

HENRY LUND'S WAR

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INTRODUCTION

After many years of trying, I was eventually able to persuade Dad to write down his experiences during the Second World War. Sadly he died just a month after I had transcribed his notes. I am sure he would have been amazed by the wonders of the internet, which will enable people all over the world to share his and others' stories.

Pat Francis

CHAPTER 1 'LEAVING HOME'

On 1st December 1939 I said goodbye to my wife at Addlestone Railway Station and made my way to join 800 other Reservists, all Police Officers Army Class 'B' Recruits, at the race track at Ascot, which at the time was the Royal Artillery Depot. From here 100 of us were moved to Mytchett where a Colonel greeted us with "Thank you gentlemen for volunteering for the MPs". Here we were tested on motorcycles and trained in various methods of dealing with miscreants.

I was able to get home to see my wife for Christmas found her in bed with a threatened miscarriage. The doctor who attended her said it was not possible that she could carry the child and wanted to terminate the pregnancy, but she would not have this. We had only been married a few months and I think that anticipating what we both thought would happen she particularly wanted to keep the child. She was confined to bed that Christmas and I carried her to the window to look out on the snow.

On returning to Mytchett on I found that together with 32 other Ex-Police officers I had been ordered to report to 51st (Highland) Division provost stationed at Bordon. I was with the No 1 Section 154 Infantry Brigade.

On 18th January 1940 we had to move to the outskirts of Southampton. As we stopped on the side of the road lots of very nice girls came up and gave us cigarettes, chocolate and lots of kisses and wished us luck. It appears that they knew where we were going, but we didn't. We stayed for two days in a school at Bassett and then on 21st January embarked at Southampton on Cross Channel Packet The Prague. We lay off Spithead for about 12 hours and then set off for France.

CHAPTER 2 'ARRIVAL IN FRANCE'

We arrived at Le Havre on 22nd January 1940 and there saw the first results of war. The liner Paris sunk in the harbour; what for, I never knew as it didn't appear to be doing much harm to the shipping.

We disembarked, picked up our motor vehicles and started into France. As we left the dock area I noticed an MP waving frantically to me and then realised that in France they drive on the right.

Our first stop was at Bolbec, where we stayed for about 10 days. The weather was very cold and damp and I remember being on guard one night when I had to break the ice from my overcoat before I could get it off. It was like being in a suit of armour. The French had a good cure for the cold a PLUM CHAUD I think it was called, made from rum, sugar, brandy and hot water and as the French people were very friendly we got treated to quite a lot of these, also delicious pastries.

We moved shortly to Lorraine where the French Government ordered us to stay. This was owing to a quick thaw. The roads in France being mostly cobbled were chewed up into ruts and our heavy goods and track vehicles really tore the roads up.

Our next call was at Bethune. The journey was made in a blinding snow storm over the heights of St. Pol. We were stationed in the cafe Evo which was a dance hall. It was there that I met Leon Martin, a Gendarme who was attached to us for the rest of the time in France.

While at Bethune we performed various patrols mostly by motor cycle. I had a 500 cc side valve BSA which would do anything I asked.

Our next move was to Loos near Lille and on our first evening there Corporal Rosser a Metro PO and I went into Lille. We stood looking at the La Scala, when an officer invited us in. It appears that the officers had not been able to attend and we got seats in the front row of an ENSA concert. What a show, George Formby and his wife Beryl, a blind pianist, a wonderful soprano and a trampolinist. When he wanted two men to try the trampoline, he chose the two MPs who were sitting in the front row. Needless to say that was my first and last try on a trampoline.

Most of our troops at the time were employed in attempting to dig in along the Belgian Frontier, but even at this time it was obvious that it was a waste of time. 154 Infantry Brigade was used at this time, moving about the country obviously to make the enemy think that there were more troops than we had. We then visited Monelle for a short period and then to St. Pol where we were billeted on a farm, which was almost a holiday. We got hot baths at a coal mine just outside St. Pol where we put our clothes on a rope and pulled them up to the roof.

This spelled the end of our continental holiday for we were ordered to embark for Metz where we arrived in April 1940. We went to the Maginot Line at Monerain and as we went over the Maginot Line I saw my first death in War. There was quite a dog fight going on about us and as we watched I saw a body falling. It was a German pilot, his parachute did not open and he died in a mess. We buried him where he fell, almost on top of the Maginot Line. A few days later the Duke and Duchess of Windsor came to meet us and the Duchess placed flowers on his grave.

