

Ref: 10 3917

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Kriegsgefangenensektion  
Schweizerische Gesandtschaft  
Abteilung Schutzmachtangelegenheiten  
z.St. Schloss Bantikow  
Uber Neustadt/Dosse (2)  
DEUTSCHLAND

Stalag 344,  
Germany,

8th December, 1944.

Sirs,

I respectfully beg to submit the following report on the air attack of 2nd December, 1944, which resulted in the deaths of 28 British prisoners of war at Arb.Kdo. E/793 (formerly Bau. u. Arb. Battn. 21), and deaths of 2 British prisoners of war at Working Party E/3, Blechhammer, as reported in my letter of 7th December, 1944, ref: 4/3886.

E/793

At 11.35 hours on Saturday, 2nd December, 1944, the air-raid warning was sounded in the area and aircraft were overhead at 12.20 hours.

During the raid, which lasted until 13.15 hours, seven bombs fell within the camp, of which two struck an air-raid shelter, thereby causing the deaths of 28 British prisoners of war and injuring a further 28.

There were 65 prisoners of war in this shelter, which was constructed of un-reinforced concrete, about forty centimetres thick with arched roof and built in the form of a letter "U".

The dead were badly mutilated, everyone having sustained severe head injuries, while the majority had also suffered broken limbs. Two bodies were very badly crushed.

Of the remaining five bombs, one fell about ten yards from a shelter in the East Camp, but causing no casualties: another fell between two barracks in the East Camp, destroying three barrack-rooms and a wash-house and injuring four men. A third fell about fifteen yards from a new shelter in the East Camp causing no casualties: the fourth on the west side of the football ground damaging two barrack-rooms and the fifth fell between two barracks in the West Camp destroying two rooms.

As the result of these bombs falling inside the camp and of others, which fell outside the wire, every building in the camp has either been destroyed or damaged, including the Red Cross Food and Parcel Store, and the Red Cross Clothing Store, both of which were situated about fifty yards outside the Main Gate of the camp. One bomb dropped about 30 yards from these stores, hitting a barrack, which caught fire and completely gutted in a few minutes.

There is still a delayed action bomb outside the wire to the south of the Medical Inspection Room and another a little outside the west corner of the camp. The presence of those bombs have made it necessary for the men occupying one whole barrack, as well as men from two rooms of another barrack, the Medical Officers and the Medical Orderlies, to move to safer quarters.

But for the fact that only five hundred of the camp's complement of eleven hundred and sixty-nine were in the camp at the time, the casualties would almost certainly have been far greater.

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All the dead were identified.

At 15.00 hours the Man of Confidence, Sgt. R. Davies, requested permission to telegraph to the Protecting Power, The International Red Cross Society and to RSM Sherriff, as he hoped they would be able to go to the camp immediately, but was told that as all telegraph communications were cut, that could not be done until the following day. I was acquainted with the incident on Sunday, 3rd December, 1944, and I travelled to the Working Party on Monday, 4th December.

All water and electricity supplies were cut and even after darkness fell there was a steadiness about the men in the camp, which was commendable.

The Man of Confidence approached the authorities for permission for all personnel to leave the camp in future air-raid alarms and that was granted.

On Sunday, 3rd December, at 11.30 hours, the air-raid alarm was sounded and the camp moved out quickly and in an orderly manner. That was quite a new experience for the men who, having always remained in the camp during an air-raid, felt considerably relieved to be able to move towards comparative safety.

Food rations, supplied by the German authorities, which were destroyed, have not yet been replaced. The diet has been provided from small stocks of Red Cross food.

### E/3

During the same air attack, a lesser number of bombs fell within the camp area and consequently casualties and damage was much lighter: 2 British prisoners of war lost their lives and 13 being injured.

Here, a part of one barrack was destroyed, the men's kitchen very badly damaged, as were several other living barracks.

Here again, the presence of a delayed action bomb, buried in the football ground, has necessitated the evacuation of the men from the adjacent barracks, they having to double-up in other barracks within the camp.

The same procedure for evacuation of the camp was followed as at Arb.Kdo. E/793 during the subsequent air-raid alarms, except at this Kdo. a number of men were detailed by the German authorities to remain in camp, presumably to form a fire-fighting party, although no direct water supply was available.

I would mention that the men in both camps, which are adjoining, have shown extreme steadiness under these very trying conditions. They are to be commended for that as also are the W.O. and N.C.O. in charge of the camps.

In connection with this, I would like to mention especially those, details of whom are given below, who, through their willingness and unselfish spirit rendered such good assistance in rescuing wounded men, extricating the dead and salvaging such material as was possible from the ruined barrack rooms, thereby also materially assisting the Medical Officer and his orderlies in their work.

As soon as it became known that a shelter had been hit, these men left their own shelter and before the aircraft had left the area, worked unceasingly until the last of the injured and last body had been extricated from the debris.

