



Volavimus
Vecidimus
Vivimus

THE KRIEGIE

NEWS-SHEET OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCES EX-P.O.W. ASSOCIATION

Editor: CAL YOUNGER

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E. SCOTT JONES

ROUND AND ROUND BEHIND THE WIRE
FALLINGBOMEL 1944

A WEEK TO REMEMBER

It was a harsh irony that the week chosen to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of World War 2 should have seen the beginning of a new war against Great Britain by Muslim extremists. They struck on 7 July (already dubbed 7/7), the very day of our lunch in St James's Park to celebrate our homecoming. In the context of the horror of that day, the inconvenience to us was insignificant. Nevertheless, we could not be other than deeply disappointed to see the empty tables and chairs resulting from the difficulty of getting into London and the transport problems of those that did. Bill Higgs arrived at Waterloo and managed to get a taxi. But the driver explained that all bridges across the Thames were closed. As Charles Clarke has put it, "Valiant efforts were made by so many to overcome the travelling problems, only to be frustrated at the end. The many stories would almost be worthy of a book to stand alongside *The Long March*."

Charles himself must have been more disappointed than most for he had worked and cajoled and plotted to get the grant from the Lottery which made the occasion possible. As usual, he had the help of the Committee but he took the brunt of the demanding work of organising the occasion, and it was Charles's idea to invite members of other groups, such as the Caterpillar Club, Kriegie Trophy winners and wartime Bomber Command ground crew. For those who managed to get to St James's Park on the day (getting home again was something else) the lunch was a great success. At the time, although we knew that bombs had been exploded, we were not then aware of the awful carnage that had been wrought on London's Underground and on the bus at Russell Square. Had we known that 52 innocent lives had been taken, there would have been small appetites.

The atmosphere in St James's Park was subdued, yet somehow defiant, as the general public made their way around the exhibits of *The Living Museum*, a tented complex designed to illustrate all aspects of World War II - or nearly all. There were wartime artefacts to see, a Tough Tactics Display, talks and interviews about the Home Front, audiovisuals of combined operations and sound effects of an air raid with ack ack action. The work of the Red Cross, ARP, concert parties and much else were celebrated. The RAF's contribution to victory was represented by a tableau consisting of a wartime Spitfire, a Nissen hut, a sandbagged defence position and various equipment. But Bomber Command got no mention, nor, so far as I am aware, did PoWs.

Our huge marquee was set amidst all of this, yet somehow the noise did not penetrate - allowing free rein to the RAF Halton Band, which entertained us during lunch. Serving RAF men and ATC cadets were on duty to help us in any way they could and, in fact, officers and men from all three services were on duty throughout the site.

The Band had just sounded the call for lunch when we had to move to temporary accommodation while a suspect package was dealt with, one of many false alarms on the day. At that stage, it looked as if we would have to be fed by the NAAFL. As planned, the Under-Secretary of State for Defence and Veteran Affairs, Mr Don Touhig, had joined us. He made a fine speech from a "soap box" in our evacuation area, paying tribute to all who gave so much for the freedom we enjoy today. Understandably, he could not stay for the Lunch as he was due to speak in a Defence debate in the House of Commons.

It was about 2.30 pm before we returned to our own marquee and sat down to lunch. Despite the enforced delay, the caterers served a first-class meal. Sadly, only a third of the top table was occupied and there were vacant seats at every table. But the wartime spirit prevailed and all those present enjoyed what was a memorable occasion. You may be able to judge for yourselves when Dave Bernard's video is produced.

The Last Day

Sunday, 10 July was the last day of the celebrations. Some members attended the Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in the morning. Some, including Charles Clarke, Dave Bernard and Doug Endors, lunched at Buckingham Palace, with the Queen present (she sat next to Tony Iveson, Chairman of the Bomber Command Association). They had a privileged view of the flypast by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight and the symbolic curtain of poppies released from the bomb bay of the Lanc.

Other members attended the nostalgic happenings, also attended by the Queen, on Horseguards Parade from which Peter Skinner, with extraordinary stamina, carried the Association Standard the length of the Mall to Buckingham Palace. Peter has been our Standard Bearer for many years. He has marched for miles in every kind of weather, including intense heat on a long day celebrating the 50th anniversary of VJ day in 1995, never allowing our Standard to droop. He has given time and effort to travel to places such as Plymouth, where he has paraded the Standard at the RAF Memorial on Plymouth Hoe. The Association owes him a great deal.

The principal commentator on BBC television seemed to be Sir Max Hastings, who carelessly failed to mention Bomber Command or PoWs. He waffled for so long that there was no time for a special programme arranged by the BBC and entitled *The Prince of Wales's Tribute to Commonwealth Forces*. This was filmed by the BBC at the Imperial War Museum a week or so earlier. Charles Clarke and Cal Younger represented the Association and chatted with the Prince. Sir Max was sure that the Prince of Wales would not mind the cancellation of his programme, but one wonders. I am told that the programme may go out later in the year.

GREAT ESCAPES - IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM

14 October 2004

For the first part of the above heading, most people will think of Steve McQueen and a motor bike. Thanks to that imagery, at least escape in our time won't be forgotten. But let us consider the second part. Imperial: well, walking towards the Museum in its parkland surrounds, with its tall colonnades and two worn stone flights of steps, I feel that the word has a special significance for our generation. With the two huge battleship guns guarding the entrance, I have a sense of the history of war within. I have felt this over the many years I have visited the Museum. My daughter, her two sons and two of my great grandsons (there are more to follow) I'm sure have had a like feeling.

