travel.

George Barrell with a Norwegian in the R.A.F. escaped this way and making South crossed the Czech border. They got some food from some Czech families. As George said afterwards, these people seemed poverty stricken and lived in squalor. In the villages down the main streets there would often be a gaggle of geese wandering along

and perhaps a few pigs roaming about. George and Storm went through part of a very large forest and while in there saw bands of escaped prisoners, chiefly Russian, living rather similar to the bands of robbers in olden times. These men lived in the woods and at that time had quite a lot of food in the berries on the numerous bushes growing there. At nights they would swoop down into nearby villages and farmhouses and raid them, taking away all the food they could lay hands on. They were desperate men and would soon end any resistance that any villagers might put up against them. They were also a thorn in the side of the Germans who could never catch them as they were so cunning and elusive.

After the Germans had recaptured George, twenty days after he had escaped, they interrogated him. They asked him if he had seen bands of men in the woods but he would not tell them. Then they were convinced that he must have had outside assistance to have been at large for so long and travelled such a great distance. To encourage him to talk more freely, George was put in a cell by himself but he was not treated brutally although conditions were hard. At that time the Allied armies were making powerful thrusts towards Germany and this was reflected in the German guards attitude towards the prisoners. George said that his cell walls were well spattered with bloodstains, presumably the result of prisoners being beaten up by the S.S. or Gestapo. Although the Gestapo were wanting George to give them the names of people who, they presumed, had sheltered and fed him, they attempted no physical violence and even at times would come in and give him an apple or two saying, "See we are not bad like some people believe, see we feed you well and bring you apples, you must tell your friends this when you return to them." As George remarked later "I bet they were not speaking like that to prisoners about the time of the defeat at Dunkirk." After about a month in the cells he was sent to a small Stalag in Southern Germany. Here he stayed for about three months before being returned to IVB. Conditions were very good in that camp. For instance the Red Cross cigarettes had about double

the value they had in IVB. A loaf of bread weighing 2 kilo cost about 30 cigarettes whereas in IVB it cost between 60 and 80. The German guards there would come around the hut every other evening with slabs of meat - anything up to almost half a sheep - and for a few cigarettes one could buy enough for a substantial meal. Also many of the guards would bring around all sorts of vegetables and eggs, fruit too, when in season. There was also plenty of fuel - a bit different from our camp.

From recaptured prisoners we learnt the reasons for their recapture - the slips they made and pitfalls to avoid. Often the Germans would be so proud of themselves for being so clever that they would boast about it to the prisoner concerned. Thus we learnt how one prisoner was recaptured because an observant Jerry noticed that his fingers were stained brown with nicotine. No one in Germany could get fingers so brown on the meagre rations and poor quality tobacco they got. Others were captured because of their rough appearance. One prisoner, escaping alone, hid in a railway wagon which was eventually shunted on to a siding in the yards in Frankfurt on Main. Here he stayed for nine days watching for a truck marked for Switzerland; this was in January, the coldest time of the year with much snow and ice on the ground. On the ninth day, half frozen and stiff, peering out through a crack he saw a goods train pull up on the next siding. Almost opposite was a truck marked for South France. Despairing of ever getting a truck for Switzerland, that night he hopped out and crawled into this truck to try his chances in the South of France. Next day after some shunting around the steady rumble of wheels told him that he was on his way. A few days later he reached his destination and getting out sauntered casually along the railway line thinking that he looked like any other railway worker. Imagine his surprise when the first German soldier he was stopped him and called him a Kriegesgefangener and marched him away to the Police Headquarters. He was picked up because he had nearly two weeks growth of beard. He had forgotten about that and therefore, he was very conspicuous.

Most of the prisoners were caught because after a few days on the loose they thought it was just too easy and so became careless. Thus they would walk through a town or village smoking an English cigarette. This drew attention to them as cigarettes were very scarce, let alone a well packed English one. Thus the envy and curiosity of Germans would be roused about them.

Other chaps would get into sealed railway wagons bound for Switzerland without any apparent breaking of the seal. Then right on the border the trucks would be stopped and German Guards would search only the trucks with prisoners in. For a long time this seemed very puzzling until at last we found out why. Every truck had its approximate weight for the journey marked on a special space. One or two prisoners climbing aboard with their gear, would naturally make for an increase in weight. As the trucks crossed the border they passed over a weighbridge. If the weights did not coincide within about 15 lbs. it was obvious that something was wrong so the truck was searched and the cause found. Prisoners escaping by this method were then always warned to tip out approximately their own weight in goods in the truck.