Our Division was not one to sit around and do nothing. They had a habit of going out on patrol and stirring things up. Before we went there things were quiet and after we stirred things up Gerry used to open up on us. This upset the French so they would bring up half a dozen 75s lift off a few rounds and vanish by the time Gerry shells came back. The French gunners had gone and we had to hide. One German gun we called the coal scuttle, because it would burst into a great cloud of soot and shower us with nails and tin and anything they could find. One of our chores was to be on duty at the Maginot where we checked all troops in and out. We were able to see the casements, which had to be seen to be believed. There is no doubt that if they had been used nothing would have got by. I remember one day a French travelling canteen in an old bus came along and I bought a bottle of champagne for my lunch, which consisted of herrings in tomato sauce, bread and marg and champagne out of the bottle.

There was not too much activity until Gerry broke out in May 1940 when we were ordered out. Travelling at night we reached Valery St. Francois where I tasted selective bombing. Each day German bombers took out a selected part of the town. The French people were completely lost and did not know which way to turn.

Our next call was at Melion, just outside Paris where we received orders to attack towards Abbeville. We were joined at the time by what was known as Ark Force, which were the troops remaining in France. It was in this action that we were supported by tank. They lasted about five minutes and were soon out of action.

This was a very bloody battle - we managed to drive Gerry back. This action was at the time of Dunkirk and I have always felt that our pressure allowed a lot of men to get away from there. We thought at that time that Gerry was easy as they did not appear to put up much of a battle. It just shows how you should not be misled.

On 5th June we were in the Foret de Ero near Blangi. Junkers 87 attacked us and just about laid low our R.A. Regiment H.Q. We were sent out to find them and I met Captain Roger Tavener with what was left of 23 Regiment RA staff, about 6 men. I knew Roger as a boy when I lived at North Tawton, Devon. He died the next day when he picked up some RSFS and was shot. This was followed by a tank attack on the evening of 5th June.

The next day was my birthday and the only drink we could get was champagne. I had rather a lot and I went to get on my motor cycle but fell off. I woke up later to find that all my section had gone and there was hardly any village left. I managed to get on my machine and rode off in the direction of Dieppe where I knew my unit had gone. A section of 25 pounders were on the side of the road in action, but not firing and as I went in front of them an RSM stopped me and said you are asking to get hit, those are German tanks over there. He looked at me and said "Lobby you ought to know better". It was a chap I had served with in India three years before where I was

known through out my service as Lobby. I got away with that one and shortly afterwards caught up with my unit. They said they had been caught under shell fire in the village and had left me thinking that I was dead.

We set up our HQ in a garage not far from a cheese factory near Sezzaine and Gerry thought that we were in the factory so bombed it with 3.0 87s. The only damage was to the cheese but the whole area was smothered in it.

We were due to embark at Dieppe, but further orders took us along the coast to Veulla le Roses where about 1 a.m. on the 10th June our DAQMG Roney Dougall, who has been my officer in charge at Bordon 1932/3, came up and I informed him that the Germans were between us and the West. He informed me that G.O.C. 51 Major General Fortune knew about this and had said a handful of Germans were not going to stop the Division getting through. What a handful as you will hear.

We went on to the outskirts of St. Valery-en-Caux where the 154 Brigade went on, but our section was ordered 24 hours rest as we had hardly stopped since the middle of April. The next day we were promptly torn to ribbons by that handful of Germans. General Fortune told us that our job was done and we were to get to the sea and try to get home.

We managed to get to St. Valery where the only cover we had was a large sewer near the railway station. After a couple of bomb runs we thought we would prefer the bombs to the smell and made for the sea and found a dug out near the harbour. Gerry soon found us and opened up with mortars, missed us, but hit a French ammunition truck which went up too close for comfort.

This decided us to move again. There were 8 of us. The first 4 went on their motor cycles. Corporal Rosser and I took RSM Hall and Gendarme Leon Martin on the rear of our motor cycle and started off by the time Sgt. Izzard, Corporal Craig and Captain Burcher (later to become a General I believe) plus 1 were just round the corner from us. Just at that moment 6 JU87s dropped their bombs in the square. We were shielded from the blast by the house and ran on into the square where I got tied up with fallen telephone wires and debris and came up with Leon the Gendarme on top of me. We cut ourselves loose and ran back the way we had come and over the lock gates to the West side of the harbour. We thought the other four had had it. We got on to the beach and hid in a cave. We thought we might get a row boat later and get away.

