

# Edward Tomsett 's Tafchenbuch (POW) Long March Diary.

## JANUARY 1945.

1st Monday. New Years Day. Note from George, wrote and Returned one to him. Went to see 'Derby Day' (in camp theatre). Poor show.

2nd Tuesday.

3rd Wednesday. Reading of script of 'The Crooked Ballot'. My part Sir William Easton. (*Clearly some political satire!*)

4th Thursday. Reading of Crooked Ballot script.

5th Friday.

6th Saturday. ½ CP?? Script Reading 6.30.

7th Sunday. Wrote Anne Postcard (PC), Wrote Mum (PC). Went sick with feet.

8th Monday. In camp (feet)

9th Tuesday. In camp (feet). Feeling very low today. Rest of barrack hut out working. Winter Birds (Geese?) outside the wire. Wish I could fly out and see Anne.

10th Wednesday. In camp (feet) ½ CP?

11th Thursday. In camp (feet) repaired specs came back. Drew pair of repaired second hand size 8 boots. Good fit. Handed in my old ones to the store (Size 10)

12th Friday. In camp (feet)

13th Saturday. Out to work again (*presume outside work – arbeit*)

14th Sunday. Wrote PC to Anne and PC to Mum. Rehearsal Crooked Ballot in afternoon

15th Monday. Received 3 Post Cards from Anne (Sept 28<sup>th</sup>, Oct 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>), and 1 PC from Mum (Oct 24.). (*Mail taking 10 weeks to arrive.*)

16th Tuesday. ½ EP??

17th Wednesday. Changed to 11 Kdo?? News E. Front extremely good. Air Raid warning at night.

18th Thursday.

19th Friday. Recieved Postcard from Mum (Oct 1<sup>st</sup>). Air raid warning at night.

20th Saturday. ½ Christmas parcel. Great moment amongst us. No work.

21st Sunday. Standby orders for Moving. (*looks like the play is cancelled!!*)

22nd Monday. Went to work but sent back at 0930hrs. Gunfire in area. Reputed Tank Battle. Moved us out of the lager at about 4pm. Forced March of 40km over snowy country. Walk all night and into next day.

23rd Tuesday. Bob's Birthday (*Dad's Brother*). Arrived Gross Vindorf at 1.50pm. Good Billet in village *pub?* Good nights sleep.

24th Wednesday. All day at Gross Vindorf.

25th Thursday. Moved in the night to a barn in Kronedorf. 21km

26th Friday. Moved on. Night in barn in *Watenam?*

27th Saturday. Moved on. Night in barn at Wiesau. Slept warm.

28th Sunday. Moved on to sleep in barn at Wiesewasson. Bad night. Extremely cold.

29th Monday. Stopped at Wiesewasson.

30th Tuesday. Moved on to Rangersdorf ur Glatz. Slept warm in barn

31st Wednesday. Stopped at Rangersdorf ur Glatz.

## **FEBRUARY 1945.**

1st Thursday. Stopped at Rangersdorf.

2nd Friday, Moved to Bonn.

3rd Saturday. On to Marzdorf. Barn

4th Sunday. Stopped at Marzdorf.

5th Monday. Stopped at Marzdorf.

6th Tuesday. Marzdorf.

7th Wednesday. Marzdorf.

8th Thursday. Marzdorf.

9th Friday. Moved to Meckledorf.

10th Saturday. Moved to Petersdorf.

11th Sunday. Moved to Sitayed.

12th Monday. Trek?

13th Tuesday. Marched into Czech.

14th Wednesday. Czech.

15th Thursday. Czech.

16th Friday. Czech.

17th Saturday. Furstenbrukke Czech. Extremely good billet in house all day.

18th Sunday. Same place in kitchen all day.

19th Monday. Trek South. *(No information of stopping points recorded between Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> March. This is has made it difficult to trace a precise route across Czech lands. However constant on the move on foot indicated.)*

20th Tuesday, Trek.

21st Wednesday Trek.

22nd Thursday Trek.

23rd Friday, Trek.

24th Saturday. Trek.

25th Sunday. Rest Day. 1/8 Invalid Supl Pill. No fags.

26th Monday. March.

27th Tuesday. On the move.

28th Wednesday. Rest Day.

