

## **IE TCD MS 10823**

### **WWI prisoner of war journal of Charles Howard-Bury**

#### **folio i recto**

##### Some Experiences as a Prisoner of War in Germany

The Battalion, whose tragic fate I am about to relate, had come out to France early in 1915. It saw its first fighting near Ypres, suffering heavy losses in the first flame attack at Hooge in Jul 1915. The next fighting it took part in was the Battle of Loos in September 1915. During the winter the battalion moved closer South to Arras, taking over a new bit of line from the French & where here there is remained until the Somme battle fighting, in the Summer of 1916, where it it took part in the heavy fighting at the capture of Delville Wood in August & again on September 15th on the big attack on Flers, where use was made of tanks for the first time. The Battalion then returned to Arras where it had a quiet time until the battle of Arras in April 1917 where it greatly distinguished itself in the capture of The "Harp". It saw more fighting in May near Wancourt, after which it had a short rest, & then went North once more to the Ypres salient, where in August it took part in the fighting around Inverness Copse; in October it was at [Polderhock] & in December in Passchendaele.

The beginning of 1918 saw the battalion enjoying a short rest, after which it was sent South again to hold part of the new line taken over from The French South of St Quentin.

The Sector was a quiet one, but no training was possible for the men, since as soon as they were out of the line, they were taken for working parties, digging new lines of trenches & strong points, for which afterwards there were no men to hold. If only some of the labour had been used for burying telephone cables – for the whole defence of this very weakly held sector depended on accurate information being forthcoming, part of the awful disaster of March 21st might have been avoided & our artillery might have been given a chance.

#### **folio 1 recto**

On the night of March 20/21st the Battalion was occupying the front line trenches near [Urvillers], a small ruined village a few miles south of St. Quentin. The front that we were holding was a wide one, nearly 2000 yards in width, and our posts were several hundred yards apart. The whole system of defence was arranged for rifle and machine gun fire, but without a thought of the possibility of a fog. After dinner on the night of March 20th I went all round the front line inspecting the wire and looking at the various working parties. It was a beautiful moonlight night and scarcely a shot was fired on either side. It was so quiet that I remarked on the loudness of the german transport and on return to Battalion Headquarters about Midnight telephoned to the gunners to fire on to the roads from which the sounds seemed to be coming.

At 4.30.a.m. I was aroused by a sudden and terrific bombardment which appeared to have started all along the line and to extend as far as one could see and hear for a long way to the North and South. It was pitch dark at the time, with a thick fog, and quite impossible to see a yard in any direction. For two hours we kept up communication by telephone with the Battalions on the right and left, with our Companies and with Brigade Headquarters, but one by one the lines broke under the bombardment, till by

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eight o'clock we were completely cut off from communication with the outside world and bitterly did we regret that our telephone wires had not been buried. Much gas had been mixed with the shells and it was impossible to stir outside without a gas mask. The gas curtains keep the dug-out fairly free, but even then, many of us were coughing and choking. About 8.30. a.m. the sentries reported that the bombardment had lifted and that the shells were falling behind, so we stood-to in the trenches round Battalion Headquarters, but owing to the fog which remained as thick as ever, it was impossible to see five yards in any direction. A good deal of gas still hung about in the fog, but it was now possible to move without a gas-mask. A few minutes after a runner came from C Company to say that the Germans were attacking and had arrived at their trenches, and shortly afterwards a runner from A Company came with the news that the Germans were in their trenches and that the Company Commander had been killed. The Doctor had meanwhile gone off to his aid post, about 300 yards away, where he was almost immediately captured. One of the Battalion runners suddenly dived into the fog and returned with an irate and expostulating German Officer, who had lost his way. I asked him what he was doing here, and he said he was looking for his men who had gone on. On looking at his maps I found to my horror that his objectives for that day were places five and six miles behind our lines, so collecting the maps together, I hurriedly sent them off by a runner to Brigade Headquarters: the officer I put down the dug-out, as he

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was very likely to escape in the fog, especially as parties of his men were all over the country. Several parties of Germans stumbled into our post in the fog, and each time, after a little rapid rifle fire at close range those that survived beat a hasty retreat. It was evident for some time that we were surrounded, but as long as the fog remained dense, we felt pretty safe. Our own artillery was quite silent, either because they were ignorant of what was happening in the fog or because they had already been captured.

