

Cover:

EWLevings Capt. AAMC

31588

The Last Round Up

6-4-43 to 24-9-44

Stamped:

Gepuft

Stalag XVIIIA

27

Transcribed by Susan Brookes (his daughter) March 2018.

My notes, if any, are in italics.

Any spellings I am unsure of are followed by (?)

6.4.43

A dismal, gloomy day was this.

Binns, Gilbert & 30 men of the 2/8 left at 5.30am for repatriation ? ? medical personnel.

Again it was all grossly unfair & typical of Italian lies & rotten justice as some 60 medicos left but only 3 of the original 10.

Later in the morning the lads hardly played the game either as the sick parade doubled since yesterday & totalled 184. With another 35 in the Infirmary & the whole job on my shoulders alone it was a big day's work especially as one was so bitterly depressed.

It's good-bye, too, to my last chance of solving some of my own personal problems. Applied for a transfer some days ago to do a surgical job somewhere &, of course, have been screaming for assistance.

1.5.43

No word of the transfer & no sign of any one coming along to help.

Work has been pretty hectic & two have died in Udine since the departure of Binns.

Have recovered from my depression but still feel pretty foul. This month's correspondence out will probably be rotten reading for the unfortunates who may get it.

Have had the hospital full of pneumonia & acute nephritis. Some of them desperately ill. The new staff is going well but the new sergeant could be improved upon.

Garden improving & showing signs of future produce.

Lost all the Serb officers on the 13th except Borosky (?), Frontor (?) & Krestinsky. They were packed off to Aversa (?) near Naples. The huge mounds of luggage they took was an eye-opener. By a little judicious bribery they avoided having it searched at this end but Lusky reported their reception at the other end was very bad indeed.

20.5.43

E.E. Symons murdered by Marinello

1.6.43

A further busy month. Sick parades continue at an extraordinary high rate – usually 180-200 daily, the Infirmary is always full, we have always 3 or 4 desperately ill men – the 57 twins – pneumonia & nephritis – being responsible.

Two more died in Udine – the Maori lad with carbuncle of the upper lip & Sutherland of a perforated gastric ulcer. Gerachty of Victoria is dying fast in the Infirmary. His lungs one solid masses of metastases. Have been battling for 3 weeks to get him away with no success because 6 months ago when I made a

similar diagnosis & begged for deep ray treatment for him Udine said it was all nonsense. So, of course, he can't have secondaries now but it may be TB or imagination or something. Like hell it is. He may last a couple more weeks but I doubt it.

All last year's malarias have recurred – every damn one of them. The Italians won't supply a thing to treat them & we have to scarp amongst the old B.R.C.S parcels to find a little quinine. Allan Burney (?) has tried converting the quin. sulph, which was useless by treating it with acetic & nitric acids. Results were far better & great economy was effected. After a week's solid battling we got permission to buy some hydrochloric acid for this purpose. There was much consultation of books & talking in the Italian quarters before it came to light. Then we packed off the It sgt to buy it. He tried 10 pharmacies & said they didn't have any. This took another week. Finally the chap who cleans the bath house heard our imprecations & produced a beer bottle full of it! A very typical example of the uselessness of anyone or anything of the Italian race. A pity we can't exterminate the uncivilised mongrels like we would rabbits.

Repatriations is in the offing & the tales one hears are really wonderful. Grimm (?), Anderson & co must hide their heads in shame. The quaint thing is they fancy they fool me. But I'm old in the way of soap pellets, cordite & an early run around the compound.

I was not allowed to submit names to see the commission. That was the prerogative of our camp leader or Bernordi (?) – a small town dentist of 20 years standing! So the camp leader said "All you fancy their chances, nominate". 973 did & he proposed the lot – with my entire approval in the circumstances.

It shook the Italians & there was not a damn thing they could do about it – except put them all before the board.

Propose to give them a few days to worry about it before doing a bit of censoring.

Fair crop of mail but no important news.

1.7.43

We have not seen the protecting power since mid-March.

Work much as usual. Hospital full, sick parades enormous, no relief, no sign of transfer. Usual crop of pneumonias nephritis & malaria.

Geraghty died as expected – the day after we finally got him to Udine. Italians blithely reported enormous metastases & demanded to know why we had kept him so long!

Kennedy also passed out after being in Udine for a year & not being repatriated.

Censored the 973 but made the Italians see our 300. They were going to put up that lot but I blue pencilled some of their lists & 237 will now go up. Far too many, still, & its their fault. I expect between 44 to 56 will pass.

Weather has been ideal & sports are all the rage in camp. This year baseball has replaced cricket as there is now a party of Canadians in camp.

Very weary of life & work.

5000 men are far too many for one chap but I shall have to carry on.

10.7.43 Repat. Commission all day. They were furious at the large number & passed only 31 refusing some obvious cases.

News of the Sicilian landing at lunch time brought us great joy & our hosts great depression. But they still gaol the boys on the smallest excuse – or, as usual here, none at all.

Heard, also, to my great joy, that I depart hence for 203 on 13th though no relief has yet arrived.

Pauro, the best of the It quacks, is in trouble for visiting the 57 sick in hospital in Udine without permission. NOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE IMPOSSIBLE NATURE OF OUR HOSTS.

14.7.43

Left 57 last night without a single regret. The heart-breaking job of trying to get even some slight, rudimentary knowledge of civilised practices into the head of the barbarous sadist Calcaterra & his unholy gang took all the spirit out of one. One can never forgive

- a) The deliberate continuation of starvation of the already fully starved 250 Kiwis & Aussies who arrived in camp on 15.11.42 & the six deaths that resulted from it.
- b) The ruthless shootings particularly of Symons which was cold-blooded, deliberate & premeditated murder
- c) The gaolings & severe punishment in irons & on half rations for men for no offence whatever. The two particular culprits here were Lts. Georgio & Ronco.
- d) The 9 months we were locked up with the Serbs
- e) The periodic refusal to allow decent, humane treatment of the sick. This always occurred in cycles.

Got away from camp without a search & after changing at Udine & on down to Mestre before dark. Saw the upper plateau of the Po valley for what, I hope, is the last time. There were many new guard houses along the rivers since my last trip particularly on the Piave.

Had a long wait at Mestre & a lot of wandering back & forth. The station was crowded with a countless horde of ill-equipped, ill-clothed miserable & undersized specimens, alleged to be soldiers & off to the Sicilian front. If they ever reach it, it will just be so many more prisoners for us to feed. They carried their good, chattels & equipment in an amazing array of containers. A few had army packs or haversacks but the vast majority had fruit cases, old fashioned hampers, tin trunks, suitcases & there were a few wheat sacks.

They didn't know when or where they were going & at least 3 asked ME if they ought to catch his or that train to Bologna.

Got to Bologna at dawn, changed to a local & then, as usual, man handled my luggage the 1 ½ miles from Castel St Pietro railway station to the hospital.

Arrived in time for breakfast. The MOs (all 6 of them & the Padre) live, eat, read, study or do any other damn thing in one room.

Very hot & a shower & a change back into shorts shifted some of the weariness.

The place is beautifully built with large airy wards, good services generally & high up above the near by country.

Staffed by a lot of juniors the Its have been doing the surgery to-date but I'm to take that over.

A West Kent Major, Ted Young, has been doing S.B.O & administration. The Padre is also a Major – worst luck.

