RAF ARRIVE WITH PYJAMAS

This was the headline that appeared 60 years ago in February 1944, in the manually prepared broadsheet newspaper, which was affixed to a board and regularly circulated through the huts at Stalag 1VB.

Johnny Bushell and Reg Wilson were among the last contingent of RAF POWs to arrive from Dulag Luft transit camp in early February 1944 and we each had a cardboard suitcase supplied to us from the Red Cross when we left for Stalag 1VB.

I do not recall the complete list of contents of the case, but the recent book 'Footprints on the Sands of Time'(which deals with RAF Bomber Command Prisoners of War in Germany 1939-1945) does. The book says that by 1944 'captive parcels' which each prisoner should receive on departure from Dulag Luft for his permanent camp, should be a cardboard box containing the following items :-

1 pair pyjamas	2 bath towels
6 cakes toilet soap	2 cakes laundry soap
1 cake shaving soap	1 container tooth powder
1 carton cigarettes	3 prs socks-2 prs cotton1 pr wool
1 bottle Cascara tablets(100)	1 set underwear(vest ,pants)
1 box chewing gum(20 pkts)	1 shoe brush
1 roll toilet paper	1 box adhesive compresses
1 plastic razor	4 pkgs razor blades(20 blades)
1 sewing kit	1 can shoe polish
1 bottle vitamin tablets(100)	4 handkerchiefs
1 toothbrush	1 plastic toothbrush case
1 pipe	1 pkg pipecleaners
1 hairbrush	2 pkgs smoking tobacco
2 prs shoe laces	1 pr. slippers
1 pocket comb	1 sweater

On reflection I do not believe we had all the items listed above (obviously compiled by the American Red Cross) but nevertheless the list makes interesting reading! I do remember however items like cigarettes, tobacco, chewing gum, pipe, toothbrush, razor, sewing kit, pyjamas, underwear etc., but not bath towels, slippers, sweater, Cascara or vitamin tablets! As for 'slippers', my only footwear for three months was a pair of wooden clogs with bits of leather for uppers!(my flying boots were 'stolen' on arrival at 1VB)- after that I got some army boots.

Reg Wilson, ex hut 36A Stalag 1VB.