

Content of Diary of Thomas Horrocks Houston – 1944 -1945.

The following transcript, like the previous, is made from the second of the two diaries which survived Dad's capture. Interestingly the diary was titled "Agenda Book" which whilst printed with dates (in French) without the day of the week (e.g. Janvier 22). In January the first written entry includes the year 1945 and for all subsequent entries the day of the week is also included, which confirms these entries definitely relate to 1945 from the 22nd January to the 9th May.

The next entry, following the 9th May, is the 18th May, identified as a Thursday, with days consecutively added for all entries to the 20th November. However these did not correspond to 1945 so confirming these were made for 1944.

Interestingly it was thought that this second diary had previously belonged to someone else and that Dad had only made entries from the 22nd January to the 9th May. But in reviewing the later entries (1944) a couple of references to "letters from Helen" (Dad's sister name) and looking at the entries a lot closer the writing style was, in fact, so similar to Dad's that it almost certainly was his diary entries, although we will never know.

The majority of the diary is written in pencil, so any words in italics below are the difficult to interpret. Similarly place names are unclear at times and also typed in italics.

1944 Entries

The majority of entries detail what he received (post and Red Cross parcels) although two entries are notable 13th September and 7th October when the Air Force was seen by many thousands of POW's – all wishing for the start of the end?

Also included are the jottings from the end of the diary including a list of books read and a few addresses.

Thursday 18th May 1944

Rev 4.0 oc: (*reveille 4:00hrs?*)

Thursday 25th May 1944

Post – 500 Players from Home

Friday 26th May 1944

Received 2nd March clothes parcel. Wanted razor blades, P.Ks

Monday 29th May 1944

Carnival Parade. Finals for all races. Gym display. Stalls & fun fair. Boxing tournament. £1,386 – 10p collected by the Arts & Crafts for B.R.C.S

Sunday 4th June 1944

Sun but cold w(*ind*). Wished myself many returns of the day. (*odd entry not his birthday but close to his arrival at Lamsdorf*). Breakfast – Sardines on toast, Morning in the garden.

Monday 12th June 1944

Received 1 x 1/4lb St Bruno

Thursday 15th June 1944

200 Players from Mrs Guy German (sent Oct)

Saturday 17th June 1944

Received 200 Players no card

Tuesday 27th June 1944

200 Players from Mrs G German (sent Oct)

Wednesday 28th June 1944

2 tins St Bruno

Tuesday 4th July 1944

2 tins St Bruno. Photo enlargement of family

Wednesday 5th July 1944

200 Players from Guy German

Thursday 6th July 1944

Letter from Helen

Friday 7th July 1944

Facilities

Saturday 8th July 1944

Picked first lot green peas & first beet

Sunday 16th July 1944

Letter to Sid Phillips

Wednesday 19th July 1944

1 x 1/4lb St Bruno

Thursday 20th July 1944

Letter from Helen 28 April

Friday 21st July 1944

3 book, Leicester P.O.W.

Wednesday 13th September 1944

At eleven thirty a.m. today great excitement in camp, all eyes looking into the skies & finding one hundred & fifteen H.B. with fighter escort over the camp the most seen by thousands of us P.O.Ws in years (4 to be exact)

1st October 1944

Sent remittance for £50

Saturday 7th October 1944

This evening at 7:15 pm Air raid warning for the first time at night felt and heard bombs dropping AcAc in action all around us, raid lasted two & half hours, plenty of excitement in camps.

Wednesday 1st November 1944

Bought a pocket watch make 'Louis Grisel' No. 225046

Sunday 5th November 1944

How much have you received from Paymaster Re 1st October

20th November 1944

Water bottle. Blacking

18th Decembr 1944

"Confession & absolution is an evasion of personal responsibility, redemption to be a task for the individual will." (Taken from South Riding by Winifred Holtby)

Entries at the end of the diary (No dates)

2739 Sarson (Cpl)

587 Davis (Cpl)

1400 Oliver

The Small Farm & its Management by James Long, John Murray, 50a Albermarle St London W1

Yachting on a Small Income by Maurice Griffiths

Around the World Single Handed – Harry Pidgeon

Shipmates – Felix Reisenburg

The Cruise of the Teddy – Erling Tambs

The Venturesome Voyages of Captain Voss

The Log of the Lone Sea Rover – Captain W L White

Islands under the *werd* – *Hassoldst Daves*

Voyagers Unafraid – Antony Irvin

The Log of the Lone Sea Rover – Thomas Drake (*could be the same as above*)

