

The Diary of an Allied Advanced Guard
Not Defeated, Just Waiting

*To see The Right and not do it,
is Cowardice*

Flight Sergeant H Whatton
100 Woodlands Park Road
Tottenham, London N15
England

The March, January-February 1945

Date	Day	Departed	Arrived	From	To	Km	
Jan 19	Fri	5 am	5 pm	Bankau	Winterfeld	33	
20	Sat	5 am	11.30 am	Winterfeld	Karlsruhe	12	
20	Sat	8 pm	9 am	Karlsruhe	Domwald Haus	42	
22	Mon	4 am	3.30 pm	Domswald Haus	Gross Jenkwitz	25	
23	Tues	5 am	4 pm	Gross Jenkwitz	Wansen	22	
24	Wed	-	-	-	-	-	
25	Thrs	4 am	2 pm	Wansen	Hiedersdorf	32	
26	Fri	-	-	-	-	-	
27	Sat	11 am	5 pm	Hiedersdorf	Pfaffendorf	22	
28	Sun	6 am	5.30 pm	Pfaffendorf	Standorf	25	
29	Mon	6 am	4 pm	Standorf	Peterwitz	23	
30	Tues	-	-	-	-	-	
31	Wed	-	-	-	-	-	
Feb 1	Thrs	8.30 am	1.30 pm	Peterwitz	Plauznitz	14	
2	Fri	-	-	-	-	-	
3	Sat	-	-	-	-	-	
4	Sun	-	-	-	-	-	
5	Mon	6.45	8.45	Plauznitz	Goldberg	7	
6	Tues	Train to Luckenwalde, Stalag Luft 3A					
7	Wed						
8	Thrs						

Food Ration on the March

Date	Day	Ration
Jan 18	Thrs	2/3 loaf – 1/5 tin meat – 1/8 pot honey
19	Fri	Nothing
20	Sat	Nothing
21		1 pack dog biscuits
22	Mon	Half of one biscuit
23	Tues	1/4 small loaf – 1 biscuit
24	Wed	5 biscuits
25	Thrs	1/5 small loaf
26	Fri	2/5 small loaf
27	Sat	Nothing
28	Sun	7 biscuit – 1/10 tin meat
29	Mon	12 biscuits
30	Tues	1/5 small loaf
31	Wed	Nothing
Feb 1	Thrs	2/5 small loaf
2	Fri	Nothing
3	Sat	1/6 small loaf
4	Sun	1/6 small loaf
5	Mon	1/3 small loaf – 1/3 tin meat
6	Tues	Train journey - Nothing
7	Wed	Train journey - Nothing
8	Thrs	Train journey - Nothing

For more information see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_March_\(1945\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_March_(1945))

Introduction

My story begins in England. The date was June 21st 1944. It was my Pilot's 21st birthday, and the crew had arranged to have a little celebration that night to mark the event. We also were going on 7 days leave the following day. We had cause to feel happy; but at that time we little knew what the night would bring. Sometime during the day we heard that our crew was on 'Ops' that night. The target was Gelsenkirchen. We took off at 11pm. and each member of the crew went about his appropriate task.

I, being the Wireless Operator cut myself off from the rest of the crew's inter-com. All went quietly for some time, when suddenly I felt our kite diving. At the same time, our guns began to chatter, I heard cannon shells from the night-fighter smacking into us and a burst came through my compartment missing me by a fraction of an inch. We had before this night four combats and always came off best, but this was plainly worse than any we had before experienced. We were 'corkscrewing' violently, but could not shake off the fighter. I heard our gunners blazing away with their guns, but it was no use. I moved my switch to inter-com just in time to hear Johnny say 'The starboard inner is on fire. Prepare to abandon Aircraft'. Johnny did not sound as if he were scared, but amazement was in his voice. My parachute was just behind me. I always kept it there in the same place, although I never thought I would have to use it. I guess the rest of the boys would be fixing their 'chutes, and thinking the same things as myself. I gripped the chute and stood up to fix it on. Difficult owing to the way our pilot 'Johnny' was throwing the kite around. I swiftly clipped on the one side of the chute but the other clip was tangled up in my inter-com leads. It took me about 10 secs to free the leads and clip on. During this time, I heard the engineer say 'The whole wing is on fire', and a second or two after my chute had been clipped on, my Pilot gave the order "Abandon Aircraft, Emergency Jump'.

Up to this moment I somehow did not think we would have to abandon our kite, although I had prepared for it. This was it though, and I knew that only if I moved fast would I be able to save my life. The aircraft was lurching about wildly, making it difficult to move about. I was able to see though as the flames lit up my compartment through the holes made by the cannon shells. As I moved towards the rear of the aircraft, it began to dive steeply. I saw a member of the crew jump out the rear door, and hurried there. The whole starboard side of the kite was on fire by this time. It was terrible, no other words can describe it. Just a blazing blood-red wreck. I knew that if I panicked I would die. I reached the door and looked out into the night. Black and Red. I prepared to jump and at that moment remembered something that my brother Charlie had once told me when we were on leave together some time ago. He had told me to grip hold of the ripcord before jumping, this I did; then I jumped. Immediately I found myself back in the aircraft. The pressure of the wind had forced me back into the kite. I got to my feet determined to get out. I jumped again, and passing through a sheet of flame, found that I was clear of the plane. I gave the ripcord a terrific jerk and then blacked out for probably a few seconds.

The next thing that I remember doing clearly was slowly, hardly daring, to look up to see if my parachute was open. It was a great relief to find it billowing out in the wind. Then I looked around me, for although it was dark a white chute would show up for some distance. There were no other chutes in the sight. It was a very strange feeling, coming down in that parachute. Utterly different from anything else ever experienced. It seemed as if I was just hanging there in the void, not moving any nearer to the earth. A gust of wind caught me and I swung like a pendulum. Many thoughts passed through my mind. I began to think I was dead. It actually took a day to rid myself of that idea. My left foot began to feel very cold, and looking down, I saw that my flying boot was missing. It was probably jerked off when the chute opened. There was a fire below me casting a glow on the clouds. I thought that I was going to land in it. The clouds were getting nearer now and I wondered what lay below them, Holland or Germany. Suddenly I was in the cloud. It was like falling through choking mist. It cleared and there was land below. The ground drew rapidly nearer, then bang, I was on the ground.

I was in a meadow. It was quiet so I sat down and took off my flying clothing and other things that might give my identity away. I felt very lonely, but did not let it dwell on my mind. I made my way across the field, feeling very uncomfortable as I had only one boot. There was a thumping behind me, I turned and saw a bull charging me. I ran and jumped a hedge. Then I almost walked right into Tom, one of the gunners. He was the fellow I saw jump from the plane. We quietly shook hands, and I pointed out a fire a couple of miles away. We guessed it was our plane. Then we turned away and set off across the fields.