War museum it certainly is when one's first sight upon entering the ground floor is of guns, tanks and aircraft. Then, following the careful map of floors, exhibits et al, the first-time visitor can absorb the many aspects of war, with some of its chilling facts. Visit the floor containing the Holocaust facts, figures and memorabilia, and you will come away scarcely able to believe in man's inhumanity to man. However much we kriegies make light of our own particular Stalag days (and why not?), those of us who witnessed any part of that tragedy can never forget it.

So, with some sense of duty to our past, a few RAF kriegies, with other kriegies, some quite notable, attended the Imperial War Museum's launch of its latest display, *Great Escapes*. Starting with coffee and meeting friends, old and new, one soon became relaxed enough to talk to the Press, something I normally do my best to avoid. Having commented on the Display to whosoever had invited our opinions, we were then asked to take part in a photo call for the media. The BBC TV crew were right on the ball and we didn't mind being asked for one more shot, then another. Then, as we were thinking of lunch, several parties of school

children shot from behind guns and artefacts and asked for our autographs on scraps of paper, on drawings they had made and even in books they had purchased or brought with them. They were all so polite, so responsive to any silly little joke and so attentive to any answer given to a pertinent question. It was a pleasure to be interviewed by them.

The Display itself, with its fantastic collection of artefacts, was excellent, but to my mind the accolade goes to the person who thought of starting it with the characters and set pieces of *The Chicken Run* film made from plasticine. However tired a child may be (and there is a child in all of us), this first exhibit brings a smile and maybe an awakening interest in the real attempts to escape.

Most of those attending during the day agreed it was a great idea. The children, on a rough percentage count, gave *The Great Escape* a first, hotly pursued by *Colditz*, with *The Chicken Run* rated third. The kids voted down *The Chicken Run*, I think, to get at the Quizmaster (me).

After a two-hour break, which included lunch, we were back with the public, some of whom had brought their children, so it wasn't too bad for me. Of course, the elders were polite and didn't ask the usual trite questions. The children were wonderful with their photocalls and, of the many I spoke to and enjoyed a smile with, I'll mention just two, because in their different ways they made my day. Duncan, your enthusiasm was uplifting, especially when I was getting tired by 2015. Claudia, you have the most beguiling smile and sensitive way of questioning. I am sure you will be an honest reporter if you should go into journalism.

Finally, I am sure that all of us who gathered for the occasion will join me in thanking the Museum staff for their kindness and hospitality. This must include the caterers, who were given the title 'outsiders' for their selection of waitresses. Did they come from a beauty contest? You all contributed to a wonderful and pleasurable day in the life of an old Kriegie.

Peter Skinner

New Book

Special Force: SOE and the Italian Resistance 1943-1945 by Malcolm Tudor. Obtainable from Emilia Publishing, Woodlands, Bryn Gardens, Newtown, Powys, SY16 2DR. In paperback, 102 pages, £9.99 inc. p&p.

CAN YOU HELP?

Would anyone who knew of Flying Officer **R.C. Wilson**, PoW No. 270098, Service No. 169892, who was in Stalag 4B and later in Stalag Luft 3, please contact Mr R. Baxter, 83 Morvale Close, Belvedere, Kent DA17 5HT. It is possible that F/O Wilson received his commission whilst a PoW since he was a Flight Sergeant at the time of his capture.

Flight Sergeant **Dennis Parry**, PoW No. 939, who was the navigator of a 544 (PRU) Squadron Mosquito, flying from Benson, was shot down near Munich on 14 September 1944. Though wounded, he managed to bale out. His pilot was killed. Parry arrived at Stalag Luft 7, Bankau about a month later. He was on the winter march from Stalag Luft 7. At Peterwitz the marchers were joined by kriegies from Stalag 344, Lamsdorf and all completed their journey to Stalag 3A Luckenwalde in the customary cattle trucks. "Liberated" by the Russians in April 1945, they were among those held as hostages until the end of May. If you remember F/Sgt Parry, or know someone who may know of him, please write to Russell Ives at 38 Mill Moor Road, Meltham, Holmfirth, West Yorks. HD9 5JY.

Stan Moss, one of our Australian members (and good friend of our Secretary) is seeking information from former Air Force colleagues and friends about Warrant Officer John Bray, who captained a Hampden torpedo bomber of 144 Squadron. Along with five other aircraft Bray's was shot down over Norway in August 1942 en route to Mirmansk. He became a PoW at Stalag 344 Lamsdorf and is believed to have died on an archaeological dig in the late fifties. An earlier request for information was published in Batch's **Can You Help? No 22**. Any information please to John Banfield, 3 Hayes Lane, Beckenham, Kent BR3 6QS, Tel. 0208 658 3994.

