



Volavimus
Vecidimus
Vivimus

THE KRIEGIE

NEWS-SHEET OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES EX-POW ASSOCIATION

Editor: CAL YOUNGER

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AIR COMMODORE CHARLES CLARKE OBE

Our President, Charles Clarke was awarded the OBE in the New Year Honours list. It was "for services to the Royal Air Forces Ex-PoW Association," which is important because it recognises the Association too. It is impossible to overstate those services over twenty years.

The Kriegie (No. 28) of September 1977 was devoted to reporting our Reunion celebrating the Queen's Silver Jubilee, which took place in that year. In it is the following paragraph: "Charles Clarke, elected as our second Vice President at the last AGM, became at once an active member of the Committee. His knowledge of protocol, his willingness to intercede and the freshness of his ideas were a godsend. He undertook the trickier correspondence and during the Reunion itself was our front man when we needed him. For the rest, he moved quietly and effectively in the background, aided by his charming wife Eileen, and in countless ways anticipated and dealt with any little contretemps which arose."

Except that he is anything but in the background that tribute epitomises the work he is doing and has done. Charles followed Maurice Butt as Chairman of the Committee shortly after the Reunion and one of his early duties was to welcome Princess Alexandra and her husband to Vic Gammon's charity concert at the Old Vic. When our then President Dixie Deans died in 1989, Charles did not immediately assume the title of President for several years as a mark of his respect for Dixie.

Charles masterminded five international reunions attended by hundreds of ex-kriegies and their wives, many from Canada. He led our contingents to reunions in Canada and was a fine ambassador. The idea for our memorial was his and he saw the whole project through, including persuading HRH the Duke



Of Edinburgh to become Patron of the Memorial Trust and to unveil the Memorial.

He gives an inordinate amount of time to the Association. If he is not presenting the Kriegie Trophy he is wangling money from the Lottery. Every member of the Association is his concern and he is often to be found at a member's sickbed or representing the Association at a funeral. He has encouraged the formation of branches and found the money for regional lunches, which he hopes will continue, and he never misses an opportunity to point out that NCOs as well as Officers can take pride in their wartime achievements.

THE PRISONERS OF WAR MEMORIAL

Air Commodore Charles Clarke writes:

Our prisoner of war Memorial in the RAF Museum at Hendon must be seen by thousands of visitors, but we have to face up to the fact that time will erode its symbolism and it will be seen as just another man pulling a sledge. The same applies to all the models of the statue which are now scattered throughout the world.

For this reason, it might be worth attaching the following note to the statue and all the models.

THE PRISONERS OF WAR MEMORIAL

Films such as *The Great Escape* and *The Wooden Horse* have made many people aware of some aspects of prisoner of war life, but they are usually based on officer camps such as Stalag Luft 3. What is forgotten is that there were many more NCO camps which had an even tougher time and from which many audacious escapes took place. Also, there is little general knowledge of the hardships experienced during the so-called Long March across Germany towards the end of the War.

This Memorial Statue commemorates the courage and fortitude of all prisoners of war who served with the Allied and Commonwealth air forces. It depicts one of the many prisoners of war who were forced by the Germans to evacuate their prison camps in the face of the advancing Russian Army. Prisoners were forced to march in appalling conditions in blizzards, with a temperature of minus thirty degrees Centigrade. They were ill-prepared and wearing just the uniform, clothing and boots they were shot down in, or were subsequently provided by the Red Cross. They had to carry their food, blankets and cooking utensils as best they could. Hence, a number built crude sledges from Red Cross boxes and bed boards, without the benefit of hammers and nails.

The Germans had made no provision for the prisoners' food or accommodation along the route and the first stop after 36 hours necessitated being crowded into a barn and sleeping cheek by jowl in straw; some prisoners had to sleep outside in the snow.

Many prisoners were eventually loaded into crowded cattle trucks and taken to other camps, by which time they were suffering from dysentery. Subsequently, some were marched again eastwards, away from the advancing Allied armies, but by this time the weather had improved.

The first march in the snow was something never

to be forgotten. Apart from the weather conditions, many prisoners were suffering from long-term confinement and could not maintain the pace. Often, they had to be helped by their fellow prisoners as the alternative was being left by the roadside or being prodded by the bayonet of one of the more brutal guards. So-called friendly fire was also a hazard and one column lost thirty prisoners from an attack by Typhoons. No one has been able to establish just how many more were lost on the various marches across Germany.

Air Force prisoners all over Germany shared similar experiences and one camp is reputed to have marched 500 miles. Other camps were held and taken over by the Russians and the prisoners were not released until several weeks after the war in Europe had ended.

Prior to the departure from the camps, a great deal of uncertainty existed as it was not known whether Air Force prisoners would be held for bargaining or shot, as were the 50 officers after the Great Escape.

Also remembered are those airmen who became prisoners in the Falklands and Gulf conflicts. Their period of captivity was relatively brief but was probably more horrendous.

The sculpture is by the eminent sculptor, Pam Taylor ARBS who has other work in the RAF Museum. She is also well known for the magnificent Allied Air Crew Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

The statue was funded and provided by the Members and many friends of the Royal Air Forces ex-Prisoners of War Association, and was unveiled on 14th May 2003 by His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh KG KT. It is the only known Memorial to ex-prisoners of war of the Allied and Commonwealth Air Forces.

TROOPING THE COLOUR

Never short of ideas to involve and benefit members, our President obtained a generous grant from the Veterans Challenge Fund to enable a party to attend the Colonel's Review of the Queen's Birthday Parade, the rehearsal for the Trooping the Colour ceremony, on 10 June. The grant covered the cost of tickets and essential transport. It was typical of Charles to think of enlarging the instructions on the reverse of the tickets and photocopy them on to the back of his memo to those members who had advised their intention to attend.

Mindful that it would be a long morning for members, Charles had also arranged

refreshments at Canada House and for members to be directed or assisted by cadets from the Middlesex Wing of the ATC and they did their job well. Interestingly, a condition of the grant was that the two groups, kriegies and cadets, should talk together so that the cadets could understand what prisoners of war experienced. There was much chat at Canada House.