Tom (Sparks) and myself walked some miles and it began to get light, so we looked for a place to hide. We found a good place between two cornfields, a deep ditch. It was full of stinging nettles but although we were stung hundreds of times we did not worry much. We stayed in that ditch all day and it was cold. People were walking and working nearby and we listened to them talk. We were not sure of our position. Either we were in Germany or Holland. It was very important to know which. Finally, after hearing the natives speech we decided we were in Holland. This turned out to be right. But we were very near the frontier.

I will not write here of the happenings of the next two weeks except to say that we found friendly people, who looked after us.

One night we crossed the frontier into Belgium, and reached Antwerp. There we were betrayed by a Belgian traitor, and found ourselves in the hands of the Gestapo. We were put in a prison in Antwerp and told that we were going to be shot the following morning. Whilst in Holland we were told by Dutch people that the majority of our crew were killed. So died some of the best friends I ever had the good fortune to know. R.I.P.

We were kept in a cell in the prison for six days. The food was poor, but we were to know worse. One day they took us from there, together with a group of other fellows who had been captured. We were taken to Brussels and there put in cells again. There we were questioned by the German Intelligence. We were sent to two more places in Germany. Then we were ready for transport to our permanent P.O.W. camp. The train journey took four days and we only got out of the carriage once during that time, that was for about quarter of an hour. We arrived here on the 25th July. It is now the 30th. We now have Red Cross parcels and so the food is quite good, although nothing like the quantity we got at home. The German food ration is small. It is more than we got at the interrogation centre. There the food we got, quantity and quality really was very poor. Tom and myself now look out for new fellows coming in, hoping that maybe one of our old crew will arrive, but I believe that we will never see at least four of them again.

Stalag Luft 7, Bankau (Bakow) Poland

August 6th

I am now settling down to this life. Clubs are being formed, among them the London Club. We use them as places where we can meet fellows from our various home towns, and talk over things of interest. The Red Cross parcels are still coming in every week. They are one of the most important things on a P.o.W. camp.

We have also a camp newspaper which gives the gen on things happening in camp. The Germans put up every day or so their war news, and so we know that the allies are doing well. The Russians were only about 130 miles from us a few days ago and last night we heard the rumble of guns coming from the East. We do not know what they were, and we also do not know what the Germans intend to do with us if the Russians get close. Still, we can do nothing but wait and see. Practically everyone in the camp expects the war to be over by Christmas, some expect to be home by then. Lets hope we are right. We have had some warm weather and I am getting quite sunburned.

Sunday August 13th.

The past week has gone by fairly quickly, I have by this time sent several postcards home. My people should hear that I am alive very soon now. I do not expect to start receiving any letters until about November. Who knows where we will be by then? The Russians do not seem to be much nearer than they were a week ago, but we know the

allies are doing pretty well. None of us think the war will last much longer. I suppose the old home town looks the same as usual. It will be god to get home again.

Sunday August 20th.

Another uneventful week as far as the camp is concerned. The american red cross parcels have ran out, but we still have the British. Tomorrow is Tom's birthday, his 22nd. We will not be able to celebrate it for a few more months. We read that the Allies are doing well, and have landed on the south of France. Keep it up. The weather is still very good, everyone is sun burnt. An air raid is on at the moment so everyone must stay in their huts. The raids usually last about an hour.

Sunday August 27th.

The weeks has passed quietly, I have spent most of the time reading books, or just wondering around. My people at home should know that I am alive by now, although they should always have believed that. My first postcards will probably arrive home during the next couple of weeks. It will be another couple of months before I receive any letters. We only have two weeks supply of parcels left.

Sunday Sept. 3rd.

Another week gone, another week nearer home. Today is the anniversary of the war. Most of the Jerrys seem to think that they have lost the war. They are fed up with it. Their food is poor, we know for we have to eat it. The parcel situation is bad, only another week's supply left, then we starve. Still, no use worrying till its time to worry. The news of our armies is very good, they are advancing very quickly. Keep it up boys. Most of the fellows are taking this life very well, but it is getting a few down. A few mornings ago an australian deliberately crossed the warning fence, and called the guard to shoot him. The guard of course did. He fired twice and missed. Later in the day the Aussie was taken away – mad. He did not recognize his own navigator and thought that all the prisoners were Germans trying to get information from him. One of the fellows in my hut is married, his wife was due to have a baby just after he came down. He is quite cheerful outwardly, but it is really breaking his heart. We hear him at night in his sleep, calling her not to die. We all hope for his sake that she is all right, for if not, he will probably go nuts. We have things like that now and again, but taking it all round, the fellows are pretty good. Our morale is very high. It is only home troubles that makes a fellow go under. We had a concert last night, we sang all the old songs and had a good time all round. The weather appears to be breaking now. Today is cold and raining.

Sunday Sept 10th.

We are now almost out of Red Cross parcels. Until we get some more in ????? ???? just about do. The weather has been rather good this last week and it is getting slightly colder. Still, the thoughts of winter do not bother us much as we expect to be home by the end of the year. The war is certainly going well for us. Let's hope the boys keep it up, right through this country. I wonder how our Albert is getting on in his little haven of rest. I am trying to contact him, as we are allowed to write to each other once a month. Roll on.

Sunday 17th Sept.

Another week nearer home. The Allies are now in Germany. It makes us feel better to know that our boys are actually in the same country as ourselves, although they are hundreds of miles away, as yet. We are very near to Poland here. I do not think the war will last very many more weeks. The german morale is still fairly good, although quite a lot of them think that their war is as good as lost. My letters and postcards should be arriving steadily now, I do not expect to receive any for another month or two. Perhaps we will be on our way home by then. A certain number of parcels have arrived here during the last few days, and a further six thousand are on their way from Switzerland. The weather is still good.

Wednesday 20th September

It was my birthday yesterday. It's nice to be sure that we will not be here for another. The news is good. The Allies have made an airborne invasion of Holland. They are at places where Tom and myself either walked, cycled or passed through by car, before the kind and gentle gestapo got us. The Allies are also fighting in Germany around Aachen, we passed through that dump also during our travels. My date for the end of the war is Nov 2nd. All of us have got our own pet dates. Tom thinks it will be over before the 10th of October. I hope he is right. We all think we will actually be in England for Xmas. The Y.M.C.A has sent us a film projector but did not send any films. We have asked for some. Today we received five hundred bottles of mineral water from the Germans. We had to pay for them, of course, for the Gerry gives nothing away. The drink was an extremely good imitation of plain water. Ah well, who cares. It won't be for much longer. We will soon be back in a land worth living in.

Sat 23^d September

According to the Germans the Allied Airborne Division is being badly knocked around in Holland. I sincerely hope that Chas is not there. It is very worrying not knowing how the rest of the family is getting on. I hope Charlie stays in England. Some of the boys here dug a small tunnel for a joke. Only, as usual, Gerry couldn't see the joke. A new order has come out saying that if anything else like that occurs, our library will be closed and any musical instruments taken away. Typical German though, so nobody was surprised. We get used to these things after a while.