One of the orderlies went a few yards out to the wire to try and find out what was happening, but was immediately shot through the stomach, another one went out to try and bring him in, but he too was mortally wounded.

About 11 a.m. the fog gradually began to clear away and it was possible to gain some idea of what had happened. The Boche were everywhere all around us: about 1000 yards away to the right, they were bringing up their fieldguns which they eventually got into position a mile or so to our rear, but not without being seriously worried by our Lewis gun fire. Parties kept coming along the St. Quentin Road quite unaware of our presence, until rapid fire from a close range was opened upon them. About 1. p.m. we sent off another pigeon message to say that we were still holding out, though hard pressed, as the Boche had got into one end of our trench and were trying to bomb us out of it, but we held them and prevented them from getting any further. Soon after they appeared at the other end bombing their way along, but thanks to the Intelligence Officer and a couple of men, they were again

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stopped. The Special Red S.O.S. rockets were also sent up, but these only attracted the attention of the Huns, who thereupon produced Flammenwerfer and Trench Mortars. The former we put out of

action with Rifle Grenades, the latter however did us considerable damage. The most dangerous of all were the Machine guns, which were firing at us from all sides and which completely enfiladed the portion of trench that we were occupying.

By this time more than half of the small garrison of 50 that were holding Battalion Headquarters were casualties, and the Lewis guns which had fired over 3000 rounds apiece against the enemy's artillery and against any bodies of troops that we had seen, refused to fire more than single rounds. The enemy too were massing in the dead ground of which there was unfortunately only too much in very close proximity. Rifle grenades had been most useful up till now in checking these concentrations, but by 3.30 p.m. the enemy had massed all around in very large numbers and after an intense machine gun fire, they suddenly rushed in upon us in overwhelming numbers from all sides with a loud cheer and it was all up with us. There must have been many hundreds of them and their methods of storming and taking a strong point were quite admirable. They told me that they had been practising such kind of warfare for some months, as they had been out resting behind and training for the big offensive. They were Bavarian troops and treated us very well. They were a portion of the second division

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that was attacking on what was practically our battalion front, the first division had already gone on and the duty of the next division was to mop up any strong points. These fighting troops behaved very decently and I was allowed to keep my burberry and field glasses.

We then collected all our wounded and carried them to a dug-out near by, where the Germans had established a dressing station and there we had to leave them. Three of us were taken on to their Brigade Headquarters, which had been established right behind us, between our old Headquarters and Brigade Headquarters. There we asked a few questions and were then sent on back under an escort. Their signalling arrangements and means of communication seemed to be excellent and very rapid, and I was much surprised at the number of staff officers to be so near the front.

The fact of being able to speak German proved most useful, though on occasions I found it wiser to pretend complete ignorance of the language.

After going several miles we came to a collection station, where we were searched and all letters and papers taken off us. There was a very rude and insulting Prussian N.C.O. in charge who took away our Burberry's and Field glasses from us and on my trying to talk to one of my men who was working there filling in a trench, he rushed at me screaming and very nearly hit me. From here-on we had another guard who accompanied us for about three

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miles further back, passing on the way the most miscellaneous assortment of transport that I have ever seen; carts that had been commandeered from Russia, Rumania, Austria & Belgium & with the most varied and ancient types of harness. As we passed through Mezieres one of our airmen flew over going very low and I hoped he was going to drop a bomb or two, as the village was absolutely packed with troops and transport, which tried to scatter in every direction and take cover, but he was evidently only reconnoitring. We then had a long and wearisome walk to Ribemont where we arrived about 11 p.m. Here we were all bundled into a bare room, with the windows boarded up and

had to spend the night as best we could. Sleep was out of the question, as it was bitterly cold and the stone floor was both hard and draughty. All of us too were very hungry as no food had passed our lips for twenty four hours. In the grey dawn of morning we were numbered and counted out by regiments, and on being found to be a Colonel, I was carried off to their Corps Headquarters for further examination. They tackled me first in German, but that was a language of which I pretended to be completely ignorant, by which ruse I managed to pick up much interesting information and found out exactly how far they had advanced, which was a very different tale from that given us by our guards. In broken French and English they asked me various questions, but I was always quite prepared with an answer as I had heard them discussing in German what they were going to ask me. There was plenty of food in the room, but they never thought of offering any to a hungry prisoner. After the

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examination, I was brought back to the bare room again. Soon after one o' clock we were given a slice of black bread with some so-called jam on it and a cup of acorn coffee, for all of which we were very grateful. This we had only obtained by protesting that we could not march any further unless we were first given something to eat. We were then formed up, & had a march of 18 Kilometres to Guise. The guards on the way were quite friendly and allowed us to halt when we wanted. On arrival at Guise the French inhabitants shewed us the greatest sympathy and I shall never forget their goodness. They rushed up to us with food of all kinds, with bottles of tea, cider and coffee, although they were terribly short of food themselves, and I am sure that we cannot thank them enough for their kindness which touched all our hearts in the depressed and pitiable plight that we were in.