CADETS ON PARADE

A number of members were privileged to attend the annual parade of the Middlesex Wing of the ATC at Uxbridge on Sunday 10th September. It was a blistering day, not at all what we expect in September, but it seems that we must get used to abnormal weather. Much walking was also involved but it was well worth it.

Before the Parade, we visited an exhibition featuring the numerous activities of the Wing, which was most impressive. Even more so was the Parade, with 900 cadets marching to their stations on the vast parade ground. It was from this Wing that the cadets who attended us at Canada House after the Trooping were drawn. It was wonderful to see, in these days when youth gets a bad press, this assembly of enthusiastic, disciplined young people. Many of them received awards, either as individuals or as representatives of their squadrons. All the trophies had to be handed back and so gradually they were transferred from one loaded table to another.

When the Parade was finished, refreshments were laid on and we had an opportunity to talk to some of the cadets and to the VIPs who attended the Parade. These included Group Captain John Maas and his wife Penny, both of whom took part in the re-enactment of the Long March. We are very grateful to Penny for the delightful account of the March which appears in this issue. Group Captain Maas is CO of RAF Northolt, the headquarters of the Middlesex Wing of the ATC.

VISIT TO RAF COLLEGE CRANWELL

The Commandant of RAF Cranwell was good enough to invite your Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer to visit the Royal Air Force College. The programme for the visit included a guided tour of the College and a Lunch and Dinner with the cadets and their officers. The Dinner took the form of a training Dining-in Night for the cadets, who will shortly graduate, and it was certainly enjoyed by the Association representatives.

Needless to say, your Chairman was required to "sing for his supper". He spoke on particular

aspects of the Great Escape and the Forced Marches from Sagan, also the uncovering of the Great Escape tunnel and the re-enactments of the Forced Marches.

The opportunity was taken to present the College with a framed copy of the "Stalag Luft 3 Tunnel Martyrs" print. It was explained that the presentation was on behalf of the Royal Canadian Air Force ex-PoW Association, who were responsible for commissioning the original painting.

On behalf of our Association, your Chairman presented the College with a model of the PoW Memorial. It seemed appropriate that the birthplace of the Royal Air Force should have both a model and the print to commemorate all Air Force prisoners of war, some of whom must have trained at Cranwell.

It was the Commandant's wish that we should highlight the history to inspire the cadets to uphold the traditions of the "junior" service. Hopefully, this was achieved as we were informed that the cadets had hung on every word of the veterans.

CHC

REGIONAL LUNCHEES

Our 60th Anniversary lunch on 7 July 2005, having been partially ruined because of the tragic antics of suicide bombers, part of the Lottery grant negotiated by Charles Clarke was not spent. It may be that Charles also over-estimated our requirements a bit. Be that as it may, the Lottery people agreed to Charles's suggestion of regional lunches so that members of the Association who normally cannot attend reunions had an opportunity to do so. There was also a compensatory lunch, blessed by the Ministry of Defence, in London.

LUNCH AT THE GREEN JACKETS

By Phil Potts

The venue, The Royal Green Jackets Club in Davies Street, Central London, attended by some forty members, friends and guests of the Association – a guarantee of good companionship and excellent conversation. Additionally, a really appetising lunch was served, with the minimum of fuss but most professionally.

Several of those present had met earlier, holding a mini-reunion in the pub at the top of Davies Street before proceeding to the appointed venue, to be welcomed by our Chairman, Charles Clarke and his charming wife Eileen (what would we do without them?), who not only pointed us in

the right direction, but more importantly, advised us where the toilets were located.

The Royal Green Jackets is an old, well-established club, and the tradition of the Regiment was much in evidence, including in the entrance hall a list of all those who, in various theatres of war, had been awarded the Victoria Cross. A most imposing list! The dining room was simply but functionally appointed with the Regimental silver on display.

The main course, roast beef served carvery style, good wine, limitless conversation and the minimum of speeches – who could ask for more!

Our thanks are due to Charles for arranging such a wonderful occasion.

THE HAMPSHIRE LUNCH

By Bill Bloxham

I am glad to say the lunch was quite successful despite the continual drip of numbers, from twenty-five who declared their intent initially to the thirteen who eventually made it to the Mortimer Arms, Ower, on a bright sunny day on 2nd May.

With a splendid menu and service, all who attended expressed much pleasure and satisfaction with the venue and the hospitality of the hotel staff. Regrettably, one of the original list, John Weston, died, and all the other withdrawals had serious illness or hospital or doctor appointments which prevented them from making the trip. However, the whole venture was worthwhile and all were grateful for the effort and organisation entailed.

NB Jack Wilkins, who attended the lunch, wrote to Charles Clarke, expressing the appreciation of those present of the efforts of Bill and Nita in organising the event and also paid a very warm tribute to Charles and Eileen "for their hard work and hours of devotion put into the organisation and management of our Association."

LUNCH AT RAF COSFORD

By Ted Chachart

A party of eleven people attended the lunch at RAF Cosford. It consisted of Air Commodore Peter Hughes and his wife Sandie, Reg and Betty Cleaver, Pancho and Mrs Martin, George Sidebotham, Jack Plant, two carers and myself. We were welcomed by the Station's second in command, Captain Anthony King RN, who presented us all with a Cosford wall plaque and a very nice pen in a box. Our hosts were Warrant Officers, Paul Dodds and Alex Straney and we toured various parts of the Station and the

museum. The highlight was being taken into the Link Trainer, now of course called a Flight Simulator – this one was rather different as it cost many millions of pounds and was for the new Eurofighter.

Our hosts asked for a volunteer and the "carer" I had brought along for our Far East PoW, who needed a wheelchair, jumped up and was in the cockpit before anyone else knew what was happening. He was instructed to start the engines, run up one at a time and to do various other tasks, all of which could be seen on the large screen where images and replica components copy the changes being carried out in the cockpit.

We had lunch in the Officers' Mess and were joined by several senior officers, all of whom were very interested in "Kriegie talk" and would have continued but their clocks were ticking.

At the end of the day I managed to get a number of copies of *Handle with Care* signed by those kriegies present. Copies were presented to the CO and to our two W/O hosts. Other signed copies produced some extra funding for our Association.