Sunday 24th.

The Germans have cancelled the new order. The protecting power has today visited the camp. The Gerrys cancelled their order last night. The British camp leader has put forward many complaints to the Protecting power representative regarding our welfare. A few are, bad ventilation of huts, no lights of any sort in huts, very bad washing facilities, very little cutlery, holding up of mail etc. etc. It remains to be seen what the Swiss can do. We have already asked for a British medical officer and staff to be sent here quickly, and are still waiting. They are really needed. In my letters home I mention none of these things. For one thing, the letters would be stopped, also, it would only worry those at home.

Tuesday 26th Sept.

Another batch of prisoners arrived yesterday from Wetzlau. I passed through that place. Nobody I knew was among the new 'bods'. I do not know what has to our bomb-aimer. He managed to bale out the night we were shot down, but was picked up wounded. He should have arrived here before now, of course he may have been sent to another camp. The new prisoners brought along a few thousand Red Cross parcels so we should have enough to last us till the end of the war, which cannot last much longer.

Friday 29th Sept.

The war in the West seems to have slowed up somewhat. Hope it doesn't keep that way. The Russians are still a good hundred miles away from this camp. The weather is getting colder now, especially at nights. We usually have a singsong on Saturday nights. All the old songs are sung, and the latest also. Our latest anyway. It is something to look forward to, something to pass the dull monotony of these weeks. Still, all things come to an end sooner or later.

Tuesday 3^d October.

It has been raining steadily for the last two days and nights. The rain is accompanied by a strong cold wind. Everything is damp except our spirits. We are living in huts, a better term would be hutches. Very small, very draughty, with six or more fellows packed inside. We have no such luxury as lights or fires inside. Some of the huts are now half flooded

with water, but the Gerry does not seem to worry. We have no beds but sleep on sacking stuffed with straw. Outside the ground is like mud, for we are in a field.

The fighting on the Western Front has definitely slowed down. A great pity, if only the advance could have been kept up at the same speed. Still, as long as the boys advance it doesn't matter. Tom's date for the end of the war is drawing very near. It doesn't look as if it will be over by then (Oct 10th). It can still end by my date though, (Nov 2nd).

Another batch of prisoners arrived here this morning. We get the latest news from them. I should start receiving mail during next month.

Friday 6th Oct.

The weather has cleared up somewhat, and the ground is hardening. Last night, one of the fellows in the hut spilt some burning wax. We had quite an exciting time putting the resultant fire out. Another ninety 'bods' are expected today. Glad to read the Allies are still attacking everywhere.

Saturday 7th Oct.

The new fellows arrived a couple of hours ago. We have one in our hut, a Glider Pilot captured in Holland. There are quite a few fellows from the Airborne Division here, we get quite a lot of news from them. One piece, Monty is supposed to have stated that this war will be over by Christmas. I very much hope that is right. The sooner, the better. Weather good.

Sunday 8th Oct.

We had an air-raid last night about 8.30 o'clock. We heard our boys overhead and saw them dropping flares. There was some anti-aircraft fire, but we heard no bombs drop. The raid lasted about a couple of hours. Another case of so near and yet so far. We wished we were with our boys up there, going back to England.

Monday 9th Oct.

The lights went out again last night for about 10 mins. The RAF must have been around. It rained most of the night and part of the morning, but has cleared up now. Tom's date for the end of the war falls tomorrow. Not much chance of it ending by then. Maybe my date will be nearer. The films have not arrived yet but should be here soon. The fellows that arrived here six weeks before us are not receiving mail yet, so I've some time to wait, it seems.

Tuesday 10th Oct.

Bad storm last night, plenty of lightning. We thought it was an Air-raid at first. It is raining at the moment. Just been issued with this week's tin of French cigarettes. They are not so good but are a smoke. We don't go short of cigs though. I have smoked more brands of cigarettes since living here than ever before. The Red Cross parcels have to last twice as long now owing to the poor transport facilities. We manage to get along quite well though.

Friday 13th.

An unlucky day perhaps for some, but for us Gefangs a good day. This morning we moved to new quarters. They are much better than the dumps we came from. We have showers here, so I had one as soon as we got here. We are only in the next field from the old camp so it didn't take long to move. Tom is still with me. The war has not progressed much these last weeks. There doesn't seem much hope of it ending for some months. We will just have to make the best of it, I suppose.

Monday 16th.

Getting along O.K. in our new barracks. Sent of two letters this morning. Should be receiving some about the end of Nov. Weather still good Expect it will break up pretty soon. The longer it stays fine, the better. The Russians seem to be making quite big advances, hope they keep it up. I do not like the idea of spending several years in this spot. Had one or two air-raids during the last week. They do not drop any bombs around here as we are in the country. Breslau is the nearest town of any importance.

Tuesday 17th Oct.

Another air-raid today, probably American. Some 'Window' was dropped and I have collected a bit for a souvenir. It is stuff dropped by our planes to render the enemy R.D.F practically useless. Some leaflets were also dropped, but we were unable to get any as the Gerry cordoned off the area and collected them. One fellow was fired on for venturing out of his barracks during the raid. He was not hit.

Friday 20th.

Among the bag of mail which arrived last night was some for fellows who arrived...(four lines unreadable comment ref no mail)... I will get some in the next few days. I hope so, it is now four months since I had any news of home. That is a long while. Too long.

Sat 21st.

The Germans lost a hammer a couple of days ago. They suspect that one of our fellows has it.

They kept us on parade after the nightly roll call and searched all the barracks ?????
????? ????????

They did the same this morning and also the blankets off anyone ??? ??????????

They are ??? ??????going to cut tea rations which are already very small

They also are holding up issue of Red Cross parcels. Dear German.

Another batch of fellows arrived this morning.

Thursday 26th Oct

The weather is much colder now but it is still sunny. The war shows no signs of ending for some time. My date, the 2nd Nov. will be nowhere near right. The Russians are still advancing. There are rumours going round that we may be evacuated soon. We would much rather be left here though. The German civilians are registering for evacuation. I hope Joe's troops cut this place off. They are only a hundred miles away from us at the moment, we are in Upper Silesia, just about on the German-Polish border. Am expecting mail at any time, shouldn't be long coming in now.

Sat 28th Oct

Another batch of prisoners arrived this morning, we have two in our room. Now have 16 so overcrowded somewhat. Some of them have only been shot down about twelve days, 'Lucky fellows'. No mail has arrived yet. The film projector is broken so it does not seem as if we will see any films after all.

Thurs 2nd Nov.

Today is Charlie's birthday, I hope he is in a position to enjoy it. Today was also my day for the end of the war. It appears that I was wrong. Still, perhaps it won't be far wrong. Some mail arrived today but there was none for me. Tom received one from home, lucky fellow. It was posted at the end of August. I suppose mine were posted at the same time, but the letters go astray. I should get one in the next batch. Weather is cold and wet.

Sun 5th Nov.

