

Wartime Diary of Capt. D.W. Clare, M.C. R.C.A.M.C

1940-1945

Gallant Doctor And Padre Wouldn't Leave Wounded Stayed To Face Hun Fire

Port Hope Minister Last Seen Using Tommy Gun
to Protect Port Credit Doctor Tending
Casualties on Bullet-Swept Beach
of Dieppe



CAPT. DR. WESLEY CLARE



CAPT. REV. JOHN FOOTE

Toronto Star photo above and story (page 8)

WWII Memories of Capt. Dr. D.W. Clare, M.C.

Written in 1988

by

Capt. (Dr.) D.W. Clare, M.C.



Remembering A Hero ...

"I guess I went off to the army because I was a doctor and wanted to help all of the wounded soldiers that were fighting for our country," were the sentiments once said by Dr. Wes Clare of Kingsville.

His love for his country and for his fellow mankind are two attributes that will long be revered in the community which Dr. Clare left behind this past week. Dr. Clare was laid to rest Monday bringing to a close the final chapter of a life that was truly blessed.

As a Second World War Veteran, Dr. Clare once treated wounded soldiers on the beaches of Dieppe and was awarded the distinguished Military Cross for his amazing bravery while under fire at Dieppe and for his courage when he was taken as a Prisoner of War by the Germans.

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #188 President Shane Upcott took a few

moments this past week to reflect on the contributions Dr. Clare made in his service to his country, his community and the Legion Branch. "He has been a great contributor to the community and the Legion," Mr. Upcott explained. "His passing is a great loss to the community."

Recalling personal conversations with Dr. Clare, Mr. Upcott recalled a few of the trials experienced by Dr. Clare in the prison camp. "He proved to be quite a leader amongst the men. Often he was a great morale booster."

Tending to people in need was not uncommon for Dr. Clare, who, after returning from the war, took over a medical practice in the Town of Essex. His battles however, continued after the war as he took an active role in lobbying for fellow veterans who also spent most of the war in prison camps. Dr. Clare's ongoing fight



Dr. Wes Clare, M.C.

helped persuade the Canadian Government to recognize that the illnesses developed by POWs while imprisoned were war injuries and should be grounds enough to warrant a military pension.

Dr. Clare leaves as not only a hero of war who helped bring freedom to the world of today, but he will always be remembered as a hero forever living in the hearts of our community.

The following is a synopsis of more than 5 years service in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, 58 months of which were spent in England and prisoner of war camps (P.O.W.).

As World War II started over 50 years ago only those nearing retirement will have any memories of that time. To the remainder it is history.

It is mainly compiled from my diaries written in camp, but as such writings were heavily censored by the Germans, certain events could not be noted. One diary was confiscated from Jan./44 to Aug./44 and I did not start again till we were marched out of Stalag 344 in Jan./45.ⁱ

At that time the Russian forces were advancing westward and had reached the east bank of the Oder River close enough for us to hear faint gunfire. On Jan.22/45. With only a few hours

notice, 6 groups, each with 1000-1100 men, a medical officer, orderly and some guards were marched out of camp. In winter weather and 2 feet of snow, we started walking to the north west, to stay

ahead of the Russian troops. Later, the remainder of the camp, Doctors, patients, and those previously deemed unfit to walk were moved by train towards Munich.

On our journey, I kept short daily notes, our route, distance walked, food issue if any, the number of sick each day that could not continue walking. These notes continued till we reached a camp at **Follingbostel** in West Germany, between Hannover and Hamburg just 10 kms. from the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen.

This, **about 1000 kms. from Stalag 344**, was where we were liberated by the British 2nd Army, on April 17/45.

1940

June 13, 1940 – Basic Training for Medical Corp



Capt. Dr. Wes Clare

On graduating from Queens (Queens University, Kingston) enlisting the day I wrote my last Cdn. Council exam, I arrived at Lansdowne Park, Ottawa, to begin a 6 weeks basic training course for medical officers on the 13 June /40. On completing this course Dr. Charlie Robertson (Meds 39,

Toronto) and myself were seconded to St. John, New Brunswick. We had been there only a short time when we had our first sample of army organization.

Overseas to England and the “Blitz”

An urgent telegram had us on a train to Ottawa where after 24 hours to pack with no embarkation leave, we were on a troop train to Halifax. Arriving there, we embarked at once only to sit in Halifax harbour for 5 days. Five troop ships, the Battleship Revenge and, a destroyer made up an 18 knot convoy that had us in England before the first anniversary of the declaration of war. We were in the south of England with front row seats for the German daylight raids, particularly, Sunday Sept. 15, (1940), the largest and one of the last massive daytime air attacks. As usual both sides exaggerated gains and losses, but a great number of planes were shot down.

There were constant rumours of an impending German invasion, code name Sea-Lion, through Aug. and Sept. However, one weekend in Sept. the invasion warnings sounded all over England. Our reinforcement unit, all non combatants, were called out at night, filed through a warehouse to be issued a rifle, ammo, and have an N.C.O. show each man how to load it. We were sent out in groups to deemed strong points behind hastily prepared barricades of barbed wire where we spent the night and the next day. There was no invasion, we went back to camp, turned in our rifles and continued to be non-combatants.

Most of the autumn of 1940 was spent in London, either as a member of a Medical Board examining Canadians who were already in England, as civilians or in service, wanting to transfer from British to Canadian Forces. Transfers had to be A1 category or as night M.O. at C.M.H.Q.

Canada House Trafalgar Square, London was bombed nightly for over 3 months with incendiary and H.E. bombs, so each person had an area as a fire watcher.

1941

During 1941 I was the M.O. (Medical Officer) for #2 Cdn. Artillery Holding Unit in Borden where we were the holding units basketball chaps for the Canadians.

In Nov.(1941) I went to the 11th Field Ambulance in Brighton, the Black Watch and the 8th Field Ambulance near Eastbourne.