NB Total from the sale of this book now stands at £700 and I still have 60 books for sale at £20, including p&p, £14 of which goes towards the cost of the publication and £6 to the Association. *Handle with Care* is very funny but it is much more: the drawings are accurate records of barrack interiors as well as the life that went on in them. More and more children and grandchildren of kriegies are becoming interested in what their fathers and grandfathers went through and Anderson's drawings are a wonderful aide memoire.

OTHER LUNCHES

Jack Lyon organised the SW Branch lunch and reported that twelve people were present. Unhappily, Hazel was unwell and Jack, putting first things first, did not go. Jack and Hazel have found their house in Cornwall too big to manage now and have moved to Kent.

Laurie Simpson organised a lunch for members in Devon and Eddie Scott Jones did likewise for the North West and North Wales branch.

For the regional lunches programme we have to thank our President, Charles Clarke. It was his idea and he worked tirelessly and negotiated very skillfully with the Lottery Board to bring it about. As with so much else, we are hugely in his debt.

THE LONG MARCH – RE-ENACTED

On Saturday 26th August, a party of 30 people gathered at RAF Northolt to begin a most memorable adventure. Following a very successful Staff Ride last November to Stalag Luft Three accompanied by the "Great Escaper" Jimmy James, plans were set to develop our interest and respect for living history further. Northolt and 32 (TR) Sqn in particular, have close links with Polish veterans who served at Northolt during the second world war, and a great respect and appreciation endures not only for those who gave their lives, but those also who regale tales to this day.

Late one January evening, after a merry Burns dining in night, earnest discussions were had to come up with another Staff Ride. The aim was to recreate an event to pay tribute to the Kriegies; a number of whom we had met whilst my husband John had the privilege to command the squadron. Presently, with the honour of serving as the Station Commander, John had been inspired by the marvellous tales and personalities he had encountered during this special tour. So in the wee hours, warmed by malt whisky and good company settled around our kitchen table, John suddenly announced he'd found the theme that was to become the next project. The seeds were sown... why don't we recreate the Long March?

Seven months later, after meticulous planning and much hard work the adventure began. The Staff Ride was open to anyone able to commit themselves to a five day break over the August bank holiday, in all 30 personnel from Northolt including 11 year old Christian, Sqn Ldr Pete Beer's son, made up part of the support party, two serving from Halton and one from High Wycombe. Also in our party were Sgt. Anthony Grosser and his wife Deanne, who were completing a four month exchange post from Australia. How fitting it was for them to be able to represent their country. The group was further enhanced by three very special guests of honour; the chairman of the Prisoners of War Association Air Commodore Charles Clarke, Mr Andrew Wiseman and Mr Ivor Harris, ably assisted by our friend and marvellous historian, Dr Howard Tuck.

After a fairly long, albeit comfortable day of travel flying from Gatwick to Berlin, we arrived by coach to Stalag Luft Three, Zagan at around 10.00 pm. The forwarding party led by Flt Lt James Tenniswood, having left three days earlier with a three ton truck positively bursting at the seams, greeted us with a truly magical sight. The camp had been temporarily transformed into a fairy wonderland, with tea lights and lanterns lining the route and surrounding area. We were camping on the edge of the remains of the theatre, built by POWs for their entertainment, in the naive belief of the Luftwaffe that it would help dissuade thoughts of escaping. We were warmly welcomed by Jaciek, the director of the prison museum, and his team of helpers, who had kindly prepared traditional wholesome Polish fayre, washed down with plenty of lager and vodka (for those brave enough to feel unaffected at the prospect of a 23 mile journey on foot the following day!) The hospitality was warm and generous, and the first of many examples we were to encounter. The evening was rounded off by sitting on camp beds inside the ruins of the theatre watching *The Great Escape* on a movie projector.

As I lay in my tent on that first night, I listened to the sounds of the forest that had grown up all around (as well as a cacophony of snoring I might add!), and wondered what those who had been interned there, had been witness to the most dreadful atrocities and hadn't been fortunate enough to survive, would make of our adventure. I'm a great believer in atmosphere, and whilst the notion of ghosts as a concept is something I'm ambivalent about, I do think we make our mark upon this planet of ours, and the essence of people who have gone before us can and does remain. Instead of feeling a sense of horror and despair, the overriding atmosphere I sensed was one of resounding camaraderie and companionship. I fell asleep content that past Kriegies would be looking down on us with a smile; combining a sense of pride with our sincere efforts and bemusement by our love of adventure.

After what seemed like very little sleep, dawn rallied us awake, and we prepared for the day ahead.

I had felt especially lucky to be included on this trip, and despite having no personal military background other than being John's loyal wife for the past 22 years, I wanted to blend in with the Marchers, and just be one of the "boys". Clothing Stores had lent me Soldier 95 kit, which being the first time I proudly dressed into, and assuming the name of "Bob", stood to attention outside my tent alongside the others, whilst the RAF ensign was raised on our pine tree flag pole.

We were invited up to the museum for breakfast, and were met by a roaring log camp fire and an enormous pile of local Polish sausages. To that scrambled eggs and bacon were added, along with steaming cups of coffee. All tucked in hungrily, aware of the long road ahead. Meanwhile our VIPs were given the same delicious breakfast in the comfort of a little side room within the museum.

Suitably refreshed, we assembled in front of the moving war memorial at the museum for a short service and wreath laying ceremony. Local Polish television was there to record the event, and the occasion focused our minds on the reason why we were about to set off. With emotions running high, we fell into line and began our march. Sqn Ldr (Retd) Vaughan Ward set the tone by being appointed flight leader, and did a fine job at maintaining a good pace, and boosting morale. Vaughan had decided that he was taking part in the Long March in memory of his late Uncle Glyn who had served in the Royal Air Force and had been killed in action. It was fitting that he should stand alongside the flight dressed in original World War Two attire, and soon the party settled into a good rhythm with Charles Clarke joining us for the first few miles, and the others in the party bringing up the rear in a minibus and the truck.