26.7.43

Last night there was much shouting & jubilation & fun & games were being had by everyone. Usually everything is very quiet after 10pm but last night people kept coming & going along the road & there was much laughter & noise until after 2am.

This morning we found out the reason in the fall of Mussolini.

For nearly 2 years I have been hearing growls & abuse of him from Italians – when no Carabinieri were about! His fall will need with nearly 100% approval in the north of Italy.

Hospital work has now been organised I am doing all the surgery – when that's possible & we run the show – in a kind of way. As usual the Italians interfere on any pretext & each & every occasion.

They will need wearing down.

The hospital CO is a dentist. What a life! Naturally, he doesn't know any medicine or surgery but it doesn't stop him using his imagination.

The theatre is large, airy, well lighted with good sterilising, preparation & anaesthetic rooms attached. The instruments are good & plentiful but gloves are scarce & we are allowed only 4 pairs for each operating day. It means using the same pair over & over after washing in water & spirit. It also means a limit of about 6 cases per day, & at that, one usually does the last couple in bare hands.

Getting a list done is a work of art & belongs in the realm of higher diplomacy. First I select a series of cases that will fit our quaint conditions, particularly as to gloves. A couple of 'clean' cases, a couple not so clean, a couple of small septic jobs – usually old osteomyelitis. Once could expect that would be all that was necessary & all one had to do was hand it in & tell our hosts that one proposed operating on these men on a certain day. In a civilised community it would probably be so but not here. First of all I have to give the list to weary Willie

Lanino (allegedly a professor of surgery – my God!). He next sees the cases in order to give his opinion & say what he thinks – he can't & doesn't do the latter but has a fertile imagination. Then off it goes with Willie's blessing to the Colonel – who, if not away week-ending with one of his three fancy ladies, will give his opinion (save the mark!) in a couple of days. After about 5 days it comes back to me quite approved & then has to be taken to Lucy, the theatre sister, who always wants 2 days to get the theatre ready. The result is that by using go-getter methods we can actually do 6 ops a week – and there are about 300 waiting so I've got an almost life time job – provided we get no more admissions. In that case I'll have to alter my will.

1.8.43

Since Musso. Got the skids put under him we've had great fun & games. The Bologna paper heroically announced its return to the old traditional state of freedom of the press.

The Roman salute has been banned. All pictures of Musso & statues of same have been removed from all rooms & both public & private buildings. Our own statue of the gent which stood in the front hall ended up in our mortuary. The Italians couldn't understand our intense amusement at that.

All the fasces have been taken down even off the door handles & have been replaced by plated bearing a unicorn & the legend 'Libertas'. The fasces perched high above the water tower came down in an impromptu public ceremony with much shouting & singing. And the things the Italians now say about Musso. He must have been a very naughty, wicked boy!!

As 82 Fortresses bombed Bologna a few days ago there has been no methylated spirits & so no operating. The Italians answer to anything remotely suggesting sepsis is meths & their abiding faith in the stuff is a wonder to behold.

Our walks home have also been suspended but we expect them back any day. These outside walks take in a total distance there and back of about 6 ½ miles either one or the other. No variation is allowed though once on the river walk a very brave & very new officer brought us back along the river. His courage failed him at the end, though, & we had to tramp across the fields to the old dusty road before entering the village.

The river walk takes us along a dusty road following the Salerno to the west. We can stop at one of two points. The river is now dry & a bed of stones with pools here & there. We sit smoke for a while, watch the washerwomen & come back. It is quite nice valley scenery however.

The hills walk is more strenuous but more interesting. We go by winding roads & tracks into the hills on the N.W. & finally get a clear view of the valley of 1000 plains stretching away to Rimini on the coast, in the ? & Bologna to the north.

Wild flowers are now about. They make a brave show but are not as numerous or as of good quality as those around 57. Blackberries are in season & we pick & eat as we go but no rapes are ripe yet.

Coastal St Pietro is higher than the surrounding country, about 15 miles from Bologna. It is a favourite run from there for tea. A well built town of 4000 people it has some really nice avenues & open air cafes.

Work had a nightmarish quality. There are so very many crying aloud for treatment, so very many appalling results & so very much chronic osteomyelitis – some of it of 2 years standing & no one has ever attempted to do anything. These chaps have been for long periods in the hands of British surgeons too. The destruction of joint function is invariably extensive. Most of it is needless & wicked. Joints have been allowed to ankylose (?) in impossible positions.

Bone infection has gone on & on until the patient is an anaemic skeleton.

Patients have never been encouraged or made to use their limbs & so ankyloses, bony rarefaction (?) & muscular fibrosis are all too common.

How many of these things were produced is beyond my understanding. Observation of a few very simple & very elementary rules would have prevented much of it.

I rather think that Frueta's (?) work had been a disservice to prisoners of war & far, far too much is expected of the sulphanilamide (?) group of drugs.

Except for 3 hours daily the patients & staff are confined to the hospital buildings. During these 3 hours "Rotten Row" is opened. It is a gum lined avenue exactly 100 yards long & 12 yards wide with a stony road up the centre of it. Up & down this narrow strip the 500 inhabitants of the hospital get their only exercise.

For the staff it is a little better as we have our outside walks three times a week – perhaps. Actually we used to manage two per week – which is not at all bad for Italians – 66% efficiency being exceedingly high amongst these poor class & European negroes.

Whilst "Rotten Row" is open it is trebly guarded. A calamity if the legless men hopped away or the stretcher cases rolled down the hill!!

1.9.43

August was a pleasant month for weather. We resumed our outside walks. Very hot weather but I do not mind that Italian morale is very low indeed. They expected the war to end with Musso's fall & can't understand why it continues.

Hospital garden is producing large quantities of spuds & tomatoes so food is satisfactory.

Had a batch of 20 letters the other day. Some from all my correspondents. Had 3 from Enid who seems lost & bewildered since Jock's death & Sheila's marriage doesn't seem to have improved her outlook. Poor kid.

Work has been fairly hectic. Half of Altamura Hospital (204) was emptied into us & the cases were really terrific.

Managed to get 5 lists done during the month. Results with the osteomyelitis cases have been very pleasing. A dozen or so who had been discharging for 6 to 18 months are already showing signs of sound healing after vigorous methods were adopted. Must try & clean up as many of these as possible.

Have corrected many badly united & un-united fractures but extension apparatus is at a premium. After 3 weeks solid urging we managed to get one good apparatus carried up from the store 150 yards away. It hadn't been used for years but is a good apparatus just the same. Unfortunately we have no tools & no materials to make substitutes with so it's a slow process treating a lot of cases.

However some of the limbs are getting straight & many joints are resuming useful function.

So far I'm satisfied with the job we've done. Staff has been augmented (??) by Darlow. He's quite useless at anything medical, has an appalling accent, & is a trouble maker & generally an objectionable coot.

X-rays have been the bug-bear. It is well-nigh impossible to get them done. We need about 200 & have had 11 for the month.

The same sorry business as with operation lists must be gone through but Weary Willie is liable to scratch off a couple of names any old time. He's just a bloody minded mongrel as the smaller medical department get them done ad lib – but they're the second civilised Italians I've met in charge of the medical dept – probably civilised because he'd spent 18 months in one of our prison camps.