1942

March 1/42 three unmarried M.O.'s (Medical Officers) were sent to replace 3 married.M.O's (Medical Officers) in 4th Brigade. They were promoted and sent to Field Ambulances. Bruce Hough left the Essex Scottish and I joined the R.H.L.I. (Royal Hamilton Light Infantry)

Preparing for Dieppe

That winter a series of 3-5 day brigade strength schemes resulted in the 4th and 6th Brigades, as so called winners, being transported to the Isle of Wight. There for over 2 months, dawn to dark, the units did Commando training, assault courses, cliff climbing, speed marching and boat drill. Any sick or injured were returned to the mainland camp.

In June (1941) all our brigade officers were assembled in a large building in Cowes, told our target was Dieppe and given our individual orders. Therewas a large scale relief map of the city, area and coastline, which we had to study for hours at night to learn the routes for our own groups.

As the tides were favorable for landing, July 3 to 7, we boarded the numerous navy craft along the south coast of England, but were held up first by bad weather, then an attack by an enemy plane with a bomb hit on a mother ship, causing the raid to be cancelled. Nearly 5000 Canadians, that had not had any passes to 2 months, knew the plans for the raid, were returned to the south of England. Over the next few weeks, in rotation, most of the men were given leave. In mid August I was recalled from the first leave I was given in over a year.

DIEPPE – AUGUST 19, 1942



The Beaches of Dieppe – August 19, 1942

Soon after I had arrived back at Arundel Park where we were under canvas, the colonel called a meeting of some officers headquarters staff, company commanders, and myself as M.O. (Medical Officer) to tell us we were going to Dieppe but the men were to be told we were going on a scheme for the army chiefs. As our target was a secret, I had a surprise inspection of the medical kits, checking the shell and first aid dressings, triangular bandages etc. There had been an issue of 200 syrettes of morphia for over 500 men, which had to be divided among 16 stretcher-bearers. As this was to be a raid, in at dawn, out at noon with the tide, our supplies were minimal.

All along the south coast of England, on the same day, troops were boarding ships and landing craft though not always the same one as allotted previously in July, Only after the R.H.L.I. (Royal Hamilton Light Infantry) had boarded the Glengyle, a commando mother ship, were the men issued ammo, supplies and were told the target of the raid. The officers had to review the previous plans with the men, made difficult by personnel changes; some of the men had not had the previous training. (DIEPPE – AUG. 19, 1942)

Leaving Portsmouth in the evening, our battalion started to off load about 2.30 A.M. into landing craft, at which time we were some 10 to 12 miles from France. These flat-bottomed, rectangular craft had a square bow which could be lowered as a ramp for the 23 to 25 men on board. An hour after starting out there was a sudden burst of firing with flares, tracers and noise. Later we learned that one commando group had met a small German convoy, damaging several British boats and alerting the coastal defences. We were to land on the 1 1/2 to 2 km beach in front of Dieppe, the Essex Scottish on the left, the R.H.L.I. (Royal Hamilton Light Infantry) on the right. Our landing was late, after daybreak, so for the last 1 to 2 miles the long lines of craft were visible and under heavy fire from the alerted shore defences.

**By MAJOR BERT S. WEMP, D.F.C., Etc.
City Editor, The Telegram**

London, Sept. 4—Even when the Germans opened up a terrific fixed machine-gun fire from protected positions on the wounded at a temporary Red Cross base on the upper beach at Dieppe, Capt. Doctor Wesley Clare, RCAMC, and Capt. the Rev. John Foote continued to administer to the boys and remained with them, refusing to go with the withdrawal.

Dr. Clare is the son of Rev. David R. Clare, of Port Credit, and Capt. Foote was a minister at St. Paul's Presbyterian Church at Port Hope and is well known in Toronto.

The two captains went in with the men on the right beach and performed such acts of bravery that words fail to describe them. Pte. W. F. Konkle, 344 East ave. north, Hamilton, of the RHLI, was perhaps the last man to talk to them in Dieppe and successfully embark. Konkle was wounded, not seriously, and was interviewed at the 15th Canadian General Hospital, England, as a walking case.

DOCTOR HIT

"When I came down to the beach Capt. Clare and Capt. Foote had established a Red Cross base. Clare was fixing up the boys who had got it, principally from machine-gun fire, although there were mortars breaking around," said Konkle. "Capt. Clare had been hit in the forehead and had put a field dressing over it. He said it was only superficial and that he was all O.K. He had a lot of boys to attend to and said that he wasn't going to leave them without attention. Capt. Foote was with him and they continued to ad-

minister to the wounded. The Germans opened up on their base with machine-gun fire. They stood it so long and the last I saw of them as I went down to the water was Capt. Foote shooting a tommy gun at the Germans to hold them off. They both remained in Dieppe with our wounded men."

WON MEN'S RESPECT

Capt. Foote won his position of beloved padre. When he first reported the men weren't so sure and he had to prove he was a soldier, he soon did this. The men built him a chapel and made an altar by sawing a rosewood piano box in two. Another with a fret saw cut this in front of the pulpit. A Roman Catholic who was handy with his knife carved him a crucifix. An altar cloth came from other materials. Capt. Foote was one of the boys and he kept that confidence at Dieppe as did Dr. Clare.

Sub-Lt. Glen Northgrave, RCNVR, Toronto, was commander of one of the assault landing craft at Dieppe, this making his third commando raid.

"I guess I was just lucky," said Northgrave to The Telegram. "We had machine gun bullets aplenty and lots of bombs around but my craft wasn't hit directly by anything big at all. I got my men in and out."

Northgrave is small of stature, about five feet two, and only a little over a hundred pounds or so in weight, but he packs bravery by the ton and then says little or nothing but "it was just luck." He has seen more hot action in this war than most Canadians.

Article with photo of Cpt Clare and Cpt. Foote from Toronto Star.