Told in the Watch Below – John Scott Hughes

The Cruise of the Falcon – E F Knight

Down Channel – R T Mullen

Across Three Oceans – Connor O'Brien

From Three Yachts Mystic Isles of the So, Seas

Addresses

Graham Palmer, 5 St Marys Road, Eastbourne

H J Southam, 6 Oakleigh Drive, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth, Herts

"Overton", Grange Court Drive, Bexhill-on-sea, Sussex

Seymore Cottage, Waldron, Sussex

Catto Burnetts, Waldron Sussex

T Lyons, 10 Milldown Road, Seaford

S. A. Phillips, cCollington Rise School, Collington Rise, Bexhill-on-sea

1945 Entries

Monday 22nd January 1945

Went to work as usual, but about 11 o'clock Jerries seemed very excited and informed us that we were not to come back in afternoon. Announced in Lager that camp was being evacuated. RAF moved off at 2 o'clock with blocks 2,3,4. Rumoured that all of us move tomorrow. Bustle and hurry making sledges and packing.

Tuesday 23rd January 1945

Up about 4 o'clock after not much sleep. Marched out of camp in disordered, counted by Jerry, issued with 50 fags, 1 parcel. Crank told to fall out. After various arguments got back into the camp to our great relief. Took over Pat Wilkins bed, scrounged round for blankets and various bits and pieces. Still expecting to be pushed out again.

Wednesday 24th January 1945

Still on the stand to. Went round the RAF compound scrounging. What an ideal rag and bone man's paradise but what a waste and destruction. How quick the day *Lager II* because of booby traps which we expect Jerries to leave.

Thursday 25th January 1945

Check roll call correct names and numbers. Germans handed over camp to British hands but believe some guards will stay with us and hand over to Russians when they come?? One boy escaped from those on the march was shot by a civilian on approaching a farm house, body brought in to *Lay*. Soup issue, 1 pkt of Knackerbrot, 125 gram. Good issue of spuds. Water situation critical. Melted snow down.

Friday 26th January 1945

Roll call at 9 o'clock after which 6 of us went to clear up block 6. This was in a terrible state, clothes, tins, boots, books etc. Could hear bombing very plain all day. News very good. Russians advancing on *Breslaw* and the *Oder*. Guards still on but very few.

Saturday 27th January 1945

Heard some terrible tales of the hardships of the boys that went on the march. They were sleeping in woods and barns. *Bleckhammer* district being attacked by Russians. Fighting in *Breslaw*. Can hear shelling all day. Few Russian planes over. Water shortage very bad. No water or lights all day. Issued with 1/3 Red Cross Canadian parcel and 50 cigs. Thank God that I managed to stay here in *Lamsdorf*.

Sunday 28th January 1945

Chin very sore, breaking out again making me very depressed and niggardy. Got some snow melted had bit of a bath in a tub. Melted more snow and did some washing, dried it in delouser. Pulled fire down to be rebuilt in our corner tomorrow. Russians 100 miles from Berlin. Patrols entered *Katowitch*. Number of crank returned from march.

Monday 29th January 1945

Went up to block II for bricks etc. for building a stove. Spent all afternoon building with Chas Elves, the other crowd U.S. No lights or water all day and night. Issued with rabbit soup (one of the best soups ever issued in P.O.W life). 1 pkt Knackerbrot. Sat round fire which was very successful.

Tuesday 30th January 1945

Last night very strong gun fire heard nearly all night. Very heavy explosion about 3 o'clock. Water issued. 1 pkt biscuits issued, 1 Canadian parcel between 3.

Wednesday 31st January 1945

Shelling very heavy in N.Westerly direction. Went round with Charlie looking for wood. Had a party out at night for a beam from NCO's barrack. For a change had lights on from 6 o'clock. Knackerbrot and bread enough left for 3 days. Issued with water.

Thursday 1st February 1945

Roll call at 8:30. Capt. Callwell gave us a lecture on keeping clean saying that after the war comes famine and infection which we must be careful of. Issued with rabbit soup (very little rabbit) 1 pkt Knackerbrot, spuds and 1 N.Z. parcel between 3.

Friday 2nd February 1945

No entry made

Saturday 3rd February 1945

Very heavy shelling round to the north and east. Red Cross issue of 1/3 Canadian Parcel and 50 cigs (Riverhead Gold what a fag only 1 step ahead of 'Junah'). Last pkt of Knackerbrot issued, cup full flour issued in place of bread and biscuits to last 8 days. Advised to mix with spuds and make potato cakes.

Sunday 4th February 1945

No roll call but announced that the whole barrack will be on fatigue tomorrow at *Lager II*. Red Cross issue revised. Suggested that it should go to cook house. This in true prisoner style was squashed. 1 full parcel being kept for emergency. Bulk issue only left. 3 x 1/2 parcel issues at the rate of 1/2 per week starting Wednesday.

