

***The Clarion* calls:**

bringing home into the Prisoner of War camps

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Abstract

Often overlooked by prisoner of war historians, the newspapers and magazines produced by the prisoners within their prison camps offer a valuable additional source for those studying the history of prisoners of war. This study evaluates the usefulness of these publications to historians and will contain a comparative analysis from publications produced in German and Japanese-run prisoner of war camps. It will use these sources to demonstrate that through their activities and relationships, both with the Relief Agencies and each other, prisoners did not simply live within the vacuum of their camps, but created physical and emotional links to the outside world to help them cope with the conditions of captivity.

Introduction

“May its life be a complete success but not a long one.”¹

This was the expression of hope made by Regimental Sergeant Major Sydney Sherriff, the Camp Leader of the Allied prisoners of war in Stalag VIII B/344 in his welcome to the first edition of *The Clarion*, a magazine produced by prisoners of war (hereafter “POW”) in captivity. *The Clarion* was one of a number of such publications in POW camps.

After the Second World War, stereotypes emerged of an “ingenious, brave and skilful” British officer in Europe who saw captivity as a game involving escape and “goon baiting”,² or of the slave soldiers held in the Far East by the Japanese who believed culturally that soldiers should die in battle rather than allow themselves to be captured, and who worked the half-starved prisoners to death on projects such as the Burma Railway.³ These stereotypes emerged largely due to academic historians leaving the genre of POW history to popular historians, memoirists and TV/film producers,⁴ resulting in popular myths emerging around camps such as Changi or Colditz. For Midge Gillies, whose father had been a POW, these stereotypes left her feeling cold and the histories they portrayed seemed “far removed from the quiet desperation” experienced by men like her father.⁵ Gillies’ book seeks to explore the day to day life of the POW, not just those periods when they may have been trying to escape. Her book is one of a number of more general accounts of POW histories which have focused, for example, on a particular theatre of operation,⁶ particular activities⁷ or have

¹ RSM Sydney Sherriff, *The Clarion*, No. 1 January 1943, p.1.

² Joan Beaumont, “Prisoners of War in the Second World War”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, (43:3) (July 2007), p.539.

³ R.P.W. Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience: The Changi POW Camp Singapore, 1942-5* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), p.2.

⁴ Beaumont, “Prisoners of War in the Second World War”, p.535.

⁵ Midge Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University: The Real Lives of Allied Prisoners of War in the Second World War* (London: Aurum Press Limited, 2012) p.xvii.

⁶ See Brian MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword: Prisoners of the Japanese 1942-45* (London: Abacus, 2005) or Adrian Gilbert, *POW: Allied Prisoners in Europe 1939-1945* (London: John Murray (Publishers), 2007)

sought to dispel earlier myths.⁸ Such works have all attempted to move away from these stereotypes and concentrate more on the experiences and behaviours of the POWs themselves.⁹ These accounts have also moved away from the earlier focus on escape and resistance towards a greater consideration of the everyday lives of the POWs, their environment and how they coped with the conditions of captivity. Moore and Fedorowich categorise the study of prisoners of war into three categories.¹⁰ The first are the accounts and analyses of the prisoners' experiences and behaviours, using one particular type of prisoner from a particular theatre of operation which draw upon, and are complementary to, the memoirs and autobiographies of the ex-prisoners. The second category looks generally at the experiences of a particular nationality of prisoner,¹¹ while the final category considers prisoner history in a wider context of the conflict.¹²

This study will fall into the first of these categories in that it will assess the conditions of captivity facing Allied POWs in both Europe and the Far East during the Second World War and the ways in which the POWs coped with these conditions. It will draw upon the POW publications; the newspapers and magazines produced by the prisoners (hereafter, "POW publications"), a source material often overlooked by historians. It will demonstrate how these publications offer an alternative insight into both the everyday lives of the prisoners and also their states of mind, in that, unlike letters, diaries, oral histories and memoirs, they were written for prisoners by prisoners, giving a contemporary account of their activities and the emotions of POWs generally without regard to external or historical scrutiny.

⁷ See Kevin Blackburn, *The Sportsmen of Changi*, (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2012)

⁸ See Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experiences* or S.P. Mackenzie, *The Colditz Myth: British and Commonwealth Prisoners of War in Nazi Germany* (Oxford, OU Press, 2004).

⁹ S.P. Mackenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II", *The Journal of Modern History*, (66:3) (September 1944), p.487.

¹⁰ Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, "Introduction: POWs and Their Captors, An Overview" in Moore and Fedorowich (eds) *Prisoners of War and Their Captors in World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), pp.1-4.

¹¹ for example the *Scientific Commission for the History of German POWs* which looks at the many aspects of German soldiers in captivity during and after the Second World War.

¹² See G.H. Davis, "Prisoners of War in Twentieth-Century War Economics", *Journal of Contemporary History* (Vol. 12) (October 1977), pp.623-634.

Clare Makepeace argues that the POW studies which focus on escape or the facets of camp life which emerged to help the POWs cope with the conditions of captivity (including the sporting, educational and theatrical activities) have projected a particular impression that the POWs “lived within some sort of barbed-wire vacuum”.¹³ She argues that the POWs’ correspondences with home demonstrate how they “lived mentally and emotionally beyond their barbed wire enclosures” and how POW letters demonstrate the primacy of home which they lived out in their imaginations. In relation to the First World War, Becker supports the concept of vacuum, arguing that POWs find themselves “ensconced in a space that was ‘elsewhere’”, that the camps were the setting for the POWs’ exclusion from the main theatres of war and that this exclusion was so effective that the First World War POWs “have virtually disappeared from the memory of the war and its historiography”.¹⁴ This study will argue that, in contrast to the perceived barbed-wire vacuum, the facets of camp life in the Second World War demonstrated in the POW publications show that the primacy of home was not just limited to the prisoners’ imaginations, but was physically recreated in the prisoners’ activities. Whilst simultaneously making the case for the importance of the POW publications as a source for cultural historians studying the POW genre, this study will examine what the POW publications teach us about everyday lives and attitudes within the camps. It will consider how their focus on domestic news, the sporting, educational and theatrical activities and also their interactions and reliance on each other and the outside world demonstrate that the prisoners attempted to cope by either creating a world within the barbed wire that largely corresponded with the physical realities of their home lives or by creating a psychological link with the outside world.

It will sample and analyse two sets of POW publications from different theatres of war; *The Clarion* produced by prisoners of the Germans and the *POWC Echo* produced by the Far Eastern

¹³ Clare Makepeace, “Living beyond the barbed wire: the familial ties of British prisoners of war held in Europe during the Second World War”, *Historical Research* (86:231), (February 2013), pp.159-160.

¹⁴ Annette Becker, “Art, Material Life and Disaster: Civilian and military prisoners of war” in Nicholas J. Saunders (eds) *Matters of conflict: material culture, memory and the First World War* (London: Routledge, 2004), p.26.

POWs (hereafter “FEPOW”). Chapter 1 will look at the different types of POW publications and will introduce the publications chosen for the comparative analysis. It will look at the histories of the publications and their style and content. It will also assess and argue their value to historians of prisoners of war. Chapter 2 will examine the physical and psychological conditions of captivity (portrayed within the POW publications) and will consider the morale of the prisoners. It will also look at the role of the Relief Agencies and the POW associations in supplying the means of coping within these conditions. Chapter 3 will consider the activities of the prisoners as evidenced in the publications. It will consider the extent to which prisoners re-created their home lives within the camps and will show the various ways in which the POWs tried to make life as near to normal as possible. The study will consider the extent to which the POWs’ black mood demonstrated in the *POWC Echo* (but absent in *The Clarion*) is evidence of “barbed-wire syndrome” resulting from the FEPOWs’ limited opportunities to create their own links to home, but will conclude that the FEPOWs’ ingenuity and resourcefulness enabled them to adapt to those difficult early days of captivity.

Chapter 1 – The POW publications

“One secret of surviving in captivity was to have a project, however small”.¹⁵

This was the view of John Borrie, a prisoner at Stalag VIII B/344. Many prisoners found such a project in producing and contributing to the POW publications which emerged across the theatres of war. This chapter will look at some examples of such publications and will assess their value to historians within the context of the study of the history of prisoners of war. It will also introduce the two publications being used in the comparative analysis, describe their histories and analyse their style and content.

There are many surviving examples of POW publications. Some, such as *The Daily Recco* from Stalag Luft III, were news sheets designed to “present the daily news without bias or distortion”¹⁶ while others such as *The Quill* from Oflag IXa¹⁷, *Touchstone* from Oflag VIIB and *Here Today* from Changi¹⁸ were a collection of short stories, poems and sketches that often bore little relevance to the contributors’ surroundings. Others, including *The Courier* from Stalag IVD,¹⁹ the *Willenberg Echo* from Stalag XXB²⁰ and *Prisoners’ Pie* from Stalag XXA²¹ were collections of public service notices, news from home, witty articles, competitions and reviews. One of the more unusual publications, *Flywheel*, was a motoring magazine produced by car enthusiasts who were imprisoned in Stalag IVB.²² These publications were not unique to the Second World War; *The Gram*, for

¹⁵ John Borrie, *Despite Captivity, a Doctor’s Life as Prisoner of War* (London: William Kimber, 1975), p.80.

¹⁶ *The Daily Recco*, 15 February 1943 reproduced in Alan Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas* (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1998), p.29.

¹⁷ Private collection of Charles Rollings.

¹⁸ National Army Museum (hereafter, “NAM”) 1989-05-218, Issues 1 and 3 of ‘*Here Today*’, produced by officers at Changi Prisoner of War Camp, November 1944 and 1945.

¹⁹ NAM 2000-12-526, ‘*The Courier*’, issues No 4 July 1944 and No 8 Dec 1944.

²⁰ Imperial War Museum (hereafter, “IWM”) E. 83/215, *Willenberg Echo* [Camp Magazine Stalag XXB].

²¹ NAM 1993-07-223, Papers relating to Sapper R C Biggs, Royal Engineers, a copy of *Prisoners’ Pie* dated October 1943.

²² IWM PST 20364, *Flywheel* - a display of motoring magazines produced by British Prisoners of War in Stalag IVB.

example, was a handwritten social magazine for prisoners in Pretoria during the Boer War²³ while *The Barb Magazine* was produced by British POWs held in Germany during the First World War.²⁴ Examples of publications from Axis prisoners include *AUFBAU*, produced by German POWs in Warwickshire²⁵ and *Il Corriere del Campo* produced by Italian prisoners held in India.²⁶ These publications were not propaganda vehicles for the Detaining Powers, but were made by prisoners for other prisoners. The Germans authorities produced *The Camp* and *O.K.*, papers which were distributed throughout the camps and contained propaganda pieces as well as sports news, short stories, humours articles and quizzes often supplied by the prisoners themselves.²⁷ The International Committee of the Red Cross (hereafter, together with its various national branches, the “Red Cross”) produced *Prisoner of War* for families of POWs which contained news and information designed to provide “enlightenment and guidance for next-of-kin”.²⁸

The POW publications were either “official” in that they were produced with the Detaining Powers’ knowledge and generally had a wide distribution, or they were more intimate or secretive. *Prisoners’ Pie*, for example, was a semi-professional publication with 480 copies printed and distributed²⁹ while *The Tiger in Irons*³⁰ and *Here Today*, both from Changi, produced just single copies. The official productions required the cooperation of the captors, who set conditions and censorship rules in exchange for granting permission for their publication. One edition of *The Daily Recco* listed these conditions; there could be no political stories, war news or camp politics (including relations with the Germans) and each edition had to be passed by the censor.³¹

²³ NAM 1980-05-3, 'The Gram - A Social Magazine founded by British prisoners of war, Pretoria', 1900.

²⁴ IWM E. 501, *The Barb Magazine*

²⁵ IWM E.J. 672, *AUFBAU*.

²⁶ IWM E.J. 1343, *Il Corriere Del Campo*

²⁷ Gilbert, *POW*, p.194.

²⁸ P.G. Cambray and C.G. Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record of the Humanitarian Services of the War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society and Order of St John of Jerusalem 1939-1947* (London, British Red Cross Society & Order Of St John Of Jerusalem, 1949), p.229.

²⁹ Gilbert, *POW*, p.191.

³⁰ NAM 2010-02-3, issue 2 of, '*The Tiger in Irons*', March 1942, produced by soldiers of the British Battalion in Changi Prisoner of War Camp.

³¹ *The Daily Recco*, Issue No. 65, 4 May 1943, reproduced in Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, pp.66-67. The *Daily Recco* was discontinued after 65 issues but after giving assurances that it would abide by the conditions,

Censorship was therefore a restriction placed upon the official POW publications and this needs to be considered when evaluating the contents of the official publications and their usefulness as a historical source. Cooperation from the captors was encouraged under Article 17 of the Geneva Convention 1929, Detaining Powers were meant to “encourage intellectual diversions”.³² There would be benefits for the Detaining Powers too, the publications would be a good way of getting messages to the prisoners, especially in the larger camps and they may have felt that occupied prisoners were less likely to cause trouble.

The official POW publications tended to take on the characteristics of any local newspaper. Local newspapers are designed to “inform, advertise, entertain and educate”³³ and contain reports, for example, in relation to local events, local crimes, meetings of committees and associations, film and play reviews and sporting fixtures, all of which similarly appear in official POW publications. One POW publication from Stalag Luft VI was even entitled “*The Yorkshire Post, ‘Kriegie’ edition*”.³⁴ Rollings argues that both the POW publications and the local newspapers paint a “rose-tinted view of the ‘locality’”, to boost tourism and keep local advertisers happy in the case of the local newspapers and to keep up morale in the case of the official POW publications.³⁵ To this extent the POW publications provided continuity with home life for its readers.