Much of the three day route was through very long straight roads fringed by tall pine forests, where locals could be seen mushroom picking. Now and again cars would slow down and cheer us on, an elderly lady on the back of her son's moped was especially pleased to see us, and would race ahead of us, stop and video us, and we concluded that she had probably been witness to the original Long March 61 years ago.

By mid-afternoon, we had made good progress, and arrived at the village of Llowa where we were greeted by the headmistress and staff of the recently renamed School of the Allied Airmen. A strong link had been forged with the RAF's Prisoners of War Association, and we were proudly shown round the immaculate primary school, and generously treated to a delicious tea party. Suitably refreshed, we said our goodbyes and thank you, and as we departed were cheered onto our next port of call, Llowa's church, where Howard gave us moving accounts of those who took refuge there in 1945.

Back on the road, we marched on until we reached Goznica, a small town that was ready and waiting for our arrival. What a reception; it seemed as if the whole town was out to greet us in the little town square. Musicians were playing, creating a festival atmosphere, with people sitting behind large trestle tables, and children playing under the trees. Jacek introduced us to a tumultuous applause as we marched onto the square ground, and we were soon enjoying refreshing glasses of lager whilst we did our best to communicate with the locals who appeared delighted by our project. The children were especially friendly, and were given little RAF souvenirs to take home.

With more applause ringing in our ears, we left the town (along with a number of young followers on bikes and foot), to our night-stop, the small village of Lipna Luszczka. The advance party had once again done us proud. As we rounded the corner of a country lane, a huge derelict manor house came into view, in front of an enormous overgrown courtyard surrounded by stables and a barn. The barn was to be our home for the night; our beds were waiting for us, and in front of the entrance, a camp fire was blazing away, in readiness for the delicious meal that was to follow. Flt Lt Barry Jezell, well known at Northolt for his culinary expertise, was preparing a curry fest. Whether it was the fragrant smells wafting over the surrounding fields, or sheer curiosity, we were soon joined by a number of locals, all keen to take part in our own little piece of living history. Indeed, the party soon became twice its original size, and a very good time was had by all, both young and old.



Group Captain John Maas and wife Penny who wrote the story



On the March

Gradually, people began to drift homewards, and our flight started to settle down for the night. A small gathering remained, sitting around the embers, enjoying each others company and recollecting the day's extraordinary events. None of us had had any idea of how friendly and generous our reception would be, and we were quite overcome by the warmth of the people we had met. Just as we were beginning to contemplate going to bed, we were surprised by a light making its way across the courtyard. A latecomer had decided to join the (remnants of) the party, and was soon tucking into the remains of the curry, washed down with lager. Fortunately Barry has a good command of German, our new friend had a smattering, and we were able to communicate on a very gentle level, though to be honest, words weren't really necessary. Richard, as we discovered his name to be, was happy just to be amongst us, despite the party having finished some while earlier! Being normally an eight hour a night girl, I dragged myself out of the magical moonlit spell, knowing more marching was required, and I didn't want to spoil my efforts of the first day. I was surprised by how alert I felt; we were all so caught up in the atmosphere of the adventure, that fatigue wasn't really to set in until well after we returned home.

As I settled into my camp bed in the barn, I realised how lucky I had been to go to sleep in the comfort of a sleeping bag, fully fed, and felt guilty to think of the terrible suffering endured by the Long Marchers.

The next morning we arose, and Deanne's medical skills were put to the test, as she administered aid to those whose feet had taken rather a bashing from the previous day. We breakfasted on compo rations heated by the camp fire, which I have to say were really rather good, with a wide selection to cater for all dietary requirements and tastes. Our generous neighbours had brought gifts the night before; we had fresh milk straight from the cow, homemade preserves and pickled gherkins should anyone have the mind to include them in their first meal of the day! Once again we stood to attention for reveille, and then were on our way, while the support party dismantled the camp. We passed through Przewoz, and on until we were close to the Polish/German border. Word had spread, and we were met by a local mayor/who wanted to offer hospitality. This meant a bit of a detour, but we congenially showed willing, only to discover that the mayor's priority appeared to be to target us for promoting the local tourist industry! Briefly refreshed, we continued without incident over the border, until we arrived at Bad Muskau in Germany. The contrast between the gently dilapidating "old worldliness" of Poland and the cheeriness of the locals we had encountered, and the immaculate (almost clinical) environment we now observed with a polite sense of being ignored was stark. None of us had imagined a warm reception; after all, how would we react to a troop of German soldiers marching through our towns with their national flag flying, but it was interesting to say the least, that we appeared to get no response from passers by. Polite interest was shown from a local newspaper who had been contacted prior to our arrival, and a *factual* rather than descriptive account of our expedition was recorded. That being said, the mayor of the town had generously opened his sports hall for our use, and a welcome sight met us: our fantastic support team had set up our camp beds and belongings, so we could dive straight into steaming hot showers and ease away a few aches and pains from our second day of marching.

Suitably refreshed, we made our way to the only open tavern, and enjoyed a variety of food including the largest pizza I have ever seen. Eventually we drifted back to the sports hall- admittedly I was one of the last, as I just didn't want another extraordinary day to come to an end, where I immediately searched for my earplugs in order to block out the cacophony of snoring that hit us as soon as we walked in!

Day three of the march, and the weather had taken a definite turn, with rain threatening from the outset. We packed our bags and were treated to our compo breakfast supplemented by a delicious plum and apple strudel kindly laid on by our host. We sat in the tea room of the delightful formal gardens that were adjacent to where we had rested for the night, building ourselves up for our final day.

Some of our party were suffering with painful blisters and even losing toenails, but the determination was for us all to finish with our heads held high. As we set off, there seemed a more purposeful effort in our step, and our fatigue was distracted by Al Reid's and Rob Marshall's collection of marching songs, some I may say that rang in my ears for days afterwards! The miles positively raced by, and our support team were surprised at the speed we maintained despite pouring rain on and off for much of the day.