Later that afternoon two boats got away with about 30 men. They were hailed from the top of the cliff which was about 200' to come back, they gave the appropriate signs one would expect and the Gerry put a burst of machine gun fire through them and killed the lot.

CHAPTER 3 'CAPTURE BY GERMAN TROOPS'

Following the burst of machine gun fire we were hailed to go up the cliff path if we wanted to stay alive, but thinking we still had a chance to get away we refused and stayed there. Gerry then started dropping hand grenades over the cliff, some men started up the cliff and one of the Generals Pipers, a Cameronian I think, went to the top of the lighthouse, his pipes in his hand, Bren in the other and yelled "Any B...s who go up there will be shot". He took aim and killed two men on the cliff side. Gerry hailed him to stop and he fired at them. They then opened up on him and he fell into the sea amid a shower of glass and bullets with his pipes flailing in the wind.

By this time we had to give up and went up the cliff. There were about 70 of us at the time. A young German under officer, a picture of a man, stood at the top of the path with his machine gun on his hip and said "For you the war is over". We were placed near a tank under guard and were under fire from our own troops. The officer commanding the tank unit which had taken us P.O.W. said "You chaps had better lay down behind the tank, I wouldn't like you to be killed now that I have you as my prisoners." The officer was wearing a soft cap and appeared to be oblivious of danger. A number of shells came close to us and burst in the sea. The handful of German troops turned out to be about 100 tanks and the officer I have mentioned was General Rommel.

During the night it poured with rain and we were wet through. As it came to dawn we were moved to a hay rick and a guard on orders from Rommel set fire to it in order that we could dry out. This was one mistake that Rommel made and it nearly cost him his life. I knew a bit about aiming points, having been an F.O.O. Signaller R.A. before the war and it crossed my mind that if I was a

gunner I would like to have something like that to aim at when WHOOM! 4 inch burst not 20 yards from us towards where Rommel and his staff were and one of the tanks disappeared. From then on the area was saturated with shells and as it got light we could see 4 destroyers laying off shore pumping shells like nobodies business. We all thought - just like the Navy, late again. It's a pity they didn't do that yesterday. JU 87s were soon after them and as they turned away one vessel was hit and sank. We said a silent prayer, for at least they had tried to get us out of trouble.

Under Rommel's men we were treated as well as they could. They sent some of us to raid the NAAFA in St. Valery, but when these troops moved on we got the rough of the German army and from then on began a life treated like animals. In fact generally speaking I think animals were treated better.

We were marched to Yvetote where a large load of rotten cheese was dumped in a field. We were told if we were hungry we could eat it. We started on a long march and near St. Pol it was very hot, we had nothing to eat and drink. A French woman came out with two buckets of water for us to drink and a German officer nearly beat her to death with the butt of his pistol. The other side of it was a German cavalry man on his horse trampling down women and children with his horse. A senior German Officer pulled him from his horse and beat him with his crop.

Near St. Pol, a German guard, I feel sure, saved me from serious illness if not death. We'd had no water and were getting in quite a state. We came to a river and I grabbed a petrol can and tried to fill it with water. There were about 30 of us at the river bank. The guard shouted to us to get going or at least I thought he meant that. When we took no notice of him he dropped a couple of rounds to sharpen us up a bit and we were on our way again. We moved about 200 yards along the road with the river alongside it and it was there that I saw a sickening sight. As far as I could see were bodies of men, women, children, cattle dogs etc. Some of the bodies were in the water which was polluted and the smell was awful. They must have been dead for at least 10 days.

We marched about 20 miles a day and our final rest period was at the sports ground near Lille. There were no lavatories and at no time anywhere other than open ground to sleep. The only food we had was what the French people gave us, which was very little. At this time there were thousands of prisoners and as a result it was difficult to find a place to sit. We had two days at Lille and then went off into Belgium. One day while marching we saw a number of Nuns sitting on the side of the road. They asked us to write our names and numbers on bits of paper and they would inform the Red Cross. They did, in fact, and in September 1940 my wife was informed by the Red Cross that I was alive.

We stayed at Aras for one night early in July. It was our first time under cover. From here we marched into Holland where we entrained in open trucks which ran through the streets pulled by a small engine. The Dutch people did what they could for us, but the guards kept them back. I got into a truck and was sitting there much fed up and very hungry when a round loaf about 18" across hit me in the back of the neck. From then on whenever we stopped we were showered with food. That evening we all embarked into coal barges. As we embarked I hear a roar of engines and saw 5 Blenheims returning home after a raid. You can imagine us reaching up to them to pick us up. We were kept under cover in the barges until we reached the Rhine and then were allowed up for air. We were heavily guarded at this time and were unable to get our bearings or know where we were. We were taken from the barges at Emmerich in Germany and entrained like cattle in cattle trucks.