The unofficial publications had greater freedom of content, but this meant increased risks on the producers. One such unofficial publication, the *POWWOW* from Stalag Luft I³⁶ was an underground circulation to provide up to date war news for prisoners in the camp. It relied on German newspapers and magazines, from official Nazi war communiqués broadcast to the camp,

the editors revived the publication for a further 69 issues until the German sensors once again halted production over a breach of the conditions; Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, pp.66-71 and 124-126.

³² Article 17 of the Convention (II) relating to Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 Jul 1929.

³³ Email correspondence with Charles Rollings on 6 September 2013.

³⁴ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.41.

³⁵ Email correspondence with Charles Rollings on 6 September 2013.

³⁶ Gilbert, POW p192, not to be confused with other publications of the same name, including the paper for civilian prisoners in Changi produced by Freddy Bloom (see below) and the newsheet for prisoners repatriated from Elsterhorst (NAM 1985-11-48, ‘*The Pow Wow*’, 1944-1947; edited by Lt Hon Patrick Theobald Tower Butler (b 1917)).

from newly arrived prisoners and also from a secret radio³⁷ (the penalties of being caught with a radio in the camps were severe and so news heard on a secret radio was less likely to have been printed for fear of revealing the existence of the radio).³⁸ Unofficial publications did not necessarily have to be underground and secretive, *Here Today*, for example was placed in the Changi library, while the Japanese were aware of Freddy Bloom's *POW-WOW* and tolerated it. Its contents occasionally became a source of concern to the Japanese but the publication did not appear to contribute to Bloom's interrogation during the "Double Tenth" investigations.³⁹

The aims of these publications varied. Alan Mackay, the editor of *The Daily Recco* states that he started the paper "to help [him] pass the time and conquer the soul-destroying monotony of Prison Camp Life – something to fill the days" but also "to purge, through general and open circulation, the cantankerous and false reports... which had taken over the body politic of our Prison Camp in those dark days... when it seemed that being a Kriegie or Prisoner of War was not only a way of life, but life itself".⁴⁰ The editors of *Here Today* claimed no such motives, "[n]ever has a periodical been started with less object in view... We have no axes to grind, no logs to roll. We have no policy, no principle and very little paper"⁴¹ (although at 42 pages long, the first edition of *Here Today* is one of the larger POW publications).

For the purpose of this study's analysis, this paper will compare and contrast two sets of publications from the Second World War; *The Clarion* and the *POWC Echo*, while drawing on other primary and secondary sources, including memoirs, diaries and other POW publications to place them into context. *The Clarion* was the POW magazine from Stalag VIII B (later renamed Stalag 344)

³⁷ <http://www.merkki.com/powwow.htm>, viewed 23 September 2013.

³⁸ Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, p.28.

³⁹ Leslie Bell, *Destined Meeting* (London: Odhams Press, 1958 pp.153-173), Freddy Bloom, *Dear Philip: a diary of captivity, Changi 1942-45* (London: The Bodly Head Limited, 1980), pp.117-137. The Double Tenth investigations were the Japanese attempt to uncover which civilian internees had assisted in the a sabotage raid on Singapore harbour which resulted in the arrest and torture of over 50 internees. Freddy Bloom was arrested and questioned for several months but was not tortured herself.

⁴⁰ Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, p.10.

⁴¹ *Here Today*, No 1, November 1944.

(hereafter, “Lamsdorf”) a camp for Allied non commissioned officers and privates located in Lamsdorf, now Łambinowice, Poland.⁴² The *POWC Echo*⁴³ was produced by officers of the 1st Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles of the Indian Army (known as the Coke’s Rifles) in Changi POW camp,⁴⁴ in Singapore, the principal POW camp in Japanese South East Asia.⁴⁵ While a number of POW publications survive today and a selection of these will be included in this study, multiple volumes of both *The Clarion* and the *POWC Echo* survive today. This fact, and that they represent publications from two of the largest prison camps for their respective theatre of operations, make them suitable for a comparative analysis. Furthermore, they represent two different type of publication, *POWC Echo* was an intimate, unofficial, paper written by officers at the beginning of the Second World War, while *The Clarion* was an official camp wide publication written by non commissioned officers and privates in the second half of the war.

The camps which provide the setting for the two publications are each often described as the largest and most notorious camps in the Second World War. Both could be described as base camps for Working Parties⁴⁶ and so many POWs left the camps regularly to work resulting in a high turnover of POWs. Changi is, perhaps, not fully deserving of its sinister and notorious reputation and seems to have derived much of this reputation from its association with the hardships and brutalities faced by prisoners on the work projects, notably the Burma–Thailand Railway.⁴⁷ It was an established base for prisoners of the Japanese, who would often be transported to other temporary locations to undertake the work required of them by the Japanese, often in horrendous conditions.

⁴² IWM E.J. 1132, *The Clarion*. A journal of the same name was issued monthly after the war by the Returned British Prisoner of War Association, but other than the name there appears to be no connection between the two.

⁴³ “POWC” is not defined by the editors, but other uses of the phrase throughout the publications suggest it stood for “Prisoner of War Camp”.

⁴⁴ This study will refer to the prison by its more common spelling “Changi” although the alternative spelling of “Changhi” was used widely in the *POWC Echo*.

⁴⁵ Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, p.3.

⁴⁶ This study will use the phrase “Working Party” to describe generically the labour projects undertaken by the FEPOW and the *Arbeits Kommandos*, the German working projects. The second edition of *The Clarion* tells us that there were over 600 Working Parties serviced by Lamsdorf.

⁴⁷ Robert Havers, “The Changi POW Camp and the Burma-Thailand Railway” in Philip Towle et al (eds) *Japanese Prisoners of War* (London: Hambledon, 2000), p.20.

In Changi however, prisoners were often awarded a degree of autonomy and their day to day lives were less regulated by the captors, giving POWs a sense of relief and security in comparison to the work camps and it was in this environment that *POWC Echo* was produced. Recent histories⁴⁸ have told how the conditions in Changi were considerably less severe than those in other POW camps and Working Parties in the Far East, although compared with the European camps, POWs still experienced extreme conditions of hunger, lack of healthcare and medical equipment and harsh treatment from guards.⁴⁹ Relative to the railways camps deaths were low, but were higher than in the German camps.⁵⁰ Lamsdorf also had a notorious reputation, being known by some of its inhabitants as “Hell Camp No.1”⁵¹ it was a rough and wild camp and being held there had a “certain cachet”.⁵² Conditions in German POW camps were invariably better than in Japan as Germany largely complied with the Geneva conventions.⁵³

The Clarion was first published in January 1943 under the editorship of James W. Wood and was aimed at English speaking POWs in Lamsdorf. After the 7th edition, Wood was repatriated to the UK and the editorship passed to Percy. R. Parramore. Wood had attempted to get permission for the publication for over a year⁵⁴ and in his first editorial, he explained to the readers that the objective of the magazine is “yours to write and to read. It’s up to you to make it bright and keep it informative”.⁵⁵ He said that news from home, the working parties and the camp would be first thing that the readers would want to see but in addition, short stories, cartoons, jokes and poetry would be welcome to “fill an hour”. As well as such hour fillers, it contained many “public service notices”, sports results, theatre reviews, religious columns and educational material and so in this regard it falls into the same category of POW publications as *The Courier*, *The Willenberg Echo* and *Prisoners’*

⁴⁸ See Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*.

⁴⁹ See chapter 2 for an in depth analysis of the conditions of the camps.

⁵⁰ See chapter 2 for comparative death rates between the two theatres of operation.

⁵¹ Richard Pape, *Sequel to boldness: the astonishing follow-on story to one of the greatest war books ever written*, (Watford: Odhams Press Limited, 1959), p.221.

⁵² Gilbert, *POW*, p.85.

⁵³ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.2.

⁵⁴ IWM Documents 19077, the Private Papers of HC Harlow, undated extract from the *Evening Standard*.

⁵⁵ James W. Wood, “Editorial”, *The Clarion*, No. 1 January 1943, p.2.

Pie. Filling those hours would be an important role for *The Clarion*, not only for its producers and contributors, but also for its readers. *The Clarion* had a print run of seventeen editions, the last being a souvenir edition for Christmas 1944 before the camp was evacuated in February 1945. These editions survive intact.⁵⁶

The *POWC Echo* was first published on 15 March 1942, within a month of the prisoners arriving in Changi, and it ran for at least 32 editions until 25 October 1942. It was edited by Major O.H. Mitchell who later placed collated reproduction copies (minus some news articles and artwork) in the archives of the Imperial War Museum and the National Army Museum. No (surviving) opening editorial exists, but Mitchell explains in the forward to the archived copies that its purpose was to “employ our minds in the early idle days of captivity, to jest at the discomforts endured and to record our thoughts and feelings in those early years”.⁵⁷ Unlike *The Clarion*, it contained few public service notices, but was instead more of a publication designed to express the feelings of the prisoners through poems, satirical articles and diaries. Like *The Clarion*, it also contained the occasional theatre review and sports reports.

The difference in style and content between the two publications is not solely down to the different theatres of operations from which they emerged or the personal preferences of the producers. The publications reflect the vastly differed conditions facing the prisoners of the Germans in Lamsdorf⁵⁸ but a number of other contrasts arise. They were written at different times, the *POWC Echo* was started in the early days of captivity for the Allied prisoners who had recently surrendered in Singapore, while *The Clarion* emerged in the second half of the war when the camp at Lamsdorf was well established and when some of its prisoners would have been in camp for over three years. Although *The Clarion* emerged at a time when the POWs no longer expected defeat and thoughts on post-war matters were evident. *The Clarion* carried articles discussing life after the war

⁵⁶ See IWM E.J. 1132 *The Clarion* which contains a complete bound set of Percy Parramore’s copies of *The Clarion*.

⁵⁷ NAM 1960-05-34, O.H. Mitchell in the foreward (sic) to the reproduction of the *POWC Echo*.

⁵⁸ See chapter 2 for an in depth analysis of the conditions of the camps.

(including a discussion on how London would look after being redesigned and rebuilt after the war)⁵⁹ and post war careers.⁶⁰ The biggest staple of almost every edition was news from home. From the start the producers requested the POWs share news that they had received in their letters from home. This was not personal or war news, but general news, often sporting or military. It created a link to the outside world that ensured that POWs did not have to wait to receive a sporadic letter to hear news from home. The *POWC Echo* also contained news articles that have not been placed in the archives, but letters from home were scarce and limited in size, especially in the early years and it can be reasonably assumed that they would have been unable to create a link home in a similar way. For the editors of the *POWC Echo* there “lurked a fear that maybe [they] would not see the civilised world again”,⁶¹ but like the prisoners in Lamsdorf, their thoughts did turn to life after the war with a suggestion that a “better League of Nations” be established to maintain a new form of international law,⁶² foreshadowing the United Nations. Conditions were new and it took time for them to adjust to their surroundings. The *POWC Echo* gave a voice to the prisoners in trying to make sense and trying to cope with these new conditions, its tone is darker than *The Clarion*, much more satirical and largely free of factual information. *The Clarion* portrayed none of the black humour or satire of the *POWC Echo* and, under Wood’s editorship, it contained no comic strips or doubtful jokes as he wished to “maintain a dignified tone” (although cartoons appeared under Parramore’s editorship) and on several occasions the censors insisted on making cuts.⁶³

The Clarion was an “official” publication, compiled by the prisoners, translated into German for the censors, printed by a local Nazi newspaper,⁶⁴ circulated widely throughout the Camp and the Working Parties and paid for through the camp Welfare Fund. *POWC Echo* was a more intimate “unofficial” publication with a smaller circulation. Although there was no indication of how it was

⁵⁹ “Post-War London?”, *The Clarion*, No. 1, January 1943, p.4.

⁶⁰ “Choose a Career”, *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, p.5.

⁶¹ NAM 1960-05-34, O.H. Mitchell in the foreward (sic) to the reproduction of the *POWC Echo*.

⁶² “Debate 4 Aug.42.”, *POWC Echo*, 21st edition, 9 August 1942.

⁶³ IWM Documents 19077, the Private Papers of HC Harlow, undated extract from the *Evening Standard* and letter from Percy Parramore to Henry Harlow dated 2 May 1945.

⁶⁴ *ibid*

produced, it was not unheard of for prisoners in Changi to have typewriters⁶⁵ and prisoners found ways to procure paper.⁶⁶ There is also no evidence as to whether the Japanese were aware of or interested in its existence. *The Clarion* lacked the intimacy of the *POWC Echo* but gives a wider impression of the activities of the camp with the whole paper designed to be a useful communications tool and to encourage a sense of community within the camp. The *POWC Echo* also contained news items about camp life, but these have been deleted from the archives as the editors felt they no longer held their original value. The articles which survive are a mixture of articles, poems, reflections and humorous articles which often reflected the mood of the prisoners and their dark humour and bitterness.