August 19, 1942

Surrender and Captivity

As the originally planned navy and air bombardment had been cancelled, we were landed in chest-deep water and forced to crawl up a very rough so-called beach, under heavy mortar and machine gun fire. There were a great number of early casualties, so for some time my Aid men and myself crawled around the beach checking the wounded and dead. Later a disabled tank landing craft drifted ashore and we gathered the wounded in its lee. After 11 A.M. some landing craft came in, under heavy fire, to try to evacuate some men. Many boats were damaged or destroyed but some wounded did return to England. There were 80 to 100 persons sheltered behind our now burning craft which was now the extreme right flank of the defences. As the tide came in, it was obvious that we had to surrender before the wounded drowned. As the senior officer in our group, I made use of a triangular bandage tied to a rifle.



Captain Clare (front right) (DND photo taken by German soldiers)

Prisoners of War



Germans guard prisoners taken at Dieppe

The prisoners were all collected on the Dieppe hospital grounds, the severely wounded filling, eventually, both Dieppe and Rouen hospitals. The prisoners, able to move, were marched 10 kms. to Envermeu where the officers were put in a church, the men put in an unused factory. As we had been searched my equipment taken, I was unable to do any dressings. Food was a little black bread and water from a pump.

The next day we marched to a train which took us to Verneulles, 30 kms. from Paris. There in an old prison camp, all the prisoners were being collected, the total count reaching (approx.) 1200 O.R.'s, 90 officers, and the 3 M.O.'s (Medical Officers) from the 4th Brigade. There were more than 250 so-called walking wounded, a misnomer as some of these men were in our camp hospital for 6 months, one officer died before reaching the Oflag.

There was none of our own equipment but we had a hut, paper bandages, paper dressings and a few instruments. We each had a wooden table and a constant line waiting for treatment. Infected shrapnel wounds, mainly back and buttocks from crawling, were a problem. Necessary surgery was done by a surgeon of the Adolf Hitler S.S. Division just outside the camp. The patients were carried by stretcher to the German facility, carried back anaesthetized, for us to continue dressings. Food was herb tea in the morning, watery soup and black bread during the day. We M.O.'s (Medical Officers) sometimes

missed the food issue when we were working. The washing and sanitary facilities were scarce and most primitive. At this camp the Germans tried to cause a rift in our ranks by offering special concessions to our French Canadians, (Fusilier Mont Royal-F.M.R.) which they refused. We were allowed one letter each, to be sent by the Red Cross; mine arrived home in mid November.

An interpreter, feeling sorry for we 3 M.O.'s gave us a pack of gauloise cigarettes and a small bottle of cognac with the result that 1/3 of smoke and a shot of cognac, having had little food for days, knocked us on our butts.

Although accurate figures are not available, it is claimed that 5000 men were involved in the raid. The Canadians included 2 brigades (6 battalions), one tank regiment and some support staff; the others were 3 groups of British commandos, navy personnel air force and notwithstanding American claims, less than 50 Rangers as observers. Assuming there were 4000 Canadians in the attacking force, some did not land.

Of those that did reach shore just under 1,000 were killed,

1900 were taken prisoner several hundred of whom were wounded.

The 4th brigade had 545 dead, 197 were from the R.H.L.I.(Royal Hamilton Light Infantry)

On Aug. 27 (1942 we were all moved; the officers with Capt. Joe Walmsley (med's /39, Toronto) were sent to an officer's camp (Oflag) while the O.R. (ordinary recruits) with Charlie Robertson and myself, were put in freight cars, (40 men or 8 horses). Our car had 21 stretcher cases, 4 orderlies, 2 M.O.'s, (medical officers) a box of black bread, some tins of meat, a milk can of water and a pail for sanitation.

As we traveled eastward there were occasional stops, the men were kept in their cars but Robbie or myself were allowed to check the acutely ill, always with a guard.

These were similar to our Home guard; it was a surprise to have one tell me, in English, that he had belonged to a German club in Toronto. This was across the street from my room when I attended Normal School in 1932-33. The cars all had chalked messages, "Churchill's Second Front"

Stalag VIII B



Map of German POW Camps during WWII

Stalag VIII B outlined in yellow on the border of Poland and Czechoslovakia

On Sept 1/42 we arrived in Lamsdorf, Obersilesia, (Poland) Stalag 8B about 100kms south of Breslau. This was a large camp of Allied P.O.W. a captured mainly in France, 40 or in GREECE, along with over 1,000 air force O.R.'s. The only officers allowed in camp did the Geneva Convention - doctors, dentists and padres, protect those.

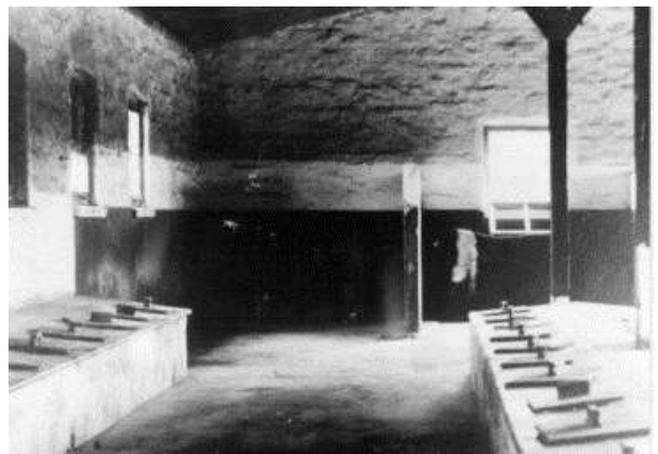
As typhus had been a major problem, every newcomer to camp went through the delouser, where one stripped, went through a shower room and met up with his clothes in another room after they had been steam sterilized. The first shower, shave, some food, a smoke and a bed in the camp hospital (Revier) made for a memorable day,