Guy Fawkes day, Long ago his was the day we built a big fire and threw around fireworks> We made Guys or blackened our faces, and hung around the 'Nags Head' or Jones Bros collecting pennies from people. Happy days. It does not seem as if the war will end this year. The Germans know they have lost the war and give it about six months. I hope it won't be any more than that. It is six months since I was home on leave. Today is cold but the sun is shining.

Wed 8th Nov.

Yesterday was one of the fellows birthday. We had a gramophone in the room and celebrated it as far as we could. The election in the USA was yesterday, we do not know who was the victor, yet. This morning it was snowing and now it is raining, it is very cold but we have a fire in the room.

Thurs 9th Nov.

A rainy day. A stage is being erected. The camp is going to hold shows, should be able to put on some good ones. The Kriegsgefangen band is going strong. The Gerrys have stopped the singing of the National Anthem at the end of our concerts, so we now sing 'Land of Hope and Glory'. The Gerry must have forgotten about that one. We didn't. Just heard that a lot of mail has arrived at the camp. I hope there is one for me, will soon know.

Sat 11th Nov.

No mail arrived on Thursday after all, it was just talk. Today is Remembrance Day. We held a parade here. The 23^d psalm and the Lords Prayer were said, The Last Post was sounded and we kept the Two Minutes Silence. I went in remembrance of my great old crew, Johnny, Jock, Bud, Sid, and Sandy. It was a parade held in peculiar circumstances and I will always remember it.

Sun 19th Nov.

Some equipment arrived from the YMCA a few weeks ago. It was stage equipment. It was put up and last week a show was put on. I went twice it was very good. The show was called 'Rookery Nook', I believe it ran in London some years ago. The 'all clear' has just sounded. Still reading library books to save myself going crackers in this dump.

Thurs 23^d Nov.

Just had a haircut and I sure needed it. Some mail arrived a couple of days ago, there was none for me. I was very disappointed, Tom received three and he has now has four letters in all. Still, the majority of fellows captured the same time as myself have not received any yet, I should receive some within the next week or so. The offensive seems to be going well so far, if only they can keep it up. Be out of this dump by Xmas. The food situation is bad. We have very few parcels left, and there does not seem much chance of getting any for some time owing to the transport difficulties. At the moment one parcel has to last a fellow a fortnight, so unless the war ends soon, we will just about starve.

Sat 25th Nov.

A concert was held last night; the main part was the accordion band. It was extremely good, the band being better than most of the so-called bands in England. There were other turns, a fellow doing a one-man play and another imitating George Formby. These shows help relieve the monotony of the days. No more mail has arrived as yet. I spend a lot of time thinking of my post war business. This is the ideal place to think as there is not much else one can do. The Gerrys here think the war will end soon. That is what they tell us, anyway. I expect they really believe that Germany will win though. They believe everything they are told. The Gerry civilians hate the RAF. We are gangsters and murderers. Many of our fellows have been torn to bits by mobs when they bale out over cities. The terrific bombing Germany has gone through has to be seen to be appreciated. I passed through quite a few of their big cities, they are like ghost towns, every single thing is smashed. The ????? of Aachen, Frankfurt, Breslau, Cologne, etc., places I actually saw were a good 75% destroyed by bombing. A Gerry has told me that during the first 1,000 bomber raid on Hamburg a quarter of a million people were killed. No wonder the RAF is hated. But the hatred is not one-sided. During the time I was in Holland and Belgium, I saw many things That I had always thought to be propaganda

Sun 25th Nov.

Just another day. ...?????. 2 lines unreadable???....
attack around Aachen. They are getting on O.K. further south though. Keep it up boys
The Gerry will not be able to stand such big attacks much longer. They are ???
???ably collapse suddenly one of these days (I hope).

Thur 29th Nov.

Nice day, fairly cold. Rugby game going on. Four fellows collapsed through lack of food. Hope the war ends soon. ?? Padre and Medical Officer have arrived. Coal ration is 5 pieces of ersatz coal between 16 men per day. Food ration very small, my main meal of the day is four potatoes and a thin slice of meat. Still reading quite a lot.

30th Nov.

The last day of November, what will December bring? I expect to be here for Xmas as I can't see the war ending this year now. Still, you never can tell. Today is cold and misty. A show is being prepared for Christmas week called *Pantomania*, expect it will be very good. Wonder where Charlie is. Hope he is in England and stays there. Wonder how old Albert the Glum is getting on. Probably fed up to his teeth. Ah well, it won't last for ever, or will it?

Sat 2nd Dec.

Cold day. Big air raid this morning. The aircraft flew right over us. They will be nearly back in England by this time, lucky fellows. Not received any mail yet.

Sun 3rd Dec.

They Gerry has thought of another one of their crazy stunts. This last two nights they have come around the barracks at some ungodly hour in the night. Woken us and had an identity check. The news seems good. I'm holding on to my postcards a couple of days in case in case I receive any mail. There should be a lot of mail for me somewhere in Germany.

Mon 4th.

Cold day, been raining most of the time. No mail. Some should be in tomorrow. We are still getting our ration of cigarettes every week. 50 per week, which is not much, seeing as there is nothing else to do. Still, it doesn't do us any harm not smoking as we used to. If we had about ten times as much food it wouldn't be so bad.

Tues 5th Dec.

No news seems good news as far as we can tell. The German news bulletins do not and never have mentioned retreats, not even when they withdrew from France. They just mention different places or areas, and from that we deduct how far they have retreated. Mail usually comes in on Tuesdays, perhaps there will be some tonight, hope I get some this time.

Tues 5th Dec

Some mail came in but there was none for me. About 50% of the fellows have received some so far.

Fri 8th Dec.

Four or five hundred letters arrived this morn, but as usual, none for me. The news does not seem as good as usual. The offensive seems to have died down. I don't suppose we will be out of here before next spring. It seems a long time to wait, and it is a long time in a Stalag Luft camp.

It is a good job there are books to read. Still, one thing is certain, we will win and we won't be

-two lines unreadable----

and most of my fingers got slightly frostbitten. They are not so bad now but are a little painful. News seems fairly good. No mail yet.

Wed 13th Dec.

Some mail arrived a couple of days ago but, of course, none for me. ??? more arrived tonight, it will be given out in the morning but am not expecting to receive any. I have just

about given up hope. The news seems O.K. A lot more books have arrived. I am keeping an old library card as a memento. I went out of camp a couple of days ago on a wood party. It makes a great change from being idle. The work consists of loading wagons with wood –unreadable line. No mail, some should be in tomorrow.

Mon 18th

Just another day, as long and as boring as all the others. Had an air raid yesterday, saw some bombs drop. Heard they fell on a farmhouse and killed six people. Just too bad. Had another raid today and heard the bombs dropping. Prisoner of War camps have been under the control of the Gestapo for the last couple of months. We had a visit yesterday of some of that mob. It was cut short by the raid. Plenty of rumours get around the camp. The latest is the Germans have a new secret weapon. It will be announced in the German newspapers tomorrow it is said. We will see.