The two publications differed in terms of circulation and readership. *The Clarion* was written for wide circulation, while the *POWC Echo* was not widely circulated and its contents suggest a familiarity between the contributor and the reader. There was also a contrasting background between the editors and contributors of the two publications. Both publications ended abruptly, materials were being gathered for an 18th edition of *The Clarion* when the camp was evacuated months before the end of the war.⁶⁷ The 31st edition of *POWC Echo* printed on 18 October 1942 was either the last edition to be produced, or the last copy to survive the war. Reference is made in it to future editions, and whilst these may have been produced, the end of 1942 increasingly saw the prisoners in Changi being dispersed to other parts of the Japanese territories⁶⁸ and it is likely that the officers of the Coke's Rifles were relocated at this time. As conditions of the FEPOWs varied between the various camps, Working Parties and time period, there is no one unifying experience of captivity. This study, therefore, will focus on what the *POWC Echo* teaches us about how the officers of the Coke's Rifles coped with the conditions of the early months of captivity in Changi. *The Clarion* may be more useful in assessing generally the conditions and the coping strategies used in Europe.

⁶⁵ Bloom, *Dear Philip*, p.34.

⁶⁶ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.256.

⁶⁷ <http://www.lamsdorf.com/the-clarion.html>, viewed 23 September 2013.

⁶⁸ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.150.

Of the few historians who have studied POW publications, Oliver Wilkinson in his article on publications from the First World War argues that the POW publications had three agendas; the first was that they acted as internal organs, the second that they acted as external organs and the third that they became souvenirs.⁶⁹ The internal function saw the publications acting as a defence against boredom and a centre for the moral universe of the camp intended to “reassure and direct POW behaviour”. The external agenda recognised an attempt by the producers to reassure family and friends back home that the spirit and morale of the prisoners were high, on the expectation that the publications would be sent home. The souvenir agenda argues that the producers attempted to provide a “physical trace of the captive experience”, that the lives and experiences of camp life needed to be recorded and preserved to allow the POWs to capture the spirit that had formed their activities in captivity.

Of Wilkinson’s three agendas, only the internal agenda would seem relevant to *The Clarion* and the *POWC Echo* as a motive behind their publications. There is no indication that *The Clarion* was written with anyone other than the POWs in mind, while the restrictions on prisoners of the Japanese writing home would have made sending home the *POWC Echo* impossible.⁷⁰ Similarly, while both publications undoubtedly made good souvenirs after the war, there is little evidence that the producers of *The Clarion* had, contrary to Wilkinson’s view, constructed the publications with memory in mind. The producers of *POWC Echo* on the other hand, were aware that their paper may one day be a source of information on their lives and even contained a summary of the first six months of captivity which Lt. Col. Gilbert claims “will be of no interest to any of us here, but is intended to act as a reminder to anybody who later on wishes to record our life in more detail”.⁷¹ Marr also recognises its importance, “though perhaps not to be compared with *The Times* or the

⁶⁹ Oliver Wilkinson, “Captivity in Print: The Form and Function of POW Camp Magazines” in Gilly Carr and Harold Mytum (eds) *Cultural Heritage and Prisoners of War: Creativity Behind the Barbed Wire* (Oxon: Taylor & Francis, 2012) pp. 227-243.

⁷⁰ See chapter 2 for an explanation of the restrictions on letter writing in the Far East POW camps

⁷¹ G. Gilbert, “Six Months in Changi”, *POWC Echo* 22nd edition, 15 August 1942

Manchester Guardian as an influence on public opinion, POWC as a record of events, sayings and writings is inevitable".⁷²

Wilkinson argues that the souvenir motive is reflected in the emphasis on educational and sporting activities and the "life-enriching experiences, such as the camaraderie and friendships made", the absence of sadness and despair and a call to forget the difficult times.⁷³ The *POWC Echo* is in fact the opposite of this; it records the internal feelings of the prisoners largely through its dark humour and honest assessments.

It is, however, in the internal agenda where the two publications best fit Wilkinson's analysis. The content and mood of *The Clarion*, with its focus on factual and informative articles suggest that its primary function was as an internal organ for the passing of information and to encourage those seeking to make the best out of the conditions of captivity. If being a prisoner brought out the worst excess of man,⁷⁴ Wilkinson argues that the POW publications assert a sense of morality on the POWs, creating a moral universe within the camp which was intended to reassure and direct POW behaviour in a manner derived from their previous civilian and military lives, both helping maintain order but also helping them adjust to their surroundings.⁷⁵ *The Daily Recco* provided a stark example of this time of moral guidance. It briefly had a rival, a paper devoted to scandal and gossip, which provoked a backlash from the other prisoners and from the editors of *The Daily Recco*.⁷⁶ The rival did not last. This sense of moral universe could equally be based upon either a religious or military code, or it reflected the moral upbringing of the editors or contributors and focused on both the behaviour and the bearing of the POWs. In *The Clarion*, one article described the soldierly bearing and upkeep of prestige shown by those on certain Working Parties as "gratifying and reflects the great credit upon all concerned" and encouraged all ranks to "make an

⁷² Alister Marr, "Passing Thoughts", *POWC Echo* 22nd edition, 15 August 1942

⁷³ Wilkinson, "Captivity in Print", p. 238.

⁷⁴ Kee, *A Crowd is Company*, p.74.

⁷⁵ Wilkinson, "Captivity in Print", p. 238.

⁷⁶ Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, p.42.

effort to dress and bear themselves in the manner which is traditional of the Britisher".⁷⁷ Similarly, Wilkinson's argument is supported by its highlighting of gallantry and civic duty⁷⁸ and in extolling the virtues of the Young Men's Christian Association (hereafter, "YMCA") and its staff,⁷⁹ while often criticising and berating the prisoners for their attitudes towards the Relief Agencies. They also advised the POWs on how to cope with their stresses; one article addressed the anxieties of not receiving regular mail leading many prisoners to jump to the wrong conclusions and counselled them to remain calm and patient.⁸⁰ The *POWC Echo* also displayed some evidence of extolling a morality, largely in its cynical view of the camp waiters who, it is implied, are not necessarily honourable in the pursuit of their duties.⁸¹

Wilkinson might have gone further in his assessment of the magazines as internal organs. While he does highlight the function of being able to assert the authority of the camp leaders and set the tone for the camp and he rightly explains that they serve as a defence against boredom, he does not recognise two other factors that are evident in the two publications. The first of these factors is the function of *The Clarion* as an important vehicle for passing on news and advice on matters such as Red Cross notices, the writing of letters and soldiers' remittance. It attempted to help the POWs navigate the difficulties of the bureaucratic nature of camp and military life and forms a "public service" function for the POWs. The second factor, seen clearly in the *POWC Echo*, is that the POW publications allowed the prisoners to let off steam, providing an outlet for their emotions, anxieties and in many cases, anger. The absence of these factors in Wilkinson's study of the First World War publications may reflect the different nature of the two conflicts.

⁷⁷ "Dressing and Bearing", *The Clarion*, No. 7, Autumn 1943, p.1.

⁷⁸ See the article on the gallantry of William H Clark who rescued a young boy from drowning in *The Clarion* No. 7 and the awards to RSM Sherriff and SSM Matthew for their "valuable and untiring services" to camp boxing in *The Clarion* No.9, February 1944.

⁷⁹ "Friends in Need....", *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.4.

⁸⁰ "Mail Up!", *The Clarion*, No. 8, January 1944, p.5.

⁸¹ The perception that those working in camp kitchens were less than fair in their food distribution is a common theme in accounts of life in Changi and is highlighted in James Clavell's "King Rat", (James Clavell, *King Rat*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975), np), where those weighing the food had been found to have been tampering with the weights and scales.

Wilkinson does highlight one important factor which this essay will also argue in chapter 3, that the prisoners sought to recreate a sense of home within the camps as a method of coping. This link with home echoes the concept in Makepeace's article of the links between the battle front and the home front.⁸² Wilkinson argues that the "'camp world' being experienced at the time was therefore linked to the prisoners' past or future 'home world', being the world they have left behind and to which they hoped to return."⁸³ He argues that the institutions and attitudes that they brought into the camp helped them adjust to their new conditions and that, through their interactions with each other, they were able to access a system of commonly held dispositions based upon their home world experiences. The POW publications therefore mobilised these dispositions and not only helped reproduce these models to help the prisoners cope, they also helped to prevent the breakdown or order within the camps. *The Clarion* in many ways supports this theory. It put a great emphasis on (often largely mundane) news from home ("Like the gold in the hills, there's News in them thar words from Home")⁸⁴ and it promoted the many clubs and associations which gave a structure and meaning for many prisoners.⁸⁵ In printing information about such associations, the publication not only signalled approval, but helps ensure their success by giving them the widest possible coverage, essential in a camp as large as Lamsdorf.

Other POW studies have generally focussed on oral histories, diaries, letters and memoirs to tell the story of the everyday accounts of POW lives.⁸⁶ These accounts generally examine POW publications only fleetingly and they are mentioned more as a curiosity rather than an analysis of their content. Rollings and Gilbert both describe the existence of the publications⁸⁷ and Gillies makes a brief look at *The Fenman*, a newsletter produced by the Cambridgeshire regiment in

⁸² Makepeace, "Living beyond the barbed wire", p.159.

⁸³ Wilkinson, "Captivity in Print", p. 227.

⁸⁴ "Editorial", *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, p.1.

⁸⁵ See chapter 2 for an in-depth examination of the POWs clubs and associations.

⁸⁶ See Charles Rollings, *Prisoner of War* which attempts to straddle the line between these general accounts and first-hand accounts that have emerged since the war.

⁸⁷ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, pp.237, 238, 246 and 250, Gilbert, *POW*, p.192-193.

Changi⁸⁸ but few have studied them in great deal. As Robert Kee points out, the memoirs and the oral histories rely on the memory of the POW.⁸⁹ His account was published in the immediate aftermath of the war which he hoped would avoid the advantages and disadvantages of hindsight, maturity and sophistication, acknowledging that memory over time can be distorted. Letters and diaries have the benefit of being contemporary and are aimed at readers beyond the camp and rely on the mood of the author at that time or the message he was trying to portray. Similarly, the POW publications are contemporary and therefore not subject to the restraints of memory and while they also reflect the mood of the producers, their primary reader was the other POW which allows for a more honest and matter-of-fact portrayal of camp life than accounts written for third parties. The POW publications supplement the other sources, providing details and descriptions within the seemingly mundane, but are equally useful in assessing the conditions of captivity. They address the deprivations of captivity as everyday realities and they demonstrate what was important to the POWs in coping with them.

Within the news from home items, the POW publications may provide facts or snippets of information relating to the war period which may otherwise have been lost to time and may be of interest to those studying individual histories or sporting careers. Occasionally they provide contemporary accounts and analysis of historical events of the Second World War, an example of which was the “Selerang Barrack Square Incident”. On 30 August 1942 the Japanese ordered the Changi prisoners to sign a “parole” in which they promised, on their honours, not to escape. Although escape from Changi was almost impossible, signing a pledge not to escape was against the soldier’s code and duty and most refused to sign. In response, the entire camp (minus the gravely ill) was ordered to move to the much smaller Selerang Barracks. Approximately 17,000 POWs were forced into an area designed to hold 800⁹⁰ where they were “literally packed like sardines”.⁹¹ Four

⁸⁸ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, pp.112-115.

⁸⁹ Robert Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company* (St Ives; Phoenix Books, 2000), p.7.

⁹⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, p.169.

⁹¹ “Chaos in Changi: sudden upheaval in Temple Hill”, *POWC Echo* 25th edition, 6 September 1942.

recaptured escapees were shot. After four days, amid warnings from the camp doctors that the poor sanitation and hygiene in the cramped conditions would lead to a mass outbreak of typhoid and diphtheria and many deaths, the POW commanders agreed to allow the prisoners to sign the parole, arguing that the pledge was given under duress and therefore signing it could not be held against the prisoners after the war.

Afterwards, the *POWC Echo* gave a first hand, contemporary account of the incident⁹² which, unlike other sources which appeared after the war, or diaries written for posterity, reflect the feeling amongst the prisoners who were using the publication to express feelings rather than make a case for future review. The editor cited the unhygienic conditions as the main reason for the prisoners caving in to the Japanese demands and that, while it was “not heroic”,⁹³ it was the most practical outcome possible. Lt. Col. Gilbert claimed that the case for signing was put in a “most noble way” and made the realistic claim that “maybe we shall be excused, if not praised”.⁹⁴ As opposed to persuading outsiders that they had acted correctly, the producers were attempting to persuade each other and thereby influencing the collective memory by which together they could defend themselves against future criticism.

As with other aspects of camp life described in the *POWC Echo*, the strongest feelings on the Selarang incident are expressed in the poems written about the incident. In “Marche D’honneur”, Mousey’s description was of a “march of honour” brought on because “we refused to sign our names; or play their silly little games”. Mitchell was even starker in his poem “Blackhole of Selarang” as “within my head [he] felt a wish to kill” but he also talks of the uplifting sights:

“the finest sight I saw that day, which warmed my weary heart;
were two lads who bore a portrait of their king”.⁹⁵

⁹² See *POWC Echo* 25th edition, 6 September 1942, *POWC Echo* 28th edition, 27 September 1942.

⁹³ “Editorial”, *POWC Echo*, 25th edition, 6 September 1942.

⁹⁴ C. Gilbert, “Mr. Pepys in Changhi”, *POWC Echo* 25th edition, 6 September 1942.

⁹⁵ O.H. Mitchell, “The Blackhole of Selarang”, *POWC Echo*, 28th edition, 27 September 1942.

This feeling demonstrates the pride felt by the prisoners in the spirit which undoubtedly helped them through the adversity. The *POWC Echo* also spoke of the great heroism shown by individuals, how bands such as the Mumming Bees Company raised prisoners' morale by performing and how "goon baiting" was still in evidence.