Another PRU man from RAF Benson was Squadron Leader **Tom Lockyer**, whose unarmed Spitfire was jumped by ME9s and shot down on 23 February 1941. He baled out and the three German pilots kept track of him then later visited him at the guardhouse where he had been taken. His niece, Madeleine Lockyer, has his YMCA Logbook from which she has transcribed much of his story. Tom was a member of the Association until his death in January 2003. Madeleine would like to hear from anyone who knew Tom at Barth or Sagan where he lived opposite the three Wooden Horse escapers. If you can help please contact Cal Younger, Mill House, Great Bedwyn. Marlborough, SN8 3LY



The two top-hatted gentlemen in the photograph are **Roger Bushell** (left) and **Willie Rhodes-Moorhouse** of 601 Squadron. The picture, taken on Willie's wedding day in about 1936, was sent to John Banfield by John D. Carr, Chicago lawyer and US Army reservist, who has always been fascinated by the Great Escape. He attended the launch of Ken Rees's book at Duxford last year and is working on a book on Roger Bushell, to be published in 2006. He would be delighted to hear from anyone who has stories, photographs or documents relating to Bushell. In particular, he is seeking any information regarding Bushell's second escape attempt, from a train near Hanover in October 1941. He was in (probably) a cattle truck with thirty other RAF and Army prisoners from Oflag VIB. Four men escaped but one fell under the train and was killed. John Carr is also looking for any information regarding Bushell's fiancée, Peggy Hamilton. John D. Carr's address is 4561 Central, Western Springs, Illinois 60558 USA or e-mail him at jdcarr02@yahoo.com

A Matter of Leadership

A former member of the Army Air Corps and later the Intelligence Corps, Dave Blackwell now runs his own small company specialising in Management and Leadership Development. He started the company after eight years in adult education and management training during which he worked with 70 different companies on four continents. Deeply interested in the experiences of PoWs, he has done a great deal of research, including a meeting with "Jimmy" James. A pet project "has been to create a unique leadership and development programme using some of the escaping activities of WWII as a foundation, with the aim of building a picture of role model behaviour for the young supervisors and managers of today." Dave's interest is broader than just escape activities; he wishes to really understand what Kriege life was like. He is interested "in the routines, the mundane nature of some camps as well as the situations surrounding escape attempts and successes." His purpose is to use as many leadership and management examples as he can find in the experiences of kriegies to set up his programme, which will not only benefit today's leaders in modern companies, but will inspire younger generations. He is looking for volunteers from our membership who would be prepared to discuss their experiences, on tape if possible, and he would be very happy to travel to meet them.

Write to Dave Blackwell at 11 Leasowes Courtyard, Telford, Shropshire TF6 6EJ or e-mail him at. You may also be interested in his website

Plea from FEPOWS

Mrs J. Denholm, who is Secretary of The Far East (Prisoners of War & Internees) Fund and The Far East Prisoners of War Welfare Fund, both registered charities, is appealing for people who know of ex-FEPOWS or their widows who may need assistance to let her know. She is anxious that monies donated for the benefit of FEPOWS should be used for their benefit before it is too late. (Our own Charitable Fund is in much the same position.) Grant assistance is offered for a whole range of needs.

Mrs Denholm's address is: The Laurels, High Street, Child Okeford, Blandford Forum, Dorset DT11 8EH.

New Book

Under the Wire by William Ash with Brendan Foley. Published by Bantam Press at £16.99. An American Spitfire pilot, Bill Ash was a persistent escaper.

MARY AND DEE

Mary Endor and Dee Younger were friends from the very early days of the Association. Both made contributions of incalculable value to the Association. Dee's last outing of any kind was to Mary's funeral, which took place on 10 November 2004. Dee died in March of this year. Neither had enjoyed good health in recent years.

International reunions, organised by the Committee, were held in London in 1997 (the Queen's Silver Jubilee year), Oxford (1982), Southampton (1987), Warwick (1991) and London (1995). As the Association Treasurer, Doug was responsible for huge sums of money received from several countries, Canada in particular. Without Mary's help he could not have coped. Not only did she keep meticulous records but an outstanding memory enabled her to field questions, many of them awkward, that came by mail and telephone from reunion participants. She knew who had paid and who had not, who would be accompanied by wives, who would be on their own, who had special needs. She took part in other preparations such as stuffing the goodie-bags and on the first day of each of those reunions she was to be found at the reception desk dealing with registration, directing people to their rooms, answering questions.

Doug and Mary also dealt with the finances of the AGM and annual reunion and of the charity concerts promoted by the much missed Vic Gammon at the Mermaid and Old Vic Theatres and the Albert Hall, where huge sums were involved.

In 1976 Dee visited New Zealand and was impressed by the way the Kiwis involved widows of members in all their activities. She resolved to start a group to help Association widows. Having herself been a widow while still in her thirties, she drew upon her experience and remarkable insight to offer information and advice and in many cases to continue correspondence through the years. The Women's Liaison Group, as it was called, never became a group at all. It was just Dee and, at times when she was away, Mary stepped in. However, she was able to call on wives, and sometimes widows, from time to time, to visit new widows. Dee kept in touch with widows' organisations and was always up to date on matters such as pensions and legislation affecting widows. Her files occupied six feet of shelf space. Her work tailed off in recent years when she suffered memory loss, but even last Christmas she was busy writing to "her" widows.

Mary and Dee were very special and both will be sorely missed.

SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF GREAT ESCAPE CELEBRATED AT SAGAN

By Air Commodore Charles Clarke

A few representatives of the Royal Air Forces Ex-PoW Association returned to Sagan to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the Great Escape - 24 March 2004. They were joined by relatives of three of the officers who were murdered.