CHAPTER 4 'FIVE YEARS AS A POW'

After three days in cattle trucks without food or drink we arrived at Lamsdorf Stalag VIII B (now called Lambinowice). This would be in early August 1940. It was the first time I had slept in a bed since I left Bordon.

The beds were three wooden tiers with straw mattresses and we were herded into single storey rooms 300 to a room, which in England would not have taken 20 men. Our rations were 10 men to a black loaf about as big as a small Hovis, a 50 cigarette size tin of watery soup and two tiny potatoes. At this time we were listed as POWs and my number was 16975 for which I was given a tag, which I had to wear and produce at all times.

So long as we did as we were told we were not badly treated, but as there were only 2 taps and 1 shower for 300 men the conditions were pretty bad. Later that month I was sent to a working party at Stubendorf, this is near Appelm on the Polish border.

We were billeted in an old sheep barn next to a German aerodrome. It had an earth floor and the beds were in two tiers made of wood with straw spread over them. We had 1 blanket each and slept 16 to a bed. There were 64 men in our bay, where at the most there should have been 12. There was no night latrine, only a bucket and 3 taps for 200 men. Our lavatory was a partly open hut and it was in full view of the officers and hospital huts. I don't know if the girls got a thrill, but it was most embarrassing to us. The loo was a hole dug in the ground, which we had to empty by means of a scoop into a tank on wheels which was then spread over a field.

We had three small stoves to cook on and to keep us warm. These were about 3' high x 9" x 9". We had a small supply of coal, but this certainly wasn't enough. At that time the Germans used blocks of compressed coal about 6" x 3" x 3". Whenever we got near a dump we would steal as much as we could carry. The method was to tie our trousers at the bottom and fill them up with coal and march back to the barn as best we could. By this means we had a good supply of coal and how we got away with it I shall never know as we were never caught. The food was very poor and to help out we stole whatever we could, mostly potatoes. We used to thread these on to string them into the fire and eat them skin and all. Another method was to cut them into slices and stick them onto the side of the oven and cook them that way.

That first bitter winter I had no shirt, I had a battle dress blouse and trousers, no shirt, vest pants or socks. To make a shirt I stole a piece of blanket, folded it over, cut a hole in the top, put my head through and sewed up the sides. The ground was so hard that a pneumatic drill had no effect on it. I was employed in November 1940 in getting foundations ready for an extension to the cookhouse. We waited outside the cookhouse and when the women cleared the tables we were head first into the pig bin to get the scraps. They called us all the names under the sun, but when George the guard explained how much food we got they changed completely and brought us scraps of food when they could. At the time we had a Feldfable in charge who was a decent sort of chap, but he could do nothing to help us.

On New Year's Eve 1940 the Feldfable left us and we had a bit of a party and sing song and the new Feldfable came to see us as we saw the New Year in. When we finished we sang "God Save the King" and he stood to attention with us. I thought, well here is a good soldier. Although he looked every inch of one, I am sure he was born of the devil's guts; he was one of the most evil men I have ever known. We would be yanked out of bed two or three times a night. Made to stand for hours while the barn was searched and on the slightest excuse our small ration of bread cut.

I had a tooth removed at the time and the gum became poisoned. I reported sick, but he refused to allow me to do so. It was a Friday and he told me to report to the dentist on the following Tuesday. When I refused to go to work he pulled out his pistol and said "Arbut" I said "no", he pointed the pistol at me and said "Arbut" and took off the safety catch. I then thought it more sensible to go to work. I was then working near the hospital in a garden. The officer who had pulled the tooth out saw me and asked how I was. I told him and showed him my face. He at once took me into the hospital to see the doctor and lanced the gum, cleaned it up and gave me an injection. He then sent me back to the barn with a note to say I was to be sent to bed for 7 days. Such is the Germans view of life that if an order is given it must be obeyed. I, therefore, had to stay on the bed for a week and by that time I could hardly move.

We were employed doing all sorts of jobs. Early in 1941 we had to help build a dummy aerodrome. We made guns from trees and old carts. It looked the real thing.

At the end of March I received a letter from my sister telling me that my wife had told her that they had sat my son up in his high chair to celebrate his first six months. This was the first news I had since I was taken prisoner. Shortly after that I received a letter from my wife. It contained a photograph of my wife and son.