Lamsdorf – Stalag VIII B



It was roughly rectangular, surrounded by 2 rows of fences 9 feet high, with concertina barbed wire between them. Inside this was a single trip wire about 20 feet away; venturing past this wire was an invitation to be shot. Along the fence were elevated guard posts manned 24 hours a day with men and machine guns, the perimeter was patrolled by guards with dogs. The only entrance to camp was through a guarded gate into a large administrative area of one storey huts; administration, post office, guard barracks, strafe bunkers (jail), camp kitchens and in its own wired enclosure the Revier (hospital) capable of housing some 400 patients and the medical staff. The doctors had a room 10 to 12 ft. by 20 to 24 ft., with 4 double-decked bunks, one long narrow table, 2 benches, a stove for little warmth not cooking, and a small cupboard for food and a few utensils. The beds had wooden slats, if not burned for heat and excelsior filled mattresses. There was no hot water in the hospital, the only shower, cold, was in a small room used as a morgue, cold at any time. From the administration area, entrance to the rest of the camp was by one of two guarded gates, from these gates a street ran the length of the camp dividing it into 3 sections.

Each section had several large compounds, each one with its own wire fence and one guarded gate. Each compound had 4 single storey huts and one **40 hole European style out-house**, which had no water supply. Each hut had 2 rooms in the middle, one for a cold water washroom the other had quarters for the hut N.C.O.'s; each end room had rows of three tiered



bunks, wooden bed boards. Each room held 120 to 140 men, each compound held 800 to 1000 men. The Canadians were put in a compound opposite the air force many of which were Canadians,

On Oct.8th a company surrounded these two compounds, had a roll call in each, at which time every man had his hands tied with rope; this became a daily procedure, lasting from dawn to dusk, with the men confined to their compound. The men went to the toilet in groups of ten, with a medical orderly to do the necessary. For several months I went to the Canadian compound daily, with a medical orderly, a guard, box of medicine and dressings and a pass to get through the various gates, When I thought a man should be in the Revier (hospital) it had to be approved by the senior German doctor.



After about 2 months the ropes were replaced by handcuffs joined by an 18 inch chain. Although they had to avoid being caught the men soon were able to get in and out of these chains.

This retaliation for deemed Allied actions lasted for 13 months it did not include those persons protected by the Geneva Convention.

As typhus had been epidemic the two previous winters, each M.O. (medical officer) was detailed to 2 compounds, 2,000 men, to carry out a skin and clothes inspection each week for lice and fleas. If any were found, that barracks was sent through the delouser, a welcome addition to the sometimes monthly shower - There were also rat drives to control their numbers. That winter saw a marked reduction of typhus cases and deaths.



1943

Then in the summer of 1943 the Red Cross supplied us with enough typhus toxoid to inoculate the medical and delouser personnel.

The death toll a Russian P.O.W. camp, 3-4 kms away, was horrendous, the local cemetery had thousands buried there.

April 28/43, with an Australian orderly, I was sent to a work party Krappitz Obersilesia to replace a New Zealand M.O. (medical officer). This party had 450 men and a medical staff of four working at a paper mill. Here we learned that holtz (wood) gas, adistillate, from burning wood not only ran German cars but it cleaned out a real infestation of bed bugs. This camp was broken up, the medical personnel arriving in Stalag on June 10. (1943) On JUNE 18 (1943) a New Zealand sergeant, 2 orderlies, one English, one Australian and myself arrived at a camp at Adelsdorf, a party of 180 men, near the Czech border. The men worked at a pulp mill making excelsior. We were 5 kms, across the border, from Freiwaldau, a town that had a railway and a hospital with an x-ray machine. In the Czech mountains were many small work parties, P.O.W.'s caught in France or Greece who had not been to stalag or been checked by an allied M.O. (medical officer) for 2 years or more. Twice a week with 2 orderlies and a guard, we would walk 5 kms to the train station to hold sick parade; the men from their parties, with guard would arrive by train.

There had been an outbreak of typhoid in the area, so I had to visit the camps to check the men and give them booster shots supplied by the Red Cross. In July 4 and August (1943) we visited 32 parties, saw over 100 men. Each trip started with a 5 km walk to the station a train ride to some stop, then a walk of some kms to a camp, checking the men and returning the same day. This was summer in the Czech mountains, pleasant even beautiful scenery but it could be tiring. Our longest trip was 120 kms, a record of sorts as we missed 3 trains, took one wrong train and had to spend the night at a camp at Hannsdorf where the men worked in a brewer.

We had a friendly relationship with our guards so I was able to have an extension and speaker from the guard commanders radio.

The only doctor in the area was in the army, a Sgt. major, who covered the barracks hospital, Freiwaldau and neighbouring civilians. When the men and guards were at the mill, the older village women would come to our camp for what ever treatment that I could give them; this was verboten, a well known word, but so were the eggs I might find on my table when they left.

In Sept. my Aussie orderly was recalled to Stalag as there were rumours of a repatriation draft. The first group of men did go home via Switzerland, this included those passed unfit by the Red Cross commission, medical orderlies and several doctors.

On Oct/43 my Sgt. and myself were moved to a camp at Oberglogau, 15 kms from my 1st camp at Krappitz. A number of the men were Canadians sent out in 1942, before the chaining episode. The others were a new draft of P.O.W.'s transferred from Italy when peace broke out there. They were all working in a sugar factory, using sugar beets, in 12 hour shifts.

On a short trip to Stalag, through Breslau, one noticed many changes. The Revier (hospital) staff was quite different, some had made the repat. list, some had been transferred to other camps, several new doctors and a dentist had arrived. The main camp had hundreds of men transferred from Italy. On returning to the party we learned of the transfer of 100 men. When this group were checked out it was obvious that the whole camp needed to be deloused. We were allowed to use a tall, cylindrical vat in which we built a platform to hold the men's kit. As each shift went to work, we, the N.C.O.'s medical orderlies and myself, put their kit in the vat and steam sterilized it at 108 to 112 degrees C. In this way their kit was finished by the end of the shift. In Dec. (1943) another 75 men left, so there were only 75, mostly Canadians, remaining for Xmas and New Years. With a small keg of 2% beer, some black market schnapps and some extra food from the German bosses, each shift had its Xmas party, though work did not stop.