Unfortunately it means that we just have to go in blind in many cases which is not so good for the wounded but what does Weary Willie & his hellions care for that?

Franco, the radiologist, is keen to do as many for me as I want but he can't until they are ordered by Willie.

This month's anatomy lesson came from the Ghurkas. Messrs Cunningham & Co don't know nuffin' about the peronial nerve in those we laddies.

Operations start at 7 a.m. & I, generally, rouse the team out! Usually the Its have forgotten to turn on the water or open the theatre or something so we stand at the window & watch the village life. It is a very pleasant hour at this season & in this place. Our joy is the washerwomen who trundle their barrows down to the river along the road beneath us.

The females of the village appear a vastly superior race to the males. They are well built, in good condition, usually fairly well dressed & have good chassis but what the close up is like I don't know.

There's a food queue outside the hospital every evening. Always between 50 to 60 in it. The line up with bowls, dishes etc to collect the food that the prisoners have left. Don't know if ration tickets are issued for it!

A problem is the 'bread' convert to the church. These jokers have been hanging around for months & are quite fit but the holy sisters love 'em & won't let their precious new lambs go to any rude camp – but our day will yet come.

8.9.43

Armistice night. At 7.30 p.m. we noticed a lot of shouting & hooraying & general activity on the part of the guards. Immediately the thought struck us all "Have they packed up?" They had & we were officially informed at 8. The place ran riot in no time. All the lads were wildly excited & requested to leave for home immediately. After the many calm discussions with Ian Lynch on this subject I think our departure will be north & not south.

The lads are quite mad & quite unreasonable. One fool offered to be me 5 pounds for every day over 3 weeks to 1 pound for every day under that it took our troops to arrive at the hospital. Didn't reckon he could pay what I fancy it may be so no business resulted.

10.9.43

Yesterday was a day of alarums & excursions & wild, ridiculously wild, rumour.

We demanded & got a wireless & heard B.B.B. last night. Salerno news was disquieting & I can see only Germany for us.

We have taken over the internal administration of the hospital but it is difficult to know what to do. None of the lads fancy treatment at the moment. The Brig. & his repat. Party left us on the 7th & we all hope they made Switzerland at least.

This morning a German truck drove up & called to one of the sentries. We walked over & they took & examined his rifle & then handed it back. But that was enough for our hero, he promptly threw it away & off for dear life across the river

He was last seen, travelling well, going into the woods half a mile away & followed closely by about half the guard house – but they were NOT in pursuit!

It was too much for the rest of them & as soon as it was dark tonight the remainder donned civilian clothes & cleared out.

A guard of officers & carabinieri is being kept over us however.

This afternoon some Germans came in & shifted all the spare beds off to Bologna but took no interest in us.

It stirred escape plans in a lot. Dozens now want to go but only a very few are fit enough for any sort of a try. Queerly, they all must have someone's blessing before they do. If they really wanted to one would expect they would just pack up & clear out, but, perhaps, like so many escapologists talk is their escape.

Our own position is difficult, if not hopeless, with so many helpless men depending on us.

14.9.43

Waiting & waiting & waiting.

Rumour rife about extra landings & lots of pure nonsense.

Salerno news not so good but east coast gives a little hope.

Germans have been in and have taken over. They are staying two days & then moving all the walking & nearly fit casts (?) to Due Madonna (19) & then to Germany. The rest of us will go by hospital train later but the mob still won't believe it.

Will have to send about 180 & we intend packing Darlow & the rebellious orderlies off with them to look after them. I'm also sending all the escapologists under my command. They can have a crack at it now if they want to – but I'll take bets against.

After the Germans leave the vigilance (?) & Corbo (?) are going to guard us.

Food has been magnificent. We've found the It reserve of meat etc & live on grilled steak, tomatoes, potatoes etc twice daily. Work is at a standstill apart from emergencies & minor procedures.

Yesterday, before Jerry came, there was much scurry about amongst the Its. They dashed hither & thither. Every man jack of them donned a white coat & a red cross – even the vigilance officers. The town guard (who had not yet deserted) were called out & paraded. Germans were coming & they were going to defend the town against them! The men were rushed into position mainly behind the hedges with their rifles sticking through. The rifle stayed put, but, from our elevated position, we could see the man-power running for dear life in all directions – mainly across the river. They'd had it! There wasn't a soldier left in Castel St Pietro by evening. And it was only one German asking the road to Bologna!!!

The cavalry marched out in order on the 11th. We are told they destroyed the guns, shot the horses, & their Colonel shot himself. It may be true.

26.9.43

We move tonight. After all the false alarms & rumours.

The train is down in the station & we commence loading at 11p.m. but just now (11a.) 71 Fortresses went over bologna so maybe we won't.

We intend holding up the loading until 10pm to hear B.B.C.. After that we should care if Jerry cops the wireless. It isn't ours, anyway.

27.9.43

Did not complete the loading until 1.30a.m. We had but one truck & made ourselves the very last load.

Left soon afterwards but made slow progress & did not reach bologna till 10 a.m.

Vast confusion was apparent. All civilian trains stopped a couple of miles out & the mob had to walk the rest of the way. Only one line was undamaged by yesterday's raid & that ran around the outskirts of the city.

Whilst waiting to take our turn on it there was another alarm & the scatter of all & sundry Italians was something to see. Those that had cars or bikes ran for dear life. It was reminiscent of Tripoli.

Nothing happened, however.

Finally we got our turn on the line & in the late afternoon did our circuit of the ancient city. From there we travelled fast – anything was fast after 18 miles in 15 hours!

Passes Modena & then ran across the rice fields to the south of the Po which latter was crossed at dusk & ran into Verona in the last of daylight.

Here there was much hurry & bustle & military activity generally. Large numbers of men were returning home very heavily laden with an infinite variety of goods. One would see a huge mound of assorted things sort of perched on the platform & wonder what on earth it was when suddenly, it would shoot upright & walk away!

How on earth some of them carried the quantity of stuff they had was beyond me.

28.9.43

Travelled fast during the night. It was too dark to see anything & before dawn we were at Balzano where we waited a few hours & were finally joined by another hospital train evacuating Lucca (202).

Our train carries no water so we must fill water bottles how & where we can. It is somewhat crowded too but our section is not so very & we travel in comfort. Being able to sleep comfortably makes a great difference. Blankets are scarce but I've got one & that ought to do. Most of the men have one apiece too - & an odd one a couple.

Since Saturday our numbers have decreases by 44. Quite a good effort, particularly by old Fred Morrison with one leg & another American officer who had fractured his femur on July 16. Stout heart needed to hop off a moving train when in that condition.

Expect they will nearly all be picked up (Note: red star, and insert: Actually it was 3 months before they got Morrison).

Still honour was satisfied.

Today was a moving panorama of glorious scenery. We travelled in full daylight through the whole of the Brenner & Tyrol past Innsbruck & into Bavaria.

We were lucky to do this stretch in daylight. The whole pass was magnificent. Rushing rivers; towering mountains (some already snow capped & glinting in the sun); lovely, luscious green valleys; quaint Tyrolean houses with their small

gables, verandahs balconies, towers & turrets – just like the picture books; snow on top of the Brenner itself giving the trees that Xmas postcard look; the wee lake at the very top of the pass. Gordena – Chiusa – Innsbruck & sundry other lovely towns - some with huge white, old castles towering over them. A place of enchantment & of the little people too. Hydroelectric plants everywhere.