### **MARCH 1945**

1st Thursday. On the move.

2nd Friday. On the move.

3rd. Saturday. On the move.

4th Monday. Rest.

5th Tuesday. Mum's Birthday. Marching.

6th Wednesday. Marching.

7th Thursday. Rest.

8th Friday. Resting.

9th Saturday. Bowel movement gone wrong. Suspect relapse of dysentery.

10th Sunday. Complete Collapse with consequent fouling of clothing. Trousers thrown away. Was moved to emergency hospital in Eger. Lost keys and belt. Drew one invalid supplement parcel and 40 cigarettes.

11th Monday. Hospital. Stable.

12th Tuesday. Hospital. Bad night.

13th Wednesday. Hospital.

14th Thursday. Hospital.

15th Friday. Got up a little today. Feeling a little better. Hospital.

16th Saturday. Left Eger by train for Nuremburg at 3am. Bath and head shaved and then delivered to Stalag X111D reserve lager. Air raid at night.

17th Sunday. Moved to Harzette. Air raid at night.

18th Monday. Harzette Wrote postcards to Mum and Anne. Air raid in night.

19th Tuesday. Drew 1/3 part of American ration pack and saw the Medical officer about some new trousers. Was issued American slacks and 4 pairs of underpants. Moved to another ward.

20th Wednesday. Harzette.

21st Thursday. Issued with ½ American ration pack. Told I'll be leaving Friday.

22nd Friday. All washing and darning done ready to leave. Saw the doc after relapse of bowel sickness. Not leaving after all.

23rd Saturday. Still in hospital. Shower in the morning. Foot dressed in afternoon. New Boots issued with laces, together with a husef (*sewing kit*), plus underwear from Q store. Feeling very weak and stomach off colour.

24th Sunday. Still weak and Stomach Unsettled. Moved back to *bug??* Ward I was in before. Wrote Postcards to Anne, Mum and Dad.

25th Monday. Stomach a little easier. News very good. Here's hoping that the war is nearly over. Got a belt, another issue of underwear and tooth powder from Q store.

26th Tuesday. News of the boys being very near now. Warned to be ready to move to Weiden Stalag XIII B. 4am. Train full and standing, second part of journey easier. Arrived Weiden Stalag XIII B, taken to hut and issued with rations.

27<sup>th</sup> Wednesday. Stomach better. Inflammation of big right toe. Stomach turned bad again.

28th Thursday. Given a pair of Russian slippers.

29th Friday. Red Cross parcel came including tea, sugar, margarine, jam.

30<sup>th</sup> Saturday. Stomach still off. Feeling sick again.

#### **APRIL 1945.**

1st Sunday. (Easter Sunday). Drew more Yankee underwear from Q store. Kit now complete. Stomach good. Got an issue of Argentine dried bananas. Made jam with them.

2nd Monday. (Easter Monday). Stomach bad again. Bad night.

3rd Tuesday. Stomach still off colour. Drew one CP?? Sold milk on for 40 cigarettes. Managed to get hold of some oats mixture, and hard cheese. Issue 50 cigarettes. (*Dad remained a heavy smoker all his life.*)

4th Wednesday. Stomach seems easier. Drew ¼ packet tea, 1/8 tin cocoa, Tin soup powder and ½ tin egg powder.

5th Thursday. Stomach seems fairly normal. Piles bad though. Air-raid on local flughaven (*Airport*) and railway station.

6th Friday. Stomach OK. Piles bad. Drew tin of Soup, and tin of Yeatex. Made cardboard socks for boots. Had an india rubber given me. Something I have wanted a long time.

7th Saturday. Drew pkt of tea, and tin of Soup powder. Blanket's deloused. Drew Yankee slipover and Macleans dentifrice.

8th Sunday. Stomach loose again. Air raid siren. Broke my specs whilst cleaning them. Stomach eased again.

9th Monday. Swopped 2 razor blades for sugar. Stomach easier. Saw doctor about getting glasses repaired. Discharged hospital and returned to camp. Bob gave me packet of prunes. Borrowed 5 cigarettes. Slept on floor.

10th Tuesday. Swopped tea for coffee, and coffee for sugar & 5 cigarettes. Sold 4oz tea for 20 cigarettes. Drew Army rations & 100 cigarettes. Stomach fairly good.