In early May 1941 the drome we were working on was awakened to an invasion of aircraft of all shapes and sizes. Hermann Goering visited there and other high ranking officers all about the same time. Thousands of vehicles and trains loaded with troops went eastwards into Poland. They were incessant for three weeks and then came the attack on Russia. It did not affect us too much, apart from seeing active aircraft, rather than just training aircraft. In September 1941 I

heard that 100 men were to return to Lamsdorf and I arranged to get on the party. Owing to the bad food and dreadful conditions I have just about reached my lowest ebb.

I returned to Lamsdorf in November 1941. When R.S.M. Hall from my Provost Company managed to get me into what was the convalescent compound - the conditions were dreadful. There were over 300 to a room on 3 tier bunks with very poor rations, as many as ten to a loaf, Hovis type, and very little else. It was there I met up with Paddy Newman, a Surrey Police Officer. We were together until the end of the war.

The first issue of Red Cross food had arrived on the June 1941. We had aluminium wash bowls and we were told to collect the food. The Feldfable put tinned beef, soap flakes, best Polish powdered milk, pepper, salt, in fact everything in the bowl, stirred it up with a bayonet and said "There Englanders eat it". Lt. Cpl. Adams of the Dorset Regiment refused to take it away and the Feldfable took out his pistol and fired at him, Adams, who ran away. The Feldfable fired about four shots in all and missed each time. At the time it was of course a very serious matter, but I have often thought of it since of how funny it was, a full fledged R.S.M. chasing a Lt. Corporal with a pistol. Despite this incident receiving these parcels gave us new heart.

There was much activity in the camp; a Concert Party, who put on a play called Paradise Alley, Church Groups and Escape Groups. One method of escape was to change identity at a football match and then go out on a working party. The British RSM in charge was named Sherriff. He was a first class man afraid of nothing. He even made the Germans stand to attention to him.

Our conditions were so bad that we bred millions of lice. I, at one time, was walking with them. I hung my blanket on a line and there were so many lice that it heaved. We were told that if we had fleas it would kill the lice and as lice carried typhus, which was fatal, we should try to get rid of them. From then on every time we caught a flea we would take it back to the billet in a match box. They in turn bred. We lost the lice, but the fleas were a real torment. A method of killing them was to get inside the blanket with a candle and pop them with the flame.

There was always a rush to get in the first ranks when going to work so that we could pick up the cigarette ends for a smoke. I used to cadge the ash trays when working near a hospital or office. The British Bible Society must have thought they had a lot of converts in us as we were always asking for New Testaments. The true fact was that the paper made first class cigarette paper.

Christmas 1941 was quiet and we had parcels for the day. The Germans thought we were all good. We were I suppose all except two men, one named Pape I believe, who cut his way through the wire and was gone. The next day two more tried it; one was killed on the wire and the other in the compound.

Early in 1942 Russian prisoners arrived. They were treated worse than we were. They arrived in cattle trucks, about 100 to a truck, and were lucky to get out alive. They were taken to a delousing centre and then to a barracks. They were so exhausted that they got down to sleep, pulled the blankets over them and a large number died from cyanide gas in the blankets. They had so little food that they would hold up dead comrades to be counted in order to get a little extra food. I saw a German officer shoot four Russians just because they tried to wipe the inside of a bowl to get a little food.

I was taken quite ill at that time and I was told that I should go out on a working party or it was very possible that I would die.

R.S.M. Hall arranged for me to go with a party of 50 men to Old Gottham, Nr. Breslaw. We left on 17th June 1942 and for me was the bleakest moment I have known. There was a news report about Rommel looking through his glasses at the fires at Alexandra. I remember thinking we have lost. Little did I know that that day was the turning point of the war and that the Germans had been stretched to the limit and were about to be broken.

We arrived at Gottham where conditions were a little better and we had more parcels. For a time I worked as a gardener. There was a stream full of trout; at least it was when we went there. This came about because when I was documented at Lamsdorf I told them I was a gardener thinking they might shoot me if I said I was a Police Officer. In the very cold weather of 42/43 I managed to get a job working in a carpenters shop. It was there that I met Packe, a German from the village of Mansdoff. He was a good man and I have always thought of him as my friend. He was a P.O.W. in France in 1917 and understood us. He brought his two sons and introduced them

to me. Six weeks later one was dead, killed by underground troops in Poland, the other died as a parachutist at Brest. Never once did this man have a cross word for me. He did his best to make life just that little bit easier.