Mitchell's poem summed up the feelings on the Incident:

"There were those who would have stood it out, and died there one by one;
There are some at home who'll criticise as well,
But to die of bowel complain is not a lot of fun,
And a word that has been forced, cannot compel."⁹⁶

The Selarang incident had a profound impact on the soldiers, far from being another defeat for demoralised prisoners, who felt heartened by the way they endured the conditions, it helped unify the Allies and it assumed a "quasi heroic status" in the same Dunkirk had.⁹⁷ As Mitchell put it simply, the incident "got us together a lot". Diaries, oral histories and memoirs provide useful information on the Incident, but the *POWC Echo* provides a unique insight, it looks at the event through the eyes of the participants writing for each other in its immediate aftermath and gives us an impression of the feelings of the prisoners and a critical insight from the prisoners themselves on how their actions would be judged by history.

It is this kind of account that helps the POW publications stand apart from other sources. They give an insight into how the POWs view their conditions and what is happening to them as they explain them to others who have had the same experiences and are living through the same conditions. The next chapter will detail the physical conditions and psychological challenges facing the POWs, contrast the two theatres of war and look at the morale of the prisoners as demonstrated in the POW publications.

⁹⁶ *ibid*

⁹⁷ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, p.171.

Chapter 2 – The physical and psychological conditions of captivity

This chapter will consider the physical and psychological challenges facing the POWs in Lamsdorf and Changi and what the POW publications teach us about how the POWs coped with these conditions together with the role of the Relief Agencies and the POW associations. Conditions were undoubtedly harder for the FEPOWs than for the European prisoners. An estimated 26 to 32 per cent of British servicemen captured in the Far East died in captivity, as opposed to just 4 per cent captured in Europe.⁹⁸ Although the Japanese Government did not ratify the Geneva Conventions, it had committed to respect its principles but, in reality, flouted all the significant rules of the Conventions leading to the deaths of many FEPOW⁹⁹ as a result of disease, malnutrition, overwork, or deliberate murder.¹⁰⁰ The treatment of the FEPOW varied from the harsh to the intolerable depending on the outlook of the individual camps¹⁰¹ so that, even within Changi, conditions varied. Many of the deaths occurred outside of Changi in the Working Parties, and so the death rate within the camp was significantly lower; only 850 out of the 87,000 POWs held in Changi died and many of these as a result of injuries suffered brought into the camp having been sustained in the Working Parties or in combat prior to capture.¹⁰²

Both *The Clarion* and the *POWC Echo* give useful insights into the POWs' own views of their captivity at the time. In *The Clarion*, a snapshot of the POWs' impressions on the conditions of their captivity is found in the article about a "psychological experiment" by Private H. Danvers who sampled fifty prisoners at random and asked them to write an essay entitled "What is unpleasant about captivity". Amongst the answers were: "lack of privacy, uncertainty about conditions back home, next food parcel, end of the war etc, monotony (especially speech and habits of fellow

⁹⁸ Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely, "British Prisoners-of-War: From Resilience to Psychological Vulnerability: Reality or Perception", *Twentieth Century British History* (21:2) (2010), p.167.

⁹⁹ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁰ Mackenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II", p.516.

¹⁰¹ Mackenzie, "The Treatment of Prisoners of War in World War II", p.515.

¹⁰² Kevin Blackburn and Karl Hack, "Japanese-occupied Asia from 1941-1945: one occupier, many captivities and memories" in Blackburn and Hack (eds) *Forgotten Captives in Japanese-Occupied Asia*, (Oxford: Psychology Press, 2007), p.17, Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, p.4.

PsOW), peculiar uniforms and their wearers; lack of feminine company”.¹⁰³ This research supports the findings of Major Matthews, the senior British medical officer at Stalag Luft III, who identified lack of privacy, frustration (largely due to the restrictions imposed by captivity), monotony and the depressing surroundings as prominent factors which led to psychiatric disorders amongst POWs.¹⁰⁴

In one of the few articles in the *POWC Echo* written with a view to posterity, Gilbert describes the conditions facing the Changi POWs in the first six months of captivity as a series of phases. He described the first phase as the “picnic phase” where the POWs could go more or less where they liked and were able to laze around, considered a “pleasant relief” after the strain of operations. He felt that the second phase was the most difficult for the prisoners, their movements were restricted by being wired in (the wiring was often done by the POWs themselves),¹⁰⁵ the hated rice rations started, dysentery figures were high and POWs experienced hunger for the first time. They began to wonder if they could survive as their supplies dwindled. In this period POWs passed time and maintained morale playing bridge, engaging in endless debates and spelling bees and also by a series of optimistic rumours that swept through the camp regarding the status of the war. The third phase was when “the Higher Command started to get things going”, education and entertainment started¹⁰⁶ and more food became available for those with money. By the fourth phase six months into their captivity, the Japanese had begun to issue basic pay every ten days which allowed POWs to purchase local produce and items from the canteen which was “functioning extremely well”. According to Gilbert, the POWs had settled, and they had “little to worry about” as long as they could “maintain [their] sense of humour and optimism”.¹⁰⁷ During this final phase, the mood and tone of the *POWC Echo* undoubtedly lightened.

¹⁰³ “Around the Camp”, *The Clarion*, No. 11, April 1944, p.13.

¹⁰⁴ Arieh J. Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity: Britain and the United States and their POWs in Nazi Germany*, (London: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p.56.

¹⁰⁵ Havers, “Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience”, p.56.

¹⁰⁶ See chapter 3 for a discussion on education and entertainment.

¹⁰⁷ Gilbert, “Six Months in Changi”, *POWC Echo* 22nd edition, 15 August 1942.

Had Danvers or Matthews carried out their research in Changi, the most likely finding would have been lack of food. Food was the FEPOWs' main topic of conversation.¹⁰⁸ Their "ghastly"¹⁰⁹ diet consisted of "rice, rice and more rice, often heaving with maggots"¹¹⁰ and the FEPOWs had to rely on their own ingenuity to ensure that meals were palatable and, importantly, prevent or delay death through starvation and disease.¹¹¹ In Europe, the POWs initially "trod a nicely balanced razor-edge between minimal diet and frank starvation"¹¹² but a combination of the German rations and the Red Cross parcels meant that the European POWs were not chronically hungry.¹¹³ The food parcels were designed to complement the rations to "supply all the chemical substances necessary to maintain good health" so prisoners were therefore warned against bartering the food for cigarettes or other non-essential items.¹¹⁴ According to Article 11 of the Geneva Convention, POWs were to receive the same rations as the guards,¹¹⁵ but in practice, the POWs in Europe relied on the Red Cross packages to provide the bulk of their food.¹¹⁶

In spite of this, food is not widely covered in either publication. This is perhaps not surprising in respect of *The Clarion* where the German censors may not have wanted to draw attention to any violation of the Geneva Convention and where the editors may have wished to focus on more positive items. Outside the Red Cross notices, only two articles hint at food shortages, both of which are cookery tips and refer to the camp gardens which supplement the rations provided by the Germans.¹¹⁷ The *POWC Echo* is more explicit in its references to food. Early editions made sarcastic and satirical reference to the rice diet, articles included a cookery corner

¹⁰⁸ Jeanne Schinto, "A Beriberi Heart: Lessons from Slave Soldiers of World War II", *Gastronomics: The Journal of Food and Culture* (9:4) (Fall 2009), p.56.

¹⁰⁹ Gilbert, "Six Months in Changi", *POWC Echo* 22nd edition, 15 August 1942.

¹¹⁰ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.157.

¹¹¹ *ibid*

¹¹² Borrie, *Despite Captivity*, p.42.

¹¹³ A.L. Cochrane, Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War", *The British Medical Journal* (1:442) (23 February 1946), p.284.

¹¹⁴ J. Lowe, "Red Cross Notes", *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1944, p.8.

¹¹⁵ Article 11 of the Convention (II) relating to Prisoners of War. Geneva, 27 July 1929.

¹¹⁶ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.136.

¹¹⁷ "Stalag Recipes", *The Clarion*, No. 4, April 1943; "Cookery Nook", *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.11.

describing a “Changhi POWC Special: a luscious RICE dish with that little (how very little) dash of you don’t know what” and contained the following rhyme:

“Sing a song of sixpence,
A basin full of rice,
Four and eighty convicts,
Over-run by lice.
When the meal was over,
They all begin to yell,
Isn’t that a pleasant dish
To make their bellies swell?”¹¹⁸

The reference to bellies swelling could, in equal measure, refer to the satisfied feeling of a full stomach or the swelling which occurs following malnutrition. Other effects of malnutrition are mentioned, including beriberi, which camp physicians tried to combat with a mixture of yeast and rice.¹¹⁹ The POWs supplemented their diets from sea fishing (until cholera put an end to it)¹²⁰ and, as in Lamsdorf, through their own produce.¹²¹ After the early editions, references to food shortages became fewer, supporting Gilbert’s assertion that by the third phase the POWs had adapted to their diets. Havers’ credits the POWs’ own efforts¹²² in making their diets “difficult to make appetizing, but sufficient to keep one alive”.¹²³ The POWs in Changi also had to suffer water shortages, the Allies having sabotaged the water supply before surrender.¹²⁴ This was only relieved, according to

¹¹⁸ “A Rhyme”, *POWC Echo*, 1st edition, 15 March 1942.

¹¹⁹ “Fertilizer”, *POWC Echo*, 8th edition, 2 May 1942.

¹²⁰ “A Report on the Temple Hill Fishing Paggar”, *POWC Echo*, 15th edition, 28 June 1942.

¹²¹ C. Featherstone, “Raffles”, *POWC Echo*, 11th edition, 31 May 1942.

¹²² Havers, “Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience”, p.166.

¹²³ C. Gilbert, “Pepys in Changhi”, *POWC Echo*, 11th edition, 31 May 1942.

¹²⁴ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.27.

the *POWC Echo*, when the engineers had succeeded in pumping water into tanks relieving the POWs from digging for water, one of their most arduous tasks.¹²⁵

Aside from food, *The Clarion* provides an insight into other items which the Lamsdorf prisoners lacked, including clothing, paper, books and games (after the library was burnt down), tea, spectacles and dentures. Health problems and the lack of medical supplies were also major issues facing POWs. Lamsdorf had one of the biggest and best infirmaries but still experienced repeated outbreaks of typhus, dysentery, diphtheria and tapeworm.¹²⁶ *The Clarion* contained a number of articles giving medical advice on a range of conditions including fractures, sprains, eye conditions and skin diseases and it encouraged the POWs to keep fit through physical exercise.¹²⁷ It also promoted the YMCA Sports Medal which was designed to stimulate healthy care of the bodies in the POW camps and was awarded to those that have encouraged physical culture, given exceptional sporting performances or exercised regularly over a long period of time.¹²⁸ In Changi, the FEPOWs had the additional risk of cholera and malaria, for which the Japanese provided inoculations and vitamin B1 tablets, but otherwise the POWs needed to act themselves to prevent their becoming widespread. The relatively low death rate in Changi is a testament to their success.¹²⁹

A feature of both camps, but more so in Changi, was the presence of the black market. James Clavell's novel "King Rat", based upon his own experiences in Changi, centres on the black market in Changi, the prisoners who ran it and the complicity of the senior officers.¹³⁰ Those who ran the black markets constituted "a separate enemy within,"¹³¹ making difficult conditions for prisoners worse in that they often found themselves getting into serious debt in exchange for a short term gain of food or cigarettes. Others were staggered, "charging interest on rice – it was simply

¹²⁵ "Local News", *POWC Echo*, 5th edition, 12 April 1942.

¹²⁶ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.213.

¹²⁷ "Medical Advice" in *The Clarion*, No. 4, April 1943, p.16, *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.15, *The Clarion*, No. 6, June-July 1943, p.15 and *The Clarion*, No. 15, August 1944, p.3.

¹²⁸ "The Y.M.C.A. Sports Medal", *The Clarion*, No. 12, May 1944, p.4.

¹²⁹ Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, pp. 47 and 166.

¹³⁰ Clavell, *King Rat*, np.

¹³¹ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.242.

beyond their tribal imaginations... that was bloodsucking; that was murder".¹³² The trade was deplored¹³³ by the editors of the *POWC Echo* who took pleasure in the setback it suffered due to the "noble efforts on the part of the canteen suppliers" in restocking the canteen.¹³⁴ The canteen allowed the prisoners occasionally to top up their diets with items purchased from their meagre allowances. Additional supplies were often stolen, bartered for with guards and civilians outside the camp, came from pre-camp suppliers or scavenged.¹³⁵ Cigarettes became a unit of currency within the camps and are frequently mentioned in both publications, *The Clarion*, for example, reported that the Whitsun festivities raised "92,000 cigarettes"¹³⁶ and that cigarettes were regularly supplied by the Red Cross. In Changi, the supply of cigarettes ran out by April 1942 and smokers were required to improvise cigarettes from other sources, for example the Japanese cherry trees.¹³⁷

Along with the physical challenges of captivity, POWs faced a series of psychological challenges during their captivity. Matthews argued that there were two stages of psychological disorder, those that arose in the first couple of years which gradually faded as the POWs adapted, and those that arose after two years which would steadily worsen and risked becoming permanent.¹³⁸ Cochrane argues that while the first year is spent in adaptation and the second year arguably the easiest, by the third year POWs started to show the strains and by the fourth year few would be unaffected.¹³⁹ Psychological conditions would vary, and included a fear amongst the POWs that they were stagnating mentally in captivity. POWs experiences conditions whose symptoms included mental exhaustion, irritability, intellectual instability, loss of concentration and a disturbance of memory.¹⁴⁰ The first issue of *Here Now* addressed this specifically through an article

¹³² Schinto, "A Beriberi Heart", p.55.