Thurs 21st Dec

This morning 1,700 letters arrived in this camp. They have all been handed out and I received not one. I am not as disappointed as I would have been a month ago, I still look forward to letters but don't expect to get any. I have had so many disappointments this last six months that nothing will ever worry me again. The news is bad, it seems that Germans are still capable of attacking. Still, they won't get very far. Very cold weather. Not the time of year to escape. My fingers are still slightly numb from frostbite but seem to be getting better slowly. Food very short, we have enough Red Cross parcels to last till Xmas, then we eat only the food we get from Gerry. About 60 new fellows arrived last night.

Sat 23^d.

Soon be Xmas. The weather is very cold. Some more Red Cross food arrived yesterday. Tom and myself are trying to make the best of this Christmas. We have stored up a little food for use on that day. I will be glad when this year is finished. The news is not at all good. It seems as if the Germans are back in Belgium. Still, our people should be able to deal with them. This last day or two, rumours have been going round to the effect that peace talks are going on. I do not believe these rumours to be true. Some more 'bods' have arrived.

Sunday 24th.

Xmas Eve. A short service was held earlier this evening, we sang Christmas Carols. This Christmas will certainly be different to any yet. An air raid warning has just sounded, by the way. The lights will be going out at any moment. Last Xmas I spent with my good old crew at Stradishall and the Xmas before that at Yatesbury. Where will I spend the next? It certainly won't be here. The snow has melted but it is very cold out, real Christmas weather. Tom and I have sampled our home made cake, it is very good. Tomorrow we will scoff it. All of it. We have been informed by the Red Cross that Xmas parcels are on their way to this camp. We have also been sent greetings by some P.o.W. society in England. They say that they hope we are on our way home by New Year! I laugh. Gurgle, gurgle. Of course, they didn't mention which New Year. Still, all things come to an end some time. But what a time. Hope all at home have as merry a Christmas as circumstances allow.

Christmas Day 1944.

Well. We are having as good a time as possible. It is now noon. Last year at this time, I was just getting ready for turkey, Xmas pud. etc. with my crew. Now they are nearly all dead. Us fellows are lucky really. This is only our first Xmas in a prison camp, some of the fellows have seen five as prisoner. It is almost impossible for them to be merry again. Five years is a long, long time in a place like this. However, it is their last year. We will make the most of it. I was hoping to receive some mail before today, perhaps I will have some before the year is out.

Wed Dec. 27th.

Today one of our fellows was shot. He died within ten minutes. It was just plain cold-blooded murder. The news is bad. The Germans are getting more like their natural selves now— pigs, because their troops are advancing. I'm beginning to wonder if this war will ever end. No mail yet. Soon be Albert's birthday.

Sat 30th.

Albert's birthday yesterday, I wished him Happy Birthday and a very happy New Year. I wonder how far away he is from here. I also wonder where Chas is. Hope everyone is well. The fellow who was shot a few days ago was buried this morning. A short service was held. No mail yet.

Same day, 1 hour later.

Wonder of wonders, I have at last received a letter. It is from my Mother. I am very pleased to have received a letter at long last. Well, I've got one before the New Year.

Sun 31st Dec.

Tomorrow is New Years Day. I wish everyone at home a very Happy New Year. A few months ago, I did not reckon on still being here at this time. Well, I am. A pity, a great, great pity. It will end definitely next year, the first half I sincerely hope. I would very much like to be home for the spring. Just have to wait and see.

Mon 1st Jan 1945

New Years Day. This year will see the end of the war. The news seems to be better this last day or two. Joe does not appear to be getting much closer to us. He is very busy in the Balkans. Everyone stayed up to see the New year in. We received a small amount of food from the British community in Argentina about a week ago. It will last another week. We have had no cigarettes for some time. The Red Cross has sent a telegram telling us that food and cigs are on the way. Roll on spring time.

Fri 5th Jan

Some food parcels have arrived. Enough to last one week. Some cigarettes came with them, about 20 each man, we get them on Sunday. Cigs are worth much more here than at home. They are one of the very few comforts we have, when we have them. The news seems average. It can go on like this for a year. Germany is beaten as far as the war is concerned. But they might be able to hold out for an indefinite period, in the hope of getting peace terms. Our people and the Americans seem to lack that final punch. Still, we shall see what we shall see. Adios amigos.

Mon 8th Jan.

The camp has received a letter from the Red Cross telling us that parcels are on the way. The news is average. I do not think now the war will end before summer. Probably go a bit crazy before it ends. Have not received any more mail as yet. I have just about read all the books here that appeal to me. I attend the school classes now and again, they help to pass the time. It is funny how the news affects us fellows. If it is good, then everyone goes around saying it will be over in a couple of months. If it is bad, then fellows are liable to think it will never end. That is a depressing time, but it will end someday. I only hope that day is not too far away. Roll on.

Tues 9th Jan.

This morning a new batch of Gefangen arrived. Two of them are in our room, making a total of 18. Too many. We have got news from them about things in England. It seems as if the people back home are still expecting the war to end within a few months. Hope they are right, but I think Germany will have to suffer a great defeat before the pack the war in.

I am going to attend the Agricultural class. Besides helping to pass the time away, it may be useful to me after the war. Who knows?

Mon 15th.

It is snowing at the moment and the ground is very slippery. At last, the Russians have launched an offensive in Poland. In just the right place too. Although they are a long way from us, they are moving this way. We are all hoping that the Russians get here before the Germans can evacuate us. Little hope of that though.

Tues 16th Jan.

The news is good. We have been waiting six months for this. The Russians are moving this way fast. They are about 100 miles away at the moment. If the Germans do not move soon they will have to leave us. I only hope we are left here. All day long aircraft have been crossing over here, going away from the front. If Joe keeps moving at the same rate as now, he will be here in about 7 days. Roll on Joe.

Wed 17th Jan.

The time has arrived. Orders have been given to pack our kit. We are going to be evacuated at any moment. We are supposed to be going to march to Sagan, which is about 200 miles away. The Russians are not very far from us. Gerry has said that if anyone should try to escape, the five men nearest to the escapee will be shot. I am certainly seeing things in my young life. I don't know how much longer my young life will last though, Adios.

Same day, much later.

Still here. We were going tonight, but it has been delayed. We are now leaving either tomorrow morning or noon. As far as we know, the Russians are about 50 miles from us and coming fast. There is some talk of the Gerry's being unable to get us out. I hope that is true. It means that we will be in the middle of a battlefield, but most of us are willing to take our chances. If we get through it OK, it means we go home. Roll On.

Stalag Luft 3A, Luckenwalde

Fri Feb 2nd.