The anniversary was an important event for the town of Sagan, as it is now known, and a full programme was arranged for the visitors. A large number of distinguished guests attended, including a Polish Government minister, ambassadors and defence advisers representing France, Canada and the United Kingdom. The visitors were hosted by the Mayor of Sagan and the Director of the Great Escape and PoW Museum.

The first morning was spent listening to a number of very well-researched papers on various prisoner of war activities and these brought home the extent to which the Polish people suffered during and after the war. After lunch in the Officers' Mess of the nearby Polish Armoured Division barracks, guests were taken to the PoW Museum, which keeps alive the memory of Stalag Luft 3. This provided an opportunity to present the Director with a model of the PoW Memorial, which was unveiled in 2003 by HRH Prince Philip at the RAF Museum, Hendon.

Later, all the guests were assembled for the unveiling of the Great Escape Memorial on the site of the exit from tunnel Harry. An ecumenical service was held and this included a very moving contribution by the Maori relatives of one of the fifty murdered. The Polish Minister made a speech and wreaths were laid, including one by Jimmy James and Andy Wiseman. All of this to the accompaniment of a Polish guard of honour and a military band, with candles lighting the route of the tunnel. Shelter was provided, but it was raining and bitterly cold, although the weather was not as bad as on the night of the escape in 1944.

It was then time to lay wreaths on the Stalag Luft 3 Memorial, which was built by krieges in 1944. This necessitated a long walk over rough ground, with the path lit by young Polish Scouts lining the route with flares: the programme had slipped in time and the Scouts had been waiting for three hours!

A concert by the Orchestra of the Polish Army had been arranged, but the visitors had to miss the first part of this to change for the official "full-dress" banquet. The musicians were outstanding, playing a mixture of classical and popular music, including all

the old Glenn Miller numbers for the benefit of our generation. The following banquet was equally impressive and the Mayor presented medallions to all the ex-krieges. What a day we had!

The pace was not quite so hectic on the second day and we had an opportunity to revisit the Stalag Luft 3 site, which is now covered by trees. We managed to locate the emergency water tank and the theatre site, but only a few bricks remain to mark the huts. The siren sounded as we walked through our former home and this brought back so many memories of what was a significant part of our young lives.

A return visit was made to the Museum and this was followed by a showing of a new Canadian film, which highlights the background of the three Canadian officers who were murdered. The film was well worth seeing and hopefully will be shown on UK television.

A late lunch at the Military Garrison completed the formal visit, which had proved to be such a great success. Overwhelming hospitality had been shown us by the inhabitants of Sagan, particularly by the Mayor and the Director of the Museum, and it was hard to believe that it was nearly sixty years since we were evicted from the camp to begin what was to become known as the "long march".

Many thanks are due to ex-kriegie Andy Wiseman, who made the arrangements for the visit and acted as our very fluent interpreter and guide.

RECCO REPORT

We are always sad to receive news of the death of one of our members, but it is difficult to record them all in the limited space of *The Kriegie*. However, it would be remiss of us not to pay tribute to **Squadron Leader Joe Hill** who passed away on 25 August this year. For many years Joe has been active with Captain Bungie Bracken (RN) in trying to obtain justice for all prisoners of war who had their pay withheld whilst they were in captivity. He was also involved in efforts to restore the Blenheim so that it could fly once again after the accident. Charles Clarke and John Banfield represented the Association at Joe's funeral at Kings Lynn on 9 September. Our sympathy goes out to Joe's family. He will be missed by us all. (Charles Clarke)

Another sad loss to the Association was that of **Graham Hall MBE**. Graham (or Nobby as he was universally known) died on 22 July 2004, aged ninety. He had been in a nursing home for several years but, prior to that, attended Association committee meetings until well into his eighties, driving himself from his home near Fordingbridge.

Graham, whose father had been a pilot in the first World War, wanted to be a pilot in the RAF from boyhood. He achieved his ambition by becoming an apprentice at Halton, qualifying as a fitter, then remustering to pilot. He flew Heyfords before the outbreak of war when he was transferred to Whitleys. In 1937 Graham, then 23, married Vera whose brother was a friend of his.

When war began, Graham was soon in action. He was shot down on 19 May 1940 on a raid to Gelsenkirchen. For a time he was camp leader at Stalag Luft 1 Barth but stood down in favour of Dixie Deans. Earlier he had devised a code with Vera whereby she was to note every word that followed a punctuation mark. The Air Ministry took up the idea of communicating with PoWs and certain aircrew were given a code which, were they to be taken prisoner, they were to pass on to Graham. Over the years much information of great value was passed back to England. Graham was appointed MBE (military) for his efforts.

After the war he joined Kodak with Vera and spent the rest of his career in the photography field. Semi-retired, he learned how to recover silver from photographic plates.

Graham Hall will be missed by all his many friends in the Association who remember both him and Vera with great affection.

Two leading lights of the RCAF ex-PoW Association have passed away. Myron Williams died on 7 May 2004 and Tony Little on 6 February 2005. Both were very much involved in the international reunions, both here and in Canada, in the 1980s and 1990s. Tony, who was president of the Association, attended the unveiling of the Long March Memorial at Hendon in May 2003. Myron, who also visited us not long ago, was the driving force behind the Great Escape painting, *Stalag Luft III Tunnel Martyrs*, which was the Canadian Association's tribute to the "Fifty".

