

Tues.  
mid  
am  
1945It happened one night.

RAF 9 Squadron, Waddington, Lincolnshire, 25th February 1943. About 7 pm. on a rather dull evening.

All pre-flight preparations had been made, the target was a tank factory near Nuremberg. We were to fly in the main stream towards the Ruhr / etc. at some point along the route, to change direction towards the south-east, to arrive over the target at the E.T.A. We were under strict orders to bomb only on the target marker laid down by the Pathfinder force.

We scrambled aboard the wagon and bumped off to dispersal where our Lancaster "W for Willy" stood ready for take-off. We climbed aboard, and got ourselves settled into our positions, the pilot and flight-engineer started the four engines and ran them ready for departure. A few minutes before we were due to taxi to the runway, a message was received to the effect that the flight had been delayed. Engines were stopped, and we all trooped out into the evening air and sat about talking and smoking to await further instructions. I found my parachute something of a nuisance, so I took it off and laid it on the tarmac.

Eventually the signal came for the all-clear. Engines were re-started, the crew took their places and slowly, the aircraft moved towards the runway. Suddenly there was a loud banging on the aircraft door, and shouting could be heard above the noise of the engines. The aircraft halted, the door was flung open, and one of the ground crew handed in a parachute! It was mine! We continued to taxi, and arrived at the point for take-off. "W for Willy! W for Willy! You may taxi up and take off (repeated) Off you go!"

Off you go! Does: The engines roared as the throttles were opened, and we were soon hurtling down the runway. One or two little bumps and we were airborne. I left my position in the nose, and entered the front-gun-turret. As bomb-aimer I was responsible to mark the gun in certain circumstances, and endeavour to map read the route. As we climbed away from the airbase, we entered thick cloud, and I was fascinated by the reflections on the clouds of what appeared to be several Lancaster. As it was, the reflections were of our own aircraft. We continued to climb still in cloud, until suddenly the cloud ended and we came out into bright moonlight. Below me, I could see some scattered islands which I now realise were the Faerians and shortly after this point we altered course for the target area. I spent most of the time ~~at~~ <sup>continually</sup> scanning the night sky for any approach of danger, but fortunately there was none.

As ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> neared the target, I left the turret and returned to the bomb-bay, where I made sure all was set for the job in hand, including bombing height 16,000, air speed etc which I set on the bomb-sight. In the bright moonlight the town of Nanking could be clearly seen, but no sign of anti-aircraft fire, searchlight or Pathfinder target. Something was wrong. Either we were early over the target, or the Pathfinders were late. I could clearly see the factory in the bend of a river, but bearing in mind the ~~later~~ orders about bombing, refrained from attacking it. We were forced to retreat out, path in order to come in again on our prescribed target-market, and by this time air defences below had realised what our target was. Searchlight swept the sky, tracer flew up from the guns, and we were in for quite a reception.

At last the large red white & blue marked flowered  
down below, and we started our bombing run. With eyes  
glued to the target in the bomb sight, I thought the pilot  
on a bombing run. "Bomb doors open" Left, left. Steady!  
As the target loomed in the sight, I pressed the button.  
As the thousand-pounder left the bay, the a/c almost  
bounced up, and "Bombs gone". The a/c pulled  
away from the target area, and set course for home.  
Suddenly, there was a violent thud, the aircraft  
shuddered and then over the intercom, I heard the skipper  
shout, "Port engine on fire. Pull extinguisher cord, or  
press button whatever was needed." There was a great  
deal of noise and confusion. The engine was still burning  
away, and all the <sup>manoeuvring</sup> of the pilot could not  
prevent the flames from opening along the wing. Finally  
it became obvious that the aircraft had to be  
abandoned and the order was given.

It was my duty in the event of abandonment  
to remove the escape hatch, and get it through  
the open hatch. It refused to be jettisoned. It  
jammed in the hole, so I was forced to release it,  
and stow it inside the bay. This meant that only  
one person at a time could occupy the escape  
passage, so it would have been very difficult for  
me to have made enough space for any one else.  
So, I had to be first.

