

# **Diary of a Forced March by Prisoners of War**

**From:**

**Stalag VIII B - Lamsdorf, Poland**

**20th January 1945**

**To:**

**Namur, Belgium**

**14th April 1945**

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**Stalag VIII B**

Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf was a large, German, prisoner of war camp. It was located in Poland near the small town of Lamsdorf (now called Lambinowice) in what was then known as Upper Silesia. Today on the site of the camp is the Polish Central Prisoner of War Museum. The camp initially occupied barracks built to house British and French prisoners in the First World War, but there had also been a prisoner camp there during the Franco Prussian War of 1870 - 71.

Stan Woodman was captured early in the war in North Africa. Transported up through Italy he was incarcerated in Lamsdorf when it was Stalag VIII B. Subsequently the camp was expanded and separated into different camps. After 1943 reference to Stalag VIII B may relate to Teschen camp. In practice many prisoners were not physically at the Lamsdorf or Teschen camps but were out at Arbeitskommandos administered from these camps.

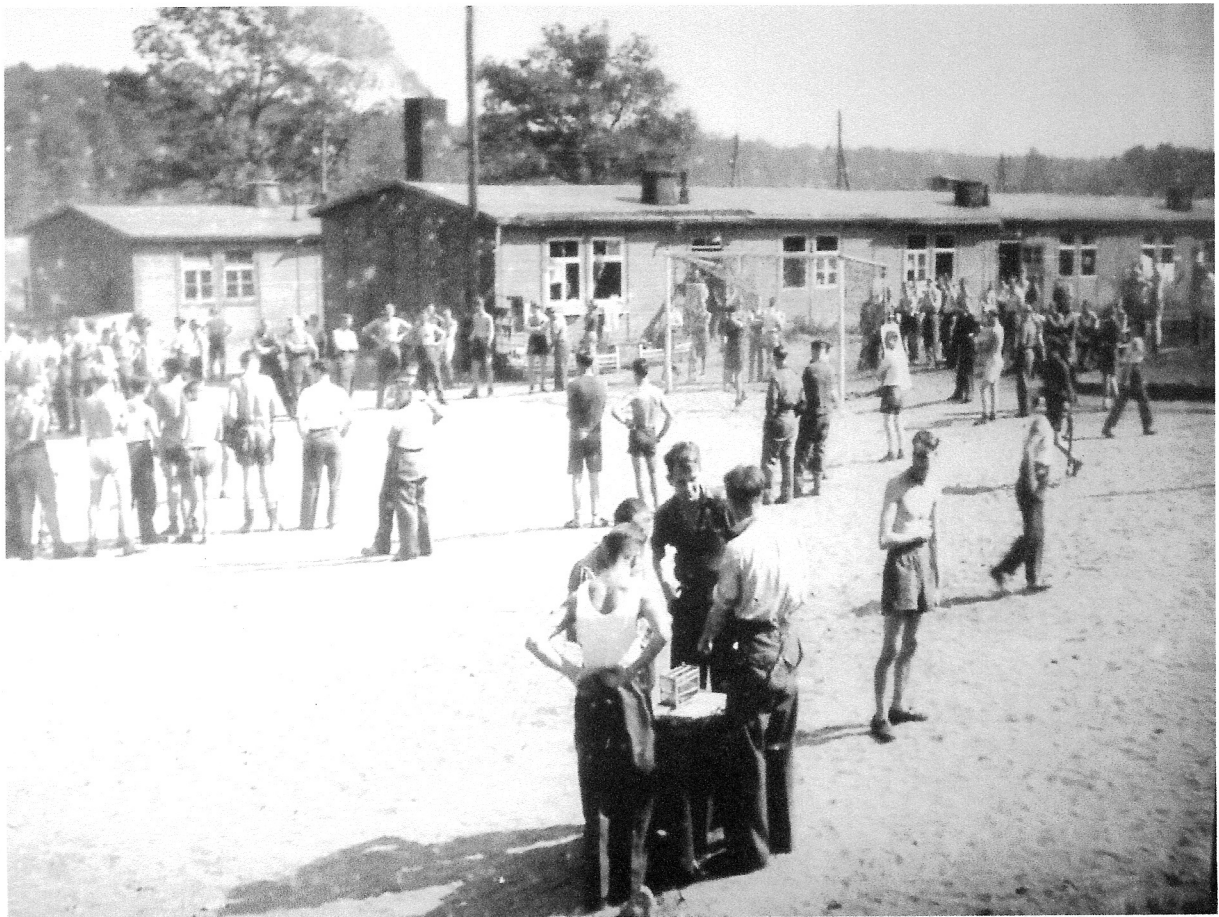
In January 1945, as the Soviet armies resumed their offensive and advance into Germany, many of the prisoners were marched westwards in groups of 200 to 300 in the so-called Long or Death March. Many of them died from the bitter cold and exhaustion. The lucky ones got far enough to the west to be liberated by the American army. The unlucky got "liberated" by the Soviets, who reached the camp on 17th March 1945. Instead of turning them over quickly to the western allies they held them as virtual hostages for several more months.