We were taken into an old shop that had been turned into a billet and fitted up with wire beds, and here we were to spend the night. We managed to get some water for washing and the inhabitants seized the opportunity when the guards were not looking to fill our pockets with biscuits and bread and sausages.

Just before midnight we were woken up and marched through the town down to the station, where we were given some soup after which we were marched back again to our billet, singing on the way the Marseillaise which annoyed our guards considerably, but pleased the French. In the morning we were again marched down to the station and given a cup of acorn coffee and a slice of bread,

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after which we were told we had to march to Landrecies, a distance of 30 Kilometres. Everywhere the inhabitants were most kind, at every village that we passed they came out with food, cigarettes and drinks, much to the annoyance of our guards, who of course were offered nothing and who tried to stop them approaching us.

After going some 15 Kilometres, we met some lorries going in the same direction and as our guards were tired, we persuaded them to ask the lorry drivers if they would take us. This they promised to do outside the village, as they must not be seen shewing kindness to prisoners of war. They dropped us just outside Landrecies as for the same reason they must not be seen with us in the town. On the way we passed alas many of other batches of prisoners all going in the same direction.

On arrival at Landrecies we were at once taken to some shower baths which were very welcome, but the officer in charge was a rude brute and his first remark to us on arriving there was that if we did not instantly obey his orders he would shoot us. We were first of all put in a bath containing a strong solution of Permanganate of Potash, after which we had a shower bath.

We were then marched back to a kind of barracks, where a few of us managed to get mattresses but the majority had to lie on the floors. Towards evening another hundred officers and a couple of thousand more men turned up. That evening we were given some quite good soup, by far the best meal we had had up to date.

We were getting used to a slice of bread and a plate of soup as

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our daily ration and so only eat a little of the bread at a time.

The next morning, after being given a slice of bread we were marched off to Bachant, a distance of 19 Kilometres. Through all the villages that we passed the inhabitants were again wonderfully kind and one felt so sorry for them under the German yoke, their despair was very great when they saw us all come through as prisoners, but we told them to keep up their courage as we were bound to win in the long run. For the first half of the way we had a mounted escort under a vilely rude N.C.O. Many of the officers by this time had very sore feet, as they were wearing gum boots when captured, and these long marches along the hard high road had blistered their feet terribly, so that we could only go slowly. After going for an hour I said that we must have a halt, and halt the column did, falling out on the side of the road. The N.C.O. in charge of the guard abused us like pickpockets and threatened to shoot us because we had halted. However we paid no attention to him, and after we had rested, went on until another guard came and took over from him. Our second escort proved to be most friendly and polite, allowing us to halt whenever we liked, and to receive presents of food from the villagers.

On arrival at Bachant, we went into a prisoners camp, where there were already collected many officers and men; a good number of them I knew, as they belonged to the same Division, and I was very glad to find some of my own officers alive that I had thought to be dead. In the evening we were given a thin gruel-like soup and went to bed very hungry. The Commandant here was quite

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a decent fellow and gave us some post cards which he promised to send off, to let our relations know that we were alive and which I believe did eventually arrive. Next morning we were given some more thin soup after which we were marched to the station at Aulnoye, where we were entrained. Except for our escort and forty of us, who were lucky enough to get a 2nd class carriage, all the other officers and men were crowded in cattle trucks 40-50 to each truck. In these they were locked in packed like sardines & without and sanitary arrangements of any kind & it was not till over twenty four hours afterwards that they were taken out for a meal. For them and for the men, the journey was a terrible one.