At about 3pm we reached the small town of Spremburg. A quick break allowed those who fancied one a bratwurst sausage (it had to be done apparently), and then we assembled into our best effort troop formation to begin the last few kilometres up the hill to Spremburg station. I had felt cold having rested for a few minutes, but soon the emotion of the occasion overtook any other feeling, and proudly each and every one of us, including our support party and our veterans took the last few hundred metres to the railway siding where the original Long March came to an end. The setting was all the more evocative, as the station is now disused and in a state of disrepair. Our team had erected the flag pole on the edge of the platform, and we all stood to attention as the ensign was lowered to a recording of a bugler playing the music of the sunset ceremony. There, the oldest and youngest members of the party, Charles Clarke and Christian Beer laid a beautiful bouquet of red roses and white lilies in memory of those who weren't fortunate enough to have survived the Long March, as well as those who at that point in their journey still had no idea of their fate. This simple ceremony and act of remembrance touched us all, and I am sure is a memory we will all cherish for the rest of our lives.

In true RAF style, we decided to carry on marching (and singing) until we reached our hotel where a full dining-in night had been arranged. In some ways the prospect of donning high heels and an evening frock, a couple of hours after completing a 63 mile journey, seemed the most arduous task of all, but it is amazing what a power nap and a hot shower, not to mention a couple of gin and tonics, can do for the spirit, and we all enjoyed a thoroughly good evening with much merriment and reflection. So much so, that our heads didn't hit the pillow until 4am, some even later than that, ensuring a rather quieter return coach journey than the one at the start of the week.

I am sure we all reflected over the coming days, just what a remarkable mission we had achieved. We were proud of our efforts and our acknowledgement of an appalling part of history, by being the first ones ever to have re-enacted the Long March. Our adventure really brought home the sacrifices made in order that we enjoy a stable and happy life today. I felt extremely privileged to have taken part in this small but important piece of history, and know it will stay with me as a remarkable adventure for the rest of my life.

Penny Maas
RAF Northolt
September 2006

Editor's Note

I am very grateful to Mrs Maas for this perceptive and refreshingly written article. It was much more than I expected when I asked her for a woman's point of view. I had hoped that this issue of *The Kriegie* would go out before Christmas but for personal reasons it has been much delayed – for which I offer my apologies.

CY



Charles and Andy Wisehan at the School of the Allied Airmen

ROBBIE STEWART RETIRES

After 41 years in the RAF, Squadron Leader Robbie Stewart MBE retired on his 60th birthday. His Gulf War pilot, Wing Commander Dave Waddington, made sure it was a day Robbie would never forget. With Robbie in his familiar navigator's seat, Dave took off in a Tornado from RAF Marham, a station that had many memories for Robbie, to give his old crew mate a wonderful send off. The day did not go entirely as Dave had planned. Robbie's daughter Flight Lt Kirsty Moore and her husband Lt Nick Moore RN, both Tornado pilots, were to follow but Kirsty's aircraft was U/S. She had to watch from the ground.

"It has been fantastic to see Dad reunited with Wing Commander Waddington after all these years," Kirsty told *Eastern Daily Press* reporter Chris Bishop. Dave, himself, said: "Robbie has been an inspiration to many RAF aircrew through the years, none more so than his daughter and myself."

Dave recalled the day in January 1991 when he and Robbie were brought down by an Iraqi missile from a very low level. He was unconscious but Robbie held on just long enough to grab the handle which automatically ejected both of them. Badly injured, they were taken

prisoner by the Iraqis. Neither allowed his injuries to deter him from flying again. Dave Waddington is CO of IX Squadron and, until his retirement, Robbie was teaching student navigators at Cranwell. As for the great day, Robbie commented: "Flying again with Dave in a Tornado was a dream that I thought was beyond realisation, but Dave made it happen"

We wish Robbie well in his retirement and hope we will see more of him.

FRANK HARPER MBE

A leading aviation historian, Frank Harper died in June, aged 81. A flight engineer on Lancasters, Frank served on 83 (Pathfinder) Squadron and clocked up 35 ops. In later life he spent many years tracing aircrew from many countries who flew from airfields in Devon and Cornwall and failed to return. Nearly 1000 died while serving at RAF St Eval; the names of most of them were recorded in a Book of Remembrance, but Frank knew that many names were missing and, as a result of his painstaking research, assisted by Jack (Tiger) Lyon, some 165 names were added. One was that of a room-mate of Jack's at Stalag Luft 3 - Dennis Cochran, one of the fifty murdered officers. The revised Book of Remembrance was rededicated at St Eval Parish Church in 2003.

LOOKING FOR SOMEONE?

Recently, requests for information from relatives, friends and authors have become much more frequent. Mostly they come through our website hosted by Frank Haslam, who provides what information he can then passes the enquiries to us. Many old kriegies must surely remember **Stan Parris**. A Hurricane pilot, Stan was shot down in 1941. Stan played the trumpet and created his own band. He produced many shows, which were highly popular and which contributed much to the well-being of his fellow kriegies. He died of cancer in 1968 at the age of fifty-three.

Stan, like so many old kriegies, rarely talked of his experiences and recently, as a result of her reading *The Last Escape*, his daughter-in-law, Vivien, wrote to John Nichol, who sent the letter on to us. Vivien and husband Mike would very much like to hear from anyone who remembers Stan.

Their address is:

6 South Lynn Drive
Eastbourne BN21 2JF.

Malcolm Chapple has written to us about his father, **Squadron Leader Jamie (or Jimmy) Chapple**, who was a resident of Hut 106 in the North Compound of Stalag Luft 3 from May 1943 until the Long March. S/L Chapple was a Halifax pilot on 78 Squadron. His navigator was Canadian Bruce Campbell, his bomb aimer H. J. King.

Chapple never mentioned the Great Escape and Malcolm knew nothing of it until the film was released when he was about 14. His father had a stroke shortly afterwards and was unable to speak or write. Two years later he died. Malcolm seems to remember that his father told him, before the stroke, that he had been in Hut 104 awaiting his turn to go when the tunnel was discovered. He has tried without success to find out whether this was so or not. Can someone tell him the answer? He would be most grateful if anyone can throw some light on that period of his father's life. Is there anyone out there who remembers Jamie Chapple? If so please write to Malcolm at Poundlands Farm, Frittenden, Kent, TN17 2EP.