The Long March was during the final months of the Second World War in Europe. About 30,000 Allied PoWs were force-marched westwards across Poland and Germany in appalling winter conditions, lasting about four months from January to April 1945. It has been called various names but most survivors just called it "The March". It has also been called "The Lamsdorf Death March".

As the Soviet army was advancing on Poland, the Nazis made the decision to evacuate the PoW camps to prevent the liberation of the prisoners by the Russians. During this period, also hundreds of thousands of German civilians, most of them women and children, as well as civilians of other nationalities, were making their way westwards in the snow and freezing weather and many died. January and February 1945 were among the coldest winter months of the twentieth century, with blizzards and temperatures as low as  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), even until the middle of March temperatures were well below  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $0^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Most of the PoWs were ill-prepared for the evacuation, having suffered years of poor rations and wearing clothing ill-suited to the appalling winter conditions.

Each Stalag was responsible for co-ordinating the movement of PoW at the outlying Arbeitskommandos as well as those at the main camp. Prisoners at Stalag VIII B (Teschen) took a southerly route through the German occupied Czech Protectorate (Bohemia and Moravia) to Bavaria. The groups would march 20 - 40 kilometres a day resting in factories, churches, barns and even in the open. Some who tried to escape or could not go on were shot by the guards.

# STALAG VIII B



# THE LONG MARCH



Toddy 28<sup>th</sup> January 1945. Awakened by the recent anniversary commemorations in the "Auschwitz" camp in Poland, I have for the first time since writing in 1945, found the courage to read these notes again - for they bring back memories of comrades, all who had hope in adversity

20<sup>th</sup> JAN 1945. - "STALAG" 344 LAUSDORAF. - POLAND

The Russians are coming, and everyone is on tenterhooks

The boys in the Lager go to work as usual. The rumble of heavy guns grow louder, and the road outside the camp is packed with civilians, carts and transport of all descriptions

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> January

what a way to spend ones 24<sup>th</sup> birthday! For I also have the tooth ache.

Latest orders are to pack everything, together we have made a sledge from old bits of the benches, and the fate of us hope to be able to pull it successfully.

Outside the snow is falling heavily, and it is now some five ins deep.

12. PM MIDNIGHT

Columns of Jews in the most frightful condition have arrived outside our Lager wire.

The S.S. Guards, armed with four foot long rubber truncheons are knocking spots off of the poor bastards

Here comes a couple of stragglers dragging a dead chap in between them as one would haul a dead dog

more or less being dragged along like sacks in the snow, they could be sacks

of potatoes

Here comes a sledge full of dead  
By Christ this is suffering

Monday 22 Jan 1954.

The Jews are forming up outside the wire  
Some have slept the night in the cookhouse  
opposite

The gaffer Jews are all well dressed  
and are carrying trenchcoats the same as the  
S.S. Guards.

The Poles have been sent to work as usual.  
The main road is packed solid with more and  
more refugees mixed with army transport.

After standing for four hours in the bitter  
cold, the living dead move on.

I am unable to describe the condition of  
the poor luggers.

There is an old man supported by two  
others, he can hardly walk, and every few  
paces they must rest.

It's a horrible sight.