30.9.43

Travelled little during the night & dawn saw us only as far as Rosenheim. The Lucca train was still with us & the Sulmona train was there also. Sulmona had been opened & all the prisoners let go. Most of them came back & gave themselves up after 6 or 7 days in the hills but a lot had made south.

There was an Italian train as well. Crowded with Its from Albania. They were not guarded but showed no tendency to want to run away.

The days run passed through flattish, undulating country very like our wheat areas except the trees bordering the paddocks were a deeper green than our eucalyptus. The country did not seem to be very fertile.

It presented the same appearance as a wheat area – large fields bordered by trees, brown fallowed areas, green grass & the chequer pattern completed by ripening corn fields. Passed many towns some ordinary & some lovely. Chemnitz was the only city. Square, solidly built with broad streets & avenues I seemed to be a glass centre & had not been bombed – apparently.

The day was a peaceful one of late autumn sunshine.

Since the Brenner it has been cold at night & we've donned winter garments instead of the shorts etc of a few days ago.

1-10-43

A short run – but taking a long time – across similar country to yesterday's brought us to Larnsdorf where we unloaded. It was raining, filthy underfoot & cold. It was quite dark when we completed unloading. Had no help at all from the local pundits who put in an appearance & then disappeared. When we arrived in camp found they had turned the loonies & T.B.s loose at large – oh well, it's their job to round them up again. Ours is finished.

2-10-43

Registration No 31588. Finger printed, photographed & given a dead meat ticket.

3.10.43

A dead hole is VIII.B. at Larnsdorf. From the last mob of officers several escaped & several changed identities with men so we are not allowed out into the main camp but are rigidly confined to one barrack. It has a vacant area of 30 yards square at the back & a space between barrack wall & wire of 6 yards on each side & the front.

Innumerable Aussies have been up bearing gifts & cigarettes & offers of clothing. Don't need the latter.

Country is flat & desolate & it would be a horrible hole to spend winter in. On clear days we can see the Czech mountains to the south but otherwise only the dismal pine forests break the contour.

Very cold & the morning posts are very heavy. So far the back had stood the strain but I am not hopeful.

4.10.43

Tom Lynch came in with a bunch last night & brought our numbers to 36. He told of the break up of 57. It was apparently a woeful show & old Mac didn't help any though loyal Tom did not say so.

We were taken for an inspection of the camp this morning. The G. in charge of us was second in command & very proud of his Britons (?).

At present there are 15,000 men in camp & another 25,000 round about on working parties.

Barracks are far better than in Italy. Beds are 3 tier but, normally, only 2 are used. Each barrack has its own attached washing room, shower, latrine & hot plate for the cooking of surplus food – a change these. After a communal washing trough in the corner of a field to do 1000 men – slit latrines in another corner – showers every 10 days (perhaps) & cooking between two bricks in the open.

In each barrack there were 4, 12 foot tables with forms – for reading, writing playing cards & eating. Nothing at all in Italy for the same purposes.

Sports facilities were far better too.

Two swimming pools – that in winter are skating rinks, a cricket ground, rugby & soccer grounds.

Surplus goods or clothing can be stored in a special barrack. This is run by the men themselves & is on a cloak-room system. Organisation is such that a man on a working party can have what he wants sent out to him from his store. Again there was nothing like it in Italy.

Red Cross store takes up two barracks, theatre another & church another. Camp garden is communal & is about 4 acres in extent. It grows plenty vegs. Kitchens are all electric with adequate store bins, space, cooking utensils & pots. All very neat & clean. There was far more opportunity & space than in Italy.

We did NOT inspect the gaol.

5.10.43

Invited to join the staff but after the assistance we had on arrival & owing to fact that I brought some 400 men in various stages of treatment 4 days ago & have not had one simple question asked me about any of them – despite our offers to

do so – declined with thanks but also emphatically Not in a million years for mine.

Spent the afternoon down with a bunch of Aussies. Didn't know any of them but we had a few mutual friends. Scrambled back through the hole in the wire only 10 minutes before the balloon went up so was lucky to miss getting caught out.

10.10.43

Out for a walk today. We did 15 miles in a circuit of the country; through the forests, across the fields & around the small, pretty lake. Passed through a couple of villages.

Quite enjoyable – as were also the raw turnips we gathered but the feet are very weary & very, very blistered.

18.10.43

Another walk.

This time much shorter. Through the forest across to the glider field where we watched the gliders for an hour & then, after gathering mushrooms, back by the village.

All the country hereabouts is poor, thin, sandy loam. All perfectly flat. It grows poor grass & poorer grain but is good for root crops. The herbage is so poor that it cannot run sheep or cattle on a decent scale & so pigs are the main stock & provide nearly all the meat foods. Forestry is the other big primary industry & there are well planted forests everywhere.

29.10.43

Collected my first German pay – 96 marks. Left 8.B. at 3.30 p.m. & walked the 4 miles to the station. Our luggage was hauled down in a wagon by a party of the lads.

We travel 3rd class here & can go only by local, slow trains which means many changes – about the only thing that is not better than life in Italy.

Made a change at Appeln & then another at Breslau. Here the German Red Cross gave us some excellent soup & coffee. First time in 2 ½ years as a P.O.W. such a thing had happened to me.

Country flat & uninteresting & its dullness was soon shut out by darkness.

30.10.43

Travelled during the night with only one change at Leignitz & arrived at Dresden at 8 a.m. Spent four hours there. Wandered about the station a good deal – on various pretexts & so saw the whole of that part of the town around the station.

The 32 (?) set about breakfast in good style sitting in a long bunch on the platform & surrounded by hundreds of the curious. I'm afraid we all ate rather more & a much greater variety than we would have normally. Hot water for tea or cocoa was provided.

Passed on the Chemnitz again & then changed several times till we reached Erfurt where we spent 5 hours & had a sleep. The room was well heated space was ample, we had more hot water provided & all was well.

The officer in charge is doing his best to get us what few amenities he can.

31.10.43

We left Erfurt at 5a.m., changed at Bebra (?) & after a short run piled out at Rothenburg – a small village on the Fulda. Our luggage was hauled up by some lads in a waggon & an easy 20 minute walk brought up to the Oflag (9A/Z). At first sight it looked very good indeed.

After a wait we were taken in & very slowly & very, very thoroughly searched. It was even more thorough than the Montalbo arrival but was even compensation in that & the picture of a highly indignant parson, clad only in his birthday clothes & quite as the Lord made him, bending over whilst a guard carefully examined his rectum to make sure he had nought concealed there, will forever be one of the joys of this life.

After all our tribulations we finally got in & our chaps took us in hand. We were allotted to rooms & then given an excellent meal & about ¼ a parcel apiece. We will draw a full one tomorrow.

The camp is an old boarding school but well & solidly built & centrally heated. One half is occupied by 500 officers & men & the other half by the Germans. It has a specially built 16 bed hospital attached & a small & dirty laundry. Dining room seats 170. There is a gymnasium as well.

It is very crowded & the room I'm in had 57 officers. Beds are two decker but there is practically no cupboard space. We are supposed to have a locker apiece [about 18"x18"x5'] but will have to wait our turn.