1944

Jan-1/44 I was returned to Stalag where my diary was confiscated for censoring and was not returned for several months.

In Feb./44 most of the Canadians, except the officers, were collected at Stalag 8B, renamed Stalag 344 to be moved to a new all Canadian stalag near Stettin at Stargard (2D). Robbie and I were to be moved, our kit was on the train, when a German officer insisted that we sign a paper agreeing to ride in freight cars, to clear the Germans with the Red Cross. Though we had fully expected to travel that way, we were advised by the Senior British M.O. (medical officer) to not agree in writing. As a result, we were not allowed to move and did not recover our kit for 2 months.

The 8th of May (1944) I was sent to a small 125 bed camp hospital, south-east past Auschwitz, at GrosStrehlitz. Our camp was a wired enclosure within the grounds of a large German hospital. There were double decked beds, in wooden huts, the patients were 75% from Russian work parties, the rest were Allied P.O.W.'s. The Russian orderly, a former medical student had been conscripted as a battalion M.O.(medical officer). As Russia did not sign the Geneva Convention their prisoners received no protection or supplies from the Red Cross, so the life expectancy was about 2 years for a Russian P.O.W. Their officers were even more harshly treated than the O.R.'s. Being the only officer, I had a small private room, a bed with metal springs, a door with a lock, ideal for the use of a hidden radio. An English sapper had cut a water bottle in half, soldered it so the top part held water, the bottom part could hold the parts of a crystal set. Using the bed spring as an aerial, I could set up the radio to hear the eleven o'clock B.B.C. news for Eastern Europe, relayed through Tripoli.

June 6, 1944 – Normandy Invasion

The night of June 6th I heard the first news of the Normandy invasion. When I told the men in the morning word spread very quickly through the camp, also spreading outside That day, with no explanation, I was returned to Stalag and was never detailed for another party.

In Stalag we kept 2 sets of maps, one showing the front by German reports, the other, hidden, showed the BBC. reported front. Both sides exaggerated their reports so we took the mean between them.

We read the obituary notices, in the daily paper, carefully. Early in the war men died for "Führer, Volk und Vaterland", (Führer, home and Fatherland) later it became only "Volk und Vaterland". It was also apparent that as the Germans retreated deaths were reported 100 kms from the reported front.

1945

Through the fall of 1944 we checked the news carefully, but Xmas and New Years went by with no change in our routine. In mid January we heard distant gunfire and the Germans began to burn camp records.

On Jan.21st (1945) by loud speakers, came the announcement that all men able to walk were to prepare to move out.

Of the 12,000 men in camp, about 6,000 had to march out.

6 groups each,

with one M.O. (medical officer) as the only officer

and 1,000 to 1,100 men

we were to leave at 3 to 4 hour intervals.

An English orderly, who had been with me on the work parties volunteered to go with me. During the last night we built a sleigh with tin runners and packed our kit and the few medical supplies that could be spared.

My kit bag had 2 blankets, a change of clothes some chocolate and all the cigarettes I could manage. Those people remaining in camp were moved later by train near Munich.

The next weeks I kept brief, daily notes of our travels, the routes, distances traveled, the number of sick unable to walk on, food issues if any.

It was obvious that the men were poorly equipped for a long winter march, poor footwear, cold weather, deep snow.

“The March – January to March 1945”

Called the Black March, Bread March, or Death March

Captain D.W. Clare’s diary notes

from January 23 to February 21, 1945

Tuesday, Jan. 23/45

Distance walked 23 km.

Up at 5 A.M; Jim (my orderly) and I loaded the sleigh: by 8.30 A.M. were out the gate of the camp where we were issued – 1 Red Cross parcel, 1/2 loaf of bread, margarine. I had received from the officers remaining in camp about 300 gm of tea, one tin powdered cocoa and milk. some sugar and 2 small packages of raisins. 12 Noon, rest for lunch. Previous parties, already discarding kit along road. The roads were good except last kms we had deep snow. At 5-30 arrived at Dominion at Friewalde, dusk, crowded old vegetable barn. At:8:30 p.m. I found Capt. Davison in a barn with 88 sick.

Wed. Jan. 24 (1945)

Distance 25 km

Up at 6.15 (a.m.) Had 68 sick. Left 9:30 a.m. At noon one man fainted and was sent back to Freiwalde. Road good. sleigh worked well. 6 P.M. at Prieborn, in horse barn; Saw 5 padres from another camp, cooked hot meals, rats in straw. I had Synovitis of left Achilles Tendons. No food issue.

Thurs. Jan 25 (1945)

Distance 30 km

Up at 7 AM march out 9 AM. Issued bread (civilian loaf) 1/5 each. Load on sleigh came loose, one runner came off. Hard going all morning; leg painful- 5 PM had vegetable soup at Fabric In Munsterburg. Long march up hills, then through snow. It took one hour to go 1 km. At 10 PM arrived at barn; Met Capt Tattersal and padres from another group. Everything full; party split in two groups between Altburwalds and Alt.Aldemodorf; completely tired; supper - tea.-bread and meat.

Fri. Jan 26 (1945)

Distance 23-25 km

Up at 8 A.M. Wash & shave in kitchen of house; dried socks by fire; hot coffee and apples in house; Jimmy (Sanitator) fixed barrel hoops for sleigh runners. Capt. Tattersal and I did dressings in morning, One padre in poor condition, we dressed his feet and he had influenza gunfire seemed closer. Marched off at noon. Through Frankenstein; putting up road blocks of trees at edge of town. Arrived at Olbersdorf; slept in ballroom of large house. Had put kit bag on wagon, did not arrive; No blankets for night.