Monday 5th February 1945

Fatigue only 20 men. After hearing heavy bombing and shelling for the last few days, hear by the news that a Russian drive is on about 15 miles N.E. of us. This brightens everyone up - this waiting for so long after expecting to be freed before this is very depressing. No bread or lights.

Tuesday 6th February 1945

Cooked potato cakes up for breakfast, all bits not successful. Supposed to be a German roll call but Jerry did not turn up. No Red Cross issue. Water rationed out. No sign of bread coming up. Spent afternoon makes potato cakes 2 per man 9 men. Bit that was over rolled round sardine, very tasty. No water for a bath. Lights came on about 6 o'clock.

Wednesday 7th February 1945

Bulk issue up + tin bully 1/2 M.C. 1/2 tin Jam, sugar, tea, biscuits, 1/3 pkt peafLOUR. What an issue for the week. Number of Russian fighters over.

Thursday 8th February 1945

Had an issue of bread, 8 to a loaf. Lights came on about 6 o'clock. Went up to block II to see battle raging in the north. Terrible artillery barrage. Sky light up in various places. 5,000

Generals in *Lamsdorf* have all sorts of ideas on the action??? Went round to Harry for the news.

Friday 9th February 1945

No entry today

Saturday 10th February 1945

Still on 8 to a loaf. Water and light still on, believe that as long as *Neise* is O.K. water and light will be on. Couple of raids on the airfield by the camp. What a night.

Sunday 11th February 1945

The heaviest raid today, first a strafing by fighters then later big ones arrived, diving and machine gunning over the camp. Crackers going off all round the camp. Could see the markings and firing very plainly. Not a very nice experience, hope the Russians know we are here. One barrack got a shot through it. Had the riot act read out, both German and English. *Lamsdorf* and surrounding villages are in a state of siege, any soldier or P.O.W. seen pilfering will be shot. Quite good news for us.

Monday 12th February 1945

Wander if we are nearly cut off. Check roll call outside, no sooner than we got outside than a big bomber circled round once then let them have it, we all ducked in again. In the afternoon we were told that the Germans wanted a list of walking, sitting and lying cases. The M.O. went through us all. I told him about my knee and got 'a sitting case'. We are cut off in the N.W. but understand the way is still open S.Westerly. No lights in our barrack.

Tuesday 13th February 1945

Bread issue still 8 to a loaf, 600 grams of spuds per day and soup.

Wednesday 14th February 1945

What a day!! On work in *Lager II*. German barracks. What a mess they had left, live rounds, tin hats and equipment, scraps of food lying about the joint., had a good scrounge round brought back plenty of coal etc. Broke into store and found English tin hat, gaiters, belts etc. In the afternoon pinched carrots, onions, spuds. 7 of us brought back enough for some nice meals for a good few days yet. Nice supper of fried onions and mash.

Thursday 15th February 1945

No entry today

Friday 16th February 1945

Camp Commandant received orders that he must evacuate the camp. He issued orders that the whole camp will be moved if and when transport is available. I personally don't think there is much chance. Russians seem to be driving on towards Berlin and westerly. Issue of bread 7 to a loaf.

Saturday 17th February 1945

Orders issued re the move. A lot of people getting panicky and making all sorts of silly presumptions. Order of move by compounds. We are next to last. 10 loaves pinched so 8 to a loaf.

Sunday 18th February 1945

Usual buzzs going round. Best one was the bulk issue and cigs 72 and ½ tin tobacco (this is supposed to be all we will get). Scotty brought me a watch strap fancy him remembering it. Another buzz is that Geneva is sending 5 Red Cross trains for us and as we are 'crank' taking us back to Switzerland (what a hope). War news very good but nothing about this sector. 7 to a loaf again. Believe lorry has been to *Neise* for bread again. Bulk issue up by the sound of it quite a good issue.

Monday 19th February 1945

Fancy still being here after a month.

Tuesday 20th February 1945

Quite a day of activity. Warned that a number are moving tomorrow. Parcels up. I got a N.Z. parcel and pkt biscuits. A scare of some sort the camp was surrounded with Jerries, 2 in the boxes. News not very hopeful for our release. Think we have had it. This is our last parcel issue.

Wednesday 21st February 1945

Blocks I, II, III, IV, V, VII VIII marched out today. Supposed to be at 7 o'clock but train was not there until 11 o'clock. Number of boys came into our block to get out of going. Spent the afternoon scrounging in block XI. Packed my kit (experimental). Bread and sugar up very late 7 to a loaf.