Another way of escape was by the obvious method of digging your way out, like a worm, under the wire. Personally I only saw and was interested in one tunnel although I knew of at least two others in the camp during my sojourn there. This tunnel, under the leadership of Dick Marriot in the R.A.F., was started under the floor of the small prefabricated hut being used as a school. This hut was built on piles and the prisoners obtained first the sanction of the Germans to bank up soil around the sides to prevent balls from rolling underneath when we were playing games. It also prevented them from seeing what was going on underneath. About thirty men were interested in the tunnel and they worked in gangs of about four each with a man on top all the time as a lookout. The

soil of the region was sandy thus making for easier working. Digging straight down for about twelve feet the tunnelling then travelled horizontally towards the wire. The tunnelling could not be dug any deeper as it would then be below the level of the nearby river Elbe, and thus fill with water. The tunnel was about four feet high and was shored up with bed boards placed about two or three feet apart. This was all done under the supervision of a couple of ex-miners from Cornwall. Lighting and ventilation were also problems to be overcome. The lighting was obtained by tapping the electric cables and running flex right down to the working face. Electric bulbs not only gave clean, efficient light but, unlike lamps and gas, did not consume any oxygen from the air - an important factor there. For ventilation all sorts of piping, hose pipes, metal pipes etc., were joined up and run from the tunnel entrance to the face. At the entrance a large rough-looking but efficient pair of bellows was connected to the pipeline and worked by one of the men whenever the others were working below. The spoil was brought up to the top and spread out in the space between the floor of the hut and the ground surface. As soon as the classes finished each day work would commence and would cease just before we were to be in our barracks for the night. This would amount to four or five hours work each day with the exception of Saturdays when between 7 and 8 hours would be worked and Sundays when about 12 hours would be managed. During part of that time about four of us would be busy making maps in the room above. For our own sakes as well as theirs we kept a sharp lookout for any guards.

For nearly two months everything went smoothly and the tunnel had passed under the first or inside wire and then under about 20 yards of a garden in which Italian prisoners worked and had reached to approximately under the middle and outside fences. Then one evening as I was working in the school room, I saw two German soldiers coming towards the school hut. Hastily I put my maps away out of sight and watched them. Fortunately also there was no one working in the tunnel so I did not have to warn anyone. After a preliminary

prowl around the hut the Germans began to poke away a bit of the banked earth on the side of the hut away from the camp. There, of course, they thought that they would not be observed by any of the prisoners. Then one of the guards got flat down on the ground and peered under the hut. After a few minutes he got up and they went away. First thing next morning I looked up Dick Marriott and told him what I had seen. Needless to say he was very concerned about the information and decided to cancel operations for a few days and if nothing happened he was determined to resume. He did not wish to wait too long as in the field outside where the tunnel was due to come up was a tall crop of barley which would provide some cover. This crop he estimated, would be due to be cut in about two weeks time. He and the rest of the chaps, had to go back there to do the work but I decided to do my map making on a top bunk in our hut. Top bunks were best as you could hide your activities more easily from other prisoners. Whenever a guard approached or entered a hut the first prisoner to spot him would yell "Jerry up". This was a warning to any others who were doing or making things they were not supposed to do, to hide the results of their activities.

In about five days time, as nothing further happened work was resumed on the tunnel. About this time I had a trip down, crawling along on hands and knees. There was plenty of headroom and at certain intervals, enlarged spaces, allowing two men to pass. With light and fresh air and neatly boarded sides and ceiling it was certainly a great piece of work and showed what some men could do under very adverse conditions and shortage of tools. On the original planned date of escape arriving there was still a bit over a weeks work to be done. Unfortunately a couple of days later the crop was cut so the tunnel would have to be dug further out from the fence to have the entrance coming under the shadow of the bank of the rifle range. This meant about another two weeks work. All went well until about three days before the estimated finish, when the Germans swooped in the early morning. Fortunately no one was

caught while in the tunnelling which, I understand, disappointed them. The Germans placed a heavy guard around the hut while their officers came and went. Photographers came and spent some time there with their cameras. After all the inspections were over the Germans ripped up all the floor boards in the room and took away all the gear such as the flex, piping etc. Then after a couple of days they had a brain wave and we stood and watched the large latrine wagons go over to the hut instead of going out the main gate into the nearby fields. Here a large pipe with metal shields was placed at the tunnel entrance and the contents of the wagons poured down. For almost a week the wagons came, and went at the rate of about twenty or thirty a day and at last it was filled and the Germans took off the guards, confident that no one would interfere with that tunnel again.

Previous to the discovery of this tunnel one had been discovered in the Russian compound. The Russians had reached out under the track outside the wire where the guards patrolled. Evidently the tunnel was not very deep as one evening the guard thought he could hear something in the ground. His suspicions aroused, he notified his superiors and made a swift search in the Russian compound where the tunnellers were caught red-handed.

As far as I know no one escaped from IVB by means of a tunnel.

SEARCHES =

Stalag IVB was not cursed with the large number of searches that the Luft camps had and although sprung on us at irregular intervals our security system could usually give us at least a twelve hour warning. Sometimes a whole section or compound would be searched, involving 1,500 or more prisoners and taking the most of the day. Other times, particularly latterly, the searches were smaller, embracing at the most only a couple of huts. These searches were more intensive and thorough but would only take half a day at the most and for this reason were preferred to the larger searches.

A typical search of the large variety took place after I had been a prisoner for about four months. As usual it involved the R.A.F. compound only, as the R.A.F. prisoners were causing the Germans far more trouble and annoyance than the other prisoners.

To be continued

Frank HeGregor.