12 O'clock midday 22 Jan

The order comes to get ready to move,  
Some of the Poles are still out working.

The guns are now quite close, they say the  
Jermies will leave us.

The civilians in the surrounding Pagers are  
doing what they please, some intend to  
luggage off, and others are staying  
and waiting for Joe Stalin.

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The local bread store has been taken over by the French arbiting corps.

Rumors are coming thick and fast, we are cut off, can't get out, etc, etc. I have just been talking to the guard on the gate, he is in a hell of a state, the unit officer intends to stay with us if anything happens (what a hope)

4:30 pm

The guards all troop in the camp, and we prepare to move off, you should see us, sledges, hand carts, pots and pans, it's like a circus

(By the By) The guards now have three days each, all with muzzles on, things don't look too healthy

Off we go on the road, the main road through Rhygefeld and down to the river Oder, here we meet the first Jerry patrol, clad in their white snow kit, standing by to demolish the wooden bridge that we have just passed over.

The road, if you could call it that, is packed with all kinds of transport, we march steadily along pulling our sledge, and stopping for a five min break in each two hours.

10 pm We pass hundreds of Jews who are stopped by the roadside, amongst them are women and children, it's terribly cold and the road surface is awful. we keep going and every few hundred

yards we see dead, some are not dead, but are waiting for death. leaning up against tree trunks.

One poor lugger is playing around in the snow, just as a child would do.

An old man, now stiff and dead is half propped against a tree, his metal rimmed glasses are hanging from one ear, the bullet hole in his head is no longer bleeding, as all is frozen.

We eventually reach our destination, a place called "SCHWIDENBURG", we have walked 35 kilometres.

The billets are in big stables, and we are supposed to sleep with the horses (that's the official billet) the Poles scrounge around to find something a little better, and finish up sleeping all over the place.

We sleep the night in the porch of someones doorway, the guards are using the room on the left of the entrance doorway, and will persist in walking over us.

They have forgotten they are Germans for a short while, and we are all out big frightened crowd, all rushing out of the way of Jol Stalin's advance.

I only wish he would lung up and get us in the bag.



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Tuesday 23 Jan 1945

Long night's sleep last night, but must not grumble, for three of us have managed to get a wash in warm water, the old lady even provided the soap - and soap here in Poland as elsewhere in Germany is as precious as gold, she insists that we stay awhile

You can't help feel sorry for these people, they live, sleep, and eat in the same room, and hardly know what is on the other side of the street.

The guards have now moved and the Polish civies on the left of the passage say that five of us can sleep with them, so we have cut a pack of cards and in case I still sleep in the passage.

Not a bad night's sleep, as we managed to get some straw from the stables, the woman in the house suddenly came out and looked at us all huddled together, Jim had his hat on and she inquired if we had a girl with us.

P.S. In our condition we certainly required eating not - - - -

Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> Jan 1945.

11 AM. we are still here, we tried to go sick and get left behind, but it didn't work.

All the kit is packed, and we are just waiting for the word go.

4 PM. The snow is falling again, -  
over 2,000 of our lads have just arrived from Sosnowitz

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We have had to make another sledge,  
as some lugger has pinched our other.

8.0 pm The guns are still firing, more the  
Australian is busy cutting one of the Polish  
Lads hair.

The situation here has its funny side, there  
are five Polish Lads who all work on the farms,  
they all live in one little room, the furniture  
consists of three little cupboards and one small  
electric fire, they insist in bringing two bundles  
of straw and spreading it around the floor so  
that our Lads can have a better sleep.

Time just off to bed in the passage.  
Its still raining, but its not quite so cold.

Thursday 25 January 1954

8.0 AM. We all march off again.

Its a terrible day, the driving snow  
makes hard work of pulling the sledge.