Thursday 22nd February 1945

Lager II party. All the gang went out, scrounged the usual onions, spuds, bread and in the afternoon I went off by myself. Cook gave me a lump of pork. Charlie got a couple of loaves. Came back to the nasty rumour that our transport will be here on Sunday. 5 to a loaf. Smashing supper of pork and fried onions.

Friday 23rd February 1945

6 to a loaf. During the night very heavy firing going on quite close to the camp. Understand that it was a strong Russian patrol. Rumour has it that the boys did not reach *Neise*, that the Jerries had bundled them out and pinched the train.

Saturday 24th February 1945

Stayed in bed until 3 o'clock. Got up cleaning and repairing our butter tin chimney. Reading 'We the Accused' by Ernest Raymond a very good book, rather on Priestley's style, detailed life like descriptions of common things. 6 to a loaf, ½ tin sardines per man. Most of these days spent in, cooking from our stocks of onions, carrots and spuds.

Sunday 25th February 1945

Things very quiet again, we seem to be stuck here. Heard that released prisoners are on their way to *Odessa*. Lucky fellows. My greatest wish would be to be among the first 1,000 men home and be home for the armistice. How great that would be. Yet who knows? It is still not impossible. Wonder what all the folks are doing tonight at this time 7 o'clock. I hope they are not worrying too much about me.

Monday 26th February 1945

Charlie and Ted split up over some silly argument. Have broken into my parcel so hope there is more to come. Wanted milk and butter out of it and as we are on Jerry coffee thought it economical to open the Nes-coffee and save milk for tea alone.

Tuesday 27th February 1945

Hell it is starting again. Mixed commission is coming round to examine us for marching or not. Charlie and Ted made it up again. Heard from B.B.C. that various *Stalags* had been moved to *Nuremberg*, *Hanover* and *Kostel*. 344 had been evacuated, expect 4,000 crank, who it was believed were going to be evacuated. Block 9 being examined.

Wednesday 28th February 1945

German doctor came to our barrack about 9 o'clock. Decided to have a go with my knee. Seemed easy before he came to me but he changed and everybody around me got 'march' so now we await developments.

Thursday 1st March 1945

Went down to de-louser for a bath and did some washing. The unfit ordered to move off tomorrow but this order was later cancelled. Robinson came up from *Kartie* and say that the Jerries were to 'stand to'.

Friday 2nd March 1945

Lazerette and Revier and some of the sick moved out by train today, leaving 1,600-1,700 in the camp still. They had a issue of Red Cross. My parcel running low. Spending most of the time trying to get 'The Robe' by Lloyd C. Douglas finished before the move.

Saturday 3rd March 1945

Geiersberg 10:30 a.m. Wed (don't know what this refers to)

Told about 10 o'clock that we are to be ready to move at 12 o'clock. Made a super stew of onions, soup powders etc. Packing up and receiving Red Cross issues (all bits and pieces). Marched out at 11 o'clock. Arrived down at *Annahof* and piled 40 into a truck. Looks as though Joe has let us down and we have had it. Charlie and I went in the station house and made a brew. I pinched a lamp from the lamp room and what a God-send it was in the dark truck.

Sunday 4th March 1945

Going quite steadily all night passing through *Neise*, *Ost Marock*. Got to sleep for a few hours but very cramped. Stopped for a while at *Geiursberg* about 10:30 a.m. Got water from passing engine. Opened the doors for roll call about 9 o'clock a.m. but only for a minute, so we cut a hole in the floor with a knife and used a *Klim* tin to pour through.

Monday 5th March 1945

At *Koalin* we halted a while during the early hours of the morning. After a very bad nights sleep we arrived at the outskirts of *Prague* just as the air raid alarm sounded. One could see that the people were used to it, air-raid wardens patrolling the streets. Pulled up at a suburban station where civvies came with bread, we gave them soap and cigs. Stop-starting journey all day mostly through town. Still not let us out for 30 hours. Got out about 4 o'clock in a siding. Men and women about, but we had to shit down beside the train. Just another example of German treatment, no arrangements for latrines, water, food (only the loaf and 1/4 pat butter issued before we left.

Tuesday 6th March 1945

Arrived at *Pilsen* and up to *Eger*. Wonder why we are going up there as it is not the direct route to Munich. Allowed out twice today but could not manage to go.