We had entrained at midday, but dawdled along past Maubeuge and Namur, going for a mile or two and then stopping for an hour, and it was not till nine o'clock the following morning that we were allowed out of our carriages at Liege for a meal which only consisted of soup. Our next meal of soup was some twelve hours later near to Cologne. On the way there we had passed through Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle) and if we had known then how close we were to the Dutch frontier we might have made an attempt to get away. The next day we followed the banks of the Rhine through very pretty scenery, partaking about midday of another meal of soup at Kaiserslautern – how I am beginning to hate the sight of soup – Eventually about nine o'clock at night we arrived at our destination: Karlsruhe, after spending 57 hours in the train. For those in the cattle trucks, this must have been absolute misery. On the platform at Karlsruhe only the first eighty officers that got out from the front part of the train were taken & of these I was one, the remainder were put back into the train and sent on to Rastatt.

We were marched through the town to a building that had once been a Hotel and here we were put into rooms, two or three

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together in a room: the door was then locked and we were not allowed out at all.

There were beds in the rooms, and after the long journey, we slept very soundly and were in no hurry to get up in the morning. There was nothing whatever to do all day, the windows were whitewashed all over so that it was impossible to see outside and we were not allowed outside our rooms. We were given nothing to read or write, so the day passed very slowly, the only break being the midday meal when we actually saw a small piece of meat.

We were told afterwards that there was probably a listening apparatus in each room, so that all our conversations could be overheard, as every officer that came to Karlsruhe was put for two or three days into this Hotel before being sent on to the camp.

The following morning a man came in to say that I was to go on to the camp at once, so I hurriedly dressed, but there was no need for hurry as I was first submitted to a lengthy and rather clever cross examination, by a German officer who could speak very good English but I do not think that he acquired the valuable information, as I also was very good in asking questions about the conditions in Germany. After this was over, some twenty of us were marched to the camp which was about a quarter of a mile away and situated in some public gardens: these had been surrounded by a barbed wire fence and a high palisade. The camp had been placed here, as being a spot likely to be bombed because on a former bombing raid, when there was a fair going on in these

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grounds some bombs had been dropped here and many of the inhabitants had been killed and wounded. Thus was the site selected for our camp.

On arrival at the camp, we were introduced to the Commandant and the rules of the camp were then read out to us, after which we were taken away to be searched. Here my whistle, Orilux lamp, gelatine lamels, and all my money was taken away from me. In return for the money we were given special camp money which could only be used in the camp and was of no value at all outside.

The Camp consisted of seven or eight wooden huts, divided up into rooms of various sizes. Slogett and I were given a room together at our request. [insert] We had known one another before, as he had once marched a Battalion in the same Division & we had met again as prisoners at Bachant & had travelled on together from there to Karlsruhe We were looked after by a French Orderly, who was very much better than the Russian we had had in the Hotel.

There were several English officers who had been in the camp for some months and thanks to the Red Cross they had organized and collected a number of parcels of food and clothing, which they distributed among the destitute officers on arrival in the camp. A change of underclothing, some tea, Bully beef and biscuits were luxuries that we had not expected to see for many months. All the officers whom we found there were most kind, inviting us out to meals and doing everything they could to help us. Besides the British Officers there were many French Officers, a few Belgians and Italians, and five Serbian Officers who had been caught by a submarine.

There was a very expensive canteen in the camp where it was possible to buy a few necessaries, cooking utensils and white wines.

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The food supplied by the Germans was not good or sufficient, some acorn coffee in the morning, a slab of bread and some soup at Midday and some more soup or a few vegetables in the evening. However thanks to the Red Cross supplies we were able to have a cup of tea and some biscuits in the morning and, by saving the vegetables, we were able to cook ourselves a meal with the bully beef for the evening. In each room there was a little stove and as there was plenty of fuel, we were able to experiment in cooking and many were the weird dishes that we made; having made them ourselves, we usually pronounced them to be good.

There was also a library in the camp where we could get plenty of books to read and a couple of French billiard tables where S and I used to have a game every afternoon. Every Saturday evening there used to be a concert, in which all the camp talent took part, but as the Karlsruhe camp was only a camp of passage, it was never possible to arrange for any show more than a few days ahead.

The days somehow passed very quickly, but it was only owing to having the day mapped out and with something to do every hour. Fixed hours for exercise which could also be combined with practice in conversation in Italian or French, definite hours for Bridge for reading, and for lessons in some foreign languages ( here came in the great advantage of having a camp of mixed nationalities,) and finally cooking and preparing the meals took up a considerable time.

We had two roll calls a day, one in the morning and one a

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quarter of an hour before "Lights out" which were at the early hours of 9 o' clock, so that no reading was possible after that hour.