2.30 PM. We arrive in SCHÖNAU.

SCHNEIDENBURG  
SCHÖNAU  
BUCHÉLSDORF  
WIESNAU  
WISEWASSER.  
MARLSDORF  
RAUCHWITZ  
TUNISHEINDORF  
WECKERSDORF  
MERKELSDORF  
PETERSDORF  
PILNITZAU  
WIDACH

I haven't written this up  
to date, but  
this has been our  
present route

7  
we ditched the sledge after about six days.  
it was a bit too much when it came  
to fields

We are now in Czechoslovakia, the people are very  
friendly toward us, only the kids will behave  
like a lot of pigs and rush into the roads  
knocking down people who intended to give them  
something edible, really it is a terrible sight  
and for once I am ashamed to be an Englishman

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> February 1945

Today we are at a place named STAVNICH,  
yesterday on our way here we could see our  
airplanes away in the distance and hear the  
A.A. fire

One four engined plane circled overhead and  
then burst into flames, coming to earth  
with a terrific crash some two miles away

One of the chaps picked up a leaflet  
that must have been dropped by allied aircraft  
(which was all calls) telling the people to  
stop work and destroy food stocks - the people  
who thought this up were idiots, if the people  
stopped work, they were shot, if anyone was  
caught destroying food stocks they were treated  
severely - (they were better off being shot)

In the night some place not too far distance  
had a terrible crashing from the air, the  
civics say that Prague was the target

The air raid alarm has sounded twice to-day, but I haven't seen any planes.

Jerry Stukas are flying very low over here I wonder why.

To-day's rations have been next to nothing, so I have managed to get out and scrounge a half of a loaf, I also went into a small house here and the woman gave me some soup and a few potatoes, bread is so very scarce in this little village - here I mention that one of the guards saw me out on the scrounge, he just said, "Get Back" and no more, they are just as fed up as we all are.

Mac the tall Australian and I are going out tonight, for we must get something to eat.

Friday 16<sup>th</sup>

Started off this morning and made LAVICE for 2 o'clock, this is a very little village but there are 2,000 P.O.W's here.

The guards had things under control to day many a poor old lady had a hit for trying to give some of the lads pieces of bread. The Hoffman ran about in a terrible temper firing his revolver in the air.

SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup> FEB.

Left LAVICE about 7-30 AM The roads are crowded with civilians, horses and carts, the walking is terrible for everyone is in everyone else's way.

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we passed through Tichin and instead of the usual throwing of pieces of bread by the people, the police lined the streets and there were placards telling the people not to give us anything, as we were the people who two days ago bombed the City of Prague

I've forgotten to mention that yesterday "Friday" when we were in "LAVICE" the janies issued pamphlets, asking us, 'appealing us', as white men, to join in the common fight against Bolshevism

Arrived in "FORSTENBRUCH" at 1:30 pm.

The people here are simply grand. We are the only mob of Englishmen that are belleted here, and we have been given soup, pancakes, coffee, and to top it all civies have come into our camp with large round loaves of bread, starting big lumps off and giving all a good do.

Wilf calls them the "CHECKO-REVELERS"

Sunday 18 Feb

We are staying here today, this is the best place that we have ever been in.

Last night Australian Mac Macarty and I broke out over the fence, and through a small orchard, then on the road to the nearest sanity, after a false start, for we first chose a hairdressers shop, he thought that the English had come down from heaven, however we managed to get a loaf of bread

before departing in the opposite direction, before calling at a further five houses all of which gave us a good reception, showing us a map of the present fighting and filling us with as much as they could spare, we then departed loaded up with cakes, bread, cigars and matches.

These people are entirely different to the Jermis, and would give us anything they possessed. However they like the Russians, but hate the Jermis like poison.

Monday 19<sup>th</sup>

We left "TÜRSTEN BRUCH" around 7.30 AM, after having been given coffee and bread by a lady in a nearby house.

Passing through "MUNCHENGRATZ" and after marching a few more miles we passed over the frontier into Deutschland, and boy what a difference, the civies stare and elegant look on their last legs. we arrived at "SCHIEDAU" at about 2.30 PM

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup>

Left this morning at 7.30 AM, the rations are terrible, one soup, and three small potatoes. Arrived at "VOIGSDORF" in the evening.

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup>

"TIEFENDORF."

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>

To day we have to march 35 miles. This is the farthest yet, terrible snow up till all the time.

(CONTINUED)

Arriving at Gross. PIRECEM around 6 pm.