¹³³ F. Dredge, "Changhi Jottings", *POWC Echo*, 7th edition, 26 April 1942.

¹³⁴ "Changhi Chit Chat", *POWC Echo*, 11th edition, 31 May 1942.

¹³⁵ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.45.

¹³⁶ "Whit Monday Carnival", *The Clarion*, No. 13, June 1944, p.5.

¹³⁷ "Local News", *POWC Echo*, 5th edition, 12 April 1942.

¹³⁸ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p.56.

¹³⁹ Cochrane, "Notes on the Psychology of Prisoners of War", p.284.

¹⁴⁰ Walter A. Lunden, "Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War", *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* (39:6) (1949), p.731, Jones and Wessely, "British Prisoners-of-War", p.167.

by Cade, a psychiatrist held in Changi, which asked whether or not “Changi Brain” existed.¹⁴¹ Cade compared the POWs to a schoolboy “kept in late while his more fortunate fellows are playing or watching the game of the year, only with us it is the fate of the world that is being decided” and it is a preoccupation with the wider context of the war that interfered with their usual mental functions. He acknowledged that many had become intellectually lazy and recommends that POWs mental exercise to overcome this stagnation, but reassured the readers that the condition is temporary. Clavell recognises this intellectual laziness, saying that POWs would generally want to put off study.¹⁴² In spite of this, education became an important feature in the camps.¹⁴³

The initial psychological challenge facing all the POWs was the manner of their capture. Written soon after the fall of Singapore, the early editions of the *POWC Echo* show prisoners struggling to cope with the manner of this defeat. The surrender of Singapore was described by Churchill as “the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history”¹⁴⁴ and had seen the fall of a fortress that had been regarded as being impenetrable. The British FEPOWs struggled to maintain their own self-esteem having been forced to surrender by their military commandments against their instincts and wishes. The manner of their defeat was more intolerable and shameful due to the blow it took to their military and Imperial esteem.¹⁴⁵ The prisoners used the *POWC Echo* to describe the bitterness they felt over the defeat and, again, it is in their poems that the strongest feelings are expressed. Howes-Roberts in his poem “The Unfortunate Incident” said that Singapore’s “vaunted” fortress “was built on the sands, of a noise in the papers, a boast and no more”, the “soldiers too few the heavy brunt bore” fighting for a “cause on nothingness found”.¹⁴⁶ He feared that the “pitiful tale” will be brushed over, hidden “in the vaults of Whitehall where many such tales lie forgotten forever”. His tone is echoed by Mitchell in his poem “The Malayan War” mused on whether their

¹⁴¹ J.F.J. Cade, “‘Changi Brian’: Fact or Fiction?” *Here Now* Issue 1, p.21.

¹⁴² Clavell, “King Rat”, p.122.

¹⁴³ See chapter 3 for a discussion on education in the POW camps.

¹⁴⁴ Winston Churchill, *History of the Second World War Vol. 4, The Hinge of Fate* (London: Houghton Mifflin, 1953), p.81.

¹⁴⁵ Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴⁶ Wynne Howes-Roberts, “The Unfortunate Incident”, *POWC Echo*, 8th edition, 2 May 1942.

defeat was due to facing a stronger Japanese army but concluded that “no, they just walked around us. God, our line was thin”.¹⁴⁷ He was left feeling weary and with a broken heart wondered “how our nation holds Imperial sway”. From officers who had served in India and would have been brought upon tales and legends of the British Empire, this disillusionment would have been keenly felt and may have rendered hopeless any hopes Britain may have had over maintaining its empire after the war.

During Gilbert’s second phase, which he described as the most trying of the first six months, a weekly column appeared in style of a book of the Old Testament called the “Book of Sorrows” according to which their “days were filled with sorrow and the nights were empty of joy”.¹⁴⁸ The weekly column described many of the hardships facing the POWs, including lack of food, the black market, lack of clothing, lack of women and loneliness. Further evidence of black humour was seen in the series of spoof “obituary” columns, which were fictionalised and satirised accounts of the officers’ lives and achievements after the war as told in the light of their recent “deaths”. Thoughts of home seemed more likely to bring on despair than hope, especially for Percy Adams who wrote the poem of “The Good Old Days of Long Ago” where “we lived a life [that] now in dreams behaunts our slumber so”.¹⁴⁹ In a separate edition, he aped Robert Browning and declared “how I wish I were in England, now that April’s here”.¹⁵⁰ He later wrote that “often our thoughts would turn to England and our own bit of the home country in particular – re-living again in our memories past pleasures in the countryside or in London as she used to be”.¹⁵¹ Things were not always downbeat however, in the same edition as “The Malayan War” poem, Gilbert described an Evensong that made him “proud to be a Britisher and a Christian”,¹⁵² suggesting the importance of religion in maintaining morale and dignity. *The Clarion* contains a number of religious notices and lessons from one of the camp padres.

¹⁴⁷ O.H. Mitchell, “The Malayan War”, *POWC Echo*, 11th edition, 31 May 1942.

¹⁴⁸ Alister Marr, “Extract from the First Book of Sorrows, Chapter 1”, *POWC Echo*, 3rd edition, 29 March 1942.

¹⁴⁹ Percy Adams, “The Good Old Days of Long Ago”, *POWC Echo*, 12th edition, 7 June 1942.

¹⁵⁰ Percy Adams, “April”, *POWC Echo*, 7th edition, 26 April 1942.

¹⁵¹ Percy Adam, “What was it like?”, *POWC Echo* 22th edition, 15 August 1942.

¹⁵² C. Gilbert, “Pepys in Changhi”, *POWC Echo*, 11th edition, 31 May 1942.

Many prisoners found solace in their faiths, Gilbert argued in the *POWC Echo* that he “could not help thinking that our religion plays more part in our lives than before the war”¹⁵³ although Howes-Roberts seems to have gone the other way, raging against the “idiot faiths” that lead to war.¹⁵⁴

While the *POWC Echo* shows bitterness and anger over the fall of Singapore and their conditions, there is little open hostility to the Japanese themselves. Anger seems to be directed more at the circumstances of war and perhaps the leaders who got them into that condition. Mitchell asked “Can one honestly say that any German or Jap wanted bloody war anymore than any English-man? Whose doing is all this?”¹⁵⁵ There may have been an element of pragmatism in this; it would have been a great risk for the editors to include material openly critical of the Japanese. There was also evidence of sarcasm. The description of the first payment given to prisoners as the “generous action of our enemies [that] opens up untold joys to many of us, who have no private means”¹⁵⁶ may or may not have been sarcastic, although the three chunks of “delicious, succulent and nutritious pineapple” supplied by the Emperor to celebrate his birthday through “his kindness and extreme bounty” which meant that “all the inmates thought very deeply of the Emperor that night”¹⁵⁷ almost certainly was. There is, however, no outright hostility to the captors. This would undoubtedly have changed by the end of the war.

Over time, as Gilbert explained in his six month review, the prisoners adapted to their environment in Changi and by the 20th edition, the “Book of Sorrows” was discontinued. The last column reflected the feeling that the prisoners were learning how to cope: “...the children of Changi suffered greatly from the plagues and afflictions that were put upon them, but being men of great stamina they survived and they grew used to the strain and life that was set upon them, and they

¹⁵³ *ibid*

¹⁵⁴ Wynne Howes-Roberts, “Sic Transit Gloria”, *POWC Echo*, 17th edition, 12 July 1942.

¹⁵⁵ O.H. Mitchell, “Sunday Evening”, *POWC Echo*, 19th edition, 26 July 1942.

¹⁵⁶ “Pay for Prisoners”, *POWC Echo*, 13th edition 14 June 1942.

¹⁵⁷ “Local News”, *POWC Echo*, 8th edition 2 May 1942.

settled down in their new mode of life".¹⁵⁸ From that moment, whilst there was still evidence of hardship and low morale ("the days are very much the same and harder to get through"),¹⁵⁹ the *POWC Echo* became increasingly focused on the everyday lives of the prisoners with more articles featuring competitions, sporting events and debates, while the poems and satire are slightly less downhearted, topics became more abstract and focused less on their conditions. Although Gilbert had said that by the final phase that the POWs had little to worry about, the officers of Coke's Rifles were about to be dispersed from Changi (at least one officer was sent to the Burma-Thailand Railway)¹⁶⁰ where they would face conditions and hardships in the Working Parties much more severe than Changi.

In contrast, *The Clarion* had only the piece that gave a glimpse into anything that hinted at the morale of the prisoners. If, for some POWs, their time in the camps were "the best years of our lives",¹⁶¹ the nature of *The Clarion* does little to dispel this notion. At its outset, Wood cited the need to "steer clear of matters political or slanderous" as well as things that were blasphemous or obscene,¹⁶² but the mood of *The Clarion* also reflects that the conditions the prisoners faced under the Germans were not as arduous as faced by the FEPOWs (although it is uncertain whether or not a darker mood may have emerged had *The Clarion* been an unofficial paper free from censorship). There is some evidence of satire, but unlike in the *POWC Echo*, these examples are generally witty attempts to make light of difficult situations. One clear example attempted to deal with a traumatic aspect of some prisoners' lives, the "jilted, thrown-over, cast-off or otherwise given the go-by by the girl friend".¹⁶³ The article proposed the formation of a "Lost Souls Club" to lessen the shock to those who have received "Dear John" letter from wives or girlfriends breaking off relationships, to comfort them and to prevent them from doing something rash (like committing suicide). Such break ups

¹⁵⁸ Alister Marr, "The Book of Sorrows, Chapter 18", *POWC Echo*, 20th edition, 2 August 1942.

¹⁵⁹ C. Gilbert, "Mr Pepys in Changi", *POWC Echo*, 29th edition, 4 October 1942.

¹⁶⁰ IWM Documents.12748, Private Papers of Captain JA Dickson.

¹⁶¹ Unnamed prisoner quoted in Robert Kee's Foreword to Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.1.

¹⁶² Wood, "Editorial", *The Clarion*, No. 1, p.2.

¹⁶³ O.E. Winstone, "The Lost Souls Club", *The Clarion*, No 12, May 1944, p.13.

would be difficult in most circumstances, but in captivity many prisoners held on the hopes of the eventual reunion. The article suggested that they seek out other members who will give them words of encouragement before being introduced to a “hen-pecked husband” who will “explain the many disadvantages of married life and congratulate the new member on his lucky escape”. As an official, censored, publication, *The Clarion* was never likely to display the same openness in describing the conditions of the POWs, nor their morale, but it does provide some insights into the conditions faced and how the POWs coped with them.

Uncertainty was a major contributor to the physiological effects of captivity and rumours were rife, especially in Changi which was more cut off from the outside world than Lamsdorf where the *POWC Echo* muses “if only we had an inkling of how things were really going”.¹⁶⁴ Rumours about the state of the war, rations, Red Cross deliveries and to where and when the POWs would be moved were widespread in Changi¹⁶⁵ and the *POWC Echo* reflected this in a number of entries, including a poem entitled “Rumour! Rumour! Rumour! by “O.B.Bs”¹⁶⁶ and an article on “Moves” by Featherstone who berates as incongruous those who voluntarily chose to be relocated.¹⁶⁷ Uncertainty also arose due to not knowing how long the period of captivity would be and that indefiniteness of time creates a sense of futility¹⁶⁸ although Makepeace argues that this uncertainty would not have been a problem for optimistic POWs who saw that indefinite captivity could mean imminent release.¹⁶⁹ Uncertainty about conditions back home was another factor, one that had been highlighted in Davers’ research. American POWs whose families were safe tended to cope better than POWs whose families were vulnerable.¹⁷⁰ This had particular relevance for one class of POW; those from the Channel Islands. The Channel Islands had been under Axis occupation since

¹⁶⁴ “More Aerial Activity”, *POWC Echo*, 17th edition, 12 July 1942.

¹⁶⁵ See Sgt J.N. Farrow, *Darkness before the Dawn: a diary of a Changi POW 1941-1945*, (Peterborough: Stamford House Publishing, 2007) where rumours make up a large portion of the diary entries.

¹⁶⁶ “Poet’s Corner”, *POWC Echo*, 4th edition, 5 April 1942.

¹⁶⁷ C.F. Featherstone, “Moves”, *POWC Echo*, 18th edition, 19 July 1942.

¹⁶⁸ Gilbert, *POW*, p.xi., Lunden, “Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War”, p.730.

¹⁶⁹ Makepeace, “Living beyond the barbed wire”, p.173.

¹⁷⁰ Lunden, “Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War”, p.730.

June 1940. In a number of issues, *The Clarion* referred to the anxieties of the Channel Island prisoners who did not know the fate of their loved ones back home and assures them that efforts are being made to locate the civilian relatives of the POWs who have been interned in Germany and provide means of communication via the Red Cross.¹⁷¹ One issue attempted to give further comfort, poignantly explaining how a “number of good toys”, made in the camp workshop by prisoners, have been provided “for your children” and distributed by the YMCA in the sincere hope they will “provide some happy hours for the children in their strange surroundings”.¹⁷² This article was deemed important enough by the editor to be the first item on page 1. Prisoners who would have been fully aware of the horrors facing civilian internees¹⁷³ might have received small comfort from this gesture, while the prisoners making the toys in the workshop would have been extra motivated at the knowledge of what they were working for.