A whole lot has happened since I last wrote in this book. We were evacuated at about 3 o'clock in the morning of 17th Jan. in a howling blizzard. Since then, we have marched, sometimes by day, sometimes by night, in bitter cold weather. We are all just about exhausted. As for food, we have half starved since the march began. Practically all I think about is food. We have slept, or tried to sleep, in icy cold barns. Many fellows dropped out on the road in the snow, and I have counted eight dead horses and a dead German lying in the snow. This has been my first chance to write since we left. My fingers and feet are frostbitten. All I want now is the war to end and get back home. I am going to eat some really big meals when I do finally return. We still do not know where we are going, or how much longer this will last.

Sat 10th Feb.

We arrived at this place a couple of days ago. It is a prison camp, Stalag 3A, built to hold 5,000 and has now 38,000 prisoners. We are sleeping on straw on the floor, but it seems like Heaven after the last few weeks. There are all nationalities here. We have no parcels but are expecting some very soon, thank Christ. Gerry rations are very small, but at least we are now getting them. The last three days of our journey we did in cattle trucks. There was 86 men pressed in the one Tom and myself were in, so it was just about possible to sit down ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? . We had no food whatsoever the last three days, we are all pretty weak. My fingers and feet are a bit better now. I don't know if we will stay here long as we are not very far from Berlin. Almost as close as Joe. The news is very good, I hope it is over very soon. I am really going in for food when I get home.

Mon Feb 12th.

Still here, we expect to move again any time but I hope some Red Cross parcels arrive before we do. The news is still very good. I hope it ends this month, not much chance of that though. Feel very weak, thinking of food most of the time. This continual hunger is terrible. Our food consists of about three potatoes, three slices of potatoe bread and half a cup of barley per day. A Red Cross official was here when we arrived. He said parcels will arrive in about five days if he can possibly do it. We have been here five days now.

Fri Feb 16th.

Still no parcels. The Red Cross people have been here again this morning, but they do not seem to be able to do anything. The German ration has been cut again. We are getting hardly any bread at all now. My fingers seem to be getting better, but my feet have been bandaged up. Some of my toes have turned black, I am very, very hungry all the time. Just wait till I get home. I don't think the war can last many more months, thank Christ. The news continues to be very good. I only hope I am not an invalid by the time I get home. We have not heard any more about moving this last day or two.

Sunday 25th Feb.

Still here. A German Red Cross official visited the place a couple of days ago. He was shown around by our M.O. After, he stated we were grossly undernourished, very weak, living in poor accommodation, and not in any condition to march further. He promised to do all he could to help us. Yesterday we were told that 2,000 parcels are on their way. That is very good but as there are several thousand British airmen or soldiers here, I'm afraid the parcels won't go far. Still, an ounce of food would be very welcome now. Tom and I spend much of the time discussing the meals we are going to have when we get home. We do not think the war will last much longer, the news is very good. The sooner the better, I am utterly fed up and longing to get home. My hands are nearly better now, but my right foot doesn't look so good. I have had no feeling in the toes for three weeks now. It has certainly been a rough time, hope the future has better times in store for us.

Fri 2nd March.

Some parcels arrived but they were not for us. They were for the French. As every nationality except the British and Americans are getting parcels though, it seems mighty strange. Our people asked the French for some parcels but were refused as usual, whereupon some were confiscated for our use. It will only work out to about a ¼ parcel per man but that is better, far better, than nothing at all. The news continues to be good, I hope it stays that way. I am really longing to get back home. We are making our hot drinks with burnt bread, it tastes something like ersatz coffee. Sometimes we are lucky enough to have sugar to put in it. We have seen no milk though since Xmas. Roll on the days.

Sat 17 March.

Well, since I last wrote in this book things have happened, thousands of parcels have arrived, enough to last us six weeks. It was wonderful to eat some decent again, and to know that I had really had a meal. I feel much stronger and more like my old self nowadays. The weather is changeable. We have had some really nice days but today it has rained quite a bit. It is obvious that spring is near. The news is very good. I am beginning to hope that I will see part of the summer in England. I certainly hope so. Tom feels the same way as myself.

Fri 23rd March.

A nice morning, spring is here. The air-raid warning has just gone. I am really feeling much better now. The only trouble is my frostbitten feet. I may lose a part of my toes, Still, how cares? I don't, and if I don't, who does? It still makes me shudder to think of that horrible march of Jan – Feb. I have not entered much about it in this book. The reason I suppose is, that at the time of the march, writing and practically everything else were

impossible and now I don't like thinking about it that much. Two of the chaps died last week. I hope to be home around June. Many of the fellows think it will end next month. I guess that is too optimistic. Still, it won't be long, I only hope that things are all right at home when I do return. Hope Chas is O.K.

Sat 24th

Another grand day. An air-raid is on as usual, we get raids all day and night. We are only about 40 miles from Berlin. It is a good job we have parcels again, as the German rations are cut nearly every day. We are now on a tenth of a loaf of bread a day. Not white bread either, by a long chalk. I said goodbye to white bread when I left England. My frostbite is getting better now. It is not very painful now, it was at one time. The news is very good, the war is near its end. I hope to be home for June, nice to see the summer in England.

Sun 25th March.

A very good day again, this is certainly the weather to be home. It is now just after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, I am lying back on my bed. I guess if I were home, I would now be lying back on the settee in the front room, smoking and reading or having a snooze before tea.

Sunday afternoon, weather like this, what memories it brings back. Let it be soon when we can get back. The news is very good, this can't last much longer. Soon I will be stepping on English soil again. Very soon, I hope.

Wed 28th March.

The news is excellent it appears that the German army is just about beaten. The fellows here are getting very excited. The main topic of conversation is which week will it end. It seems pretty sure that we will see June in England. All the folk at home must be rather excited, but they can be no more pleased than us Gefangs. We have only another couple of weeks parcel issue left. A lot can happen in two weeks though. We just wait for the news from day to day, hoping to hear that the end has come. I do not think it will be long delayed. It will be wonderful to get out of this rotten country and step foot in England again. Roll on.

Thur 29th March.

Soon be April, wonder what events that month will bring. We hope it will show us the biggest event of all, or is that too much to hope for. Wild rumours are beginning to go round now. Today we heard that there was a 48 hour armistice, then later on in the afternoon, it was said that the war had ended.

Fri 30th March.

Weather not so good, much like yesterday. The food situation is getting very bad. The German civilians in nearby town Luckenwalde are supposed to be getting only a tenth of a loaf per day. It is probably much worse over in the west where the fighting is going on. We have parcels to last for two weeks, so until then we will not worry much. When they run out though it will be a different story. The potatoe ration has been cut down by a third, the margarine by a quarter, and so on. They wont have to give us any before long, because there will be none to give. Not heard any news yet to-day, but am hoping it will be up to last week's news. We are getting very impatient for it to end. All the Gerrys know they are beaten and are just waiting like us for the finish. May it be soon, Very soon,

Mon 2nd April.