We pay tribute, too, to **Eddie Poulter** who died on 6 November 2003, aged 82. His death should have been recorded in our May 2004 issue but somehow was overlooked. Eddie, who was the Flight Engineer on a 619 Squadron Lancaster, was shot down on 13 August 1944. He had completed 44 ops. After the war he stayed in the RAF for four more years during which time he met and married his wife, Beryl. A trained engineer, he spent 30 months at sea, in the engine room. Then he went into the power industry and finished his career

as a maintenance supervisor in charge of 500 men. Eddie became Secretary of the London branch of the Caterpillar Club Association and remained in the post for nine years during five of which he was also Treasurer. He was a man of many parts - magician, musician, philatelist and Labour Party activist. He was also an ardent supporter of our Association. Known to practically everyone in Tooting, Eddie was a great character.

Kriegies Help Apprentices

Organised by Dave Bernard, six ex-kriegies - Doug Endor, Eric Hookings, Peter Skinner, Cal Younger, Alex Gill and Alfie Fripp - met six apprentices from RAF St Athens Apprentices' Engineering Training Establishment to help with their "Thesis Projects". The meeting took place at RAF Northolt on 9th August 2004 when each apprentice interviewed one of the kriegies about his RAF career and especially his experiences as a PoW. Charles Clarke and Dave Bernard supervised.

On 20 September the group met again for an oral presentation by the apprentices, with slides. Additionally, the six essays produced by the boys were presented in book form. The lads were impressed. In their conclusion they wrote: "It is amazing to think that without the courage and determination of these men and their fellow servicemen during World War II, we would now be living under German dictatorship. The country owes them its gratitude."

MYSTERY TOUR OF MUNICH

Philip Jenkinson, mid-upper gunner of a 10 Squadron Halifax, was shot down on the Munich raid of 6/7 September 1943. He was on the run, trying to get to Switzerland, for nine days before an adventurous meeting with two German soldiers. He soon found himself at Stalag Luft 6, Heydekrug.

Munich was the target again on the night of 2/3 October. On 22 October Philip was one of seven survivors of the two raids taken from the camp and put on a train, with no inkling of where they were going. To their astonishment their destination was Munich, where they joined a group of twenty-one PoWs from Stalag 4B and three officers from Stalag Luft 3. They realised with some apprehension that they had all been shot down on the two Munich raids and their fears were heightened when they learned that they had been brought to Munich on Hitler's orders.

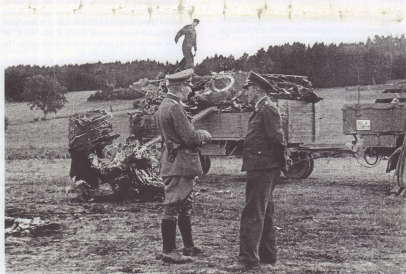
They were taken to *Fuerstenfeldbruck* aerodrome, an operational station of the *Luftwaffe*, and later the site of the Munich Olympic Games. They were given comfortable quarters and even had sheets. What worried them was the prospect of a hearty last breakfast. They ate in the Sergeants' Mess, the German NCOs having long since eaten and gone their way. The following day was uneventful except that the PoWs were marched around the station, presumably for exercise. In the evening a young German officer asked the three pilots in the group (the only pilots to have survived the two raids) to step into the next room, where they were welcomed by *Luftwaffe* night-fighter pilots keen to compare notes and to identify their victims.

Two more days passed in similar fashion then, on day four, the PoWs were marched to the station parade ground and lined up in ranks of five. They were heavily guarded. A group of Nazi top brass arrived in a noisy procession of cars and motor cycles and a senior officer, claiming to be Goering's representative, addressed the kriegies. Informed by Goering of the destruction wrought by the RAF bombers, Hitler had ordered that all the survivors of the two raids were to be brought to Munich, a city dear to his heart, and shown the damage

to public buildings, especially schools and hospitals. Heavily guarded, the kriegies were directed on to buses and taken on a tour of the city. They were not shown military targets such as factories, which had been targeted, only public buildings and private homes where innocent people had died.

The kriegies were apprehensive and were more so when the bus reached the Opera House, which was cordoned off, and they were told to disembark. Were they to be paraded on stage before a hate-filled audience? As they marched in single file between two ranks of heavily armed guards, hostile civilians gathered and it was a relief to enter the magnificent foyer and ascend the richly carpeted stairs. All seemed normal until they reached the dress circle. Then the reason for their visit became obvious. A huge hole in the roof, matched by one where the stage should have been, was revealed.

They returned to their buses, the guards holding back the angry crowd, and were taken back to the base. After lunch in the Sergeants' Mess they were driven to Munich rail station to begin their journeys back to their camps. There had been no firing squad; they had unwittingly taken part in a massive propaganda exercise.



The wreckage of Philip Jenkinson's Halifax is removed by the Germans



Kevin Murphy examines Philip Jenkinson's model

The Collector

Philip Jenkinson returned to Germany in 1949 to visit the graves of his pilot and rear-gunner and again in 1951 to try to find where his Halifax had crashed. He made enquiries but the war was still too fresh in the minds of the German villagers, who became hostile when they realised who their visitor was.

A farmer, Philip was unable to travel to Germany again until 1983 when, with the help of German air war historian Hans Griminger, he found the site and photographs of the crashed Halifax taken the following day. One of these quite remarkable photographs shows the wreckage of the Halifax being loaded on to a German lorry. (See previous page.) Philip collected pieces of the aircraft and on subsequent visits has added to his still growing collection – which he began when, before burying his parachute, he tore off a piece to keep as a souvenir. He passed it off when he was captured, after nine days on the run, as a handkerchief. He still has it. The site where he landed proved more difficult to find

than the crash site, but he found it eventually. There was no sign of the parachute.