At this camp we learnt how to make our own spirits. We boiled up fruit, potatoes, anything at all and then distilled it by putting a bowl on top and letting the steam drop into a small bowl. Captain Mansly North Lanes drank so much that he went blind for a period.

We had the same sort of treatment, pulled out of bed and counted at all sorts of hours, tons of food perished and anything to try to upset us.

CHAPTER 5 'NEWS OF THE INVASION'

In the summer of 1944 we heard whispers of an invasion and we used to pull the Germans legs by telling them - next week and tomorrow. We had a little joke on the German airman by singing "Roll out the Barrel" while they were singing "OH E I Oh". This marching was a little quicker than usual and we put them out of step. I would always salute and give "Eyes right - left" the German company would return the salute.

One morning things were not quite so easy. The German Lieutenant got very angry with his men and gave them full arms bend and more or less field service punishment. We soon found out the reason for his behaviour. We were close to a factory and the works people were glued to their wireless sets. A full scale broadcast was being given of the landings in France. We could hear the sound of shells and bombs. We all, Germans as well, had a fellow feeling for the lads who were going through it. It was obvious to us all, Germans included after the first day, that it was coming to an end, for which we all gave hearty thanks.

On 4th July the air raid siren went and we had to run to some cellars. We could hear aircraft overhead and I managed to look through a light. The sky was full of bombers going eastwards. About 30 minutes later we heard terrific explosions. Every day from then on between 11 a.m. And 1 p.m. the sky was full of American aeroplanes on bombing missions to the east. The guards got so used to them that in the end we didn't even take cover. One day during a raid I watched a bomb leave an aircraft. I stood transfixed; I couldn't move and thought fancy coming all this way to die now. It turned out to be an extra petrol tank and only made a hole in the field about 20 feet from me.

Because of the raids the various departments were split up and our carpenters shop went to a large mansion nearby. We had a group of about 15 working at the house and the guard, who escorted us used to call at a farm where there was a small shop. We would steal whatever we could and I saw an open barn where there were a lot of hens. I went in, took a dozen eggs and slid them down the inside lining of my overcoat sleeves, which made a good supper. George Bradley from Bradford and I forced the lock on a grill and slid in through a vent and used to steal eggs and food from under the noses of the Germans.

While working in the carpenters shop we would slip into the machine shop for a smoke. This of course, owing to the amount of wood shavings, was forbidden. There was a whet stone in the shop and if anyone came in we would drop the cigarette in the water. One day having a quiet drag the door opened and there stood the Oberst, the officer in charge of the German airforce camp. With a mouth full of smoke I tried frantically to reach the whet stone, but someone had moved it. He said "Beste de Raushon", I could not do it. I threw him a salute and said "Yah mein herr" at which a puff of smoke came out of my mouth. He called for the guard, who put one up the spout and looked as if he were going to shoot me. The officer stopped him and came to examine my D.G.S. Medal ribbon. He asked me what it was. I told him "for service in India". He asked me about my service. I told him and also about my police career. He shook me by the hand and told me that any man who served his country for a career could be proud of himself. He gave me 20 cigarettes and told me to smoke in the loo next time and 10 marks to spend. He then said "You are a good soldier and you have admitted the offence; 7 days bunker" I was marched to the civilian jail at Grottkau where I was interviewed by a police inspector. I showed him a photograph I had of myself in uniform. He invited all his colleagues to meet me and we discussed police work in both countries. I was given a parcel apartment in the prison and the prison warden went to a local working party and got me two Red Cross parcels, which I shared with him and his family. I did not want to leave there. When I returned to my working party, Under Officer Schultz

asked how I had been treated and not to let the prison warder down I told him what a terrible time I had had, by this time he also knew I was a police officer and regular soldier. He gave me an extra Red Cross parcel and where previously he had really been a pig, we became reasonably friendly. He, it appeared, was a career soldier and like all German soldiers service to his country came first.

We had spare time and to fill in I got some Pitmans Training Manuals through the Red Cross. I had a Pitmans Certificate when at Murree in India pre-war. I also had Moriarty's Police Law. I formed a class and we read Moriarty from cover to cover. The reader was a man who had a number of convictions for theft. This also stood me in good stead later as I passed my promotion exam on my return to the police force at first attempt.

Early in January 1945 dozens of J.U. 87s came to the camp overnight and the drome changed from training to active. A couple of days later we heard a rumble in the distance like prolonged thunder. It turned out to be Russian guns.