For coping with the psychological conditions of captivity and another major difference between the European POWs and the FEPOWs, was the POWs’ contact with the outside world, especially the receipt of mail and access to the Relief Agencies, on which much depended.¹⁷⁴ These agencies, predominately the Red Cross and the YMCA, took responsibility for much of the POWs’ physical wellbeing and sought to implement the Geneva Conventions for the supply of food, medicine and other equipment to the POWs on both sides. The Red Cross had a large responsibility; it prepared food, and medicine and clothing parcels, facilitated the exchange of information, letters and parcels between POWs and families and organised the repatriation of POWs. Between 1941 and 1945 it delivered 25,608,167 food parcels,¹⁷⁵ 1,011,109 next-of-kin parcels,¹⁷⁶ 885,915 medical and surgical parcels,¹⁷⁷ over 263,000 books¹⁷⁸ and 1,464,404,000 cigarettes,¹⁷⁹ all within Europe. In

¹⁷¹ “Channel Islanders”, *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, p.2.

¹⁷² “Channel Island Ps.O.W.”, *The Clarion* No. 5, May 1943, p.1.

¹⁷³ Borrie, *Despite Captivity*, p.137.

¹⁷⁴ Lunden, “Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War”, p.729.

¹⁷⁵ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.259.

¹⁷⁶ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.193.

¹⁷⁷ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.260.

¹⁷⁸ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.214.

contrast, the “pitifully small amount of only around 225,000 parcels made it to the Far East¹⁸⁰ and many of these failed to reach the POWs themselves.

The YMCA shared some of the responsibilities, especially in connection with the supply of books, sporting equipment and musical instruments. It had the job of attending to the spiritual and cultural needs of the POWs.¹⁸¹ According to Rollings, “there is hardly an ex-POW who has not at some time or other expressed undying gratitude for the help the relief agencies provided”,¹⁸² and despite evidence of large scale griping about the services provided, the prisoners of Lamsdorf had every reason to share this gratitude. *The Clarion* twice listed the equipment they had received from the Red Cross,¹⁸³ including in December 7,506 food parcels and 5,797 medical equipment, in January 1943 4,796 food parcels and 7,026 medical parcels and in February 1943, 84,192 food parcels and 5,555 medical parcels, but the practice of listing the figures was discontinued due to the unrealistic expectations this gave the POWs and complaints which followed when they did not receive what they considered was due.¹⁸⁴ Prisoners were told that the Relief Agencies’ parcels would be distributed to where the greatest good was possible.

The Clarion also gives an insight into the work of the YMCA in the camps.¹⁸⁵ In an article featuring Gunnar Janssen, the YMCA secretary in Berlin, the editor describes his work and the work of the YMCA as “a symbol, a living example of the finest work of Man” showing that the work of the Relief Agencies did not just help the POWs physically, but also helped them maintain some faith in humanity, even in such trying times. According to Janssen, the work of the YMCA helped the camp develop from its “primitive level” to a “high standard of education, entertainment and religious activity”. *The Clarion* explained to the POWs that the aim of the YMCA was to help every POW live

¹⁷⁹ Cambrey and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.202.

¹⁸⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, p.133.

¹⁸¹ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.236.

¹⁸² Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, p.211.

¹⁸³ J. Lowe, “Red Cross News” in *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, pp.14-15 and *The Clarion*, No. 3, March 1943, pp.14-15.

¹⁸⁴ J. Lowe, “Red Cross News”, *The Clarion* No. 4, April 1943, pp.8-9.

¹⁸⁵ “Friends in Need....”, *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.4.

as humanely as possible, while warning them that living humanely did not amount to living in luxury.¹⁸⁶ In 1942, it delivered to POW camps across Europe consignments of 25,413 parcels weighing over 135,000kgs including 637,743 books, 4,124 musical instruments, 26,835 items of sporting equipment and 65,058 indoor games.¹⁸⁷

The Red Cross notices were discontinued after the 7th issue, possibly due to editorial reasons (Parramore had replaced Wood as editor by then) or perhaps due to the rather negative tone they had taken. The Red Cross notices often resorted to chastising the POWs for taking the work of the Relief Agencies for granted. Attention is brought to the negative letters sent home by POWs in which they complained about matters such as ill-health or lack of Red Cross parcels,¹⁸⁸ many of which contributed towards a rather negative impression of the Red Cross back home. *The Clarion* stated that when confronted, half of the writers denied sending such letters, while a quarter apologised saying that they had been feeling out of sorts. The rest gave no reason. The edition described the sending of these letters an “unworthy practice” and calls on the Red Cross Trustees in the Working Parties to give the POWs sympathy and considered advice, but also warned that such letters add to the misery of those at home and that it was unfair to criticise the Red Cross who were doing a good job in extremely difficult circumstances to ease the POWs’ hardships. It concluded by stating that “It is something to be alive and safe. They’re not so safe back home, but they do not complain to us”. Another issue further explained that the Red Cross parcels are gifts of the British public and where items are missing, there are probably very good reasons for it.¹⁸⁹ In doing so, *The Clarion* is upholding the moral universe of the camps while demonstrating that the European POWs were likely to complain about their conditions, contrasting with the Changi prisoners who were deprived of the support from the Relief Agencies, who lacked both the practical and emotional

¹⁸⁶ “Cooperation Please”, *The Clarion*, No. 8, January 1944, p. 12.

¹⁸⁷ “Facts and figures”, *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.9.

¹⁸⁸ J. Lowe, “Red Cross News”, *The Clarion*, No. 4, April 1943, pp.8-9.

¹⁸⁹ J. Lowe, “Red Cross Notes”, *The Clarion*, No. 6, June-July 1943, p.7.

encouragement from the Relief Agencies yet managed to avoid bitterness against their captors.¹⁹⁰ The Japanese authorities did not encourage the work of the Relief Agencies, they were suspicious of foreign intervention and valued little the fate of the POWs who they believed had disgraced themselves and lost their rights as honourable individuals for allowing themselves to be captured.¹⁹¹ Relief ships were refused permission to dock¹⁹² while the Relief Agencies had no First World War experiences in the Far East from which to draw on, resulting in little aid getting through.¹⁹³ Of those parcels that did get through, many were ransacked, stolen or sold for inflated prices on the black market. As a result, the Relief Agencies focused on getting food parcels through but in no more than a casual way¹⁹⁴ and most FEPOWs never saw a Red Cross parcel in over three and a half years.¹⁹⁵ It is no wonder that only two references to Red Cross deliveries appeared in the *POWC Echo*.

The contact with home through letters was also important; such letters not only brought news of loved ones and life back home (crucial for the pages of *The Clarion*) but also, as Makepeace argues, to provide a space to live out experience.¹⁹⁶ Initial lack of communication caused them great anxieties as they could not even let their loved ones know that they were alive. Even when letters were permitted from June 1942, many took months or years to arrive or failed to get through at all, resulting in some families not knowing that their POW had survived until they turned up back home after liberation.¹⁹⁷ Citing lack of sufficient censors, the Japanese restricted the letters and replies to just 24 words,¹⁹⁸ which would have made it impossible to share sufficient news and information to

¹⁹⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, p.248.

¹⁹¹ Felicia Yap, "Prisoners of War and civilian Internees of the Japanese in British Asia: The Similarities and Contrasts of Experience", *Journal of Contemporary History* (47:317) (2012), p.325.

¹⁹² Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.272.

¹⁹³ Gillies, *The Barbed-Wire University*, p.132.

¹⁹⁴ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, pp.272 and 274.

¹⁹⁵ Rollings, *Prisoner of War*, pp. 137 and 157.

¹⁹⁶ Makepeace, "Living Beyond the Barbed Wire", p.161.

¹⁹⁷ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.438.

¹⁹⁸ Havers, "Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience", p.52.

establish the psychological links with home enjoyed by the European POWs, yet in spite of this, Lt. Col. Gilbert considered the rules “simple and very fair”.¹⁹⁹

Links to home were also established by the Lamsdorf POWs in the creation of the various clubs and associations within the camp, often linked to shared interest or a region. They were ways of encouraging the POWs to take responsibility for improving their own conditions and to build relations outside their immediate accommodation blocks or groups of friends but also helped recreate their comforting pre-war civilian worlds.²⁰⁰ Clubs were formed for groups such as accountants, farmers and motor cyclist enthusiasts.²⁰¹ The geographically based POW associations relied on *The Clarion* to spread the word and attract members. The first such group mentioned, the Northumberland & Durham POW Association, stated that its aims were to “give assistance to those in need; financial, legal and employment aid and the establishment of social contact after the war”.²⁰² By June 1944, it had grown to over 900 members and had seen the first meeting in the UK of the repatriated POWs.²⁰³ Its’ featuring in *The Clarion* not only helped it grow, but also encouraged the formations of similar groups, with associations forming for POWs for a further 21 regions by June 1944. The groups gave a sense of community within the camp based upon their connections with their home lives and provided a link to the community and their families back home. James Deans, a member of the Caledonian Society in Stalag Luft VI explains the appeal of such societies: “the meeting together, the talks of home, the sound of the familiar dialect, and the uniting of common memories, all help to strengthen ties with home, and bring a soothing influence. Home does not seem so far away, when men of one place get together and talk about it”.²⁰⁴ Patrons based in the UK were sought and activities arranged. One example showed an association had taken all the

¹⁹⁹ C. Gilbert, “Mr Pepys in Changhi”, *POWC Echo*, 14th edition, 21 June 1942.

²⁰⁰ Gilbert, *POW*, p.95.

²⁰¹ “Around the Camp”, *The Clarion*, No. 11, April 1944, p.13.

²⁰² “Northumberland & Durham Ps.O.W.”, *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.18.

²⁰³ “P.O.W. Associations”, *The Clarion*, No. 13, June 1944, p.16.

²⁰⁴ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.41.

prisoners' children to the pantomime and tea at Christmas time,²⁰⁵ further demonstrating the physiological boost that such connections to home provide. The other prominent group in Lamsdorf was the Talbot House organisation. *The Clarion* described "Toc-H" as a "non-political, inter-racial and inter-denominational organisation" which sets out to "win men's friendship and service of others" based upon a "practical Christian outlook on life"²⁰⁶ and which had been started in the UK after the First World War. Toc-H's main activity in Lamsdorf was the collection and distribution of supplementary clothing and necessities²⁰⁷ which was especially valuable for new POWs and ensured that maximum use was made out of the equipment within the camp. The role of Toc-H not only gave practical benefits to the POWs, but gave a sense of community and purpose within the camp which was linked to the POWs' activities back home to the extent they were, or would become, members of Toc-H in the UK. Details of the Welfare Fund or the work of the Camp Comforts Committee feature in most editions of *The Clarion*, and show how the funds raised through POW subscriptions, theatre collections or through special events such as the Whitsun Carnival allowed the POWs to purchase items such as theatre equipment, musical instruments, medical equipment, goods for the canteen and the production of *The Clarion* itself. On top of this, there was an anonymous philanthropic society called Simple Simon & Sons which funded entertainment and sporting events for the good of the camp.²⁰⁸

That no such POW associations are evident in the *POWC Echo* may be partially explained by the fact that the prisoners of Changi were in their early years of captivity and understood that a return home would not be imminent. Battalions were captured en masse after the surrender of Singapore and so communities would have been centred on the military units the prisoners would have been fighting with. This sense of community is evident in the *POWC Echo* where its primary readers were the members of the same battalion. The readers of *The Clarion* may have had the end

²⁰⁵ "North Staffs P.O.W. Comforts Fund", *The Clarion*, No. 3, March 1943, p.2.

²⁰⁶ "Toc H", *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, p.12.

²⁰⁷ "Toc H", *The Clarion*, No. 5, May 1943, p.18.

²⁰⁸ "Theatre", *The Clarion*, No. 3, March 1943, p.7.

of the war in mind, a sense of re-engaging with home life before they could physically return, while understanding that they would need to rely on each other to get through the difficult re-adjustments. The associations gave the European POWs a structure in their lives, a structure that the FEPOWs in Changi had to develop for themselves in the early days following surrender. The large numbers of captives had taken the Japanese by surprise. The newly captured POWs were marshalled into Changi and largely left to their own devices, using their organisational and practical skills to create these structures enabling them to come to terms with their surrender, rebuilding their self-esteem and military pride.²⁰⁹

One factor almost entirely missing from the POW publications is the matter of escape. The only reference is a cartoon of a POW crawling under the wire to be faced with the large black boots of an angry guard.²¹⁰ This was as much a warning as an attempt at humour and any other reference would have been impossible in a censored organ. In Changi, escape was not a realistic option and so its absence from the pages of the *POWC Echo* (other than in relation to the Selarang Barracks Incident)²¹¹ is not a surprise. Lamsdorf had a great tradition of escaping with half of the RAF's "home-runs" coming from it,²¹² but its importance in post-War histories has been largely overstated. According to Cull, Britain's POW genre was in itself an escape; avoiding the reality of post-war impotence and the serious reality of war itself.²¹³ Escape, or the thoughts of escape, were both a practical and psychological release for the POWs, it was the only way a POW could exercise control over their own destinies and in its absence the FEPOWs were forced to accept and adapt to their conditions, contributing to a "vibrant and flourishing community".²¹⁴ Escapism, through activities, imagination and through links to the outside world were just as crucial on how the POWs made

²⁰⁹ Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, pp. 6 and 167.

²¹⁰ *The Clarion*, No. 12, May 1944, p.1.

²¹¹ See chapter 1 for a description of the Selarang Barracks Incident.

²¹² Gilbert, *POW*, p.262. A "home run" is where an escaped POW is able to make it safely to an Allied or neutral country from where he could return home.

²¹³ Nicholas J. Cull, "Great Escapes: 'Englishness and the Prisoner of War Genre", *Film History*, (14:3/4), War and Militarism (2002), pp.287 and 288.