A very frightened civvie gave us a small meal, and we repayed him by bumping off both of his pet rabbits, which we found in rear garden

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Off again this morning carrying the bodies with us; (purgate -) how can we cook the things Annie at STRISOWITZ. To find a very crowded.

letter

(Answer) the body goes in a bag, to be dangled in the soup, hope this works.

Saturday 24<sup>th</sup>

we have had no rest this week, and all were hoping to be able to stop here today, but we are off again, it's raining and the roads are in a terrible condition, we arrive at "DRIEHUNGER" all very tired.

Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>

A rest day at last.

The rations are terrible, we have a general crib all around, as some of the boys are in a pretty bad state having been walking for some five weeks.

Someone has gone to a local "Sialag" to see if they have any spare parcel kit. Yes they have but only with parcels one between eight - one big drink and it's finished

Monday 25<sup>th</sup>

On again this morning, its trying to rain, we make a stop at a place called "LAOUNG" where we all go into a barn together, we have only one entry and exit and that is up a ladder.

Our ration for today has been six potatoes, however we have had no bread for a week.

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>

Had half a cup of soup before leaving, this is the first time we have had anything to start out on.

We march through "BRUX" which is a large petrol plant, the place has been bombed silly.

We finish up the day in another barn in a place called "HOLISCHWITZ", I have been here approx. two hours, and in this time I have jumped over a surrounding wall, and discovered that I was in the rear of a bread store-room, and complete with a long pointed stick I managed to remove 24 loaves of bread, spearing them one by one, and carefully hauling them back through the iron protective bars that were across the two rear windows.



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Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>

We are staying here today, which possibly is a good thing as we can now share the spoils, that will have to be carried by our crew, as all is for future use. The soup has just arrived, three parts of a mug a man, its quite thick this time, the best we have had to date

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> March, 1945

We leave at 7.30 AM.

Aircraft overhead all day long,  
music to our ears, arrived at a  
place called "Hagensdorf"

Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March

Set out this morning in the snow

I don't know how far we have travelled  
today, but its plenty.

Finished up at a place called "HARDORF"

Its been a terrible day, and most  
of the chaps are feeling it now.

I think we are off again in the morning

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup>

Terrible day, we are now right up in hills  
making for a place called "FELL", which  
we hear is twenty two "KILOMETRES" away.

(we hope)

(CONTINUED)

Finished up to night, 3<sup>rd</sup> march, in a big farm along with the chaps from the camp 769, all say that we are staying here to-morrow.

Could do with some bread  
Carried some potatoes all day, hope to find something to boil them on.

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup>

Rest day to-day staying here in "GRIEL", it's a rotten place hardly no rations

SAW HAMILTON to-day, he will make it I am sure.

Monday 5<sup>th</sup>

Snowing heavily this morning, terrible roads, finish up in the evening at a Guest House at a little place, called DEUTSCH-BUNDERSDORF

We are all packed like sardines, KIRM and I sleep under the table

Bread issued, but little soup

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup>

marched a good thirty KILOMETRES to-day.

finishing up at "FALKENAU" billeted in a divided brick factory, it's a terrible place filthy

we are now along with camp 711 who all look as though they have had enough

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Wednesday 7th.

we are staying here to day.

I have out on my own in the streets, unfortunately, two Jermies with an alsation dog caught me and along with two others that they had previously caught gave us a good beating, before we were back to base.

I am writing this standing in the open, we the captured ones are supposed to be standing with our arms in the air, but when no one seems to be looking we drop hands until the next command is shouted.

The only reason that we were able to escape from the "Hands Up" position was that the air raid sirens sounded and we all B. off in the confusion I do hope we move to-morrow.

THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup>

Yes we are moving to day, thank God it is still pretty cold, and the Peds are feeling pretty "B"

Some of the Peds are passing out, many may not be able to go on. We finish the day in a place called "KLINGEN"

There is nothing to be pinched, and altogether things are pretty rough.