CHAPTER 6 THE LONG JOURNEY TO FREEDOM'

On 23rd January we were told to get our kit together as we had to leave on the march westwards. We were told that anyone falling out would be shot. In the early hours of the following day we started off through snow covered hills towards Czechoslovakia. We stayed at Althamjew for 5 days where there was a party of prisoners who had a gramophone with one record. One side was Bing Crosby singing "I'm dreaming of a White Christmas", the other Vera Lynn "In Room 504". We played that for 5 days.

From then we had no food whatsoever for 10 days and to moisten our lips we ate snow. An old lady gave me a crust of bread. It was so hard that it cut the inside of my mouth. One day we stopped at a farm with a butchers shop attached. During the night Paddy Newman forced the bars apart and cut huge chunks of beef from a side hanging there. We all had a couple of pounds of beef each. The guard found us and threatened to shoot us if we didn't give him some. He got his share and he promptly made us march off. The butcher didn't find out until we were about 20 miles away. We chewed raw meat as we marched. Our entry into Czechoslovakia was marked by a very bad incident. The Czechs knew we were coming and when we got over the border men, women and children rushed up to us and gave us food. A patrol guard opened fire and hit a Polish Warsaw fighter in the arm and took most of his forearm off. We were forced to run at the time and went on. About half an hour later the guard fell dead with a bullet in his back. We did not ask where it came from; neither did the Germans, they were only too glad to get away.

That winter was very cold and roads very icy. I had both hands frost bitten and still suffer from effects today. At times we had to sleep on the roadside in deep snow huddled together and the outside men would move into the middle when they were frozen. At times we managed to get into barns and used to fill our clothes with grain or hay to dry them out. I used to cook grain in a billy can and fill my pockets and thus managed to keep going. A number of men who ate the grain raw died we arrived at Bayreuth in early March where we stayed for five days. I saw some of the finest aerial dog fights over this town.

It was here that we met the Jews dressed in thin clothing. I saw 38 kicked to death on one day and we often saw bodies on the roadside.

We passed from Czechoslovakia through Ansig Oberstentansdorf and other towns which had been flattened by bombing raids. Hardly two bricks left on top of each other. Ansig was still standing and I counted 19 factory chimneys. I mentioned this to a guard and he said you don't bomb your own property, this is not owned by the Germans!

At Bayreuth we were given dehydrated vegetables to eat. A number of men ate it raw and died through it swelling up inside them. I was very ill at the time. A British doctor saved my life with some calamine tablets. We were ordered to move by train to Nuremberg. We left in open trucks and travelled through some of the most beautiful country I have ever seen. The area was covered in snow and the fir trees were covered in tinsel dropped by aircraft to break up the radar.

On arrival at Nuremburg I collapsed and was left for dead. I was unconscious for about twelve hours and then came round to find that I had lost most of my possessions. Someone gave me something to drink and a Red Cross parcel. From then on I started to look up.

We were in Nuremburg for 14 days with a countless number of prisoners of all nationalities. A pilot of a fighter aircraft used to come over nearly every dinner time and drop notes to let us know how things were. It was nice of him to do it. The only thing was that Gerry would open up on him with explosive bullets and we were showered with shrapnel.

Early on Easter Sunday 1000 of us were put aboard a train in open trucks. We were told we were going to Aupsberg. Shortly after we started a German troop train loaded with tanks and troops came along side us and travelled on the other line with us. Two Lightning aircraft came down and their sights were so good that they shot the troop train up without hurting us. Other than being scared stiff we were all right. Bombers then hit the line in front of us and we had to return to Nuremburg.

Just as we got there a bombing raid commenced and one truck was hit and killed 37 of our men. The raid continued for about 20 minutes and it was like being in the middle of a tornado. The ground heaved from bomb shock. I fell to the ground and tried to claw my way into it like a mole. The raid was over as suddenly as it started and all was quiet except for what I can only describe as a death hush over Nuremburg which was burning fiercely. On the Monday the same thing happened. We were taken out to the train, entrained, bombed, rushed back to the camp and at 12 noon another 20 minute raid.

We were paraded on the Tuesday and forced to march at gun point towards Nuremburg to dig out the dead, of which I am told there were thousands. The senior German M.O. stopped this by telling the guards that we had typhus and that we would cause an epidemic. We then returned to the camp and the next day started to walk down the autobahn to Munich. One day a number of white Lorries with Red Cross on caught up with us and we had four American Red Cross parcels each. We had been weeks without a smoke and then had 400 each. At times we smoked two at a time and a haze of smoke rose from the column of 200 men I was with.