Sat. Jan-27 (1945)

Distance 21 km

Left at 9:30 (am); 3 M.O.’s walked together as groups were all together. Went through Reichenbach to Neudorf; Lunch – biscuits and cheese. Heavy transport on road. Three groups were at a large farm (Dominion); eleven of us in a small kitchens slept on straw, had radio news. We had 2 hours of sick parade in kitchen while boys cooked. Kit arrived with wagon. One M.O. lost his blankets. I lost cigarettes, chocolate and socks. From 10 p.m. to 3 a.m. some men got soup. Sanitators feet very bad, no bread issue; gave bread and biscuits to man who had his food parcel stolen.

Sun Jan 28 (1945)**Distance 24 km**

Tea and bread; 40 sick; went through Sweidnitz; being evacuated; roads jammed with evacuees. Had soup from train kitchen. Went on to Alt Juarnich; everything full; went on 6 km across open moor; 40-50 cm- snow. Dreary road, cold, to barn with no roof; no water; Sat by fire all night, very cold; much frost bites; one man had boots stolen in night.

Mon. Jan.29 (1945)**Distance 29 km**

Marched back to Alt Juarnich; arrived at 11:15 a.m. One party had soup early. The sick started to walk 11 kilos but returned, I stayed with Major McLarty (M. O.) while his group had soup and used forge in Dominion to fix sleigh; One New Zealander was blinded by smoke from previous night. Started at 2 p.m.; Issued 1/10 loaf of bread at mill. Walked in blizzard and snowdrifts through Streigau to Rhonstock to Dominion at Barhof. I pulled sleigh most of the day as Jimmy (Sanitator)(orderly) was ill. After night march through blizzard arrived at 9 p.m. I slept in stable with padres and sick; 22 sick arrived on wagon for the night.

Tuesday. Jan 30 (1945) Rest Day

Had shave and wash in the open; had sick parade for 2 1/2 hours in morning and 2 1/2 hours in afternoon; blistered feet and frostbite. Night was noisy and crowded; food poor; no fires allowed for cooking. Had issue of bread 1 loaf to 4 men, soup, oatmeal (Halbel flocken).

Wed. Jan. (1945)**Distance 22 km.**

Up at 6 a.m. Tea. 1 slice bread. Left at 8:15 a.m. Weather mild, snowing. Roads very hard walking; gunfire to the north. Made good time to Jauer where road blocks were under way. Passed circus with wagons stuck in the snow; very slow, deep snow, turned west and gun fire decreased. About 1500 hours were at Kuchau. Billets good; slept in Kindergarten on stretchers for children. Told this was home area of Baron Von Richtofen. Had Halbelflocken soup, potatoes, glass of wine and cherries. Did sick parade in barns and dressed 2 hands in our billets. Ashes from previous groups still warm. Joined by 6 NCO's (Non Commissioned officers) from previous party. One man run over by-wagon. Traded for dry oatmeal (Halbelflocken), tin meat, salt.

Thurs. Feb.1. (1945)**Distance 12 km.**

Breakfast - oatmeal porridge, bread, cocoa and cherries. Meat for sandwich on march. Left at 0900 hours, roads soft, snow melting; sleighs were being abandoned. Ours left behind 3 km from Goldberg. Road blocks being built, sunny, clear day. Arrived at Dominion 1 km east of Goldberg; stayed upstairs in Polish kitchen. Had tea. From 15.30 hours to 17.30 hours had sick parade of 31 men from Air Force group; 8 men from Breslau group. Issue-1 loaf of bread for 10 men, thin soup. Poles gave us mashed potatoes. All the local families came to see the doctor. Slept on straw on floor. Supper - potatoes and milk.

Fri. Feb 2. (1945)**Distance 10 km.**

Up at 0600 hours. Tea and bread; 39 sick. Issue – 1/5 loaf; Left at 09:30; all sleighs gone. Carried packs 10 km to Pilgramsdorf. Mens' accommodation poor, no water; Postens (guards) kicked out all the fires. We had billets in Kindergarten; young school teacher. Had sick parade 14.30 to 15.45. Bought loaf of breads, jug of milk and 2 rye loaves. Teacher gave us potatoes and had an electric heater so we had tea and toast. Slept on straw in room. Issue of potatoes to some men. Had potatoes, bread, tea for supper.

Sat. Feb. 3 (1945)**Distance 33 km.**

Up at 0600. Cocoa and toast. Issue- bread 2/5 loaf; 32 sick on lorry. Started at 0800 hours; Our kit was cut down; All our blankets were on postens (guards) wagon. Had blister by noon; had drink of buttermilk. It was hard going uphill through Lowenberg. Had ride on ration wagon for last 4-5 km. Stopped at Gasthaus for coffee and bread; had beer from postens (guards). Helped, push wagon up a hill. At Welderdorf, Capt Tattersal and party stayed in village. Our party went on 2 km to poor barns. We had billets in a machine shed on straw. Ate in hallway. Issue - soup and 3 potatoes. Bought loaf and apples from house. Held sick parade in horse stable. It was raining, muddy; Men wet and tired.

Sun. Feb. 4. (1945)**Distance 25 km.**

Breakfast - oatmeal porridge, bread, tea. Issue - one loaf to 10 men. Had sick parade in lean-to shed. Left 34 sick for wagons on road at 09.30 hours. Very slow going; lunch at Lauban. Went through Lichtenau; no room. Went further 8 km to Schloss Heidelsdorf. Passed large group of Jewish prisoners on road. One man fainted and helped him in last 4 km. I always stayed at the back of the column to protect and help the stragglers. Sent 33 men on lorry to Gorlitz. Spent night in castle. Had spring bed - 4 in a bed - hot and uncomfortable. Supper - potato soup from houses bread, tea. Men had barley soup. Had wash and shave. Started with nausea and dysentery.