Wednesday 7th March 1945

After a terrible night woke up with terrible pain in my stomach due to constipation. *Regensburg* in Bavaria, where we saw the Danube and a fairy castle. Saw a number of trains of evacuees and number of bombed places including a petrol train burnt out and couple of engines in the ditch beside the track. Apparently we have been just missing air-raids all along. Had to have a shit in a tin and oh what a relief after 5 days. Slung it out of the window. About 11 o'clock we were allowed out for about ½ hour. I had a shave and wash and what a great feeling it was. Heard that we are not going to *Mooseburg 7a* but *Oflag 7B* at *Minigan*. Beginning to feel very weak through sitting so long cooped up and lack of sleep.

Thursday 8th March 1945

After a fairly comfortable night woke up at a place called (nothing written) and snowing very hard, country very Swiss like as we are not far from the boarder S.W. *Munick*. Arrived at *Mimmingin* about 10 a.m. and what a wait. Allowed out for 10 minutes but shut up again. Our carriage leaking furiously all wet and miserable. Still not let out at 4 o'clock. Turned out about 4 p.m. but started sorting out NCOs. All our crowd first decided not to say they were. I called them and made a dash for the truck again as I had heard they were sleeping in tents at this camp. When I got in the truck the other had formed up with the NCOs. I tried to get out but officer would not let me. Rations came up cup of coffee, ¼ loaf and lump of sausage. Bedded down comfortably for the night but felt very cold.

Friday 9th March 1945

Woke up to the cry of hot water and found we were still at *Minningan*. Guard told us we are going on to *Ausberg* to clear up air-raided places. Had wash and breakfast and started off about 10 a.m. Railway line had been bombed all the way along. Arrived at *Ausberg* and what a mess. Detrained then marched off, 200 of us. Streets and houses smashed up. The railway yards were a jumble of twisted iron and trucks. Saw a 250 lb bomb with RAF marked on it beside the road. Lying in the middle of a roadway was a pair of railway wagon wheels, b---- those things flying about. Saw a number of Yank prisoners clearing debris. They had only been captured a few months. Arrived at the outskirts of the town and we were put in a big building not finished. A number of civvies, Jugo, Italians in the same building. Very glad to get to bed on the floor of the top floor. Issued with ¼ loaf and lump of sausage.

Saturday 10th March 1945

Heard that they want us to go to work tomorrow. All of us are crank and some commission cases. Helped Nick (who had taken over command) to make the lists of all the men. Nick argued all day trying to get us back and away from here. Issued with 1/3 loaf for two days and lump of sausage. Arranged for 150 of us to go to work tomorrow but not to do any, then all go sick. A number of boys went to hospital. Arrangements made for doctors to come tomorrow so no work.

Sunday 11th March 1945

French doctors examined everybody except *Sanit* and NCOs. Only marked 14 fit for work after treatment. Very good show by Nick.

Monday 12th March 1945

Went with Jackie to the hospital with the boys kit. Called at American camp. One Yank said he would rather stay than go to *Mimingin* (Note: all spellings different but believe its the same place) The town was in a shocking state. Yanks Lager had four bombs dropped on it, clearing one of their barracks up. Arrived back very tired. German Doc coming tomorrow to check up on French Doc report. German guards wanting to buy bread for English fags. Issue of loaf 1 kilo between 3 for 2 days.

Tuesday 13th March 1945

The German was pretty easy only wanting to see a few of the sick. Made a corn beef pudding which turned out pretty good. Coming off the stairs today reminded me of Agricultural Hall and back stage at the circus, with attendant smells. Had a raid which lasted from 11:30 to 4 o'clock. We had to go down to the cellar. Germans would not let us go out into the country. Heard the raid was at *Regensburg* about 150 kilos away. Had a bucket bath after Nick and Jackie. No bread or spuds issued today. Soup - well dish water would have had more body in it. Nobody ate anything except the guards who doubled up. Hear that we are all going back to Stalag at *Mimingion* tomorrow.

Wednesday 14th March 1945

Packed blankets etc. but no good do not think we will be going today. Bread came up 1 loaf between 2 for 3 days. Officer coming up tomorrow from *Mimingion*. Just going to bed when the air-raid siren went off. Most went down the cellar but some went off into the fields. No planes came.

Thursday 15th March 1945

Officer came round and said that *Mimingion* was too full and we would have to stay here. Took away a list of complaints. ½ parcel issue on Saturday. Late in evening Lager Fuhrer came in and said that all NCOs and *Sanit* were to return to *Mimingion* in 2 batches of 25 tomorrow. I got on the first party to go at 3 a.m. Packed kit and blankets, share food out with Oliver. Did not bother getting undressed just lay on palliasse. Up at 3 o'clock made a brew. Marched to station in a hellva rush to catch 5 o'clock train this time in ordinary carriages.