In 1997 Philip melted down some of the metal from his aircraft, made a mould and produced a splendid model of a Halifax. He was so pleased with his work that he took it to show his one-time navigator, Kevin Murphy, a retired teacher and member of our Association who lives in St Albans.

Philip has been to the crash site and the site of his parachute landing so many times that he is now accepted by the locals as a friend. He has continued to bring home parts of his aircraft to add to his vast collection of wartime memorabilia, which is matched only by his collection of bicycles, housed in a barn on the farm in North Devon where he still lives. His long-suffering wife, Jean, just smiles gently when he opens a cupboard door and an avalanche of aircraft pieces and papers falls to the floor. Few men are blessed with so tolerant a wife.

RETURN TO SAGAN

By Eric Foinette

As part of the celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War 2, the British Legion organised a large number of *Heroes Return* visits to the scenes of wartime service, subsidised by a Lottery grant.

I was able to join in a visit to Stalag Luft 3. We enjoyed the excellent facilities of the Union Jack Club on 8 June, prior to flying from Luton to Berlin next day. There were forty-three, including relatives, in the party, which first visited Luckenwalde (Stalag 3A), the camp in which I ended up to await the Russians, but there was little to recognise as it was now overgrown. We then travelled to Poland, where the party split up - 30 going to Breslau (Wrocław) to visit Lamsdorf, while the rest of us went to a delightful little Polish town, Zielona Bora, some 40km from Zagan. Our group totalled thirteen, of whom three were our "minders", a Legion leader, medic, and standard bearer. Of the ten in our party only three of us were actually in Luft 3. - Roger Daggett, Eric Drury and myself. We also acquired a very competent and charming interpreter, Carolina, who escorted several of us on an evening walk round the town centre.

We spent the next day at Zagan, where we were welcomed at the Museum, with a short film, before studying the exhibits of Stalag Luft 3. Outside, they had constructed a mock-up of the tunnel, with a glass cover. One of our party, a young member son of a PoW, went down the entrance, climbed on to the trolley and propelled himself to the exit some 20 yards away, where he emerged, quite breathless, to the applause of all. After visiting the monument to the 50, we proceeded to the old camp-site, now signposted, and I was surprised to see how much could be identified - hut foundations, fire pool and theatre areas.

The position and extent of the tunnel are now graphically set out by a narrow track, 110 yards long, of granite chips between kerbs, and the exit, excavated by some Americans two years ago, but backfilled because of the instability of the sand, is now marked by a memorial stone. There is also a stone, presumably representing a mole, and another, laid horizontal and engraved, simply, HARRY.

On our way back to our hotel we visited a small airfield where a short flight had been organised by the medical officer. The aircraft was a Russian 1940 Antonov biplane, with battered canvas seats. Twelve of us crowded into

it, with another four (possibly ground crew) standing by the open door at the rear and two more standing in the cockpit next to the two pilots - a total of twenty. No wonder we had to sign an indemnity form! As they had been told of our RAF connection, we were given a twenty-minute flight instead of the normal ten. It was an exciting and enjoyable ending to a special day.

On our return to Berlin we met up again with the Lamsdorf party for a farewell dinner. Next day we had a service of remembrance at the Charlottenberg war graves cemetery, where we saw the graves of so many of our Air Force colleagues - how tragic to see how young they were, and how grateful we were for our own survival, even if life as PoWs was unpleasant.

The hotels were very good and everything was efficiently organised by our party leaders, thanks to the British Legion, so that at the end our group was quite like a happy family. We arrived home on 13 June.



Eric on Track



At the end of the tunnel

Roger Daggett, Eric Foinette, Eric Drury, and George Cross

THE LONG MARCH REVISITED

Peter Heatherington's personal recollection of a journey to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the "Long March" from Stalag Luft III

A bitterly cold wind, straight out of the east, greeted us as we emerged from the terminal building at Berlin Schönefeld airport on 26 January 2005. My son Chris and I were here to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the march from Sagan. My father, Flt Lieut. Ron Heatherington, had left Block 106 in the north compound on the night of 27 January 1945 to emerge into a bitterly cold night and start the long journey home. Ron died just last year and Chris and I were keen to honour his memory by visiting the site of the former POW camp. We felt privileged to be able to do so in the company of some of his former comrades. Apart from ourselves, the group consisted of seven former POWs and three relatives, a total of twelve. Some had visited Sagan since the Long March to commemorate other events, such as the 50th anniversary of the Great Escape in March 1994. My parents had been present on that particular occasion, but for Chris and me, and several others in our party, this was the first visit.

The temperature was a mere -5°C as we boarded our

minibus for the journey down through Germany and Poland to Sagan. The flat, featureless landscape was already blanketed in snow and our thoughts soon turned to the arduous trek, begun on that fateful night 60 years ago when temperatures had dipped to -20°C . By contrast, we had the luxury of a heated vehicle and the convenience of a half empty Autobahn to ease our journey. Eventually we left the Autobahn and continued down roads which wound their way through never-ending forests until we reached the Polish border. The German border guard began to examine our passports but, when he realised we were "Alles Engländer" he promptly waved us through.