I unplugged my intercom, knelt  
over the hatch, and went headlong into space.

Remembering instructions, I grasped my parachute  
release, and buffeted by the slipstream of the aircraft  
waited a few seconds before pulling the rip cord.

I eventually pulled it, but to my horror there was  
no ~~not~~ welcome tug on my shoulder. I looked down,  
and in the moonlight I saw that the small pilot chute

had opened inside the parachute bag, like an upside-down  
unfurled umbrella. Quickly, I reached inside the bag  
and pulled it out. The parachute streamed out behind it,  
and I was floating gently to earth on the bright moonlight.  
Since I had left the aircraft, I had held my breath, and now  
it exploded in a feeling of relief. For what seemed a few  
minutes I floated between earth and sky, and then the ground  
below began to speed up towards me, and I had landed.

For a few seconds I lay there getting my senses back, and  
when I was able to take stock of my surroundings I found myself  
in a ploughed field seemingly miles from my where, and  
at the foot of a large electricity pylon. "Third time  
lucky!"

I did my best to bury my parachute, but the  
ground was still frozen, so I did the best I could. I felt in  
my flying-suit pocket for survival kit, map, compass,  
matches etc. It was not there, it must have fallen out  
on the way down, and Switzerland or France was a  
long way off. However, I decided to remain free as  
long as I could, so I made my way to the nearest  
road and set off. Overhead I heard the sound of the  
lads on their way home, with regret. I ~~did~~ had no  
idea of the direction in which I was heading. There was no  
one about and no habitation that I could see. All of a  
sudden as I came round a ~~sharp~~ bend in the road, I  
saw and heard what appeared to be village hall or  
canton type of place. Judging by the noise, there was  
some golly evening taking place. I hurried past, but  
as I came opposite the door, I opened and  
a figure came out. "Gute nacht" it said. "Gute  
nacht" I replied, and continued on my way.  
To my relief there was no sound of following footstep,  
my now it was well past midnight, and  
a brilliant moon continued along the road.

making no attempt to conceal myself, and in a mile or two I came to a cluster of cottages. I paused to decide whether to turn right over a bridge or follow the original road. A dog barked, I continued along the road. In a while, I came to what appeared to be a group of farm cottages, and as I felt rather tired, I decided to rest awhile. I found a convenient hay-loft and clambered in. What seemed a very short time later, I heard the sound of horses' hooves clinking and a man's voice. Realising that someone would probably come to collect some hay - maybe armed with a hay-fork, I slipped outside and made off towards the road. A clump of trees offered some shelter, so I settled in. Once or twice during those hours, a motorcycle went up and down the road probably in search of me. I stayed where I was till dark, and then decided that since I had no chance at all of existing unobserved for any length of time, I left my shelter and took to the road which now ran through a pine forest from what came to be called of axis. Finally, breaching an incision, I was aware of two young lads on bicycles approaching me. They looked at me with curiosity as they passed, and then turned and sped off up the hill. Shortly after, down the hill towards me appeared a small crowd of people, mostly older men, some women and a few youngsters. In their hands were aimed with heavy sticks and stings. I continued walking towards them, their ranks opened, and I walked unharmed down to the centre of a village. Here, they all crowded round me, curious, asking questions which I could not understand. I pointed at myself, then up to the sky, and mimed a falling aircraft. At that point, the atmosphere changed as down the road came a man in a greenish uniform, frantically a revolver, which he stuck in my back, and marched up the way he had come.