The following was a specimen of the way the average day was spent. We were called at seven, then came the cooking of breakfast, which consisted of a cup of tea and some biscuits fried in dripping, after which we shaved and dressed. On three days in the week there were hot shower baths, which

were quite good, and cold shower baths on all the other days. The first roll call was at ten o'clock, after which we either learnt Italian or walked up and down under the chestnut trees; the next hour was spent in reading and translating the news out of the German papers. So called lunch was at 12, but it took very few minutes and was usually followed by a walk up and down, from 2-3 a game of billiards, from 3-4 preparing and eating tea, which again only consisted of biscuits with occasionally a little jam. From 4-6 we had a regular four at Bridge consisting of General Dawson, Lord Farnham, Troughton and self. At six we started to prepare supper and this usually took us on till the last roll-call at 8.45 p.m. As it was too early to go to bed then, we walked up and down for another hour under the chestnut trees. No one was ever allowed outside the camp under any pretext, so that the inside of the barbed wire became the whole world to us.

The chief interest in the camp was the constant arrival of new faces: it was a camp of passage and most people only stopped

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there for two or three days, and as we remained there for a fortnight we met officers of nearly every division, and so were able to get news of friends and to piece together the happenings since March 21st. Many of the wounded officers had undergone terrible hardships since their capture, remaining for days in open trucks, with their wounds neglected and full of maggots, and no one making any attempt to look after them.

On April 12th the usual routine was varied by an air raid alarm. Sirens blew and guns fired, and all the Germans retired in great alarm to prepared dug-outs. The aeroplanes however did not come over Karlsruhe but must have been bombing some neighbouring town: the populace were in great terror of air raids and many houses in the town were empty owing to them.

Early on the morning of April 13th Sloggett and I were warned to hold ourselves in readiness to proceed to Furstenberg. We had only 2 hours notice in which to pack up and to make all our farewells. We were given a meal of soup and potatoes, after which we and our luggage were carefully searched and all money taken away from us. This took some time as there were fifty officers coming with us, but when it was finished we fell in in fours outside under a German officer and with an escort then marched to the station, where soon after midday we entrained in 2nd Class carriages. In most compartments there were seven officers and one of the escort: we luckily had only four, together with the German officer in charge.

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There was much speculation among us as to what kind of camp we were going to, as no one seemed to know anything about Furstenberg, not even where it was.

The German officer who was in charge of us was in appearance most fierce looking with a great bristling moustache, but was actually very pleasant and went out of his way to be agreeable to us. Throughout the journey he got us papers and provided us with meals whenever possible. Our two 2nd Class carriages were attached to any goods train or slow train that was going in the direction of Furstenberg, and in consequence it took us 51 hours to get there. On the way we passed many troop trains going to the Western front, decorated with boughs outside the windows. The men were all full of hope that the war would be over in a couple of months. We saw also many overcrowded Hospital



trains going in the opposite direction, which cheered us up, as it shewed that the Germans were being made to pay very dearly for their victories.

At Frankfurt We had a meal of sausages and potatoes, and another at Cassel, far better and more plentiful food than any thing we had had in the camps up till now. At Berlin we arrived at three in the morning, but were kept there nearly nine hours shunting about from station to station; however after a breakfast of bread and sausage we were attached to a train which brought us to Furstenberg in the course of the afternoon.

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Our first impressions of Furstenberg were of the best. The little town through which we marched was most picturesque with quaint old fashioned buildings and gardens which extended down to the lakes which lay on either side of the town & were connected up by canals. Beyond the lakes were pine forests. Our camp was in a building, about a mile out of the town, which had been used as a Sanatorium. Pine forests surrounded it and there were fine views from it over the surrounding country and the lakes. We were told that we were very lucky to come here, as it was the best camp and the one with most privileges in all Germany. We were received very kindly by everyone, the Commandant appeared most civil and the German Adjutant, who was an Alsatian married to a Russian wife, was most agreeable. He spoke English well and was most tactful towards us, smoothing out any little difficulties and altogether very unlike the Germans that we had already met. Sloggett and I again shared a room together with comfortable beds and sheets, and after two nights in the train we slept very soundly.

The camp consisted of about 140 officers, of whom sixty three belonged to the Mercantile Marine, having being captured by U Boats at different times. There were besides five Rumanians and one Russian officer. The orderlies with the exception of three Russians, were all English, and in this camp we were allowed to manage our own affairs completely, looking after the orderlies and running the kitchen and the arrangement of the rooms etc. without interference from the German authorities.

