

THE LONG MARCH.

19/1/45 to 8/2/45.

This is an exact copy of my diarised notes as written on the evacuation from Stalag Luft 7 Kreutzberg to Stalag 3A Luckenwalde.

Jan 16/17th.

The Russians opened up their new offensive. Rumours of evacuation on foot. We all hope to be left behind. Gun flashes visible at night in the N. and NE.

Jan 18th.

All are packed up and ready to move. A trial run about 6pm. Was to have been the beginning but scrubbed. Back to the barracks ready for an immediate start. R. put on an air raid. A temporary drome, only working for 3 days got a direct hit. A stick of bombs ran up to the camp but stopped just in time.

Jan 19th.

Pulled out in the early morning. Was first out as the cookhouse sledge headed the line. Easy work until Kreutzberg was hit. Very heavy hauling through streets. Sledge abandoned at Konstadt for a wagon. Bedded down in a school at Winterfeld. Very windy and cold abandoned wagon. 44ozs meat, 2/10 bread, 2 ozs marg, 2ozs honey.

Sat. 20th.

7am. 12 kms to Karlsruhe. Brickworks, hot coffee. Made a sledge - left at 21.30 - crossed river Oder - 20 kms S.E. Bries - 35 kms. Covered 40kms in 24 hours - bedded in a farm 5kms. E. Lossen. Bridges blown up shortly after we had crossed the Oder - can hear Joe's guns - no co-operation.

½ cup coffee, ½ cup soup, ships biscuits- say 8ozs, 2ozs marg.

Mon. 22nd.

Left 4.30 via Lossen and Alznau - arrived Jenkwitz 10.30. Bedded in a barn again. Still hauling the sledge (we made) - with 12 men's kit - too heavy. 5 of us got a kiddies sledge - much better going. Most of the civies have already evacuated - only Polish workers left.

Tues 23rd.

Left 8.30 via Zilden, Bankau, Kooschendorf arrived Wansen 16.30 - distance 24 kms. Accommodation not so good. A very cold night. 6 of us bludged into a hay loft and did ok. ½ cup soup, ¼ loaf bread..

Wed 24th.

Stayed Wansen. 30 sick men left in hospital.

½ cup soup.

Thurs. 25th.

Left 4.10 via Kuschlam, Karzen, arrived Heidersdorf 13.20 - distance 30 kms. Still being herded like cattle into confined spaces - even so - better than sleeping outside. Grub is not so plentiful. Lamsforf evacuees.

½ cup soup, 14ozs bread.

Friday 26th.

Same place.

½ cup soup, 1/ cup coffee, 1oz marg.

Sat 27th.

Left 11.00. arrived Pfaffendorf 17.15 – distance 20 kms. 9Kms. N. of Reichenbach. These german farms are the dirtiest I've ever seen. No attempt is made at cleaning yards or sheds etc. The cows are all stalled and fed (on the soiling system). The barns are v. well built and solid with quite a big storage capacity.
25 loaf 21 ozs.

Sun. 28th.

Left 05.45 via Scheidnitz arrived Standorf 12.15 – distance 22 kms. Still hauling the small sledge. A story of transport is going the rounds -too good to be true – we still hope however. 20Kms is getting too much – quite a few of fellows falling out sick.
1 cup soup 7ozs water biscuits, 1 oz marg.

Mon. 29th.

Left 18.00 – snow drifts up to knees – heavy hauling. Blizzard most of night - an exceedingly bad do.
½ cup porridge.

Tues. 30th.

Arrived 4am – 4kms W. of Jauer. Distance 25kms.
½ cup soup, 1 oz meat, 8 ozs wafer biscuits.

Wed. 31st.

Here we caught up with some 30 evacuated airmen from Lamsdorf who had been left behind sick. They joined our party making ours up to 1482. Civy evacuees here in great numbers – they suffer almost as much as we do – they are moved in semi-open wagons. When is this all going to end!
½ cup soup, 7ozs bread, 1.1/2 water biscuits, 1 cup raw oats, 1 oz coffee powder, 2 raw spuds.

Thurs. Feb. 1st.

Left 08.00 – thaw – many sledges abandoned – arrived Prawnsnitz 12.30 – distance 12 kms., posn. 8Kms S.E. Goldberg.
½ cup porridge, 1 oz marg., 28ozs bread.

Fri. 2nd.

3 x ½ cup porridge.

Sat. 3rd.

2x1/2 cup porridge 12 ozs bread, 2 ozs. Marg, 2 raw spuds.

Sun. 4th.

Commandant announced that 5 men were to be liberated.
2x1/2 cup soup, 12 ozs bread.

Mon. 5th.

Left 06.45 – arrived Goldberg and entrained 08.45 – distance 8kms.
Train rations :- 1 spoon sugar, 2 spoons flour, 3 spoons barley, 18ozs. Tinned meat, 24 ozs bread 2 1/2
2.1/2 ozs marg..
Total distance walked 234 kms. Left Goldberg 13.15 – 56 men in our truck, 64 in some in space of 25x8'. Leisnitz 1400hrs. - left 15.45hrs. Arrived Sagan 17.30.