Library has about 5000 volumes on all sorts of subjects.

1.12.43

Changed to a smaller, downstairs room with 16 in it. Very crowded. We have now our locker apiece & have each made ourselves a wall shelf. Suitcases take a lot of stuff & the rest goes on the bed. Bedboards are scarce so our bunks are a series of cross pieces. I've gone through a couple of times already.

Our new room is warm & probably one of the best in that regard.

Altogether it isn't a bad place to spend a dismal winter in.

Have been reading a lot of 'thrillers' interspersed with medical journals. Lectures go on all day & every day but I've little interest. The medical ones at the moment are anatomy of the brain by the professor of anatomy at St Andrews. Interesting enough but superfluous.

1.3.44

Last two weeks have been freezing cold with no relief at all. Ice skating has been in full swing & yesterday they had a gymkhana. The bookmakers had no idea of

their calling so I gained a very easy 60 marks in quick time & retired to my bunk. It was too cold outside.

Decline to try this ice-skating. The back is, rather strangely, doing well & hardly painful at all but I'm taking no risks of a fall.

'Dramatic Society' staged 'Thunderrock' & 'French Leave'. Former far too merry for this life.

Had a huge batch of mail on 8th. Letters came from everyone & over a period of 3 months.

Also had a small clothing parcel from Phyllis which left England on 21.7.43 & had in it just the few things I needed badly.

15.3.44

Had a tobacco parcel yesterday (Aust. House) Fair batch of mail on 12th including a couple direct to Germany & one from Phyllis telling of yet another Levings female. It looks as if Ma & Pa exhausted all the male chromosomes.

Left Rotherburg at 2.30 a.m. this morning & caught the train at 4 a.m. A change at Behra & we passed on the Fulda line. Very cold country, low hills surrounding the river. All snow covered, &, at present, uninteresting.

Further change at Gemunden – a solid town – then down the main to Wurzburg where I spent a couple of hours locked up with some Serbs to whom I dished out cigarettes, chocolate, scarf, mittens & balaclava.

This section was lovely country. The river on one side & the terraced vineyards on the hillside on the other. It should be a lovely run in late summer.

Wurzburg is a solid town with parks & avenues. It had not yet been bombed.

Spent an hour at the window just looking. Scored a cigar - & of a sequence of 50 females – of the correct age! – who went past only 6 pass muster. Sad life, this – even the opportunities are only mental exercises.

After a short sleep & lunch passed on to Nuremburg – which had been bombed. Difficult to assess damage from the train but it was not inconsiderable. Nothing of interest in the countryside in this section of the trip.

A couple more changes & we were heading for Munich. It was quite cold.

Heavy snow was falling all along this sector. It was full moon, too & so very, very cold. A tasty brunette did her best about that but with two guards what would you?

Munich had an air alarm but we heard no planes & no bombs were dropped though the searchlights made play all the time. There were hundreds of them & they extended a good 20 miles beyond the city.

Tried to get somewhere to lay our weary heads but couldn't. Wandered about the city for an hour or more in the snow & saw much of it by moonlight. The

black haired beauty was most insistent on being pally &, apparently, liked walking.

Finally had to return to the station & spend till 5.30 a.m. trying to sleep sitting at a table.

16.3.44

Left Munich at 5a.m... Very tired & weary. A long run down to Salzburg but it was snowing heavily all the time so I gave up trying to see scenery & went to sleep. Very cold but at Salzburg we were in a warm room & had tea made, then awash up, a meal & more tea.

Very pretty city Salzburg.

Left at 2p.m. & reached St Vite where we changed again, waited 1 ½ hours & then came on to Spittal.

All this country was in Tyrol & had the unearthly quality of beauty about it. Much of it was still obscured by snow but quite a lot was to be seen & it was all good.

A short walk to camp, put into the hospital after a reasonable wait, some supper & bed. After 43 hours travelling mostly in a heavy snow storm, the latter was very welcome indeed.

I'm sure the Munich brunette had only strictly dishonourable intentions & I'd have been a ruined man if the guards had gone to sleep! Shame.

17.3.44

Spittal Lazarett [18A/Z] has a bed capacity of 600. An international show with the staff comprising British (3) Serbs (2) & French (4). Also a couple of Italians who have some of their own miserable horde to look after but they are not to stay with us long & will be transferred to barracks in the amp soon – thank goodness for that. There are also a couple of Russian doctors in the camp but they do not work in the hospital. The Russians are supposed to be kept away from everyone else but that's a hopeless task.

Camp comprises two separate areas – east & west lagers. East lager is exclusively British N.C.O.s West lager is international like the hospital.

We are surrounded by mule stables & normally, in peace time, the place is headquarters of an alpine regiment & our present quarters – all the hospital in fact – either barracks or stables.

Administration block (wholly German) is built of brick & all the rest of timber with wooden floors. Heating seems to be adequate.

After Italy the supply of drugs, dressings etc in stock is amazing, but here, too, there is no good extension apparatus. X-ray facilities are excellent. We can get as many plates as we need but, of course, must be as economical as possible. We can screen as often as we like & once a week a good x-ray specialist visits us to screen chests & stomachs & read plates.

Hospital occupies about 6 acres which allows of ample room to move about in.

Staff besides myself are Gunther (?) 7 Kok (S.A.M.C. – physician). Gunther is to go home next month. The orderlies are S.A.M.C., R.A.M.C. & the 57 lads with Allen Rowey again in command.

A goodly number of the 57 people are round about but nearly all have passed on to Germany.

Dentistry is done by two French officers & Doug McLeod – who can now finish the job on me he started at 57 last July.

Warmer here than up in Germany but still cold enough.

Whole place is in a valley through which runs the Drau. Valley is about 2 ½ miles across with high mountains to the N & S – these are now snow clad & glint beautifully in the sun. The lower hills are forest clad.

The relief of getting away from Oflag life with the infantile arguments, selfishness & stupid discussion is enormous.

Never again, if I can help it.

28.3.44

Acting purely as a surgical consultant!!

A Serb had done all the surgery here to-date but I am to do the British & American & he the rest from now on. Did our first list – 5 – today.

Reminiscent of Derna days went to a funeral (French) for the ride – or, rather, walk.

Having my teeth fixed up, Our Douglas has condemned two but not for immediate execution & is filling 8 more.

2.4.44

Walking today with Kok & a postern. Climbed the low mountain to the N. – quite laborious but we enjoyed the quiet forest tracks. Good view of the valley from the top. A clear sunny day with enough snow still about to give the air that bracing nip. Descended to the Millstatt Lake on the other side – a famous tourist resort. Walked back along the S side of the lake having a magnificent view of the lake, the green valley & the snow clad mountains topping it all. The sun was just right for these & they glinted with all their colours at their very best.

We then turned around a shoulder of the hill after passing through Seeboden & walked back to Spittal along a track about 100 feet up with the rushing stream & road far below. A beautiful gorge with the cliff walls in reds & browns & blacks & the greens of the forest harmonising.

Sat in a quiet corner of the track & smoked in the sun & then returned to camp.

It was an enchanting afternoon & the only reasonably perfect day of the last 1088.

9.4.44

Out walking again today but only a short one. Passed through the town then up a small mountain, through some forests, over the top getting a nice panorama of the valley, & down the other side & back.