Friday 16th March 1945

Arrive at *Mimingion* about 8 o'clock walked up to the camp. Searched, fairly cushy, had a bath, wrote letter to Nick (which guard said he would take back). Yanks, Poles, Serbs, Russians and all sorts here. English compound very crowded. Marquees very full. I was detailed for the concert hall. Could not find space to sleep. What a life. Issue with soup and bread (6 to a loaf army bread). Met all the boys Chas Elves, the Spriggs, Jonah, David Ponder - did not get much help from them???

Saturday 17th March 1945

Started making a blower with Henry Armitage. The boys had had no parcel issue. Very hard up for a smoke. Sold tin of porridge for 10 fags. Having a smoke improved matters considerably.

Sunday 18th March 1945

Roll call 9:30. Finished blower quite a super little job. Supposed to be parcel issue tomorrow ¼ parcel Mon, ¼ parcel Thurs. ¼ following Monday and Thursday. Settling down to the hardships. Wrote letter card home first since January.

Monday 19th March 1945

Another of those days. 500 NCO's to move to 383 NCO camp. Spent the day on parade off parade. Issued with American parcel between 4, shared it with the right combine Ginger Raines and crowd. Receive 30 fags, Pkt raisins, meat paste, ¼ tin milk, ¼ coffee, ¼ sugar, ¼ biscuits, ¼ marg, ¼ choc. Henry wants to take blower with him, tried to persuade him not to but decided to cut for it . I won.

Tuesday 20th March 1945

Those NCO's that did not go yesterday to go today. They got off after a lot of swapping and messing about, very surprised that the Jerries stand for so much from us. Nobby Clark and I mucking in together.

Wednesday 21st March 1945

Went on sick parade, saw English doctor, he recommended light work then saw German. Got back off sick parade at 10 o'clock. About 11:30 the air-raid alarm went and lasted for 2 hours, saw 5 planes very high up circling about. German b... herded us into the barracks - not even allowed to go to the lav. This is typical example of German orders, the lav being just across the way. What a sight when 15 white lorries arrived outside the camp with Red Crosses on them, evidently the food lorries mentioned by the B.B.C. I certainly never expected to see those.

Thursday 22nd March 1945

Had air-raid warning, saw all our planes go over and what a lovely sight. ½ dozen fighters came down and strafed the air field near here. Issued with ¼ Canadian parcel and 10 cigs. Still no card from *Stabarzt* looks like I have been *scroubed* (*scrubbed?*)

Friday 23rd March 1945

Lovely weather, after doing some washing, spent the afternoon sun bathing. The usual mid day air-raid. Some more of the boys arrived in from *Augsburg*, Jimmy Houston, Guy Mitchell and Dougy and Joe Fletcher.

Saturday 24th March 1945

Went on sick parade. This time with bad knee, had Jimmy Sprigg's sheet but *G. Amt* still would not have any of it. So am still marked fit. (Just my luck. I seem to be slipping these days).

Sunday 25th March 1945

Spend day in sun bathing. Nic and Jackie came in from *Augsburg*. Wrote post card to Father and Mother.

Monday 26th March 1945

Parcel issued Nobby and I received ½ American parcel. Fortunately containing 180 cigs.

Tuesday 27th March 1945

Raining most of the day. Decided to move the beds round and get bed boards for them. Moved the screen back giving us more room. News very good. Volunteered for farm work so hope I can get out of this camp and get some good food and billets and one gets bored stiff in this joint and I can see us always being crowded out here.

Wednesday 28th March 1945

Raining all day, spent most of it in bed reading '20,000 Streets Under the Sky' by Patrick Hamilton. This is a London trilogy, Life in London of a *Pro* Barman and Barmaid. A very entertaining story. Comic Kapitals used plentifully and remarks about London Life very true, Lyons Corner House spoken as palaces. Red Cross parcels arrived 1,991 (9 lost on the way).

Thursday 29th March 1945

Quite a bright, spring morning. News that Patten's Flying Column has arrived at the outskirts of *Nuremberg* and a spearhead driving in the direction of *Augsburg*. Can hardly believe this as the move seems so swift. Issue of ¼ Canadian parcel and 15 fags.

Friday 30th March 1945 Good Friday

Thought once we might have been home for Easter. 3 trucks red Cross in which is a good sign.

Saturday 31st March 1945

Saw the Alps, snow capped in the evening sun, what a lovely sight, just like a painting. Had a concert in the barrack, but not very good. Finished reading 'South Riding' by Winifred Holtby, a very good novel about County Council life and the sporting farmer.