Easter Monday. Still in Germany Wonder if many people have gone away on holiday this Bank Holiday in England. I very, very much hope that by the time Whitsun Bank Holiday comes round I will either be home, or on my way. The news is still very good. It can't last much longer, but this waiting for the end seems interminable. Oh to be at home, sitting down to some pork chops round our own table, I have been hungry now since last June. What I won't do to a big dinner when I get back home. Roll Roll Roll on.

Tues. 3^d

The weather has certainly broken up, after last week's grand spell we are now having cloudy, rainy days. The news however makes up for the bad weather. It is great, our troops are about 100 miles from us and at halfway to Berlin. If they can keep up the advance as they did last week it won't be long before they are here. I expect they will have to stop before long though to regroup. It seems that the German Army is just about smashed. I hope they do not get an opportunity to reorganize themselves. The general opinion here is that the war will end any time between now and the end of the month. I still hope to be home for June. What a day that will be. The Gerrys are getting friendly, a sure sign that things are not going well for them. I do not know if I mentioned before that we are now in the charge of the army. All the Luftwaffe guards left here a few weeks ago. They were sent to Berlin to help hold off the Russians. We were not sorry to see them go, and I only hope they manage to stop a bullet. Today should be parcels issue day but I suspect we won't get them till tomorrow. I wonder where Albert the Glum is. Perhaps he has been lucky and has been liberated. No idea where Chas is. For that matter I don't know how anyone at home is getting on, seeing that I have only had one letter since being shoot down. Got used to having no mail by now though and I certainly don't expect to receive any more during my stay in this horrible dump of a country. We only have one parcel issue to come after this one, but perhaps we won't have to worry about food in a few weeks, we shall see. My feet are almost better now, don't give me much trouble and my fingers are now quite better. I will never forget that nightmarish march of Jan – Feb. Nor will I, or many others, forget how the C of E padre kept walking up and down the lines during blizzards, encouraging the fellows to keep going. One sight will stay in my memory. It was during a night-march, we had little or no food for some days and were ready to drop. A terrible snow blizzard was on, and we had already marches about 20 miles without a break. We happened to strike a sheltered road, screened by trees, and were messing around trying to get past a line of lorries that had got stuck in the snow. We reached the end of this road and came out on the top of a hill totally unscreened from the wind and snow. It was murder even to try and walk, and I guess the padre had that in mind, for there he stood with a smile on his face, standing in the full force of the blizzard, waiting to see that all us chaps got by. Near him lay a dead German officer and a horse that had burst open. Yes, a pretty sight. We saw many sights like that though in those few weeks. That Padre, Captain Collins deserves the V.C. if ever anyone ever did. Stil, I all that is over. Roll on Monty.

Mon 9th April.

The weather is very changeable. Yesterday was a nice spring day, fine sunshiny weather with a slight nip in the air. We all feel that the end of the war is close at hand. Many prison camps have been liberated and the fellows on their way home. Our boys are about 130 miles away from here. If they carry on this way perhaps we will soon be on our way home. I do not know if Gerry intends to move us again but I fail to see where he can send us. Hurry up boys, there are a few thousand here waiting for you. Tomorrow is parcel issue day, probably the last. I hope we never have to worry about food again in a few weeks. I am fed up, fed up to the teeth with this life. Never do I wish to see this country again, and never again do I wish to speak to, or even see a German again. I shall hate and detest the swine as long as I live. I never wish to hear anyone complain about England again. I will advise them to try some of these continental countries first, and to see some of the people living in them. I have traveled through three European countries so far, and have met every nationality of Europe. I've seen enough. Its England, England, England every time for me. May we soon see Old England.

Thurs 12th.

The news is good. Our boys are now less than 100 miles from us. We were hoping we would be left here but it seems we are to move again. One party is going this morning.

Tom and myself are fed up with this and when we move we are going to try to escape. It is a big risk, but better than this. We may be lucky.

Fri 13th April.

Some of the fellows moved yesterday, 400 in all. We are hoping they won't have time to move the rest of us. Our forces are advancing very swiftly. They are now about 65 miles from us. It all depends on the next few days. This is the second Fri. 13th. I have spent as a gefang. It will be the last. On Wednesday we were inoculated against tetanus. The weather is pretty good again, nice weather to go home in.

Sat 14th April.

Still here, and what is even better, the fellows who were moved on Thursday came back this morning. The Gerrys were unable to shift them. Things are getting better for us every day. Very soon we will be cut off. I do not think the Germans will try to move us again. Our boys are now only about 50 miles away, as far as I can tell. We are waiting and hoping to see our tanks and troops. What a day that will be. Two of the chaps tried to escape last night but they did not make it. One was killed and the other seriously wounded. Pity, seeing that the fighting is so near its end.

Mon 16th.

Weather pretty good. Fellow who was wounded the other day has died. Bit of a hold-up at the front it seems. Don't know how far they are from us, but I guess it is still about 50 miles. Oh well, perhaps they will get here before long, but will we be here to welcome them?

Tues 17th.

Good news. The Russians have launched a new offensive not far from us. The point is who will liberate us now? We are easy, so long as we are liberated.

Wed 18th April.

Terrific thunderstorm last night and about five air-raids. It must have been pretty rough for the boys up above. Things are getting livelier around here. If the Gerry has any intentions to move us he will have to do it soon. I hear that one half of this horrible dump of a country is now occupied so our turn will be coming soon. There is liable to be a lot of action around here seeing that our boys are about 50 miles west of us; Joe's kiddies are about the same to our east, and a strong German army is in the middle. We have had a number of RAF officers brought in from Sagan, the senior officer has sent us instructions as to what to do if the Gerry guards suddenly hop it and leave us on our own. Most important thing will be maintenance of discipline. That will be necessary as never before seeing that we are liable to have no food. Yea, things may be very tough for a little while. However, I will survive. I have not been all through this just to drop out at the post. The German food rations are now so small that a fly wouldn't be able to find landing space. We have been issued with our last parcel and it has got to last a fortnight. By that time I hope we are in the hands of the Americans or the Ruskies. We were very surprised to hear of the death of President Roosevelt. A very good man who will long live in the memory of millions of people. The sun is now shining on this dump. If I'm not home by June I'm giving Churchill the sack, this holiday is stretching out too long. Much too long.

Fri 20th.

Adolph's birthday. The news is not so good. The Germans have advanced 15 miles on the sector that interests us. It seems we are not lucky enough to be set free for a while yet. Still, perhaps that will all change in a couple of days. We are getting very short of food. An air-raid is on at this moment, I can hear the bombs exploding. Weather fine but cold.

Sat 21st.

Things appear to be coming to a head. The Russians are advancing more or less in our direction. I do not know how far they are. However, the civilians are moving out this morning. I have just been watching some of them dragging their belongings along the road. We have taken over the kitchen here, I don't think there is much in the place. We had a roll-call this morning. Many of the guards are supposed to have gone. The army fellows (our chaps) are detailing guards to take over when the Gerrys finally leave us. It won't be long now. We were told this morning that many camps have been liberated in this area. A lot of prisoners have been killed by running out of the camps to greet the tanks. We have been told to stay in camp and under cover when the fun starts. Last night I could see artillery flashes in the east. Yea, things are happening at long last, it won't be long before I see home again.