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<u>Service No.</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Regt.</u>	<u>POW No.</u>
943120	BENNETT, F.W.	L/Bdr.	R.A.	2975
T/124-X	CHATTERTON A	Sto.	R.N.	100277
2734172	COOPER, F.	Gdsm.	W.Gds.	2499
PD/X-101052	DYER, W.	Mne.	R.M.	3394
PKX/86772	ECKERSALL, A.	L/Sto.	R.N.	5310
13013788	FINN, P.	Cpl.	AMPC	919
DX/2986/T	FULLER, R.	L/Cpl.	R.M.	7264
P/JX-209592	INSTONE, J.	O/S	R.N.	100280
1523197	NIXON, T.A.	A.B.	R.N.(MR)	86844
6288197	SAUNDERS, E.G.	Pte.	Bufs	2412
(x) T/124-X	SKEATES, P.R.	Skr.	R.N.	102465
(x) T/124	SILKER, J.P.	Stkr.	R.N.	14634
6287149	SPENCER, C.	Cpl.	Bufs	7100
P/X-1679	STURROCK, P.	A.B.	RNVr	108266
P/JX-205830	THOMPSON, R.	A.B.	R.N.	101453

In addition to these I would remark on the work of the following:

P/JX-132290	ALGAR, F.	A.B.	R.N.	5320
7589758	BRITTON, A.	Crfmn.	REME	3212
T/78000	HARRIS, B.	Dvr.	RASC	2966

These men voluntarily carried out the necessary but painful task of preparing the dead for burial, a task which occupied three days and nights.

(x) Private      HARRIS, B.      1615      7 Fract. Tib and Fib L, lacerations scalp.

(x) Gunner      HARRIS, B.      I have the honour to be, injured both legs.

(x) L/Cpl.      LEGG, R.      1125      3 Fract. astralagus and tarsus

(x) A/B      MACDONALD, A.      9889      S. Sherriff R.S.M.      lacerations head.

(x) Private      POW, L.      6393      Injury lower leg left

(x) Private      SHERIDAN, V.L.      3596      7 Fract. tib and fib L, lacerations scalp.

(x) Private      TOWKES, H.      27940      Injuries both feet, lacerations scalp.

(All the above were admitted to Reserve Lazaret, Casel).

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<u>Rank</u>	<u>Names</u>	<u>POW No.</u>	<u>Nature of injury</u>
(x) Private	FORD, W.R.	2853	? Fract.l.femur and lacerations scalp.
(x) Fusilier	GARNER, J.	1206	Severe lacerations scalp.
(x) Gunner	HOUGH, W.W.	1235	Severe lacerations foot and knee l, Contusions face.
(x) Private	KEITH, W.	10665	Fract. Tib and Fib R.
(x) T/O	KIRK, R.	18636	Dislocated hip right and lacerated scalp
(x) Private	WHITE, G.F.	4403	? Fract. Vertrbrae (cervical)
(x) Sapper	ANDERSON, H.	872	Severe scalp wounds
(x) L/Sto.	ARMER, E.	25671	? Fract. R Scapula
(x) Mne.	BROWN, E.J.	718	Injuries both feet
(x) Private	DAWSON, G.E.	6537	? Fract. Scapula and Tarsus
(x) Private	DUFFELL, W.E.	1615	? Fract. Tib and Fib L, lacerations scalp.
(x) Gunner	KERFOOT, B.	4083	Deafness, injuries both legs.
(x) L/Cpl.	LEGGE, H.	1125	? Fract. astralagus and int malleolus
(x) A/B	MACDONALD, A.	98848	Fract. Patella left and lacerations head.
(x) Private	POW, L.	6353	Injury lower leg left
(x) Private	SKELHAM, V.L.	3596	? Fract. tib and fib L, lacerations scalp.
(x) Private	TOWNEND, H.	27940	Injuries both feet, lacerations scalp.

(All the above were admitted to Reserve Lazaret, Cosel).

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Rank	Names	POW No.	Nature of Injury
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WORKING PARTY E/3

(x) Driver	EVANS, W.	221420	Crushed hand R, injuries left ankle
(x) Private	TAYLOR, J.T.	222278	? Fract. tib and fib L.
(x) Bombardier	LORD, J.	6585	Lacerations scalp
(x) Private	LITTLE, J.W.	220051	Crushed hand left
(x) Corporal	PITT, W.	10476	Severe skull injuries
(x) Sapper	TAYLOR, C.	220832	Lacerated right arm and face, fract. ribs
(x) Driver	BOWATER, E.	221187	Injuries to back and head.

(all the above admitted to Reserve Lazaret, Cosel).

LIGHT AND MINOR INJURIES

Rfn.	HANDLEY, C.	220390
Rfn.	PINKNEY, J.	221798
Sapper	BEGG, J.	27248
Driver	HOLMES, J.	220061
Private	CLARK, G.	220937
Private	HIND, J.	10771