Sunday 1st April 1945 Eater Sunday

Bread cut 7 to a loaf. Had a very nice pudding of rice and figs supplied by Froggies. Read out that the parcel issue would be on Tuesday instead of Monday. That means Nobby and I will have nothing to eat tomorrow Monday. The bastards, there's parcels and cigs there and they can only issue a ¼ parcel Tuesday and Thursday.

Monday 2nd April 1945 Easter Monday

Alps very clear and what a lovely sight in the early morning sun. What a day no smokes, no food. Started reading Edgar Wallace biography by Margaret Lane. Had international concert outside in the afternoon. Rumoured that the Stalag had had evacuation orders sealed. News very good. Do not think it will be long now. Plenty of air-raid warnings at night.

Tuesday 3rd April 1945

Started to rain. Issue of American parcels, ¼ per man. Nobby's and mine had only 80 fags in meaning 20 per man. With the amount of parcels in Geneva want to issue 1 a week now.

Wednesday 4th April 1945

No entry today

Thursday 5th April 1945

Good news. Issuing today ¼ American and ½ English parcel. 40 men detailed for *Augsburg*.

Friday 6th April 1945

Went on sick parade, saw Capt. Smit about my cough at night, told me it probably was caused through worry - but there's not much worrying me. Saw the *Arty*, he had my name on a list beside him, believe it to be the *blughers* list. So have blood test tomorrow. Number of boys came in from *Mooseburg* for driving the Red Cross lorries, all Canadians. Heard that the death rate so far on the march was 570 and more to come.

Saturday 7th April 1945

Receive Krank card lasting until Monday week. Had blood test. Raining most of the day. Had a concert in the barrack.

Sunday 8th April 1945

Overhead alarms all day, 4 in all I believe. Very nice day, nippy but bright. Wrote card to Dad and Mum. Finished Edgar Wallace's biography. What a man he was, he certainly had confidence in himself but how hard he must have been. Rumours of a big party on the way here. Serb and Russian making an additional compound.

Monday 9th April 1945

Saw hundreds of our bombers and fighters over the camp flying eastwards. The last batch dropped rocket bombs directly overhead, believe they hit the air field damaging the runway, fuel dump and hangers. One stray one falling in the town. What a sight. Receive ½ Canadian parcel.

Tuesday 10th April 1945

No entry today

Wednesday 11th April 1945

More bombers and fighters over today, what patterns they left in the sky.

Thursday 12th April 1945

Waited for lorry to go out for bed boards but could not go out until the afternoon. Went into *Morninggen* then 20 kilos north to the sawmill, collected wood, came back and left it in a wood shop. Enjoy the ride very much, surprised to see what a beautiful old town *Morninggen* is. Issue with tin of milk.

Friday 13th April 1945

Suppose to go down to saw the boards up but once again could not get the lorry until the afternoon. Went out about 3 o'clock, went first to *Morninggen*, loaded lorry up with bed boards, lorry came back to camp, we went with guard to his house which was an old castle built in 1470, belonged to a Prince *Foulk*, then went to a village about 20 kilos out and had a great time. The Poles in the bakery gave bread away when baker went to dinner. Civilians very afraid of our black troops raping and cut their throats. We went in a pub and had sausage and bread. Arrived back in camp about 10 o'clock after quite a Red Letter day. Parcel issue ½ Canadian.

Saturday 14th April 1945

Raining nearly all day. Got stuck into 'Rabble in Arms'. Airplanes over in afternoon. Nobby sold his battledress blouse to Pole for 60 cigs.

Sunday 15th April 1945

Air-raid again nearly all day. Spent day sun bathing.

Monday 16th April 1945

Went up to *Stabartz*. Smith told him to give me another week and that I had to go and see him. Air raids nearly all day. Issue of Xmas parcel.

Tuesday 17th April 1945

A dozen fighters came down and started machine gunning down on the town somewhere. They opened up just over the camp. Spent the afternoon in and out of the air raid trench.

Wednesday 18th April 1945

Went to see Smith, he sent me up for screen test but don't really think there's much wrong with me except smoker's cough maybe? Day started well with air raid warning which lasted all day. Bombers over.

Thursday 19th April 1945

No entry today

Friday 20th April 1945

Usual air raid alarm went into trench in case they came over. About 11:30 it started 13 waves of bombers let their loads go right over the camp and what a sight. The ground shook and trembled and what a smoke and dust rose up from the town. They asked for volunteers to go and dig the dead out.