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There were luckily a number of officers who had been prisoners for a considerable time and who had a good store of provisions put by from their parcels. Two of them very kindly invited Sloggett and me to their Mess and fed us until such time as our parcels began to arrive, which was not until nearly two months later.

All the new arrivals were divided up into Messes, and for those that were not taken on by old messes, collections were made from those that had stores, and food was periodically doled out to them.

We arranged, through the Kitchen committee, to draw only so much of the rations to which we were entitled as we wanted, & to exchange what we did not want for other supplies.

The German ration was however always very poor, one or two very thin slices of bread a day, meat once a week, and then only about one ounce per man, and this even was not given in the meatless

weeks. Of potatoes we got a fair amount, except for two months in the summer when they were scarce and we were given none at all. Of carrots turnips and cabbages we had more than enough.

As a rule one officer in each mess used to prepare and arrange the meals for that Mess: he would prepare what was wanted for breakfast over night and hand it to his table orderly with instructions as to what to do. For lunch there were but few preparations, a tin of potted meat or sardines would be opened to eat with the soup or vegetables which formed the daily ration. After lunch however, much preparation and ingenuity would

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be displayed in making what was wanted for dinner: various curries of bully beef, pastry for a Machonachie pie or a fruit tart, and in many ways we learnt to become quite good rough cooks.

The great excitement every day was the parcel cart which used to arrive in camp about ten o'clock every morning. The parcels were at once unloaded and taken down into the parcel room, where they were sorted by a parcel committee of British Officers, and a list was then put up shewing who had got parcels and at what time they were to come and draw them. At the appointed time, the lucky officer would come to the Parcel room, call out the number of his parcel, which would be then opened by a German N.C.O. who would take out everything, have a look at them and then hand all the contents to the officer, who would take them up to his room or locker. This was I believe the only camp in Germany where this system prevailed, in all others the tins were confiscated and the contents opened out & searched before they were handed over, and then only after much trouble and annoyance. Once or twice the German authorities thought of starting a tin-room at Furstenberg where they would store all officers tins, but they found that this system would cause them too much trouble, so on each occasion they dropped the idea.

There were two "Appels" or Roll Calls in the day, one at nine in the morning after breakfast and the other at four in the afternoon just before teatime. They never took very long, as the numbers only were counted: but if any were missing an N.C.O. would be sent round the rooms to find out who was the culprit, and on his apologising for being asleep, or for

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forgetting the time, he would be seldom punished.

We were especially lucky, in the amount of freedom allowed us outside the camp. On arrival we were all given parole cards, on which was written an undertaking that while we were outside the camp we would not attempt to escape or make any preparations for escape. This card we handed in at the gate every time that we left the camp. At half past nine in the mornings there was always a walk till half past eleven and again in the afternoon there was either what was called a "Yachting Party" or a Bathing Party from two till four o'clock. Many of the mercantile marine being clever carpenters had during their captivity made model yachts and these they used to race across the lake every afternoon. This was a good opportunity for those that wanted to take a book out and lie down by the side of the lake; others used to make it the occasion for a rendezvous with Germans who frequently came down here for a holiday from Berlin. The Bathing party used to go down to the Swimming Baths and have a good swim in the lake. We were not supposed to go more than 50 yards out under penalty of being confined to camp for three days, but several times I have swum out to

islands 800 yards out and even across the lake for which the penalty was eight days confinement to camp, punishments which I always managed to avoid thanks to being on good terms with our sentries. For parties of under twenty officers, we were supposed to have one sentry and for parties over twenty two sentries. These of course could not, in

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spite of orders, keep much surveillance over us when out for walks, and we used to wander at will wherever we wanted, after telling the sentries that we would all foregather at a particular spot, and come in past the Kommandatur to all appearances as though we had been together the whole time.

The country was very pretty all around, gently undulating and with great forests of Scotch fir, beech and oak trees, and nearly every mile or so a lake. For hours one could wander without meeting a human being, though we often came across deer, as the forests were strictly preserved. These lakes in summer proved most delightful for a swim and we often slipped the sentries when out for a walk for a swim in them or in one of the canals, which was delicious on a hot summer day.