Mon. Feb.5 (1945)

Up at 0800 hours. Had porridge tea and bread. Sick parade for one hour. Issue - pea soup one loaf bread to 4 men. Left at 12.30; Put 15 sick on wagon. Arrived at Gorlitz-Mays at 16.30 hours (Stalag V111C). Got kit from wagon. Met Capt Tony Stallard in front of Revier (from Lamsdorf) and Capt. Gibbons (Lamsdorf) who had accompanied a group to Switzerland for repatriation, had arrived back at this camp. So 5 of the 6 doctors that walked from Stalag 344 had arrived at V111 C

Tue Feb. 6 (1945)

Rested. Took Sulfa-guanidine for dysentery.

Wed. Feb. 7 (1945)

In morning went to lager to see men. In the afternoon began work in the Medical Inspection room. Worked 14.00 to 17.30 hours. Checked sick from Sweidnitz.

Thurs. Feb. 8 (1945)

Rested in morning. Word of further move. Capt. Tattersal was supposed to go to the French Lazarette. Had sick parade in the afternoon.

Fri. Feb. 9 (1945)

Morning was free. Sick parade in afternoon. At night told that Capt. Gibbons and I were to go to the Lazarette, packed.

Sat. Feb. 10 (1945)

Lazarette move cancelled. Major McLarty and Capt. Gibbons were marched out with 3000 men from Lamsdorf. At 12.30 I was sent to the French Lazarette which had 5 French doctors. Had small room, a fire and a bath.

Sun. Feb. 11 (1945)

Had hot chocolate and white roll from French. Made hospital rounds.

Had all English speaking patients moved to one barracks. Had 2 French orderlies in the barracks. An Australian sergeant was the interpreter.

Cases mainly frost bite and pneumonias. Private Tyler had gun shot wound left arm, infected amputated given penicillin 19,000 units daily.

My first use of penicillin. He seemed improved.

Mon. Feb. 12 (1945)

Hot chocolate. Rounds In A.M. Arranged wards by type of infection checked medical stores checked the pneumonias till 1800 hours. Had supper with French doctors. Read for an hour

Tues. Feb. 13 (1945)

Chocolate and bread. Rounds at 10.00 am and from 14.00 - 18.00 hours.

Checked histories and worked in barracks. We received medical supplies from camp hospital in Gros Strehlitz. Sgt. Vertrauensman had been on march 24 days. Sent to Stalag for my personal kit. Had abscess on my right ankle.

Wed. Feb.14 (1945)

Chocolate. Word from Stalag that all well people were to march. Lazarette lists were prepared and all English-speaking were to go by train. Prepared lists of walking, sitting and lying cases after dinner. There were air-raids and bombing. Saw all English and American patients in Lazarette. One American. severe religious mania, had to be left in hospital, later.

Thurs. Feb. 15 (1945)

Tea and bread. No ward rounds. Capt. Tattersal and 1000 English, Canadian and American left camp. Transferred sick from camp to Lazarette. Word that extra personnel were to leave hospital Thursday night or Friday. That night word that English-speaking were to go by train, French to stay.

Fri. Feb. 16 (1945)

0600 hours everyone roused. Orderlies preparing to leave. At 0800 hours in ward. had coffee and toast with orderlies. At 09.30 two officers and sanitators left. Work went on in barracks. Sound of artillery in distance. Afternoon quiet. Had bath and bed.

Sat. Feb. 17 (1945)

Rounds at 10.0, Patients well. At noon word of move by train. All walking cases packed and at gate. By 1300 hours on way to Gorkitz station. At station we had all walking cases, 13 lying cases hand carried by French orderlies. Capt. Tony Stallard arrived from camp and 45 palliases were brought down. Train of 30 cars, 5 for lying cases, one open truck for rations. We had eventually 51 lying cases from Lazarette and 35 lying cases from camp. Last patients arrived 1930 hours. It was very dark and crowded. Arrangements were left to Tony Stallard and me, Rations to men were bread, meat, margarine (not issued then). Lazarette party given 2 tins meat, jam 20 or 2 cheese in lieu of meat. Some Serbians gave us an American Red Cross food parcel. At 2200 hours we were under way. Air raid very close, railway wagons shaking. We had about 1000 men, 2 medical officers and 20 cases of Holtzwohle for 30 wagons.

Sunday, Feb. 18 (1945)

Cool night, many fleas. Had breakfast – bread, cheese and a drink. Went through Dresden in morning. Many fires from bombing. Issue - 1 kg loaf per man, meat 1 tin for 6, margarine. Some bread had been stolen. Red Cross parcels at Stalag and Lazarette had been divided - one parcel for 8

men with 9 cigarettes per man. This was issued at Riese, north west of Dresden. There were long halts during the day. We had one Unter officier and 10 posten for whole train. Sick were fairly comfortable, gave one, Pte Rowe morphine. Pte Cummings developed Scarlet fever. There were 4 of us eating together Tony (Capt. Stallard), Jimmy (Sanitator), an RAF Flight Lieutenant who had had surgery and myself. Many men in camp had made 'blowers' (miniature forges with fans made from wood base and tin from food cans) One could boil water in 2 or 3 minutes with a small quantity of wood chips. We had one and could make hot drinks for our patients. This had been carried on the march. Ate at 15.30 hours made last rounds of trucks bed at 1915 hours. During night there were air raids but made fast-trip with electric engine.

Monday, Feb. 19 (1945)

Train stopped at Halberstadt 0730. This was about halfway between Leipzig and Hanover S.W. of Magdeburg. Did rounds of lying cases. Hot cocoa from blower for pneumonias and serious cases. Stopped all morning. A strafe party had an American sentenced to 30 years gave him bread and cigarettes. Word of fighting In Gorlitz area. At the station, beside our train was a Luftwaffe train with a car with A.A. gun. About 1330 hrs police came to Tony and me claiming our men had stolen Luftwaffe food and gave us one hour to produce the food and the culprits or they would shoot ten men. Before the hour was up 2 RAF Mustangs appeared and were fired at by the Luftwaffe A.A. which resulted in 2 strafing runs at the train. Our men were mostly outside the railway wagons and we had 11 killed and 26 wounded in a few minutes. The food incident was forgotten; 10 dead and 20 wounded were left at Halberstadt. We moved during the night; had air raids; nothing close. In the confusion following the air attack, the American from the labor gang (strafe party) was given a uniform and joined our group.