If anyone remembers **F/L Archie Sulston**, his grand-daughter, Sarah Buchanan, would be thrilled to hear from you, and hopes that you would be kind enough to share memories with her. Archie was the navigator of a 103 Squadron Wellington shot down by flak on 15/16 May 1941.

The target was Hannover. The aircraft crashed in Holland. The skipper and the rear gunner were killed. H.J. Sellers, like Archie a pilot officer at the time, and Sergeants Easton and Hamblin were taken prisoner.

Contact Sarah, her e-mail address is sarahbuchanan@googlemail.com

The last issue of *The Kriegie* carried a request by American writer, John D. Carr for information on **Roger Bushell**, whose biography he is writing. By coincidence, another American writer, Jennifer Schwartz, is also writing Bushell's biography. Mr Carr got in touch through our website and, unfortunately, your editor overlooked the fact that Ms Scharzt had earlier written with a similar request. Naturally, she was not very happy about that but she has been very gracious in accepting my apology. She has already done an enormous amount of research. Asked when she thought she had done enough, she replied, "When I catch every breath that Roger exhaled." Please help if you can. Jennifer's address is: 1705 Samson Avenue, Fort Dodge, IA 50501, USA. Her e-mail address is jennifer@rogerbushell.com

Sgt Ken Fenton, pilot of a 139 (Jamaica) Squadron Blenheim, was shot down by a nightfighter on 1 July 1941. His was a dramatic story, but he died in 1976 without mentioning it to his son Nick. Finding his father's YMCA logbook inspired Nick to find out more and he has tapped many sources in the course of his persistent research.

Ken Fenton ditched the Blenheim 60 kilometers north-west of Vlieland in the Friesian Islands and with the other members of his crew, Sgt A.A. Fuller and Sgt R.W. McDonald managed to scramble into their dinghy. They were spotted by three Stirlings from No 7 Squadron and their position was reported. Two Stirlings returned home, the third, piloted by F/O J. Kinnane (RAAF) stayed, circling the dinghy. Two ME 109s appeared and a battle followed. Kinnane's Stirling was shot down; there were no survivors. An Air-Sea Rescue High Speed Launch arrived at the scene and was also attacked. One member of the crew was killed, the other six, together with the Blenheim crew, were taken prisoner. Ken Fenton went to Stalag 9C, then in April 1942 was moved to Sagan. Heydekrug followed, then Thorn and 357 Fallingb. Nick is keen to learn all that he can about his father. He wants to know particularly how and where his father was liberated. If anyone can help, please get in touch with him at: 86 Lovelace Drive, Pyrford, Woking, Surrey GU22 8QZ



WALTER (WALLY) LAYNE

David Layne, Walter's son, is anxious to know the identities of the men in the two photographs reproduced here. Walter was shot down in a 97 Squadron Lancaster on 23/24 September 1943. The raid was on Mannheim and the Lancaster was picked off by a night-fighter. Three were killed, including the Squadron's Navigation and Gunnery Leaders, four became PoWs.

Walter spent the first ten months of captivity at Heydekrug where, shortly before we were marched out, we were issued with YMCA Wartime Logs. In a letter to his wife, Walter mentioned that kriegies were busy filling their books. From his father's Log David extracted the photographs, which appear to have been taken at Fallingbasted. In the background of the picture on the right can be seen the ruins of the garden built by Italian PoWs while Stalag 357 was under construction.

On 23 January, his commission having come through, Walter was transferred to Stalag Luft 3. He was there for five short days before the camp was evacuated. No doubt he found himself on the Long March from Sagan. He was liberated near Lubeck on 2 May 1945.

If anyone can identify any of the five men pictured, please write to David Layne at 7165 Waco Drive, Irvington, Alabama 36544, USA, or you could e-mail him at d.layne@mchsi.com



HAROLD JOHNSON

Staff Sergeant Simon Amos, currently employed in the British Defence Liaison Section in

Wellington, New Zealand, was recently handed a Wartime Log (oddly, with a red maple leaf on the cover) which belonged to Sgt Harold Johnson, a British PoW. The book contains excellent drawings and a diary kept on the march from Fallingbistel from 6 April to 9 May 1945. The family who handed over the book, possibly connected with a member of Johnson's crew, would like it to be given to his relatives.

Sgt Johnson was one of the crew of a 102 Squadron Halifax shot down over France by a JU88 after a raid on Frankfurt. Three were killed, Wing Commander J. R. A. Embling (on attachment from 77 Squadron) and another crew member evaded and Sgt Johnson, Sgt R. C. A. Douglas and F/S L. C. Fantini were captured.

Can anyone throw any light on this rather mysterious discovery?

LESLIE (CURLY) TERRETT

Sons, Robert and Allan have been researching their father's wartime career for a good many years. Their father was in the marching column which suffered "friendly fire" at Gresse. They are anxious to establish where he was between 22 April when he was liberated, apparently at Gresse, and 4 May when he arrived back in England. Robert thinks his father may have been

in the party which dealt with casualties. Can anyone explain what happened immediately after the Gresse tragedy. If so, please contact your editor at: Mill House, Great Bedwyn, Marlborough, SN8 3LY.

JOHN AND RUSS

John Banfield is pictured (right) with Wg Cdr Russ Jeffs AFC, who was in command of 207 Squadron from May to December 1942. John served on the Squadron from September 1941 until he was shot down on 3 January 1943. The photograph was taken at the 207 reunion in Derby in September. Both were reunion regulars, but, unhappily, Wg Cdr Jeffs died on 11 October aged 92. His memorial service at All Hallows Twickenham on 2 November was attended by John and Frank Haslam. A great character, Russ Jeffs began flying privately in 1931; he joined the City of London Auxiliary Air Force Fighter Squadron in 1932 and transferred to the RAF's High Speed Monoplane Flight in 1935, flying Blenheims. He served on Nos 18 and 50 squadrons before arriving at 207. Later he had various posts in Africa, India and Burma and enjoyed a fearsome battle with the Japanese. He had many friends in the Association. To celebrate his life, Frank is busy setting up a website, which, though still to be completed is well worth a visit: www.207squadron.rafinfo.org.uk/jeffs/



LIE IN THE DARK AND LISTEN

By Wing Commander Ken Rees

With Karen Arrandale

Grub Street (Soft Cover) £9.99

I don't think Ken Rees did much lying in the dark and listening. If he wasn't flying on ops, he was enjoying the night life of the nearest town. In Stalag Luft 3, if he wasn't digging tunnels he was probably thinking about it. How much Karen Arrandale helped with the book I don't know, but it is the voice of Ken Rees that we hear, his character that pervades the book.