On Saturdays we were allowed a long walk from 9.30 a.m. – 4.p.m. and so we took our lunch out with us. The favourite walk was to go to a village called Neu Globow on the pretty Stechlin See. There were two or three inns here, where they were delighted to see us and where we could always get some beer, and a bathe in the crystal waters of the Stechlin See was always a treat. The inhabitants in these parts were very friendly and bore no enmity against us – often they would ask officers out to lunch – Their only desire was to get the war over as soon as possible. The lakes were all full of fish, which we were not allowed to catch; but we often managed with a hook, a worm and a bough of a tree to land surreptitiously a small perch which was a welcome addition to the fare at breakfast.

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There were two tennis courts outside the camp, made by the labours of the officers who had excavated them out of the hill side and made the surface for them. These were much used all through the summer months and several tournaments were held on them.

Besides outdoor sports it was necessary to have some form of mental occupation in order to prevent one's brain from vegetating, and so classes of different kinds were arranged. The German classes were taken by the Censor, who was a German Pole, who spend too much time with the classes, with the result that we had to wait a long time for our letters.

Besides the German there were French and Italian classes, mathematics, shorthand, bookkeeping, in fact whatever we could find instructors for. These helped to pass some of the time away, though in the fine summer months, the outdoor attractions often proved too strong.

We used to take in most of the leading German papers, but as very few officers knew German, it was necessary for some of us that knew the language to translate all the events of importance that had occurred and to put up the news in English on the notice board, as well as to move the pins on the large scale maps of the battle fronts either backwards or forwards. The Berliner Tageblatt and The Frankfurter Zeitung were as a rule the most moderate German papers and they often had the greater part of the English and French Communique's in them, so that we felt we could trust their news fairly well.

### **folio 23 recto**

There was quite a good library in the camp, as all those that who had received books and had read them presented them to the library, so that by the time we came there, there was quite a good collection, though mostly of the lighter variety.

All the Dramatic Talent in the Camp was collected into the Dramatic Society, who used periodically to give us various entertainments. Towards the end they improved very much, so also did the new string orchestra that was started, but at the beginning these functions were apt to be the occasions for a good deal of dissipation.

On alternate Sundays we were allowed to go to the Lutheran Church in the town. Not more than four or five of us ever availed ourselves of the privilege. The Church was an ugly modern building with large galleries all round. There was not a bad organ, but the singing was very bad, and the attendance poor. The Parson used always to preach the most doleful sermons regarding the conditions of the country and the sufferings that the people had to endure owing to the war. I always enjoyed listening to his gloomy descriptions of life in Germany.

I had never before realized how extraordinary corrupt the average German was. Possibly want of food and poor nourishment had increased this characteristic but I scarcely ever met with a German who was not bribable with soap, chocolate cocoa or food. Their substitutes for soap was a kind of pumicestone and very poor; soap itself was not to be bought with money, so that for a cake of soap, they were quite ready to make any sacrifice. It

### **folio 24 recto**

was the same with chocolate and cocoa, articles quite unprocurable in Germany, for which therewere no substitutes.

As a nation they were wonderfully clever in inventing substitutes. Instead of coffee they used ground acorns and if plenty of milk and sugar were added, it formed a very passable imitation. For tea again they had to make use of various leaves; beech leaves formed the chief component of their tobacco; clothes shirts and tablecloths were made of paper; this outwardly looked quite good, but wore out very quickly besides being dreadfully expensive. When they got short of one substitute they would invent a substitute for that substitute. In the bread besides rye and potatoes there was sawdust and straw, a combination which was apt to cause troubles of the stomach.

For a couple of English cigarettes the sentries that accompanied us on walks would allow us to go wherever we liked and sometimes on a Saturday we would go nearly 20 miles to get properly fit.

The people were very short of fats and butter; butter would sell in Berlin at thirty marks a pound; & when the beech mast was ripe, this was collected everywhere, as it is very rich in oil.

The Summer days used to pass very quickly: I had a garden inside the wire which throve exceedingly and supplied us with fresh vegetables every day. Tomatoes even ripened out of doors, and at the period when there were no potatoes in our rations, our Mess was kept supplied with them every day; besides these we had

### **folio 25 recto**

plenty of lettuce, carrots, beans, peas, vegetable marrows, parsley, beetroot, radishes and mustard and cress, and these helped to counteract the effect of always living on tinned meats besides providing an additional interest in their cultivation.