Liberation

Same Day, Afternoon.

Great news. We are on the point of being liberated. The German guards have all gone. We have taken some of them prisoner. Our men have taken over the camp. White flags have been hung up around the outside of the camp. The RAF officers have been over to us. We are now a service unit again, thank God. The Russians are known to be less than 20 miles from us and this morning there was an action in the town of Luckenwalde, just over a mile away. We have been told to expect the Russians at any time. Our officers have promised we will be on our way home as soon as possible. As yet I can hardly believe it. We have waited so long that it just doesn't seem possible. All morning we have heard the artillery, but I could not believe they were so near. Roll on Joe. Roll on England. Roll on home. Roll on.

Sun 22nd April.

Greata Day. A few minutes ago, I was wakened by the sound of cheering. The time was 6.15 am. Fellows were shouting, "They are here". It is true. The Russians have liberated us. We are free again. At last it is over, these months of waiting.

Mon 23^d. April

Yesterday a lot of Russian tanks and lorries drove through the camp. They were greeted by cheers and the scene was one of wildest joy. There are still several Gerries knocking around. Just small pockets of resistance, but they are being mopped up. We have had aircraft strafing and quite a number of bullets have come into the camp. Also an artillery duel was going on yesterday afternoon. Shells were hitting a woods just a couple of hundred yards away making things very nice and comfortable. Who cares, we won't be here much longer, just waiting for the Russians and Americans to link up. We will be the first camp to be liberated by the Ruskies and to go home westwards. As soon as the Americans get here the quicker we can start our journey home.

Tues 24th.

Still waiting for the Yanks to arrive, the fellows are getting very impatient to start moving. That is only to be expected. An aircraft came over here strafing again last night. Lots of Russian planes about today. This area has been cleared completely of Gerry pigs now. The Ruskies have commandeered food from the German villages and are sending it up here. We had Russian news reporters here yesterday and had our photographs taken. I should be in England in two to three weeks from today. It will be great to get home again. It is now safe to write here that we have been getting the BBC news pretty regularly since I have been a prisoner. We had hidden crystal sets which the Gerrys knew nothing about, and so we have kept in touch with the latest events. Roll on Yanks.

Wed 25th April.

Still waiting, no signs of the Americans yet. The funeral is taking place today of eight Russian who died of starvation. The Russians are looking after us for food, the rations are not much larger, but the quality is 100% better.

Fri 27th

The fellows are very impatient to be moving. The Yanks have not arrived yet although we were told they had linked up with the Ruskies. We are not allowed out of camp but Tom and myself yesterday broke out and went to the town of Luckenwalde. It is pretty quiet there. The German civvies are dead scared of the Ruskies though. It is good to see a German town under occupation. They have very little food. I'm glad we won't be spending next winter in Germany because it seems they are going to be very short of food. Too bad. No strafing last night. Hope we start moving soon.

Sun 29th.

Getting pretty fed up; still here. We were liberated a week ago today but it seems as though we are still prisoners for all the good it has done us. I guess the war will be just about over by the time we get back seeing that Germany has asked to surrender unconditionally. Weather very changeable. Eating better than we used to. Everyone is getting very restless and discouraged as each day goes by and no signs of moving is shown. We expected more of our government than to keep us here rotting away in this rotten prison camp inside this rotten dump of a country called Germany.

Tues 1st May.

Happy birthday Mum. I only wish I were home to say it. The war seems to be coming to an end fast. We are going to move to another camp as the Ruskies consider that our living conditions here are terrible. The new place is not a prisoner of war camp, but a German officers training camp-. It is supposed to be a very good place. It does not seem as if we will be going home for some time. Nothing they do for us here can compensate for having to stay in this country. The sooner we go home the better it will be for all, but it appears we will have to wait till after the war has ended. Well Mum, on your next birthday we will all be home anyway.

Thurs 3^d.

The move to the new camp has been cancelled, thousands of refugees arriving there have taken up all the room. I would rather stay here anyway. The next move I make I want to be in the direction of England. Had several battles around here. Bullets and shells whistling about. A mortar shell landed in the camp, strangely enough in a trench. . No one was taking cover in the trench so no one was hurt. Really fed up to the teeth now, waiting to go home. So Musso is dead and Hitler is dead. Things must be pretty hot for them right now. Expecting the war to end in a week, it won't be much longer anyway.

Fri 4th.

The Americans are here. They say we are moving almost at once. We really feel liberated now. Tom and myself were planning to walk to the American lines ourselves. We were going to leave Sunday morning, but now we don't have to. The Yanks have come just in time for food is getting very, very short. The food situation has been completely upset by the thousands of refugees who have arrived here. I'm hoping to be home within a fortnight, it still seems too good to be true.

Well, this old book has just about served its time; it has helped me to pass away those months of waiting.

Thurs 10th.

The war ended a few days ago. We are still in this same dump, it seems we will never get home. The Americans came for us a couple of days back but the Russians would not let them take us away as it was not official. So we have to wait here till things are done officially. I could have been on leave by this time but for red tape. I really feel as if my life

is being wasted now, more than I ever did when a prisoner of the Gerry. We are just as much prisoners as ever, knowing that the war is over only makes it worse.

Sun 13th May.

Still no signs of going home. We have shifted to another part of the camp; to the old German quarters. It is something like Luft 7 in these barracks. The weather is grand and I am getting sunburned. It is the same in England, we know as we have a radio that used to belong to some German civilian or other in Luckenwalde. We can go for strolls around the countryside. The country is pretty good around here but there is another country that is far better than this, and that is a few hundred miles away. Every day seems like a year now, just waiting to go homewards.

Thurs 17th May

The weather I still grand. Food is very short. The Russian tell us that we shall be on our way home before this month is out. I hope so... It makes things doubly worse when we hear on the radio each day that so many thousands of ex-P.O.W. are being flown home. It seems they have forgotten about us. Expect Albert is home by now. Still, one day we shall see the transport arrive to take us to the other side of the Elbe.

Sat 19th May.

It seems that we are about to go. We have just been told that agreement has been reached about the exchange of British, American, and Russians. The Russians say that we will leave at midday tomorrow by truck to the other side of the Elbe. I expect we will fly home from there. Soon be home on six weeks leave now. Tomorrow is Whit Sunday.

Mon 21st May

We left Stalag 3A yesterday, and are in a reception centre waiting to fly home. We should go very soon. We are with the American Army now. It was great to eat some decent food again: and white bread, it tasted like cake. I expect this will be the last entry in this book. I hope it is

Sat 26th May 1945.

Arrived back in England.

**IN MEMEORY OF
SGT. LESLIE STEVENS, RCAF.**

**SHOT DOWN IN COLD BLOOD,
STALAG LUFT 7
WED. 27TH DEC 1944**