Did some window shopping & saw some exquisite glass. Alas, tis for show not sale.

15.4.44

Gunther left today. For the 3rd successive April I've said goodbye to Aussie M.O. on his way home & been the poor mug left behind.

Will have to scratch April out of my calendar for future turf transactions. Quite obviously, it's my unlucky month.

Repat. Commission on 19th. We are presenting 88 including myself but I've not much hope though if the game were entirely fair I'd be a certainty. But it isn't. I happen to be an important person & some Britisher is wanted here to do my job & they've had the dickens of a job getting me. (?) even if there are at least 6 coves who have been sitting on their rears at 9A/Z for 2 years doing nothing, who could easily manage it.

Got a packer of 650 cigarettes sent on from 9A/Z today by some of the Aussies. Cheers.

19.4.44

To stay now till the end!

Commission came to day & passed 52 out of the 88. Some of the decisions were extraordinary both for passes & failures. Apparently they knew very little surgical pathology & much depended on the diagnosis on which they were put up. As half expected – the hostility to my even going up defeated me here. With the German member it was enough that I am wanted for work here & to the devil with my collapsed disc & widespread nodules of new bone in the spine. The chairman voted against too but he didn't know much except nervous diseases. They barely listened to my x-ray report or history – one was busy writing & the other reading! 1 other – the junior Swiss – voted yes & let it go at hat.

Felt far more humiliated at the disinterest shown than upset at the failure. After all, I am a senior colleague.

1.5.44

Protecting power on 24th. Got the low down on repatriation. No hope at all for us & as usual a lot of youngsters in Tobruk got away. It's all so damned unfair that one will certainly do everything in one's power to get away from military control as soon as possible.

Anzac Parade on 25th. For the second year in succession took the parade. Hope it's the last time. A very good show was put on & the lads marched & paraded as though they were trooping the colours.

Do hope the chap leading the column did not let the rest down.

Had a huge batch of mail last week – 22 in all – from all over. Two from Phyllis one of which told of Jean's Shirley. Where will be the end of these females, oh Lord? Dates ranged from Aug 2 1943 to Feb 6 1944 from Aust.

Had 3 days in bed after a terrific rigor one night & had to post-pone an operating day.

Only 2 walks in 7 weeks so far.

Nutty (?) Cole sentenced a cove to 7 tradeless days – a German, that is, for daring to interfere with a "full" Briton. So that chap will be off the rackets for a week!!

8.5.44

What a lovely climate!

After a couple of weeks of warmth & sun it rained incessantly for 2 days & then SNOWED for a couple more.

A very dreary outlook & all is muck underfoot.

14.5.44

Read Chas Morgan's "The Empty Room" walking today. Climbed part of the way up the mountain. Valley was very beautiful in greens & blues & the snow capped mountains over all. A laze lent softness & distance to the view. Chesnuts were flowering as were all the orchard trees & the wild flowers carpeted the grass with reds & blues & yellows. Quite a hot day & we enjoyed the peace of the wooded lanes beside the river.

This week's bon mot. An Englishman walking around had O.B.L.I on his lapel. Asked what this meant he said "old Bill's Last Issue" & quickly came back "so you're what resulted when he found a better 'hole'".

4.6.44

Had a fair batch of mail in middle of May & also clothing parcels from home & Australia House & 500 cigarettes from Phyllis. Latter more than welcome. Kok returned to-day after taking Alderson to Graz. He had an enjoyable trip.

Received our first batch of wounded – only 22 all told but there is a good deal of work to be done on them. Very few are in even reasonable condition & there are many badly untied fractures, ankyloses (?) in bad position & much osteomyelitis. Quite a 203 exhibit, in fact. How on earth some of these deformities occur is beyond me. They are so very bad, so much in keeping with 203 experiences & so foreign to even the most elementary surgical rules that one wonders why. Practically all this lot had been "treated" in Italy by Italians – we even had one chap, who with a lot of skin wounds, has his elbow ankylosed in full EXTENSION. Varied the usual run of appendices & hernias this week by doing a T.B. glans of the neck.

Saw a French show – "The Voyage of M. Perichon" – well done & amazing but I do hate imitation ladies.

Snow has nearly gone from the mountains & Kok & I hope to soon go & find us an edelweiss – or something.

Sleeping badly again. Lack of hope for the immediate & distant future has a lot to do with it.

9.6.44

Kok went off to Klagerfurt yesterday for the day. I'm going soon to try & get a decent ray of my back. Cold miserable & continuously raining with lots of fresh snow on the hills but none in the valley.

Hope rising these days. We know it's almost impossible but we all keep hoping that we will be out of the bag by Xmas.

Landing appears to have gone well & to be established. Very mild indeed, was the excitement & enthusiasm round the camp. Most of us have waited so very long that we can no longer raise enthusiasm – though, deep down, we do hope & hope & hope.

13.6.44

Walking again today to Lake Millstatt. It's a very lovely walk along the gorge from Spittal to the Lake. With the Canterbury bells, daisies, buttercups & other wild flowers mingled in the lush, green grass it looked very beautiful today.

The slow spread of the forces in Normandy is encouraging. It seems a relentless, steady progress.

Rumours are rife particularly amongst the French. It has been well said of them "if anything happens in the next month, it's the French news of today".

21.6.44

Was to go to Klagerfurt today but it has been postponed. So very wet, very miserable & finally so cold that we had to change back into uniforms.

It has rained incessantly for a week.

Work progressing well. A couple of cases unsatisfactory – probably my fault.

East lager closed & the inhabitants packed off to Markt Pongau (?). No one knows who is coming to fill it but something or other is sure to.

The uncanny lack of excitement about the invasion continues – we've waited too long, perhaps.

An effort in aid of Red Cross is being held in the XVIII area. Today the men had an exhibition of art work. Some of it very good. Coveted a few things – a painting of the Drau; an inlaid walking stick (Serb & very good); a mahogany cigarette box; & a few of the mat. The woodwork was very beautiful & showed infinite patience & skill.

27.6.44

Achieved Klagerfurt t last & my good x-rays but the extent & nature of the spinal destruction is alarming.

It was a long, tiring but interesting day. Up at 5.30 a.m. we got back at 7.15p.m., after a journey of 50 miles & back through some of this world's best scenery. Although extolled millions of times it is really indescribable. The crops are ripening & give a golden-green hue to the landscape; the wild flowers, now at their best, stipple it with many colours – white & gold daisies, blue of larkspur & cornflower, red of poppies in the growing corn; & the many conical peaks of the dolomites rise about the lake & river in the foreground, the golden green hillsides & the forest clad upper slopes. Over all hung a dusty, blue haze. The houses are built to harmonise with the scenery & their quaint, scrolled balconies & turrets struck no jarring note.

The girls' costumes added further colour – a blouse of all white with elbow-length, puffed sleeves, a bodice of red with a blue leaf design, a skirt of navy with the leaf design in red & an apron of sky blue was the common one but variations in colours were frequent.

Had a look through the hospital escorted by the German surgeon. He was very keen to demonstrate Boehler's new pinning of fractures & wants me to go back in a month or so to see it done. The principle is that of the Smith Peterson nail but it passes the whole length of the bone & must be embedded in solid bone at both ends. An ideal thing for the humerus or lower 1/3 of the femur & for any badly comminuted (?) fracture. Demonstrated results were very good.