16

Friday 9<sup>th</sup>

Last night we had one boiled sweet each.  
Today one of the lads got shot for  
nothing, he was only standing in the yard.  
"God" what a rest day, I'm resting my inside  
for all I have had today is out and  
a half potatoes.  
I am now right on my knees

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup>

Frightfully cold this morning, some chaps are  
passing out right and left.  
We walk out on the road and a  
miracle happens: - we are issued with one  
parcel per man, Canadian, French, and Belgian  
cigarettes are enclosed. - it's wonderful.  
This afternoon we stop at "MULLBACH"

Sunday 11<sup>th</sup>

Staying here in "MULLBACH" is really heaven  
after what we have been through.  
This is only a little joint, but it's  
the best place we have hit since  
leaving Czechs

Monday 12<sup>th</sup>

Rest day, last night we received a USA food  
parcel - one between two  
Life is sweet for the time being, for we have  
straw, parcels, and rest, it's pretty cold outside, but  
we don't mind, many have made themselves ill.  
I am not so bad, feeling a little queer, but

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TUESDAY 13<sup>TH</sup>

We have had a good couple of days.

A lady in a nearby house, cooked quite a bit of parcel fat

we somehow got some flour, and had two good cakes

We had a Pete start to-day 9.30 am, and finished at a place called THIERSCHEIN at 2.30 pm

WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup>

Started out this morning, feeling a lot better, had a good feed of beans last night, and a good stodge from the cook house, (for a change) made "ROSLAU" which is quite a range. Place, we are billeted in a factory. It's a lovely day, better if we had bread.

THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup>

Quite a nice day, the rations are awful, we are wanting bread badly

They are making a soup out of the parcel fat. I do hope it's a success

I have just had a bath in a stream, it was B. cold - mine all skin and bone.

mac the big Australian is feeling a little stogy, which is unusual for him, as he has been the Lion of the party.

18.

Friday 16<sup>th</sup>.

Really a smashing day, we leave at 9.30 AM.

I am feeling a little grossy, my knees are buckling under me.

We finish the day after doing only ten kilometres at a little place called "Weissenst" "

Quite good billets, the best for a long time.

There is a lovely stream outside

SATURDAY 17<sup>th</sup>

We leave early this morning, it's a terrible cold day. It is just a week since the parcel turned up, we could certainly do with another, before we get down the nick again.

We arrive at a place called "GEFREES" it doesn't look much of a joint, we are still trying to get some bread.

None of us have just climbed into the loft, to have more room, we expect to stay here tomorrow.

SUNDAY 18<sup>th</sup>

Unexpected mood, this morning, the rumor has it that this is the last day of marching.

I hope to God that it's true we are all praying and hoping.

I am writing this during a ten min break on the road, we have just passed through a pretty little place, called "BURNICK", it is one of the cleanest little towns I have seen

Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> (CONTINUED)

I think we are doing about 20 to-day  
 Arrived at a place called "BIDLASH" which  
 is about four kilometres from "BAYREUTH"  
 To-day we had our first glance of the  
 Deutsche Autobahn, it is a good road with  
 no crossing, having a wide grass verge in the  
 middle.

The scenery is grand, but unfortunately  
 we are not in much of a position to appreciate it  
 all are hoping for a food parcel, times are  
 getting thin again

Monday 19<sup>th</sup>

Rest day, to-day, rumors are rife, this is journey's  
 end, (or is it?)

It is quite a nice morning but still very cold  
 Some Bread has just turned up, but it is  
 the worse we have ever had, for it is all  
 green mould, however I have just  
 been down in the celler and discovered  
 some potatoes, it's a hungry day and the  
 soup ration is half a cup full

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup>

Another grand day to-day - no parcels, but  
 rumors of moving by train tomorrow, which  
 I hope is true, it was a good job that we  
 came across the spuds yesterday -  
 Cigaretts are getting low, however we had a good  
 soup, the best ever, I think it was all  
 the rations

20

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup>

We are still here (Christ only knows when we are moving).

It is a wonderful day, the sun is smashing however everyone is fed up to the teeth (Evening) they say we could get a food parcel tomorrow.

Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup>

Another lovely day.

Half an English food parcel and fifty cigarettes. Everyone is quite pleased with life once again, there has even been a bread issue, it's not quite so green this time.

The siren has been working overtime ever since we arrived here.

The aircraft appear, rather like a bus service

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup>

We were expecting to move today, but apparently the train has not arrived, so no one knows what is happening now.