Tues. 6th.

Spent previous night in siding - Sagan - left 06.00hrs. Arrived Falkenberg - 1st. Drink of water after 35 hours on train.

Wed. 7th.

Spent previous night in siding at Falkenberg.
½ cup coffee.

Thurs 8th.

Left 01.00 arrived Luckenwalde 03.00 - getting hungry - detained 10.00hrs and marched to Stalag 3A. Nearly 400 men bedded down on floor of one big barrack designed for 200 men in 3 tier bunks. Better than being squashed up as on the train. The 75 Irishmen who left Stalag 383 in May 44 are here, so we old kriegies landed on our feet. No parcels in - worse luck. Got yesterday's bread 1/5th. = 300gms. - on a normal stalag diet now - no extras.

The issue per day. 300Gms bread, 1 cup soup, ½ cup mint tea or ersatz coffee, 1/20th kgm., 20gms. Sugar. Marg. 20Gms sugar..

So ended the Long March, the rest of my diary takes one to my homecoming on May 10th 1945.

Fri. 16th.

Bread cut to 200gms. 70Gms. Flour promised in lieu.

Sat 17th.

Came good with the flour - bread is restored to 300gms. (1/5th. Loaf). Hot water with sugar makes a welcome drink. Yesterday the P.P. Commission came - said we must have more grub. Rumours of extra soup.

Sun. 18th.

Bread up to ¼ loaf today. A lovely Spring day.

Tues 20th.

Soup cut by 1/3rd. - 30 Norwegian parcels out of 100 to go for our sick.

Thurs. 22nd.

Soup and spuds cut by 20% - yesterday and today we got meat instead of marg. (1cm of a sausage). We are getting 700 personal parcels of cigarettes to be shared with 9,000.

Fri. 23rd.

Both soup and spuds heavily cut. Issued from the lost parcel depot - 22 cigs per man - also small food issue - I got 1/10th. Packet (½ lb.) oats.

Thurs. March 1st.

Got 375 gms, bread yesterday - March is in like a lion - wind up to gale veering to N.

Sat. March 3rd.

¼ American food parcel - just the job.

Tues. March 13th.

Yet another American food parcel - all the other finished.

Wed. March 14th.

We got a double issue of soup for the 3rd. Time this week - catch - in lieu of spuds - only extra water added. Bread for 2nd. Day down to 1/6th. After 2 lovely Spring days the weather has turned to

rain again.

April 20th.

Adolf's birthday. Ruski's coming again. Gunfire and fires to NE, E, S, and SW - much excitement.

April 21st.

The goons pulled this am. a/c straffed during the night - nerves all on edge - we don't know what will happen, but the Ruski's are close.

April 22nd.

Rusky troops and tanks through the camp this morning. All the Rusky POWs turned loose on the town. We stay here 'til the Yanks co-me and go home via the West.

April 30th.

Still here but are moving to an officer's camp in a couple of days. I've been breaking bounds quite a lot to relieve boredom - no news of going home yet.

May 5th.

Tired of waiting for repat. - took off with a dozen others - heading west. Raided German army stores and picked up a "Got Mit Uns" belt. Treuenbitzen - guests of Russian Command. Got caught up in an ambush when we joined with a Rusky column mopping up in the woods. One of the Ruski's gave me a camera taken from the Jerries. They took 1 prisoner for interrogation and shot the rest.

May 6th.

The Ruski's told us to go back to the German depot we had raided yesterday - thought it politic to look to be complying, but turned West as soon as out of sight. Hitched a ride with some Yanks in a horse and wagon. They stopped by some roadside graves - one of them pissed all over the face of a dead German lying in the ditch - made me feel sick! Reached Wittenberg - overnighed in a workers lager - had VIP treatment from the foreign workers - "Viva La RAF". They put on a magnificent meal, including peach brandy.

May 7th.

Set off in light rain but high spirits. Picked up by an American jeep - rode the bonnet for miles and miles of rough roads. Crossed the Elbe by a pontoon bridge. E. bank lined with Russian troops who were having a ball shooting the mang German troops trying to swim across to the the American side. Not many made it, but still they came. Taken by truck to Hildersheim airfield to await repat. Given a US "K" ration which I scoffed at one sitting - white bread tasted like cake, but all too rich, I was quite sick afterwards.

May 9th.

Flew home via Le Havre in a Dkota - I took control for awhile - hadn't forgotten how! Landed at Westcot, Bucks. - train to reception centre - re-kitted and train to Rhyl arriving about 2pm to be met by Pop and Mother. Then 6 weeks leave on double rations..

A MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT

The preceding pages have been taken from a small diary - 2 3/4" x 2" which I kept concealed from the Germans. The following pages are compiled from my memories - still very vivid of the same period and as written in my autobiography "TO SIX SCORE YEARS AND TEN". They add more detail to the diary which was kept on the march.