Spent a long while yearning to Blue Murphy who is rapidly becoming an international economist.

Bombing damage in the city was extensive.

12.7.44

No summer at all so far, just rain & more rain.

No mail or parcels since mid-May.

Gala day at West Lager in aid of Red Cross.

15.7.44

Yesterday Kok & I went mountaineering. We got there – somehow. Very still & sore today. Still find it hard to believe that I reached the top of Goldeck – 7054 feet up & 5,100 feet above Spittal. Next time I fancy going a mile up in the air I'll buy me an aeroplane.

A track leads up all the way twisting & turning on the hillside but incessantly rising with never a break in the upward incline. This was all forest covered until one came to the abode of the Herr Director of Cows on whom we called on the way down for a sample of his product. One could tell Sep (?) from the cows because the latter looked so intelligent!

From here the gradient was much milder & we reached the first hut & had breakfast. A wide valley opens out here & is used for summer grazing. As elsewhere grass is regarded as a crop, is mown 3 times a year & put down as ensilage for winter feeding. To this level a narrow waggon can be brought but all stores are brought up by pack mules. In winter this hut is closed & is used only by occasional skiers. A rough track leads from here to Goldeck Hut – 700 feet below the summit. This is a guest house maintained by the Alpine Club & managed by a woman, assisted by a boy of 10. She was spending her 10th successive summer there. Here we had lunch & then climbed to the top & came back in the rain, had tea & Kok went off to see something else of interest whilst I had a sleep. Apart from a stop at the cow man's we came down non-stop & reached camp again at 9.30 p.m.

We started at 5a.m. & after 2 miles walk through the town & across the river we reached the commencement of the track. Varying in width for 4 to 6 feet it is cut out of the hillside & supported by revetments of timber or stone. A wheelbase of 2'6" to 3' could manage to get along it. The climb commenced easily but I very soon tired. Lack of sleep the night before did not help. At 1000 feet I was ready to turn it in but had to keep on trying &, thereafter, it was a question of exhaustion versus distance with me. Kok travelled easily.

The rare air plus the steep climb resulted in it being a series of dashes of 200 to 300 yards when the hammering of my heart, vertigo & ringing of the ears would call an imperative halt. A rest & then a few more hundred yards until compelled to stop again but, ultimately, we reached the hut & after breakfast & a long spell the rest of the way was easy – perhaps one became adjusted to the lessened oxygen supply in that time.

The wild flowers were in their glory. Daisies of all kinds were found all the way; arnica (large & yellow), wild anemones, buttercups & blue bells on the lower slopes. Between 100 & 1500 feet we met the yellow foxglove – a magnificent flower with a cluster of 6 to 12 yellow bells each about 1 ½" long. It was not found above 1000 feet but below that grew in great profusion.

Sun came up when we were about 1500 feet above the valley. He arose in a blaze of glory over the mountains & gave us a grand greeting & a grander view of the long narrow lake, the lower hills & the peaks away to the North.

Soon we were getting magnificent views of the whole valley, the chequered fields, the winding river, the lake & range on range of mountains.

At the first hut I couldn't make out first, how I'd manage to get that far & second, how on earth I was going any further. Did not realise then that the worst was all over. A two storied building with a basement – about 40"x20" it has an old log hut of two floors close by & a cow-bier of similar construction also – saw beds in the attic of the latter. Beer & refreshments can be had here in peace time. At the moment they had 50 guests – all girls of 12-16 & there were a least 15 of themselves. They are piled in somewhere in the 3 buildings. The valley grazes cattle & has been cleared of timber up the face of Goldeck as well. The cattle stay up from May to October & were in excellent condition when we arrived.

Around the hut there was an abundance of tables & forms, a swing for the lasses to amuse themselves on & a cold shower standing naked & solitary in the yard. It had been used quite a lot, too!

At this level (above 5000 feet) we came on alpine roses for the first time & acres & acres of them grown in the valley in huge clusters. From a short distance these acres of pinkness interspersed with reds, blues & yellows of other flowers create the illusion of a floral carpet. Gentians are seen here too – the small blue, the larger yellow & the magnificent large belled deep-blued one that give us "Gentian blue" but it is the Alpine rose that creates the fairyland effect.

After an hour & a half's rest we passed on & climbed another 1300 feet to the Guest House. Again we had a carpet of wild flowers at our feet & below us grand views of the valley & far away magnificent ones of the many mountains.

The guest house is 6387 feet up & consists of a smallish building, 40 years old, with dining room, kitchen & 4 bedrooms & a basement storeroom for wood etc. Beds are spring mattresses, blankets are plentiful & pure wool. The beds have to be packed side by side to accommodate numbers but a few separate ones are provided in the attic & cost 2 marks per night as against 4/5 a week for the others. Normally food, beer & wine can be bought quite cheaply.

After lunch we did the final 700 feet & reached the cross on the summit easily. Kok carved our names there – I was too tired to bother. We had a short spell up there & could see grand scenery wherever we looked. The Dolomites stretched away – peak after peak of them. We could not see the Adriatic which is possible on very fine days but we saw enough glorious mountains to compensate for the arduous, difficult climb.

Rain came up & we had to leave tarrying only to gather a bunch of forget-me-nots on Goldeck itself. Visibility was soon only 10 yards & we were glad to get back down to the guest house wet through.

After tea I slept awhile & at 6p.m. we started back down seeing again all those good things – the rose covered valley, the wild flowers, the views of the valley, lake & mountains.

Tarried awhile with Sep & then back to camp – very tired, very exhausted, very satisfied. Goldeck is 7054 feet & Spittal 1930 feet so we climbed 5124 straight up – almost a mile. To do it – there & back – was, at least, 20 miles.

21.7.44

Still no mail nor any parcels either.

Have been living for cigarettes on the charity of Percy Green & Frank Seymour.

Today completed 1200 days as a P.O.W.

It has been raining incessantly. No summer yet. Only two fine days & the lads were lucky to strike them for their Goldeck climbs. Kok & I took advantage of the fine weather today to go to the lake. Spent all afternoon there swimming & sun-baking. Walked back by the gorge. Pleasantly tired after the 9 mile walking

the sun & the swimming but I get very unsettled lately after these outings & think it would be better not to go at all. A taste of freedom after all this time is bad for one.

Very cheered today by a flight of 401 bombers – Liberators & Fortresses. They come away 2hr. 40 mins. (?)

All the lads have been up Goldeck & have thoroughly enjoyed it.

Constant, severe pain over the right scapular has been worrying me for a month. X-ray showed yet another congenital deformity. I seem to be finding I'm a mass of the damn things. Having infra-red heat & massage.

The first batch of 23 for repatriation moves off tomorrow.

24.7.44

Issued with gas masks today. Why?? Still they are in nice haversacks.

Red Cross effort here totalled

From hospital 7,200 marks, From West Lager 10,600 marks, or a grand total of pounds 1,483(A). Not bad for 250 men though the buying & betting of other nationalities helped it along a lot.

11.8.44

Achieved some mail at last but no parcels.

Place is alive with rumour & no one knows what to believe.

Hordes of Italian cattle are being trucked back – we see 3 or 4 trains of them daily.

Talk of discontent is rife but we cannot judge what it means – if anything.