11th Wednesday. The 'boys' are strafing the vicinity again (morning and afternoon). Late afternoon went to optician and got new frame for specs, all fixed. Stomach good.

12th Thursday. Lager. Stomach Good.

13th Friday. Warned in morning for moving out at 2.20pm. odd sock, sweets, and one pair of gloves. Moved out to a town 2km from Weiden. Slept fairly well.

14th Saturday. Camped out. Moved off. Stomach off again. Weather good.

15th Sunday. Moved into a barn. Guess we're being moved. Air raid activity all around. Planes strafing overhead. News very confused. Drew 2 Postcards for Anne and Mum & 100 cigarettes.

16th Monday. Moved off. Planes strafing the roads in the area, and investigated us. Must have realised we were POW's. Blister on foot. Great plane activity in night. Sounded like heavy bombers

17th Tuesday. Moved off 15kms. Foot very bad. Weather good.

18th Wednesday. Foot very bad. Weather good.

19th Thursday. Moved off early 28km. Yank fighters gave arms dump or aerodrome a real pounding. Victory roll overhead.

20th Friday. Rested today. Feet a bit better for the rest.

21st. Saturday. Rest day. Foot a lot better. Wind and rain.

22nd Sunday. Rest day. Wind and rain.

23rd Monday. Moved on again 19kn. Yanks very near. Another forced march 30km. Moved all night.

24th Tuesday. Billeted in barn. Weather wet and windy. Stopped all day and night

25th Wednesday. Told moving but did not go until 2pm. Planes over strafing. Near miss 50 yards! Walked till 9pm. Foot and back of right knee very painful. Weather good. Barn

26th Thursday. Didn't move. Issue of 400gms of flour. Made scones with it. Rest Day weather good.

27th Friday. Moved on 18kms. Some rain but weather good.

28th Saturday. Moved on 20km. Rain all the way. Soaking when reached barn. News pretty good.

29th Sunday. Rested most of the day. Moved off at 6pm as Yanks were near. 10km. Night in barn. Made a break for it but recaptured by guard. (*guess he's lucky to be still alive.*)

30th Monday. Moved on 22km. Weather bad.

## **MAY 1945.**

1st Tuesday. Ordered to move again because the Yanks are coming. Moved off 2pm. Three of us decided to make a break from column. A curve in track meant we could not be seen by guards. Hid in barn and wood shed. Stayed the night with yank POW.

[*This part of the Family History rumour was correct then.*]

2nd Wednesday. Can hear tanks. Are they ours or Jerry's. Our's, thank God. (*That's the first mention of God anywhere since this diary started*). Back with the Yanks. Great Day. We are free. Stopped in village, and was issued with revolver. Feel like a soldier again. Stood guard over German POW's.

3rd Thursday. Moved off and escorted German POW's to Viisiburg. Went sick with .....?feet. Was taken by Ambulance to Regensburg Field Hospital (under canvas). 2oz of pipe tobacco given.

4th Friday. Wrote letters to Anne and Mum and Dad to tell them I was free. Moved to another field hospital 3 or 4 miles away. Rumour has it that we are being flown to England. Got a wrist watch and a jacket from a chap in exchange for my battle dress blouse. Weather wet.

5th. Saturday. Had old fountain pen given to me. Saw my first film since Alexandria. It was called 'Laura'. Pretty poor film though. Had pipe given to me, and won a cigarette lighter, which I exchanged for pipe tobacco. Weather Bad.

6th Sunday. Weather still very wet. Dakota Supply planes will not come for us whilst weather is so bad. Some planes landed but once unloaded took off empty. Wrote airmail letter to all. European war is nearly over. Swopped revolver for another one.

7th Monday. Better today. Did a bit of writing. Planes started coming in about 10.30am. Learned the War with Germany was over. Was notified at 3pm that I would be flying to England as a stretcher case. In plane by 3.30pm and took off for England, landing at 7.40pm at Newbury. Removed to American Hospital for the night.

8th. Tuesday. Was told by officials that I would be taken to the railway station, and put on the train to Derby. Left at 2.40, arrived Derby at 7.40. taken to Derby Royal Infirmary 8.40pm Listened to Kings Speech 9pm. Phoned mum and dad, to let them know I was back and ok.