A short distance on, we stopped in Lelkna (Lugknitz) where, in the House of Culture, we were to enjoy an abundance of pizza and other hot dishes in the slightly surreal surroundings of a modern art exhibition. Suitably refreshed, we continued our journey and were soon approaching the outskirts of Zagan (to give the town its now Polish name). Just before entering the town, I was surprised to see a sign at the side of the road for "Stalag Luft III - 1Km - almost as if the camp still existed.

Zagan itself was new to most of us, including the former POWs in our party who had spent so long within the camp but had not, of course, had the opportunity to



The Long March party including RAF helpers

visit the town. The immediate impression was of a rather dreary place with many tired looking apartment blocks and other buildings dating back to the post-war Eastern Bloc Era. Our hotel, though fairly basic, was nevertheless a friendly place which was to serve us well as our home for the first three nights of our trip.

After settling in, Chris and I had a brief exploratory visit across the bridge, in front of the hotel, across the wide River Bobr. We discovered an older and more interesting part of the town on the other side, with an old castle and attractive square. Back in the hotel we began to exchange many tales and memories with the other members of our group. We were delighted to be joined by six men and women from the RAF Regiment and other units stationed in Germany. Their leader, Sgt Gordon Sinclair, had heard of our commemorative journey and he and his colleagues had decided they would like to be involved. This had necessitated a nine-hour journey by road and they were staying in the hotel at their own expense. They were to prove a most worthy addition to our numbers and a credit to the RAF. Chris and I were delighted to discover that one of our group, John Holland, had been in the next room to my father in Block 106.

Thursday morning, 27 January dawned dull with a fresh blanket of snow on the 60th anniversary of the

precise date when the Long March had begun. The day began with wreath-laying ceremonies in front of the Museum of Martyrology, a moving memorial to the POWs of all nations, on the outskirts of the town. A seemingly large group of people then squeezed inside the museum to view the exhibition about the camp and to watch a recently made film about the Great Escape. Much of this contained still photographs previously published in various books. However, it was fascinating to see the archive film, apparently produced by the Germans in the camp, which gave those of us who were not ex-POWs a glimpse of some aspects of camp life.

We were then taken a short distance, down a snow-covered track, to the site of Stalag Luft III itself. Reports had suggested that virtually nothing of the camp remained. Certainly the site has been reclaimed by the trees which covered the area before the camp was established in 1942. Nevertheless, there were identifiable remains of several buildings and the foundations of others. But first we visited the recently constructed stone monument, marking the exit point of "Harry", the tunnel from which the 76 escapees had emerged in March 1944. The line of the tunnel was marked by a narrow gravel path, although this was somewhat obscured by the snow, several inches deep, which covered the entire site.

As we picked our way between the trees, the first and most readily identifiable remains were those of the Hospital. Although nothing remained of the building above ground, the hospital had a basement which was intact. Some of us descended the icy steps and walked inside the dark and eerie rooms, below the ground, illuminated now only by the occasional shaft of light through openings in the floor above. We entered the main site of the former north Compound and walked through the trees to the fire pool. The brick retaining wall was clearly visible and the pool seemed to have been larger than people remembered. There were some recollections of its illegal use as a swimming pool.

The Director of the Museum, Jacek Jakubiak, guided us, past the site of the kitchens, to what remained of the theatre. We were surprised at how large this building must have been and, indeed, there still remains a substantial amount of the brick retaining walls. This prompted the former Luft III inmates to recall the many highly professional productions mounted during the war years with individuals such as Peter Butterworth, Rupert Davies, Roy Dotrice and others, who had gone on to successful stage and television careers.

There was one more site that Chris and I were anxious to locate. After stumbling through the snow-covered undergrowth, with the assistance of the old plan of the camp and one of our Polish guides, we eventually found the remains of Block 106. This had been home to my father from October 1943 to the beginning of the Long March in January 1945. It had also been home to John Holland and together we stood surveying the remains of the washroom floor and the brick pillars upon which the wooden hut had stood. This was the place that I had first heard of as a child and now, over fifty years later, here we were stood on the actual spot. It was the first of several deeply emotional moments that this journey was to bring.

The Museum Director tore us away from our thoughts, insisting that we move on. I left reluctantly, not sure whether this would be my first and last visit to the camp. Even if I were to return, it could not match the feelings of pride and sorrow which I now felt. Pride in the knowledge that my own father had been one of this band of courageous and determined men and sorrow that he was not still with us today. We also felt privileged to be sharing this visit with the former POWs in our group.

The bus hurried us the short distance to the memorial, just outside the camp, commemorating the 50 officers murdered on Hitler's orders after the Great Escape in

March 1944. There was no ceremony but the older members of our group spent time in silent memory of their former comrades.

Soon we were back on the bus and after a few minutes arrived at the local primary school whose children were eagerly awaiting the "heroes of the RAF". After a welcoming speech by the headmaster, translated for us, as ever, by Andy Wiseman, Charles Clarke responded and, in particular, acknowledged our gratitude for the contribution the children of the school make in looking after the memorial and remembrance garden to the "fifty".

We were sat at a long table laden with fruit and chocolate biscuits. The children sang and recited poems before rushing across to join us at the table. At first we all just sat smiling at each other, but the ice was quickly broken and communication established in various ways. The members of the RAF party joined in with the children amid much laughter and trying on of RAF caps. While we were shown quickly around the school, our RAF friends played football with our young hosts in the icy playground.