Was out swimming again last week but will refuse to go any more. Too upsetting. Too reminiscent. Sun has been kinder & we've had almost 10 days of really good weather.

Work very slack. No more wounded & few general admissions. Did my 50th major here this week & there have been hordes of uncounted minor operations as well.

Mail from everyone. Nothing exceptional in the news. A curious one from Enid. Getting a trifle worried about that lass.

Have lost all desire to read. Can't face study & when not sitting in the sun wander from room to room just talking. One blessing here the chaps, as distinct from Oflag, have no desire to discuss their personal sexual adventures ad nauseum.

Pathology & anatomy in which I was wont to bury myself & forget my troubles have lost all appeal. One just wants the sun & dreams.

Our gardens are a glorious mass of colour with asters, sweet William, daisies, marigolds, gladioli, snapdragons, stocks etc.

21.8.44

Rest of the repatriation party went today.

The 6th I've seen go & of the game had been fair, I'd have been in the very first myself.

Someday, somewhere, someplace I'll be lucky about something.

Protecting power here today & YMCA Saturday. No requests to either of them.

Long expected landing in South of France this week. There's an inevitability about the progress of the war now but I still doubt we shall be free by Xmas.

Had a series of running repairs done lately. Vifue (?) chopped off a papilloma, Kok did an ingrowing toenail & injected the shoulder whilst Doug McLeod grabbed 2 teeth as his trophy (calamity, this latter).

No parcels, no cigarettes. Still living on the charity of the chaps & we are both getting fed up.

Really summer at last. For the first time in my life I'm a passably decent brown.

8.9.44

No more mail. No parcels at all.

Today is the 1249th day as a P.O.W – exactly 3 ½ years less one month. It was celebrated by the early (?) arrival of my Red Cross identity card. Such remarkable efficiency by Aust. H.Q. is positively startling as I have been a POW a mere 3 ½ years & it is only 33 months since I sent off 6 requests for the card!!

Summer draws to a close. The nights are chilly but we still get a fair bit of warmish sun & can still sunbake.

Our garden flowers are fading & they are no longer the glorious picture of a month ago. Lists closed today for next month's medical commission for Repatriation. We will present about half as many as in April. Quite futile going to all that bother, anyway.

Sleeping badly again. Getting into the 3 or 4 a.m. habit after a reasonable spell off it.

Tackled a hefty job on an American airman yesterday. Had an appalling deformity of the forearm with 1 ½" of continuous cross union in the upper third. Very difficult indeed & I paid for the 2 ¾ hours work with an aching back & complete exhaustion. One's mental condition, after 3 ½ years of this life, is not up to these long, tedious & nerve wracking jobs with poor, inadequate assistance. One lacks snap & sparkle & rapid decision. Will endeavour to avoid such jobs in future. After all I don't get anything out of it – only a lot of back pain.

As from next week Red Cross issues of food & cigarettes are to be halved. As there are plenty of tomatoes, potatoes & other vegetables about it is the best possible time for it to happen, if it had to happen.

Patients who have been in hospital are all reclassified for work on discharge. The classes are A; full work : B; light work : C; farm work : D; camp work : E; sitting work : F; no work at all.

Except on large working parties there is little distinction between A & B actually made. C is kept mainly for people who have lost an eye or are deaf & so many be endangered in general work.

(2 pages have been cut out here)

24.9.44 Zean (?) Kommando

We clambered around & up the hills for about 5 miles & got the usual glorious panorama of our lovely valley. The views towards Villach were new to us (from that angle) & are really the best we've had. The valley stretching away into the distance with the Drau wandering across & along it, the chequered fields, the forests & mountains to the side & the conical peaks of the Dolomites in the far end of the picture. There were the usual deep forest glades with their silence, some lovely gorges, a dainty waterfall & three age old moss grown water mills. A plateau ran along the hill side in one place & we could see in all directions from it. Being flat it is, of course, intensely farmed.

The Kommando itself is placed near a farm built on another smallish plateau. The farm house was struck by lightning last year & a crowd of Italians are rebuilding it but our chaps are employed building a ten foot road to the farm.

There are 16 of them & most of them old 57 boys. Their living quarters consist of a small barrack which is divided into 3 rooms – one for bunks & living about 20'x12', a 12'x10' kitchen – which is very well appointed & has a good range & a small wash house with a concrete floor that the lads use for bathing washing clothes etc.

They've a stove in the bunk house, the kitchen range, & a boiler in the wash house so have plenty of heat. Hot water is always available & tea always ready. They have no trouble about fuel living, as they do in the forest area.

The barb wire enclosure runs about 12' all around the barrack but they have no need of exercise room within the compound as they work all day & can always get a stroll after work.

(Last page torn out. Written in pencil inside back cover Bedridden E.F.)

This is not a 'proper' index, so entries where the information is on more than one page have just the first page listed.

18A/Z 17
2/8 2
203 4
9A/Z 15

A

air raids 6, 10, 16, 22, 25
Alderson 20
Altamura Hospital (204) 7
Anderson 3
ANZAC Parade 19
Appeln 14
Australia House 16

B

B.R.C.S. see Red Cross
Balzano 11
Behra (?) 15
Bernodi 3
Bernordi (?) 3
Binns 2
Boehler 22
Bologna 6, 10
Borosky (?) 2
Breslau 14
British P.O.Ws 17
Burney, Allan 3

C

Calcaterra 4
Castel St Pietro 5
Chemnitz 12, 15
Cole, Nutty (?) 20
Corbo 10
Cunningham 8

D

Darlow 8, 10
Dresden 14
Due Madonna (19) 10

E

entertainment 16, 20, 21, 25
Erfurt 15

F

Franco 8
French P.O.Ws 17
Frontor (?) 2
Frueta (?) 7

G

Gemunden 16
Gerachty 2, 3
Ghurkas 8
Gilbert 2
Goldeck 22
Green, Percy 24
Grimm (?) 3
Gunther 18

I

Italian P.O.Ws 17

K

Kennedy 3
Klagerfurt 21
Kok 18, 20, 26
Krestinsky (?) 2

L

Lanino 6
Larnsdorf 12
Leignitz 14
Levings family 16, 19
Lucca 11
Lucy 6
Lynch, Ian 9
Lynch, Tom 13

M

Marinello 2
Markt Pongau (?) 21
McLeod, Doug 18, 26
Mestre 4
Millstatt Lake 18, 21
Modena 11
Morrison, Fred 11
Munich 16
Murphy, Blue 22
Mussolini 5

N

Normandy 21
Nuremberg 16

O

Oflag (9A/Z) 15

P

Phyllis 16, 19

Protecting Power 3, 19, 26

R

Red Cross 3, 13, 21, 25

Rosenheim 12

Rothenburg 15

Rowey, Allen 18

Russian P.O.Ws 17

S

Salerno 9

Salzburg 17

Serbian P.O.Ws 2, 16, 17, 21

Seymour, Frank 24

Sicily 4

Smith Peterson nail 22

Spittal Lazzarett [18A/Z] 17

St Vite 17

Sulmona 12

Sutherland 2

Symons, E.E 2

T

Tyrol 11

U

Udine 3

V

Vifue (?) 26

VIII B 12

W

Watkin, Enid 7

Willie 6, 8

Wurzberg 16

Y

Young, Ted 5

Z

Zean (?) Kommando 27