Saturday 21st April 1945

Asked for volunteers to go and unload Red Cross parcels that had been bombed down at the station. Supposed to be a number of delayed action bombs round them. Marched down here supposed to work on railway but would not do any of that kind of work. What a mess down there. Coaches and rails all tangled together. Saw and smelt a number of dead soldiers in the wreckage. I got some flour in my vest and filled my trousers with matches. Came on to rain, got soaked.

Sunday 22nd April 1945

The 'Flop' is on again, just like *Lamsdorf*. The transport and evacuees going backwards and forwards, most of them not knowing where to go. After getting wet last night spent most of the day in bed while my clothing dried out.

Monday 23rd April 1945

Stabarzt parade a farce, rumours flying round today. Guards supposed to be going today, certainly they are in a flat spin. Saw a funny sight, on a lorry towing a car, the spotters saw the jet propelled plane coming just over the trees. The lorry stopped and the car ran on just missing the lorry, all the soldiers dived for the ditch while our boys laughed and shouted that it was German, poor buggers, they must have been 'strafed' like hell on the road. In the evening saw our planes diving on the road behind the trees, something went up in smoke.

Tuesday 24th April 1945

News that armies had passed *Ulm* about 50 kilometres from here.

Wednesday 25th April 1945

No entry today

Thursday 26th April 1945

Went out to see the village in flames and machine gun fire. The fight is on!! Outside the town, understand the burger meister went out and arranged for the town to be declared an open town. In the early afternoon saw from the hospital roof, the armoured column moving in. Went down the road and what a cheer went up when the tanks and jeeps came up the road to camp. After many hand shakes the boys were all off to town. Our guards were lined up and taken P.O.W. How young these Yanks seem. Went into town.

Friday 27th April 1945

Nobby and I went down to the town. Civilians and troops (mostly bastard French Moroc) smashing windows and getting into the shop and looting. Piles of troops and vehicles coming into town. Yankee M.P. arriving.

Saturday 28th April 1945

Raining in the morning. What a pleasing sight to see American girls in the camp. Concert party called the 'Jersey Bounce' arrived and a doughnut machine but did not partake of any.

Sunday 29th April 1945

No entry today

Monday 30th April 1945

Hanging around waiting. Hear that planes are coming to take us away. When nobody knows. Went walk into town with Phil.

Tuesday 1st May 1945

No entry today

Wednesday 2nd May 1945

Went down to the town and on to the air field, where a great number of planes smashed up, were lying about. What a mess the bombing had made of the 'drome. Nobby's leg very bad, went to the hospital where they kept him in with the Russians.

Thursday 3rd May 1945

In the morning told to get ready to go to the air field for embarkation. Marched to the air field but no signs of any planes. Waited patiently all day. Nick had arranged for billets in a *Gast hous* if we do not go. Issued with rations, went down to billets, where I was quite ready for bed. Feeling browned off and tired.

Friday 4th May 1945

Went up to the air field, but no signs of a move although rumour has it planes are coming but they did not turn up. 300 came from near *Augsburg* but went back by truck. Drinking beer in the bar, quite like old times, but the beer very weak.

Saturday 5th May 1945

Still no sign of a move again today. Stayed down in the *Gast Hous*. Went with Guy and Jackie back to the *Lager*. Pick up the wireless, felt rather bad about it, but after all I said I was taking it. Raining all day.

Sunday 6th May 1945

Still no signs of planes. Had quite a homely Sunday, went into the bar for a drink. Strolled round the village.

Monday 7th May 1945

Weather on the improvement. Planes are in. What a race - seems to be hundreds landing - all Douglas Transport C47. Started off at 12 o'clock. Found travelling in planes quite good. Arrived at *Rheims* at 2 o'clock. Lorry to the camp where all our clothes were taken off us, bathed and new American gear dished out. Wireless was in the way and very heavy. After supper went down with Nic and gang. Prices too high and did not see much life. Was just like sleeping in Mainline station with mikes, people walking about etc.

Tuesday 8th May 1945

Waiting about all morning for grouping. Started for airport about 3 o'clock, airport outside *Rheims*. (Just learned that the peace terms have just been signed at *Rheims* of all places) Loaded into Lancaster bombers. I was fortunate enough to get in the nose with the A.G. and what an experience. Followed the route across France and arrived over England at Brighton, landed at no name given and taken by lorry to where we stayed the night. I can't explain the feeling felt but everything seemed so solid and fresh. How great the countryside is.

Wednesday 9th May 1945

Up at 7 o'clock for M.O., Dental inspection, filling up numerous forms. Received £5 and £6. Interrogated in afternoon. Told that we won't be going today as we still have to be fitted out with clothes. Saw Red Cross Centre, if mother is at home. Went to an EWSA show. Very so-so.

Note The diary ends here.