It is a smashing day, everyone is cleaning up and believe me we need it.

SATURDAY 24<sup>th</sup>

Today I have washed my shirt, socks and towel (after eight weeks use)

It is a glorious day, still no news of a move. But rumour says that open trucks are in the station.

Unfortunately I have the back door  
Trot.



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Sunday 25<sup>th</sup>

Another lovely day, alarm's every five min  
Practice fall in and search in readiness for  
the train

We now understand that we leave  
at 4 AM tomorrow Monday, and draw a food  
parcel before setting on board train.

There is a rumor of an air-borne Pandina's  
around Frankfurt-on-main

Train is now in and we are all ready  
for moving

Monday 26<sup>th</sup>

all boxes of a mouse smashed

Just after midnight, the mouse was  
cancelled, and today the train has been  
unloaded, so it looks as though we have  
had it.

We are sure that we are staying due  
to the U.S armies drive in the west

Issue of three cigarettes and some soap

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>

Sky cloudy, unexpected order to pack up  
and move to the train.

now on the train we have 60 men in each  
open truck, no one seems to know where  
we are going, they say we shall be moving  
at 1 PM

Yes! we did move at 1 PM, it is now  
 5 PM and we are well on our way to  
 somewhere - have just passed a place  
 named "HEERSTRAUCH", it's raining  
 We are now stopped in "NURNBERG-SOUTH"  
 This place looks like one big rubble heap;  
 there is hardly anyone on the streets.  
 "Hurry up and move train"  
 we are now stopped for the night in  
 the siding

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup>

Not a very promising day, spent last night  
 alongside the railway track, luckily it was not  
 too cold, and thank God, there was no air  
 raid. - I have just collected the rations,  
 after scattering for an alarm.

11 AM we are once again on the march,  
 the rain is heavy and there is no shelter  
 in these open trucks; arriving at 2 PM.  
 we have a ten min walk, then right into  
 Sialag B.D.

This is a hell of a place, much  
 larger than Landsdorf, we are crowded into  
 huge tents, however it is good to be  
 stationary and to be behind wire again

There are Russians in the compound, they  
 are in an awful state, and I do feel sorry  
 for them

This march has taken nine weeks and  
 three days, and as far as we can  
 judge we have covered some 800 miles

23

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup>

It is a lovely morning, and there are rumours that we may get a food parcel today.

I hope we soon get de-loused and move out of here away from these Russians. We finally get de-loused at (12 o'clock (midnight)) and move into a new compound. I get to bed along with 49 others at 3 o'clock in the morning.

Friday 30<sup>th</sup>

Not quite such a bright day. We receive 1/2 food parcel per man. I can't believe that we are going to move once again.

We are now in an international compound, amongst Italians, French, Serbs, and every nationality under the sun; the place here is very dirty, we cannot get a place in the tents, so we move into a hut occupied by Japs and Serbs.

The only good thing about this hut is it has plenty of wood in it, that we can use to make fuel for making tea.

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April

Grand day, everyone in the compound has had his name and number taken, for I am sure that they don't know how many prisoners are holed up in these temp camps.

CONTINUED.

we are ordered to be ready to move at 5 AM in the morning.

The de-lousing did little for me, for I found two large lugs on my shirt, it is the first I've seen since Italy, I think I must have picked them up in hut when I was along with the Frogs.

MONDAY 2<sup>ND</sup> APRIL

After 13 - around since 5 o'clock in the morning  
 Here we are back on the train, still  
 50 men to each open truck  
 we make a start at 10 AM.

NEUBERG is in a terrible state, and the  
 Jemies are still up to their old tricks, for  
 we have just passed a Red Cross train  
 coupled between two troop trains

at 5 pm four single engined fighters with  
 U.S. markings, flew overhead, turned and  
 flew up and down our train, which was  
 now positioned alongside a Jemies train,  
 that was loaded with transport and troops,  
 positioned in the front and rear were A-19  
 guns which the Germans fired with great  
 gusto, however their aim could not have  
 been good, for it made no difference  
 to the chaps in the aircraft.

Quite a frightener, day, having been  
 in this siding for 5 hours, they are now  
 taking us back the way we came.