Among many excellent reviews the words of Frederick Forsythe must have pleased Ken most: "Ken Rees had a war career that takes the breath away and he describes it so well one can imagine one was there, experiencing the terror." In his introduction Ken writes, "When I was twenty-one I had already flown fifty-six missions, got married, been shot down into a remote Norwegian lake, questioned by the Gestapo and sent to Stalag Luft 3, where I took part in what became known as The Great Escape." His description of that momentous event is very vivid, particularly of what went on in the tunnel and in Block 104 after the shot was heard.

In the early days of his wartime career he got into various scrapes which make for hilarious reading, as when he was pursued by a portly policeman into the civic ballroom of the town hall, now a dormitory, and across the beds which were mostly occupied. Having done 20 ops over Europe, Ken volunteered for a posting to the Middle East. After a number of ops, mostly to Benghazi, he was posted to Malta where he was soon joined by his old squadron from Britain. Between 1 November 1941 and 28 January 1942 Ken flew 23 ops. All the time there was massive bombing of Malta, with the loss of many aircraft.

Ken and his pals got in to a scuffle with Maltese police and were summoned to court the day after Ken was interviewed for a commission. The charges were dismissed but the AOC had heard about them. Ken thought his commission was a goner but his CO got him off the hook and the commission came through. Then it was back to Egypt and ultimately home by sea.

Posted as an instructor to OTU, Ken met Gwyn Martin, who was to become his navigator and lifetime friend. This friendship and his romance with Mary, whom he had first met when both worked at Gorrings, endow the book with a strain of tenderness. Bored with instructing, Ken and Gwyn wangled a posting to 150 Squadron. On 3 October 1942 Ken and Mary were married with Gwyn in attendance. Twenty days later on a mining mission off Norway, Ken ditched his

blazing Wellington in a lake.

The story of the Great Escape is familiar to everyone but Ken grips the reader with his striking account. After the war Ken tried farming but soon rejoined the RAF. He played rugby for London Welsh when he was not travelling the world, even commanding RAF Can at one time.

This is a fine book, candid and warm-hearted, well leavened with humour, it is the story of a fine man, modestly told.

THE LONG HAUL

Memoirs of a survivor

By William Bloxham

Woodfield (soft cover) £15

It is difficult to review the work of a friend; it is so easy to rupture the friendship. The risk here is slight for Bill (our Association auditor) has written a very good, often gripping, book. It is his life story but he begins with his fateful mission of 22/23 December 1942. Bill was the flight engineer on a 138 (Special Duties) Squadron Halifax, which, at the behest of SOE, was to drop arms and ammunition to Dutch resistance fighters operating in Northern Holland.

It should have been a quiet night but as soon as the cargo was dispatched flak seemed to come from all sides and the Halifax was doomed. Hit in his left leg, Bill lost consciousness, the aircraft crashed from 3,000 feet, killing six of the crew. Bill found himself unable to move in the blazing wreck. Badly injured and suffering burns, he was pulled from the aircraft by a mysterious saviour, probably a member of the Resistance, who then rescued the rear gunner before disappearing into the night.

Bill was many months in hospital where, despite his injuries, he was ruthlessly interrogated. His thoughts were often of his parents in a village in South Wales, of his love for Nita, whom he had met in early teens and of his brother Jack who was to die over Berlin in August 1943. He recalled his parents' opposition to his joining the RAF and of his eventual entry to Halton as an apprentice. He also wondered how the Germans had come to be in such numbers at the dropping ground. His quest for the truth of the matter preoccupied him for many years. He learned in the end that the Germans had penetrated the Dutch Resistance and were in control of radio transmissions. That they were should have been detected, but mistakes were made in the Dutch section of SOE and resulted in the deaths of 150 airmen, 50 Dutch agents and large quantities of arms. Bill describes all this in fascinating detail.

After more than a year in hospital, Bill reached

Heydekrug in February 1944 and was repatriated later that year. He desperately wanted to stay in the RAF but was invalidated out and went on, in partnership with Nita whom he married in June 1947, to build a successful career in the Civil Service and in business and to enjoy a happy family life. It is an inspiring story with many interesting photographs. A resolute Christian, Bill's faith sustained him through his ordeal and still pervades his life.

CY

SURVIVAL AT STALAG IVB

By Tony Vercoe
McFarland & Company (soft cover)

Tony Vercoe, a New Zealand Army veteran, has written a truly amazing book, inspired it seems by our member Lew Parsons. It is not a personal account of the author's experiences; rather, he is an observer who rarely intrudes. Stalag IVB at Muhlberg was the largest PoW camp in Germany, with many satellite work camps. A football match could attract up to 20,000 men of numerous nationalities.

The author has done an immense amount of research and the book covers every aspect of Kriege life from klim tins to escape. It has liberal illustrations, photographs by Terry Hunt, whose camera was hidden in a book, and delightful drawings by Ray Newell. Vercoe uses comments and anecdotes of other kriegies and official records, weaving them into his narrative and gradually building up an evocative picture of the huge camp. There were large contingents of starving Russians and relatively affluent French. Each compound had its own leader. Throughout "Snowshoes" Meyers RCAF was the Man of Confidence for the English-speaking community.

There are some extraordinary stories such as that of Florence Barrington. Widowed in the 1930s, with a son then 13, she married a German photographer and went to live in Austria. When war broke out her husband was called up by the Luftwaffe and her son Winston joined the RAF. Winston was shot down and was sent to IVB. When she got news of this Florence moved into Germany and was able to smuggle food and clothing to her son. But she wanted to be near him and the Escape Committee got her into the camp. She swapped clothes with a member of a working party outside the camp, strapped her breasts and cropped her hair. She had secret sleeping quarters and spent the rest of the war in the camp. Fred Ward, another Kiwi, allegedly escaped but lived in the rafters of a hut until the war ended. There are accounts of generosity and brutality of pathos and excitement. The book is a revelation.