short time, an officer appeared and in a friendly manner,  
he said "for you the war is over". He produced a  
form purporting to be from the Red Cross, and asked me to  
fill in all the details which included Squadron, Station,  
aircraft and other military details. I filled in each, the name  
and number whereupon his attitude changed. He told me  
that unless the form was completed, they could not send it  
to the Red Cross in Geneva, and my parents would not  
know what had happened to me. I spoke of my parents and  
being Jewish, since my name had a Jewish sound. I assured  
him I was not, and he left. Feeling tired by the isolation  
I managed after a struggle to open a shutter, not with the  
intention of escaping because that was permitted. I was taken  
out of the cell for some reason or other but when returned I  
found the shutter had been closed and firmly fixed. Later, with  
others I was taken to a clothing store where my flying suit  
was removed, and I was given a large Polish Army overcoat  
and a khaki shirt. A few days later, I was taken  
in company to the local station, and headed into waggons  
marked "Forty men or ten horses". My gummy shoe captivity  
had begun.

MAR '43 For several days we travelled East in somewhat  
uncomfortable conditions. The doors were kept locked and  
armed guards kept watch. We had little food or water  
during this time, but at intervals the train would stop,  
and we would be allowed out for a breather under very close  
supervision. Finally, one afternoon we arrived at  
a small town named Schubin, which was in East Prussia,  
possibly then in the Soviet Corridor. We were marched along  
cobble streets and up the hill into Offlag II b. It was  
a small camp built round an old country house with a  
courtyard. Some POWs were housed in it, the rest in wooden shacks.  
During my time there, there was one suicide <sup>and</sup> several successful  
escapes. The Camp Commandant was the old type of

German officer portrayed in British films. Monocled,  
in a shaggy cloak. He appeared ~~at~~ at every parade to  
greet us with "Gute morgen, meine Herren". In which way  
a retold answer was chorused. The only exercise we  
to walk <sup>around</sup> the circuit within the barbed wire. The countryside  
was dead and uninteresting. In the fields we could see Polish  
women working under the eyes of armed guards. Food was  
not plentiful, not varied and not appetizing. We ate to live.  
Lumps of kocherabi in hot water, sawerkh-out and a slice of  
black bread was the usual fare, or sometimes a piece of meat  
could be seen swimming in the hot water. Drink was a kind of  
mint tea, which was at least hot. An occasional Red Cross  
parcel was a godsend. Life went on much the same,  
sumous of meals <sup>and</sup> parcels received daily. News that  
the German Commandant had denied the permits were to  
discourage escape attempts aroused bitter indignation.

In April 1943 we evacuated once again, this time  
Westwards. After several days of uncomfortable travel, we  
arrived on 7th April 1943 at Stalag Luft III at Sagan, Silesia.  
This is the camp from which the "Wooden Horse" ~~was~~  
escape took place, and also the escape in 1944 of 50 RAF  
officers, who were captured and shot by the Gestapo.

Life was a little better here. A bigger compound gave us  
more freedom of movement if only in the same direction, and  
Red Cross parcels arrived more frequently. Huts were divided  
into rooms, at each of which contained up to 14 prisoners.  
Each room allocated duties on a rota. Cleaning, cooking, etc.  
fetching water, and fuel (bricks of paraffin coal) for the stove.  
Cooking consisted of mashing a few rotten potatoes with perhaps  
some corned beef or spam from parcels. Cook officers had to pretend  
to involve himself in some way in the escaping activities. Some were  
used as diversions to help lifters away from capture attempts.  
These activities were fairly noisy as the compound was flooded  
by searchlights which swept it from end to end, and also patrolled

at night by armed guards and vicious guard dogs. Not many  
were successful. Members of security dressed in overalls and  
armed with very long screwdrivers used to prod the  
ground at intervals to detect tunnels, so that all activities had  
to be stopped when these "fenets" entered the compound. Their  
arrival was heralded from the entrance gate to the "working" area  
by a variety of signals e.g. screaming, ratching for a clothes  
shutting, or opening a window etc. The camp had been  
constructed in a large clearing in a pine forest, as the  
soil was sandy and loose, easy for digging into but  
also prone to rolling away tunnels. The summer here  
was very hot, and the winters very cold despite the heat of the  
stove, mirrors of windows were coated with ice. It was  
possible to build a skating rink by felling a chosen area  
with water, and letting it freeze overnight. The skates were  
supplied by the Red Cross. Also, golf enthusiasts were able  
to construct a "mini-de-cours", clubs supplied by the Red Cross.  
Balls home-made from pieces of leather from boots cut down to  
shape wrapped round a smooth pebble, and sewn together with  
unravelling string - permanence having been obtained from  
the Commandant. Several interesting things happened during  
the year. The tunneling meant the removal of large amounts  
of sand; which had to be disposed of without arousing the  
suspensions of the "fenets". On one occasion it was stored  
in the roof of one of the huts, which collapsed under  
the weight, but was brought down the head of the  
establishment upon us. We were locked out of our huts  
for a whole day whilst they inspected every one.