²¹⁴ Havers, *Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience*, pp.33-34.

sense of their imprisonment.²¹⁵ The next chapter will examine how activities in both camps are demonstrated in the POW publications. It will contrast the experiences of the European POWs with those in Changi and consider the extent to which POWs attempted to recreate their home lives within the prison camps.

²¹⁵ Makepeace, "Living Beyond the Barbed Wire", p.160.

Chapter 3 – Everyday lives: sport, entertainment, arts and education

“Almost every activity of the outside world was reproduced there and provided the same outlets, fatuous and valuable, for human energy.”²¹⁶

This is the view of Robert Kee, a prisoner of war of the Germans from 1942 to 1945, who is a major proponent of the idea that the POWs would invariably find ways of reflecting home life within their camps: “For the readers there were books....for the actors and producers and carpenters there was a theatre....for those who liked cleaning buttons there was button polish”.²¹⁷ POWs had to find ways of coping with their conditions and creating a life for themselves in the camps. The advice given to Kee was to keep himself occupied and find ways of taking twice as long as normal to do any task in order to fill the long hours.²¹⁸ He was told that although life in the camp was simpler and more unpleasant than the outside world, life in the camp was the same as anywhere else and that humans adapt to the conditions in which they find themselves out of necessity.²¹⁹ This chapter will consider how through a host of activities (including arts, sport, education, entertainment and pursuing hobbies, as evidenced in the POW publications) the POWs did not merely keep themselves physically and mentally occupied, but also created an important psychological link with their home lives, living beyond the vacuums of their captivities. The POWs were trying to make it as near to normal life as possible.²²⁰

As identified in the research within the camps undertaken by Danvers and Matthews, monotony was a major problem facing the POWs.²²¹ Whiteside claims that staying in Lamsdorf was “one of the

²¹⁶ Robert Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company* (St Ives; Phoenix Books, 2000), p.71.

²¹⁷ *ibid*

²¹⁸ Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company*, p.65.

²¹⁹ Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company*, p.72.

²²⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.52, Lunden, “Captivity Psychoses among Prisoners of War”, p.728.

²²¹ See chapter 2 for a description of Davers’ and Matthews’ research.

most boring pastimes I have ever experienced”,²²² while the FEPOWs also learned to “curse the monotony of [their] existence”.²²³ It was therefore imperative that they find a means of occupying their time. The European POWs benefitted from the steady supply of books, educational material, sporting equipment, musical equipment and other items from the Relief Agencies and as a result, were able to undertake a wider variety of activities than the FEPOWs. Those who found hobbies and other activities within the camps were less likely to suffer a psychological breakdown.²²⁴ The camp populations contained a large number of specialists in a wide field of activities who often sought to continue their trades, crafts or hobbies within the camps, not only to earn but also to “keep boredom and depression at bay”.²²⁵ Similarly, many sought the opportunity to try new hobbies and develop new skills.²²⁶ According to Becker, embroidery, wood carving, metal sculpting, letter writing, poetry and drawing were among those activities undertaken, all of which helped the POWs to “escape their current situation – to go on fighting and hoping”.²²⁷ *The Clarion* contained examples of such activities, including a review of the annual Whitsun “carnival” and funfair which raised funds for the Red Cross (complete with photographs).²²⁸ Prizes were awarded to the Chinese Street scene, a large and detailed model of Glasgow and a H.G. Wells inspired scene of the future. The POWs’ ingenuity was also evident in the *POWC Echo* which detailed the Arts Exhibition containing “ingenious exhibits” including paintings, model ships, carvings and mats made with old bits and pieces of socks.²²⁹ Arts and crafts exhibited in the Lamsdorf Arts Exhibitions included tinwork, needlework, carvings, paintings, etchings and woodwork.²³⁰ Contributing to or producing the POW publications were ways of expressing these skills, both *The Clarion* and the *POWC Echo*

²²² George Whiteside, *The Clarion with W.W. II memories as a Prisoner of War*, (San Antonio: Poppy Publishing), p.16.

²²³ Percy Adams, “What was it like?”, *POWC Echo* 22th edition, 15 August 1942.

²²⁴ Kochavi, *Confronting Captivity*, p.56.

²²⁵ Becker, “Art, Material Life and Disaster”, p.29.

²²⁶ Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company*, p.73.

²²⁷ Becker, “Art, Material Life and Disaster”, p.29.

²²⁸ “Around the Camp”, *The Clarion*, No. 15, August 1944, pp.4-5.

²²⁹ C. Gilbert, “Mr Pepys in Changi”, *POWC Echo*, 19th edition, 26 July 1942.

²³⁰ “Arts & Crafts Exhibition”, *The Clarion*, No. 4, April 1943, p.3.

contained cartoons, artwork, poetry and short stories. In *Here Now*, Otto Cramer painted intricate and colourful images of designs he intended to decorate his house with after the war.

Sport was also a means of passing the time and was encouraged as an effective way of relieving tension and frustration.²³¹ It had numerous benefits; providing a means of a sense of nationality amongst prisoners at a time when that nationality had been soundly defeated; providing a sense of passing of time with the sporting seasons creating a sense of routine, and importantly, providing a psychological escape and demonstrating a determination to recreate a sense of normality.²³² In an article written for *The Cricketer* while still in captivity, Terence Prittie, a prisoner in Oflag VIB, argued that “whatever we are missing, we might, after all, be worse off, for with a cricket bat in his hands, the prisoner of war is rather nearer home than at any other time than at any other moment of his existence”.²³³ The Germans were generally happy to permit sport as it not only made for a more relaxed camp environment but also helped alleviate the boredom of the guards and prisoners alike and, in addition, provided the guards with a form of leverage to ensure good behaviour.²³⁴ The Japanese and Korean guards often joined in themselves.²³⁵ Sport was another psychological link to home; In Europe, sporting equipment was supplied by the Red Cross or the YMCA²³⁶ or made by the prisoners themselves. The prisoners of the Japanese had to make do with equipment brought in, bartered for or handmade.

Internal sports news did not appear in *The Clarion* until issue Number 3 and, while it rarely dominated the pages, it featured in most subsequent editions, demonstrating the extent to which sport was an important part of camp life. A variety of sports were played, including football, rugby, athletics, boxing and cross country. Football seems to have been one of the more organised events with the camp hosting a number of league competitions, one comprised of 27 teams and 3 divisions.

²³¹ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, pp.56 and 154.

²³² Blackburn, *The Sportsmen of Changi*, p.3.

²³³ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.57.

²³⁴ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.56.

²³⁵ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.273.

²³⁶ See chapter 2 for a description of the Relief Agencies’ activities.

Matches were initially limited to eight players on each side due to the size of the pitch but by May 1943, the pitch had been expanded to full size and had seating for 4,000 spectators. One issue gave a match report on a game played against another camp, Stalag VIIA, who fielded four professional players, demonstrating that even at the heart of the conflict, the Germans were content to allow a team of prisoners to go on “tour”.²³⁷

The *POWC Echo* confirmed that that team sports, including football, hockey and cricket, took place in Changi²³⁸ although the conditions and turnover of the FEPOWs made it more difficult for them to be pursued for long. In his diary, Farrow questions how people who were starving and in poor health would be expected to take part in physical games like football²³⁹ and eventually the officers banned sports such as football and boxing as they were creating too many injuries.²⁴⁰ Before being banned, football was organised into a league, with eight teams playing twice a week by September 1942.²⁴¹ Aside from organised team sports, other activities included bridge, draughts, cribbage, table tennis, cards and darts and even Monopoly were popular.²⁴² There was, however, a suggestion that interest waned after initial surges of enthusiasm,²⁴³ further demonstrating prisoners’ stagnating in Changi.

Education provided a means for many POWs to alleviate this stagnation. Initially, educational activities were designed as a means of keeping the POWs mentally and physically alert,²⁴⁴ but over time these activities became important in their own right as the POWs used their time in the camps to develop themselves, learn new subjects, gain qualifications and set themselves up for post-war careers. In Europe, the Relief Agencies facilitated study through locating and supplying specialist books and teaching material and assisting the UK authorities and the academic

²³⁷ “VII A – VIII B”, *The Clarion*, No.4., April 1943, p.7.

²³⁸ See *POWC Echo* 17th, 18th, 20th and 27th editions.

²³⁹ Farrow, “Darkness before the Dawn”, p.129.

²⁴⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.160.

²⁴¹ “Selerang League Football”, *POWC Echo* 27th edition.

²⁴² See *POWC Echo* 2nd, 4th, 6th, 10th, 14th, 17th, 18th and 20th editions.

²⁴³ C.F. Featherstone, “Games and Pastimes”, *POWC Echo* 13th edition, 14 June 1942.

²⁴⁴ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.215.

institutions in arranging for prisoners to sit examination papers which would be of “real value” to POWs in gaining post-war employment.²⁴⁵ By 1946, over 17,000 applications had been received by the Red Cross to sit exams and almost 79% achieved a pass mark,²⁴⁶ (including Parramore, the second editor of *The Clarion*, who achieved an electrical engineering practice qualification from the City and Guilds of London Institute in 1944)²⁴⁷ providing further strong evidence that the European POWs often succeeded in living beyond a vacuum of their captivity.

In Europe, the Germans cooperated with the studies, one camp, Stalag 383, became a special camp for education,²⁴⁸ while another, Stalag Luft VI became known as the “Barbed-Wire University”.²⁴⁹ Education was also an important part of Lamsdorf; from 1943 the Stalag School taught 63 subjects by 41 qualified tutors and were attended by almost a thousand students.²⁵⁰ Its principal was CQMS Lawrie who used *The Clarion* to inform the POWs of the school and its functions,²⁵¹ to advertise special courses (for example, a six week course to allow those on Working Parties to catch up)²⁵² and to run a monthly English lesson within the pages of the early editions. *The Clarion* also promoted the essay competitions held for prisoners by the Council of the Royal Society of Arts²⁵³ and the British Legion.²⁵⁴

Without the support of the Relief Agencies and the backing of the Detaining Power and in spite of facing more challenging conditions than their European counterparts, the FEPOWs still managed to maintain an element of education. In Changi, there were at least two schools, one of which, the Temple Hill School (where economics was said to have been the most popular subject), is

²⁴⁵ “POW Education”, *The Clarion*, No. 7, Autumn 1943, p.15.

²⁴⁶ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.221.

²⁴⁷ *The Prisoner of War*, (2:25) May 1944, p.12.

²⁴⁸ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.216.

²⁴⁹ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.260.

²⁵⁰ Cambray and Briggs, *Red Cross & St John: the Official Record*, p.216.

²⁵¹ S.C. Lawrie, “The School”, *The Clarion*, No. 1, January 1943, p.12.

²⁵² “Working Party Tutors”, *The Clarion*, No. 2, February 1943, p.13.

²⁵³ “Essay Competition”, *The Clarion*, No. 3, March 1943, p.3.

²⁵⁴ “Essay Competition”, *The Clarion*, No. 10, March 1944, p.6.

mentioned in the *POWC Echo*.²⁵⁵ It is estimated that, at their peak, around 9,000 out of a camp population of around 45,500 at Changi attended classes.²⁵⁶ As well as formal lessons, lectures and debates were frequently held within the camp.²⁵⁷ The editors of *POWC Echo* welcomed the opportunity to expand the mind, “seldom does a man get such a chance as we do here in living a life so completely different from what he has been accustomed to, and it is when such reactions take place in the human brain that ideas and brilliance bloom forth”.²⁵⁸ Clavell was more cynical; “The Brass has ordered it....‘Give them something to do. *Make* them better themselves. *Force* them to be busy, then they won’t get into trouble’”.²⁵⁹ He describes courses in languages, art and engineering using the knowledge of experts of other POWs. Studies were difficult, not only were the POWs often physically unfit for study due to malnutrition and disease or mentally unfit due to depression and stagnation, they also lacked the necessary equipment. The books that were available were antiquated and in high demand, notepaper was scarce, there was little or no light after dark, there were frequent distractions and practical work was impossible.²⁶⁰ It was therefore of little surprise that the Changi POWs did not fully embrace the opportunities to learn.²⁶¹

Alongside more formal methods of learning, books provided another way of relieving boredom and were also an invaluable means for prisoners to mentally to escape the confines of their surroundings.²⁶² According to Shavit, it is impossible to overstate the psychological value of books for they made life bearable for many lonely POWs.²⁶³ Kee agrees, “we could not have lived without books. They were the only sure support, the one true comfort. When food was short, clothing scarce, blocks overcrowded and underheated and war news bad, there were always

²⁵⁵ “Local News”, *POWC Echo*, 5th edition, 12 April 1942.

²⁵⁶ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.199.

²⁵⁷ “Local News”, *POWC Echo*, 4th edition, 5 April 1942.

²⁵⁸ “Editorial”, *POWC Echo*, 20th edition, 2 August 1942.

²⁵⁹ Clavell, “King Rat”, pp.121-122, his italics.

²⁶⁰ Cade, “‘Changi Brian’ *Here Now* Issue 1, p.22.

²⁶¹ Clavell, “King Rat”, p.122.

²⁶² David Shavit, “‘The Greatest Morale Factor Next to the Red Army’: Book and Libraries in American and British Prisoners of War Camps in Germany During World War II”, *Libraries & Culture* (34:2) (Spring 1999), p.128.

²⁶³ Shavit, “‘The Greatest Morale Factor’”, p.130.

books.”²⁶⁴ Both camps had libraries, the Lamsdorf library was large and well stocked,²⁶⁵ at least until it accidentally burned down, yet in spite of this, books do not have a large presence in either of the POWC publications. *POWC Echo* contains a small number of book reviews and *The Clarion* references the library and the availability of books, but otherwise there is little to indicate their importance to the prisoners.