Tues.- Feb. 20 (1945)

Passed through Hanover; heavily damaged, reached Follingbostel about noon. Walkers marched to camp; sick slowly cleared by lorry along with X-Ray and diathermy machine from Lazarette Gorlitz. Arrived at Stalag XIB Lazarette at 1630 hrs. About 3000 British prisoners; 4 doctors and 300-400 men were airborne captured at Arnheim. One doctor had infection and was unable to work. Tony and I with Jim as orderly were in a room in barracks with sick from train. Lights out at 19.30. Bed by candle light.

Wed. Feb. 21 (1945)

Up at 07-30 Breakfast, then checking wards. Went to Lager to see men; quick sick parade; checking how many were sick. We went to see Chefarzt re medical arrangements with negative results. Made ward rounds; everyone quite well after trip. Had shower; supposed to last one month.

Weighed 58 kg (123 pounds) in clothes.
Had been 80 kg (176 pounds) at New Years.(1945)

Thurs. Feb. 22 (1945)

Up at 07.30. Went to lager doing sick parade. Men were deloused and bathed. Air raid and strafing along railway. Back at 14.30; patients bathed; did ward rounds. Tony doing 3 wards and I did 3 wards.

My notes stopped at this time.

The daily programme became routine, increasing works decreasing supplies and food.

Stalag XIB was across a road from a large military camp. My memory is that of an S.S. barracks. If we faced that camp, to our left there appeared to be a small village and past that on a hill 2 or 3 km away was another stalag.

Several times work parties from that camp came to our camp either bringing patients to the Lazarette or picking up a few rations. In this way I met some Canadians and prisoners from Lamsdorf who had reached Stalag 357 from the march.

Our camp had the Lazarette where the Chefarzt had refused permission for Dr. Stallard and I to work, so we used long, single-storey wooden barracks as sick wards. Rooms were lined with triple bunk beds with a small room for medical supplies and 2 or 3 orderlies. It was difficult treating lying cases on the bunk beds. Many were too ill to be deloused and with the old palliases for mattresses we had problems with body lice.

In the camp were many nationalities, with one Italian doctor in a separate wire compound with a small X-ray machine, who claimed he was a lung specialist. He saw 3 or 4 patients a day and would do nothing for the many men arriving on the march from the east.

Almost daily now groups of men arrived and the estimate was that we had 10,000 men in our camp. There had been some Russian prisoners in our camp when we arrived and I remember being told of a Russian camp near the rear of our camp but I never saw it and I never was in Stalag 357.

Our sick numbers increased so the men had to stay in their bunks and we checked them there. Conditions in camp were deteriorating, number of men increasing, decreasing food, more sick and many dying.

As word of the Russian advance from the East and the Allied advance from the west became known, camp discipline became disorganized. Several groups were made to march out of camp and some after marching for several days were returned to camp. There were constant air attacks in the area and we were allowed to paint a large P.O.W. on the roof of each barrack.

I vividly recall Easter Sunday as a Sgt. Major took me to the rear of the camp where a small building was used as a morgue. This was piled with dead that had not been buried due to confusion and lack of able men.

About this time we realized that the German barracks and most of our guards were gone leaving only a very few posten (guards).

From this time, each posten (guard) was accompanied on guard duty by 2 POWs on orders of the Senior Medical officer.

Liberation!

Though we could hear the distant fighting it was several days before we woke up on Monday, April 17 (1945) to find British troops outside the camp.

They had liberated the Belsen-Bergen. concentration camp on Saturday. There was no mention of this camp in your notices.

After liberation, I was able to walk about the German barracks. A British Field Ambulance used the Officers mess and I walked through the huge 3-storied buildings used as store-rooms, full of goods and articles from captured countries.

I liberated a case of Eau de Cologne, 4-7-11, which I gave to my mother and sisters later on at home.

At this time, we estimated there were 10,000 men in camp, nearly 5000 bedridden so evacuation was set up in a convoy of lorries for the walking and an ambulance convoy for the sick.

Each day the two convoys made a four hour trip to the nearest Allied airfield and were air-lifted to England.

Because of the numbers of sick and only 5 working doctors we had to stay for several days. Finally the numbers of sick were reduced and after about 10 days Capt Stallard and I were told that, as long-term prisoners, we could leave with an ambulance convoy.



**I am a patient in hospital in England on May 8, 1945
(V-E-DAY)**

This may or may not be what you wanted in the way of history but most of it is from daily notes at the timing some of memory but it is difficult to forget many events of the time. I have enclosed photocopies of 3 Ausweist the only documentation I have and one picture of myself, my medical sergeant John Drake, New Zealand, my orderly Jimmy Theobald, London, Eng.; taken in a photography shop in Freiwaldaup, Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1943,



Wes Clare and Earl Clare (also a POW) when they returned home

Citation at Capt. Clare's investiture, Awarding him the MILITARY CROSS at London, England on May 17, 1946.

"Captain Clare served as medical officer to the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry at Dieppe on 19 August 1942. Throughout the operation Captain Clare carried out his work without regard to his own safety under heavy enemy fire. The rate at which casualties had to be treated on that day used up all medical supplies available in a short time and Captain Clare was forced to improvise. At all times this gallant officer gave unstintingly of his efforts far beyond the duties of a medical officer while working under the most hazardous conditions.

At the conclusion of the action Captain Clare refused to take his place on the last available landing craft leaving the beach because he believed he was the only medical officer in the area and many men still need professional care if their lives were to be saved received the Military Medal for his bravery at Dieppe.

Dr. Wes Clare became a much loved family doctor in the Town of Essex and was one of the group who started the Essex Medical Clinic in the 1950's.