There was a small orchestra in an ~~un~~ unoccupied  
room, which was being used to house the "wooden horse"  
beforehand it was ~~carried~~ carried out at night in  
containing its human cargo + food. The orchestra kept watch  
for human interference, and at such times, the music would  
stop abruptly, and all questions cease.

We were able to follow the progress of the war through daily news readings. A reader would appear in each hut, book-lets would be posted to warn against approaching fronts. The news was gathered by means of a clandestine radio receiver, which picked up the BBC broadcasts. The set had been built from odd materials, - pieces of wire filed from unsuspecting guards, silver paper and tin sheeting from cans of powdered milk supplied through the Red Cross. Valves which could not be made, were brought into the camp by bribed workers in the camp hospital nearby. The set was kept in a KLIM tin, which was hidden in such a way that only the operators knew when it was supposed to be used, but not a day passed without a news bulletin - even when we were in the March in 1945. 1943-44 passed slowly enough, and although we were aware of the D-Day landing and the progress of the Russian armies towards Germany, there was always the question How long?

The beginning of the end came towards the end of 1944 and January 1945. Russian guns could be heard in the east, getting nearer and nearer each day. Finally on 27th January 1945 orders were given to evacuate the camp, and the trek to the West began. In the short time we had for preparation, we managed to collect such things as would help us in our way. Tins of food saved from the pot, cigarettes (sometimes used to barter for food,) and the warmest clothing we had. It was the middle of winter and the snow was deep. We walked along in double file, guarded by what seemed to be 'Red's Army', some of whom found the going extremely hard, and there were occasions when prisoners briefly covered the guards' backs. We weren't the only people on the route. Reminiscence of 1940 in France, the train was crowded with assorted

civilians fleeing westward away from the Russian  
advance. Some walked, some pushed wheelbarrows and prams  
laden with family possessions. The better off <sup>had</sup> in old-type  
carriage, pulled by lean horses or in farm wagons.

Day 1. 28th January. Left Sagan at 9 or 10 am. Pulling horse-  
made sledges loaded with all transportable belongings + food.  
Arrived Halbau 1800 hrs. Sited in R.C. Church after  
sold call in falling snow. No heat. No water. Spent cold  
night on hard floor. 17 Kms.

Day 2. 29th January. Moved to a school in Halbau.

No comment.

Day 3. 30th January. Left Halbau 0600 hrs. for Pribus.  
Arrived ~~Lippa~~ Lippa 1600 hrs. 21 Kms.  
Spent another cold night in R. church.

Days 4 & 5. 31st January. Left Lippa 0600 hrs. arrived Pribus.  
Continued to Muehlen 30 Kms.  
Sited in glass factory. Very warm. Had  
first wash in hot water and a shave. Dried our  
wet clothes. Spent whole day in night resting up.  
Collected 1 1/2 Red Cross parcels distributed to  
people. Stork Harris "obtained" some food.

Day 6. 2nd February. Left Muehlen 1200 hrs. Arrived  
Grauden 1800 hrs. Slept in barn amongst plenty of  
straw. Sled finally collapsed. 18 Kms.

Day 7. 3rd February. Left Grauden 0900 hrs. Arrived  
Spremburg 1400 hrs. 10 Kms.  
Stayed at Army barracks. Marched to station at 17.30  
entrained in goods wagoons, 40 men per wagon also in.  
Train left Spremburg at 21.30 hrs.