Of more prominence in the POW publications is the area of entertainment, especially the theatre which became an important tool for raising morale²⁶⁶ and for providing activities not just for the audience, but for the producers, writers, actors and designers. Acting, directing and costume and set designing were effective means of channelling energy and provided an outlet for artistic expression²⁶⁷ (while the costume and set designers were able to use their skills in creating disguises and props for escapees).²⁶⁸ Its importance is demonstrated in one edition of *The Clarion* which stated that “we are entirely at the mood of the entertainers. They can either allow us to drop into a mood of apathy and ennui and succumb to the paralytic coolth, or stir us to vigorous enthusiasm and applause”.²⁶⁹ With a theatre that could host 600, Lamsdorf had “the grandest theatrical and musical ambitions of any stalag”,²⁷⁰ an ambition borne out in the pages of *The Clarion*. Most editions carried a review of at least one performance showcasing a range of plays, including Shakespeare, musicals, movie adaptations, comedy and pantomimes. Shows would generally last for two weeks, but, as in the case of *Lambeth Walk*, an original play written by a POW, runs could be extended due to popular demand. Shows were ticketed to ensure fair distribution. As with the football “tour matches”, the Germans also allowed productions to tour the camps, with the visiting production of *Ghost Train*

²⁶⁴ Kee, *A Crowd is Not Company*, p.115.

²⁶⁵ Shavit, “The Greatest Morale Factor”, p.121.

²⁶⁶ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.144.

²⁶⁷ Gilbert, *POW*, pp.171-172.

²⁶⁸ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.300.

²⁶⁹ “Theatre”, *The Clarion*, No. 10, p.4.

²⁷⁰ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.292.

being described as one of the best performances staged in the Lamsdorf theatre, while their own production of *Twelfth Night* went on to tour other camps.²⁷¹

While the reviewers recognised that they “needed to make allowances for the circumstance in which any show is put on and to applaud or condemn the extent to which difficulties are overcome”,²⁷² generally all the reviews are positive and shows are frequently described as the best the camp has ever put on. Similarly, individual performances, costumes and sets attract lavish praise completely lacking in criticism. The general positive nature of the reviews reflects the similarity between *The Clarion* and local newspapers.²⁷³ Only the performance of R.C. Sherriff’s *Journey’s End* brings an introspective moment from the reviewer.²⁷⁴ The play written in 1928 depicts life in the trenches of the First World War with themes of camaraderie, hardships and the futility of war, themes which might have been expected to resonate with the POWs for whom “blood, death, filth and disease is – or has been – for us, a common spectacle”. The reviewer, however, felt that the play had more significance on the outside of camp than within it and that compared to the POW’s “vivid personal experiences” is somewhat “artificial”. If the productions were designed to produce a sense of escapism for the prisoners, *Journey’s End* had the opposite effect in forcing the audience to confront the conditions of their captivities and giving “food for thought for many” (although the review still acknowledged that the play provided two hours of good entertainment). The more successful productions were the musicals, which *The Clarion* put down to the favourable acoustics of the theatre.²⁷⁵ Musicals arguably provide a greater possibility for the prisoners to be entertained without being overly taxing, complicated or emotional, characteristics which would be attractive to those experiencing mental stagnation in the camps.

²⁷¹ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.293.

²⁷² “Theatre”, *The Clarion*, No. 2, p.10.

²⁷³ See chapter 1 for a discussion on the similarities between POW publications and local newspapers.

²⁷⁴ “Theatre Review”, *The Clarion*, No. 14, p.13.

²⁷⁵ “Theatre”, *The Clarion*, No. 12, p.6.

The *POWC Echo* was not so afraid to provide critical reviews of the plays staged in Changi. Mooney, who was a successful stage actor before the war, savaged the productions of *Monkey's Paw* which he described as "absolutely tasteless" and *The Dream* which was "extremely wet".²⁷⁶ He expressed the hope that he would not be "here to visit any more of these sack-cloth performances or have to criticise them". Both performances were well received by the audiences, which suggest that the shows produced the required escapism for the POWs, even if they did not stand up to expert critical scrutiny. Alternatively, they might hint at the difference in perspective of a classically trained officer (in Changi) as opposed to the tastes of the other ranks (in Lamsdorf), suggesting a class difference between the two groups.

Performances in Changi began within a month of the surrender²⁷⁷ and continued, depending on the health of the performers and the strictures of the Japanese guards, peaking towards the end of 1942 when thousands of prisoners were dispersed on working parties across the Japanese territories,²⁷⁸ although Farrow's diaries suggest that they continued throughout the duration.²⁷⁹ Listings appear in earlier editions of *POWC Echo* and the first review appearing in the 15th Edition on 28 June 1942, but the numbers of reviews are more infrequent than in *The Clarion*. A number of plays, such as *The Dover Road*, *Who Killed the Count* and *The Gunner Concert Party* were well liked by the reviewers but it was the impromptu and improvised performers of the Mummie Bees theatre group during the Selarang Barracks Incident that appears to have been the best received and the most important in terms of raising the morale of the prisoners confined in such trying conditions.²⁸⁰ Together with the theatrical performances, music recitals, band concerts and gramophone record playing were a regular feature of camp life in both camps and all featured in the POW publications. Lamsdorf had a dance band, a choir, a string band, a military band and a symphony orchestra, amongst others. Instruments were provided by the YMCA or purchased

²⁷⁶ Alistair. W. Mooney, *POWC Echo*, 19th Edition, 26 July 1942.

²⁷⁷ MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword* p.263.

²⁷⁸ Gillies, *The Barbed Wire University*, p.150.

²⁷⁹ Farrow, "Darkness before the Dawn" p.363.

²⁸⁰ C.F. Featherstone, "The Mummie Bees at Selarang", *POWC Echo*, 25th edition, 5 April 1942.

through the Welfare Fund and were in decent supply (one issue of *The Clarion* expresses regret that at present there were *only* ten sets of bagpipes in the camp and these were needed by the Stalag Pipe Band).²⁸¹ In Changj, instruments either had to have been brought into the camp with the POWs, made or bartered for, but concerts and recitals from instruments including pianos and violins became regular features of camp.

For prisoners in both camps, the speed in which these entertainments were established and their huge popularity demonstrates their importance to the prisoners, both as an opportunity to occupy time and, in many cases, as a chance “to be linked with one’s ‘sweet home’”.²⁸² In recreating the hobbies and passions of their lives outside the camp, by transporting their minds to a land and time beyond the wire or by simply giving themselves a few hours where they can forget their surroundings and the difficulties of their conditions, the POWs were able to mentally escape and exist beyond the confines of their captivities. The activities outlined in the POW publications demonstrate two things; first how the POWs occupied their time and alleviated their boredom, and secondly, how they were able to use these activities psychologically either by bringing their safe and comfortable home lives within the camp, or living mentally beyond the confines of their captivities. For Kee, they demonstrate that the same forces affecting human nature outside the camps are visible inside, that the “ceaseless thrust and bustle came from something deep and primeval in man. The restless indifferent force of human energy, responsible alike for beauty and ugliness, comedy and tragedy, saintliness and crime, had to find its own heart inside the wire”.²⁸³ Such activities were available more to the POWs of Lamsdorf than those in Changj who, soon after the last edition of *The Clarion* went out, would face their biggest challenge, the “death-march” evacuation as the Red Army approached.

²⁸¹ “Musical Instruments”, *The Clarion*, No. 7, Autumn 1943, p.14.

²⁸² Becker, “Art, Material Life and Disaster”, p.31.

²⁸³ Kee, *A Crowd is Company*, p.72.

Conclusion

In relation to the prisoners of the First World War, Becker argues that the POWs' moral and physical suffering is "particularly vivid because they have lost sense of continuity with their past, the present condition of their country, and the progress of the war".²⁸⁴ POWs are "spatially and mentally uprooted, occupying a liminal space, neither at the Front or at home, but 'elsewhere'". The *POWC Echo* was aware of the POWs' suspended existence, echoing Cade's analogy to schoolboys kept behind in class, says that "it seems strange to be cooped up here, day after day, where time is no object, standing in the queue for tea, medical attention, books, canteen stores and even purposes of nature, whilst in the outside world the fates of nations hang in the balance".²⁸⁵ According to Becker, such prisoners develop "barbed-wire syndrome", by which she explains that they are forced to adapt to their new surroundings while at the same time struggling to come to terms with their incarceration and defeat, leaving them feeling depressed and in a "black mood".²⁸⁶ This dark mood emanated from the pages of the *POWC Echo*, especially in the poems of Howes-Roberts who frequently showed signs of bitterness, hopelessness and frustration. In one poem, "Prisoners of War, 1942" he bemoaned the useless state the POWs find themselves in:

"And now we are not any more
Than just a band of shiftless ghosts
Most useless, vague deponent souls
That swirl like driftwood near the shore"²⁸⁷

In "Youth 1942" he demonstrated a lost faith, a senseless existence and the futility of fighting for his King:

²⁸⁴ Becker, "Art, Material Life and Disaster", p.28.

²⁸⁵ "Editorial", *POWC Echo*, 16th edition, 5 July 1942.

²⁸⁶ Becker, "Art, Material Life and Disaster", p.28.

²⁸⁷ Wynne Howes-Roberts, "Prisoners of War 1942", *POWC Echo*, 20th edition, 2 August 1942.

“The Faiths of our Fathers are down
In the dust with the idols of old
Life has no purpose, endeavour no crown
...
For Fuhrer, for King, for Blood, for Tears
March on, for we’ve nothing to lose, and nothing to gain”²⁸⁸

Mitchell asks us to “forgive any bitterness and sarcasm” displayed in within the pages of the *POWC Echo* that he claims were written under the strains of captivity.²⁸⁹

As shown in the *POW Echo*, the FEPOWs did not have the links to home that their European counterparts had, letters were infrequently delivered and limited in size, escape or the hope it provides was unavailable to them, there was little or no contact with the Relief Agencies and, while secret radios existed and were invaluable for maintaining morale and a small link to home, the risks in being caught with a radio meant that spreading the news was difficult and created more rumours than information. They also did not have the steady influx of new prisoners who brought with them news about the war or occasionally news from home. Yet, in spite of all this, they adapted. The FEPOWs had fewer means of living beyond the vacuums of their captivities and so in many ways, they had a greater connection to the First World War European POWs described by Becker than those held in Europe during the Second World War. In contrast however, Havers argues that the prevailing conditions of Changi, especially in the early years, forced the FEPOWs to create their own structure and they displayed a determination to overcome captivity enabling them to overcome the shock and shame of their defeat and create a flourishing and vibrant community, a conclusion

²⁸⁸ Wynne Howes-Roberts, “Youth 1942”, *POWC Echo*, 21th edition, 9 August 1942.

²⁸⁹ NAM 1960-05-34, O.H. Mitchell in the foreward (sic) to the reproduction of the *POWC Echo*.

supported by Gilbert's six month summary. They may have been broken but they were not unbowed.²⁹⁰

Psychologically, the European POWs may have appeared to be better disposed to cope with the stresses of captivity, having the links with home the FEPOWs lacked. They had more frequent and less restricted letters from home, they had a regular flow of new prisoners bearing news, they had visits from the Relief Agencies who provided them with material items and they had camp wide publications, like *The Clarion*, to help them organise themselves, all enabling them to create links with the outside world reflected in their everyday activities. Sport, education, entertainment and the pursuit of hobbies enabled the European POW to form a psychological link with their homes, bringing these homes into the camps. These links to home were reinforced through letters, through the work of the Relief Agencies and through each other via the POW associations, all supported and encouraged by the POW publications, which set the moral tone for the camps and facilitated the activities that enabled the POWs to live beyond the vacuums of their barbed wire existence.

These factors suggest that the European POWs would have been better disposed to cope psychologically with captivity, but post-war statistics showed that by November 1945 over 71,000 European POWs had sought compensation on psychological grounds, as opposed to 682 FEPOWs. Although Jones and Wessely believe that this is due to the focus on the FEPOWs' physical conditions in the early years after the war which were considerably worse than in Europe,²⁹¹ these figures may suggest that factors other than the primacy of home were also important in helping the POWs to cope with their conditions and these factors could be the basis of further studies. Further studies could, for example, consider the social and class differences between the officers of the Coke's Rifles and the other ranks at Lamsdorf, or consider whether different nationalities displayed characteristics which would enable them to better cope with their conditions. Research into the personal histories of those editors and contributors who survived might also teach us more on the importance of the

²⁹⁰ Havers, "Reassessing the Japanese Prisoner of War Experience", pp. 5, 6, 28 and 167.

²⁹¹ Jones and Wessely, "British Prisoners-of-War", p.177.

POW publications to them and how they readjusted to ordinary life following liberation. Many POWs in both Changi and Lamsdorf may simply not have coped at all, but much of the evidence for how those that did can be found in the pages of the POW publications. As MacArthur concedes, diaries do not tell the whole truth of captivity,²⁹² but neither do the POW publications. These publications supplement other sources, help to put them into context and give us an insight into how the POWs gave regard to their conditions between those who shared their experiences with them. Mackay suggests that POW publications like *The Daily Recco* deserve “a place in the annals of World War II”.²⁹³ This author strongly agrees.

²⁹² MacArthur, *Surviving the Sword*, p.7.

²⁹³ Mackay, *313 Days to Christmas*, p.10.

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