All too soon we were ushered back to the bus. We lunched in the "Officers' Mess", which seemed more like a nightclub than a military establishment. Again, we were looked after royally. Fortunately, we were able to have a brief rest at the hotel before setting out for the Palace of Culture of Zagan, a large, impressive building adjacent to the river and near the centre of Zagan. We mounted the large staircase and were led past a large, open log fire into the ornate wedding room, where we were treated to a concert by the children of the local musical college. The evening concluded with a buffet-style banquet and an opportunity for us to mingle with our Polish hosts.

Next morning we said goodbye to our RAF friends as they began the long drive back to their bases in Germany. Their contribution to our visit had been substantial and Charles Clarke was quick to acknowledge the credit they had brought upon the service. We clambered back on our bus to begin our tracing of the route taken by the Long March. At Ilowa (Halbau) we enjoyed another memorable school visit. This school was founded in 1946 and, in an emotional speech, the headmistress told us that she fervently hoped that its sixtieth anniversary, next year, can be marked by renaming the school after the Allied Airmen of World War II. The children sang several songs for us and we all joined in a boisterous rendition of *My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean*. The school building was run down, yet the staff had put a great



The Long March party at the primary school.

deal of effort into decorating the rooms, to create the warm and welcoming atmosphere that greeted us. We were delighted to receive framed pictures made by the children for each of us. I found the visit a most humbling experience.

Our westerly journey continued via Borowe (Bureau) to the town of Gozdnic, known better to the original marchers as Freiwaldau, about 18 miles from the camp. Here we met two Germans who had as children witnessed the long, straggling column of POWs as they passed through the town. After more brief speeches and tea and biscuits, we left the town and drove down a small country road. It was covered in snow – reminiscent of how it must have looked on the march itself. We stopped briefly at a small village and amongst a group of old farm buildings, Charles Clarke thought he recognised a barn in which he had slept for a while. We carried on down this quiet and lonely road until eventually we reached Leknica where we had stopped for lunch on the way down from Berlin and again we stopped at the Culture House for a meal laid on by our generous Polish hosts.

The bus then returned via main roads to Iłowa, where we stopped to visit the church. The interior was beautifully decorated and, in common with many other buildings we had visited in Poland, was still displaying its Christmas tree and decorations. We learned that

traditionally they stay on display until the fortieth day after Christmas. The church had some significance to the march as some American POWs had taken refuge there. A plaque on the wall commemorated their stay. A group of old ladies, who had arrived for evening mass, looked less than impressed by this influx of "tourists". Our bus then returned direct to our hotel in Zagan. En route we were entertained by the commentary and humorous observations of Andy Wiseman, which were a notable feature of the entire trip.

The drive along the route of the Long March was completed on the Saturday, 29th January. We set off after breakfast to do the second part, that is from the River Neisse (which marks the modern boundary between Poland and Germany) and the end of the march at Spremberg railway station. Before crossing the border at Leknica we planned to visit the local market. Unfortunately, as soon as we arrived, Tom Cosby was taken ill on the bus. Our Polish hosts directed the driver straight to the house of a local doctor, Dr Krakowski. Tom recovered quite quickly. Dr Krakowski would not accept payment for the private consultation. She said, "You paid sixty years ago". This chance incident and her remark, perhaps more than any other during our visit, served to underline the genuine warmth of the Poles towards us and the importance which they still attach to remembering the mutual suffering endured by our two countries during the second world war.

Having retrieved Tom from the good doctor, we resumed the planned itinerary, next visiting Bad Muskau, the location of the stables and glass factory remembered by many of those on the March. The buildings surrounding the courtyard, including the famous barn, now formed part of a museum of rural life in that part of Germany. We were invited to inspect the inside of the stables and several of those present remembered laying their weary bodies on the floor with only straw for comfort.

After a late lunch in a cosy roadside restaurant in Graustein-Schonheide, we had a relatively short drive to our destination in Spremberg. Our first call in the town was to the location of the old barracks, once home to a tank regiment of the Afrika Corps, which had provided shelter on the last night of the March. Unfortunately, the entire complex was demolished last year and so there was nothing to see.

The bus then took us the final few hundred metres to the railway station. Here the Long March had ended and the kriegies had been packed, forty at a time, into cattle trucks to endure further privations on their journeys to transit camps in various parts of Germany. Those present remembered the goods sidings, opposite the main platform, where they had boarded the train,

At this point we said goodbye to our Polish hosts and expressed our gratitude, in particular to the Director of the Museum to POWs in Zagan and his secretary, both of whom had been so helpful throughout our fascinating journey. Indeed, the Director had clearly put enormous effort into researching, not only the route of the March, but also into finding the places and people whom we had been so pleased to meet.

We stayed in two separate hotels on this final evening before being reunited very early next morning to be driven back to the airport at Berlin. The journey had been without a doubt memorable to us all, emotional at times and perhaps significant to each of us in different ways. Chris and I personally were very proud to have made the trip in memory of dad/grandpa, and we feel sure that he was with us in spirit. We feel privileged to have met his former comrades and hope that we may sometime have the opportunity to meet them again.

The author is the son of Flt Lt Ron Heatherington No 106 Squadron and Block 106, North Compound, Stalag Luft III who died 23 February 2004.



Here the Long March had ended.



THE BLOWER