Day 8. Arrived Falkenberg at dawn. Train ~~stops~~ <sup>stopped</sup> and  
shunted for hours. Eventually arrived at -

Stalag 3A, Luckenwalde at N15 hrs 100 Km  
Show, search and bed 0200 hrs.

Luckenwalde was a mixed camp containing  
all sorts of nationalities besides Allied prisoners.  
Conditions were worse than those at Sagan.

(Photos on back of wartime log will show something  
of those)

Incidentally on the march we picked several  
groups of tanks heading for the Russian front, often  
accompanied by companies of MGs or field-  
guns or mobile little forces. We didn't give much  
for their chances of escape by the Russians.  
They went by without much incident, until  
on 21st April the Germans began to leave the  
camp and head westward. In order to prevent  
any harm to the vacuum left by their departure  
General Ruge (Norway) assumed command, and  
a Camp Defense Scheme was set up. The citizens  
of Luckenwalde camp were evacuated by order of  
police, German General threatened to fire on the  
camp unless 8 rifles taken from his men were  
returned. Rifles returned, Russian artillery  
shelled the town which was now defended by  
only 1000 Volksturm (Home Guard) and Hitler Youth.  
22nd April. Town of Luckenwalde surrendered;  
and also how Russian tanks burst through the  
town, companies of infantry were seen in the  
surrounding woods followed by more tanks and  
armoured cars. After much sporadic fighting around  
the camp, the German defences collapsed. General  
Ruge visited Marshal Kluge's HQ, and was  
told we would be evacuated westwards.  
April 26th/27th. Russian operational troops moved  
out, and occupational troops took over.

The period of Russian occupation was not a pleasant one. Although we had been "liberated", yet we were not free. We were still confined to camp, and food supplies were both erratic and sparse.

20th April. We were allowed to walk outside the wire for the first time. It was still a hazardous pastime as fighting was still continuing near the camp, and our Russian "allies" who controlled the camp were in the habit of holding prisoners at gun-point and robbing them of maps, watches and other possessions which took their fancy. All this time, negotiations were going on between the British + Allied Senior Officers and the Russians to speed up the repatriation of all prisoners. Tense arguments, and reports rose and fell according to the content of spreading rumors.

Meanwhile supplies of food began to improve.

The Russians were definitely stalling on the business of repatriation. Attempts by Andersson + Allied

Supreme HQ met with a show of force when attempts were made to proceed with an evacuation of the camp.

This situation prevailed until 6th May when another American Convoy was sent away empty. In the meantime, all British prisoners were

held before a tribunal, consisting of a ~~British~~ British officer and two Russian officers to be vetted - for what reason remains a mystery.

During this hiatus, many prisoners had walked off in the direction of the Allied lines, begging lifts from passing army transports.

A decidedly risky affair as there were still armed Germans in the area, and the Russians weren't ~~sure~~ sure about whom they shot.

9th May Norwegian prisoners repatriated.  
10th May - 14th May. successful box some

except for the marriages of 3 Officers to women refugees.

19th May an announcement of impending departure the next day was received with a mixture of hope and scepticism

20th May. Leave Luckenwalde in Russian convoy, crossed the Elbe by a pontoon bridge. at Coswick had incurred American horror. Arrive Halle late evening.

Was received with great welcome. The first taste of American white bread was heavenly, and so was the beer. He spent five pleasant days here with medical checks etc and good food.

25th May. Flew from Halle in DC.30 to Bonnabel reception centre to receive a marvellous welcome from the Canadian staff.

26 May. Flew in Lancaster to Crakby. Spent the night at Breicester

27th. By Train to Craford, de-loaded and re-shipped and sent home.

- 7.5. There would appear to be some connection between the enforced delay in our repatriation and the enforced repatriation of Russian refugees to the Red Army, and Yugoslav refugees to Tito.