Arrived back where we started from, at  
 11 pm, and we should be inside the wire  
 by midnight.

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TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup>

Here we are again, we are now in the Lamsdorf compound, this is the fourth compound in three days.

We are all pretty cheered up with this 'B' around.

We have had nothing in the way of rations from the Jemies, so today after standing outside for an hour we received one seventh and one fourteenth part of a loaf per man, two days' rations what "B" loaf we were to go on that train trip, we could have dogged it if we had known, but we all now want this enforced till the end, no one seems to know what to do with us - it's the biggest Balls up since Dunkirk.

WED 4<sup>TH</sup>

Again we march off into the unknown, most of us are so fed up with this aimless existence, however we do manage to somehow get a horse and cart, in order that those who are now having trouble walking can ride.

To acquire a horse and cart at this stage of the game, is rather like getting a ride in Hitler's car.

Further too, I am in charge of this great big horse, reason for this is I know nothing about horses, that's like everything else here.

a further week has passed since  
Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup>

I am now so fed up of nothing  
nowhere, as I now call it  
Once again I find myself in a  
large farm barn, yesterday, and this  
morning the sound of rifle fire was  
quite near, or so it seemed, and  
on that evidence four of us decided  
what ever the rest of the party do,  
we shall stay here, we therefore get  
into the hay loft with as much as we  
can steal, thinking we could be here for  
a few days

Below the Germans are shouting, trying  
to get some semblance of order, so that  
they could move out once again,  
By now nearly all the prisoners were  
increasingly determined to go no further

At eleven o'clock, a civilian dressed  
in a dark duffle coat, wearing a  
white armband walked into the farm yard,  
and announced that the Americans were  
five hundred yards down the road,  
? Should they walk up to us, or  
should we walk to them.

Saying that we had walked far enough  
in a few min, the farm was full  
of U.S. troops who lined their  
up, asking if any of us would  
like to shoot the buggers

Asking the U.S. Troops what was the next move, we were told to find a house that we liked, walk in and kick the occupants out into the garden

my buddy, James Kirk and I found a bungalow occupied by a elderly man and his daughter aged approx 45.

We now had abundant rations, and I just could not eat any of it. Whilst the people appeared to have so little we therefore sat to the table and consumed most of the rations that we were carrying

Come the morning, a lovely day, I suggested that we should get outside and find our bearings

Having lived in barns for many weeks now, I suggested that we should take a look at a nearby barn, and there to my great surprise, covered by bundles of hay, were two vehicles, one being a B.M.W., the second a Ford Pilot, checking that we had fuel, I said, open the doors Kirk, we are going home.

Realising then that we had no idea of where we were, or what direction we should go in was a small problem, the old man in the bungalow, pointed and said go that way, I said to Kirk, "I hope to god he is right"

Driving across Germany and into Belgium was reasonably easy, except as we were driving a German army vehicle it could have been nasty if the Yanks had chased us in a Jeep. I had fired the machine gun that was mounted on the floor of the vehicle.

Arriving in Belgium all tatty, dirty, and breathless, we approached a military policeman asking what we should do now, this resulted in us both to be driven to a place that looked like a factory, once inside we had a bath, hair cut, and saw the doctor, finally we were given all new U.S. clothes, and came out looking like new U.S. soldiers, we were also sent to a bank and were given some money.

Two days later we were placed on a train (no open trucks anymore) and we were taken to "NAMUR" in Belgium where again we went through the same procedure - in one side as U.S. troops - and out as British soldiers.

Our stay in a Hotel was in our eyes, out of this world, one did not have to make the bed, worry about what you had to eat, all very much appreciated after the rough time we had

(CONTINUED)



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One fine day we both decided to go for a tram ride, we were afraid to get off, just in case that we were unable to find our way back again.

On our return, I heard someone shout, (Does anyone want to go home) yes Sir!

I do so much, want to go home

Arriving at the airport, we were given an inflatable jacket and told not to touch anything that moved inside the aircraft, I had my first look out from the top gunners position, and below I could now see both playing cricket, the sea shore and green grass, what a wonderful sight and feeling.

We had been lost, but were found again.

*J. Woodman*

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