Survival at Stalag IVB may be ordered from The Eurospan Group, 3 Henrietta Street, London WC2E 8LU (Email: info@eurospan.co.uk) or from internet suppliers. Price £21.50

BOYS AT WAR

By Russell Margerison
Northway Publications (soft cover) £7.99

Of the many books by air-crew ex PoWs I would rate this among the best – on a level, say, with Jimmy James's *Moonless Night*. First published in 1986, it deserved a reprint.

The author volunteered, aged 18, in early 1943. His first flight was in an Avro Anson where his head "stuck up in the perspex dome like an electric bulb in an upturned goldfish bowl," one of the book's many felicities. He describes crewing up; several changes were needed before a happy crew was formed and posted to 625 (Lancaster) Squadron. The skipper was a USAAF pilot and there were three Canadians in the crew. They began ops in March and their fifth was on the notorious Nuremberg raid, which Margerison describes with frightening truthfulness. They came through unscathed but, out of fuel, crash-landed in a Buckinghamshire field.

Their luck ran out on 21 May when returning from a raid on Duisburg they were shot down by a night-fighter. The pilot and flight engineer were killed; Margerison was helped by a Belgian farmer and passed on to the underground where he was soon joined by his wireless operator, Dick Reeves. The two found themselves living in a house of great opulence for many weeks. They met some extraordinary characters whom the author brings vividly to life and had many adventures, travelling on trams in Antwerp and even going to the cinema.

Eventually they were betrayed to the Gestapo, imprisoned and interrogated first in Antwerp, then in Brussels. Finally, with 40 other air crew in the same predicament, they went to Dulag Luft and on to Stalag Luft VII, Bankau, where they were reunited with their Canadian rear gunner.

In January 1945 they were marched out and after eighteen days on the road and two in cramped cattle trucks they arrived at Luckenwalde. On 21 April they awoke to find the Germans gone but the Russians were there and unwilling to let them go. Like many others, they decided to get away and find their own way home. Their story is astonishing. Holing up in one rather posh home, they were invaded by Russians, who raced upstairs and raped two women, murdering one of them. Their several attempts to cross the Elbe were frustrated but eventually they made it.

Margerison got home on 23 May, well after he would have done had he stayed put.

RECCO REPORT

We hope members like the format of the **New Directory**. **John Banfield** and **Bob Ankerson** have been working on it for many, many months, with the co-operation of RAF Henlow. We owe all three a mountain of gratitude. Preparation of a directory of this kind is painstaking work and John and Bob have been meticulous. The list of deceased members must have given most of us pause. At the time the Directory went to print, membership numbers were down to 461 and numbers are falling with every month that passes.

Norm Graham, of the St Anne's Association of War Veterans in Canada, in acknowledging receipt of a Model of our Long March Memorial, wrote: "The statue has finally arrived and what a beauty it is! I am sure all veterans will appreciate the opportunity to admire this wonderful piece of art when we finally get it to its rightful place, we are hoping at the Veterans' War Museum in Ottawa."

On sale at Aces High, Wendover, Bucks, where several members took part in a signing session, were prints of an excellent drawing of Colditz by Nicolas Trudgman and a book, **Collecting Colditz and its Secrets**, subtitled "A unique pictorial record of life behind the walls". The author, Michael Booker, spent forty years researching the book which, published by Grub Street, is priced at £20. A good buy.

The 2006 AGM took place at the RAF Club on 25 March and was well attended considering our numbers. Over forty members attended and eighty enjoyed the lunch. President Charles reported on the many activities which took place during the year to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of hostilities, notably the Lunch in St James's Park which coincided with that tragic day, 7th July 2005.

A number of members had the honour to be invited to a dining-in night in the Officers' Mess at RAF Northolt. On 21 April, we went first to RAF Uxbridge, where we were to spend the night, tied our black ties, then were taken by coach to Northolt. It was a wonderful evening, with full dress uniforms and the family silver and the continuously circulating port. Jock Morrison gave a short talk, which entranced our hosts.

Sagan is a busy place these days, especially for Charles Clarke and Andy Wiseman. Readers may remember that when the Long March was

revisited in 2005, the party was entertained by a school whose children look after the Memorial to "The Fifty". The school at Lłowa in Poland was known only by a number. On 30 April it was named **The School of Allied Aircrew**. Charles and Andy were there. The children put on an impressive display. Later an Association wreath was laid at Sagan.

THE KRIEGIE ROOM

The following e-mail was received recently from Wing Commander Clive Montellier, OC Support Wing, RAF Wittering:

Gentlemen, I hope it will come as no surprise to you that, earlier this year (2006) the memorabilia of the RAFs Ex-PoW Association accompanied Stafford's major units when they relocated to RAF Wittering. As a front-line flying station, with a history dating back 90 years to when one, Major Arthur Harris, RFC, selected the site in 1916, we are proud to be associated with the Kriegies, hopefully, our fairly central location will also make us as accessible as Stafford towns. The display case, pictures and model of "The Long March" statue have now been installed in our Officers' Mess and I felt this would be an appropriate time for our Station Commander to write to your President to cement the new relationship and invite you formally to visit the station on a future occasion.

The Kriegie Room was the idea of Group Captain Bob Dixon, CO of Stafford at the time. Some of the items have somehow landed up at Northolt and Wing Commander Montellier hopes to recover them soon.

VITEK FORMANEK

Czech author and kriegies' friend, Vitek was kind enough to send two articles for *The Kriegie*. Unhappily, we have run out of space. Briefly, the first article (since published in the Czech Republic) is an account of his tour of England with his girl-friend Eva last summer. The purpose was to meet Kriegie friends and they managed to see fifteen of seventeen they had hoped to see. With Michael Booker (mentioned opposite), they also visited the Great Escape and Wooden Horse exhibitions at the Imperial War Museum.

The second article was the story of his recent visit to Lamsdorf escorting our South African member Harry Elsom and his family. Harry did 13 ops with 106 Squadron and was shot down over Munich in 1941.