Low flying transport aircraft passed overhead very low and the aircraft crew sat in the open door showering us with chocolate and cigarettes.

Just as we arrived at Ingalstatt there was a raid by bombers on an underground magazine. The bombs hit the magazine which blew up with a terrific roar. There was heavy cloud at the time and the explosions shook the rain out of the clouds and we were soaked.

We passed over the Danube at Ingalstatt during the night time. The bridge was stacked with bombs ready to blow it up and there was a heavy bombing attack at the time. We were force marched at this time and most of us were about finished.

I noticed at this time that our guards were changed. Ours went to the Russians and we got their guards. The attitude of the guards changed and they treated us more like human beings. We were able to meet some of the Austrian people who gave us a little food. We could hear the guns on north, west and east and it was obvious that time was running out. My friend Paddy Newman was taken quite ill on and we had to leave him where he hid in a farm and we continued on. I had some German money and went to a bakers shop in a small village. There was a queue waiting for bread and a Feldfable pushed me out of the queue. The shop keeper came out and told him off and took me to the head of the queue and I got my loaf of bread.

CHAPTER 7 'RELEASE AND THE JOURNEY HOME'

On the 28th April we arrived at Newdorf at about 7 p.m. We were taken off in groups of 50 to barns and were getting some straw for our beds. A prisoner came in and said "Corporal there are some Americans outside!" I said "Bring them in". He told me to go and look. I went outside the barn and there in the road were about 30 tanks with German soldiers standing on top. I was trying to make out what was going on when a voice from inside the tank said "Say Bud are you a Limey?" I said I was a British soldier P.O.W. "Who are you?" He said "We are the American Third Army you had better get your head down before it is blown off." I said "What about those Germans". He said "They are my prisoners if I gets it". They got it.

From then on it was bedlam. We disarmed the guards and took them prisoner and went out on the town. I saw slave labour women at a big store. They broke the windows, stripped naked and changed into new clothes. We found a huge wine store and drank and drank.

We sat talking with the American soldiers and a Sergeant was laying on a bed. I was on the floor. He said how long were you a P.O.W. I said 5 years. He got off the bed and said "You have it, you deserve it better than me".

During the night the Germans tried to counter with an attack. The Americans opened up with quick firing mortar rockets. It was the first time I had seen or heard them. It was like a dozen thunder storms.

We were left at Newdorf for about 10 days. We had Red Cross food, but were in very poor condition.

On the 8th May we were flown by Dakota aircraft to Brussels where we were cleaned up and given cash. That night we were released on Brussels and we did a conga through anywhere we thought we would go.

While on the aircraft to Brussels the pilot came back to us and told us that Donetz had asked for peace. I said never mind about peace, who is flying this aircraft. He said 'George', which was my first introduction to auto flying.

We left Brussels on 9th May and flew to Westcott in Berkshire.

When we arrived there a young WAAF insisted on carrying my bag. They did not seem to understand that the joy of setting foot on English soil once again was enough to make us all feel well again. I must have looked a bit rough as I only weighed 7 stone, which at 33 years was a bit thin.

We had to be interviewed by security and I got away about 1 a.m. 10th May I went to the phone and asked the operator to get me my wife's parents' number at Burgess Hill. A sleepy voice asked very testily why I didn't know the number. I said I had been away for some time. He said "Where". I said "In a prison camp for five years". He said "Right" click, click, click and I was through to Burgess Hill. I said "How much?" and he said "You talk to your wife for the rest of the night if you like, it will cost you nothing.

Most of next day was spent in interview and late afternoon we were taken into Aylesbury by T.V.Cs. On arrival in the square there was a huge bonfire. Two stone lions had been painted red and blue and it had a large white 'V' painted on it. My friend and I went into a pub and I asked for a pint of beer, it was bedlam in there, everyone shouting out for booze. I asked two or three times for a drink and the barmaid said you will have to wait. I said "I have waited five years for a drink". She said "Where have you been". I told her. The next thing I knew was two soldiers picking my friend and I up and carrying us to a table. One of them brushed all the glasses on to the floor and I think everyone in the pub bought us a drink.

The next day we were given passes and sent home. I travelled to Burgess Hill and then to Keymer Road, I knocked on the back door and opened it and saw a very small boy hiding behind a cupboard. He looked at me with two very wide brown eyes and fled upstairs shouting "My Daddy's home". I can picture him now dressed in short pants and a floral overall. He was then nearly 5 years old and this was the first time I had seen him.

This was the start of trying to get back to something of a normal way of life.