Many of the officers kept rabbits, which had large families and rabbit pie became a fairly frequent dish. At one time the rabbit hutches were near the wire, but after it had been discovered that one of the hutches covered the entrance to a tunnel that was to go outside the wire, they were all removed to the centre of the camp by the German authorities.

The electric light in the camp was not turned out until eleven o'clock, so that it always gave one time for a game of bridge after dinner. For many however bridge was not an exciting enough game, and poker and roulette used to be played instead for very high stakes, so that it was not at all an uncommon thing for a hundred pounds to be lost or won in a night. Settling up used to be done by cheques, usually once a month.

The worst part of Furstenberg was that it was possible to get spirits into the camp by means of the Russian orderlies. The stuff that they used to bring in was called brandy, but it had never seen a grape and was manufactured locally, chiefly I believe from Sulphuric Acid and Fusel Oil. It had a most nauseating taste and I am afraid ruined many a constitution. Besides this there was a canteen where German wines were sold and also Port and Sherry of a kind, so that there was really no need for these spirits to be brought in, but it was impossible to stop it.

### **folio 26 recto**

Life in the camp was far from intolerable & there were consequently few of us who were ready to run the risk of an attempt at escape. These could be divided into three classes, those whose thoughts turned that way and got no farther than thinking, those who thought and talked openly a great deal about escaping but did nothing, and those who said nothing but made their preparations in quiet and slipped away.

Before we came to the camp, no one had attempted to make an escape for many months, so that the sentries were lulled into security. Moreover it was not difficult to distract their attention. Soon after our arrival two officers succeeded in cutting the wire and slipping out without being noticed, when the gap was not discovered till the following morning. On this occasion it happened quite accidentally that the village tailor, a little dwarf about 4ft high and with eyes like a ferret was in the camp. We had nicknamed him Cuthbert and he always answered to this name. Someone had put him up onto the piano and made him dance there, a most extraordinarily funny sight, which was too much altogether for the sentries, who instead of watching the wire, were watching this performance. The wire meanwhile was cut and the two officers got away. Unfortunately they did not get far and were caught the following night.

The next attempt was made some little time later just as it was dark. My duty on that occasion was to keep one sentry occupied and so for

### **folio 27 recto**

twenty minutes I had to talk gardening to him and to discuss the differences between the English and German systems of growing vegetables. The other sentry was also being engaged in conversation and did not see the wire being cut until the fugitives had just got through it. He the

fired a hurried shot at them, but as he had not cleaned his rifle for months, the barrel was so full of rust that the shot burst it and he was unable to fire again. One of these two officers got right up to the Dutch frontier and had the extraordinary bad luck to be caught there, when almost over the border.

No one indeed had yet succeeded in getting across the frontier from Furstenberg. The distance was too great, the Dutch frontier being 300 and the Danish 240 miles as the crow flies. The distance to be travelled being of course much greater. As it was the nearest, I had decided to make for the Danish frontier, as there was always the possibility of being able to jump a coal train & across the Kiel canal, which was the great obstacle in the way. This route also led through a less populated country.

The Lieutenant Edmundson, an officer of the Machine Gun Corps, who had been captured on March 22nd & had accompanied us from Karlsruhe to Furstenberg, I found a very keen & energetic young officer who was anxious to try his luck & get back home. The necessary preparations for making an attempt to escape required much time & thought. In this camp most of the necessities were easy to procure; for a tin of cocoa one of the German under officers was quite ready to supply you with any amount of German money in exchange for camp money.

#### **folio 28 recto**

On certain days in the week tradespeople from the town and occasionally a man from Tietz, the William Whiteley of Berlin, used to come up with hardware goods or with clothing for sale. A little chocolate proved the Open Sesame here and a compass and electric torch were provided at quadruple their cost, a very light waterproof and a ruck sac also in which to carry all ones food were also obtained in the same way.

In return for a few tins of food one of the Germans who ministered to our health provided all the maps that were required up to the frontier, and so gradually we obtained most of the articles required. There were several pairs of wire cutters in the camp, and for the occasion we could always borrow a pair.

The amount of food that had to be carried for the long journey was a great difficulty. The least bulky and the most nourishing food stuffs had to be collected. Horlicks Malted Milk Lozenges, Beef lozenges, Chocolate, Oxocubes, Biscuits and bacon proved the most important of these, and in fact were the only things that we could get. A pair of shoes to rest ones feet in during the day time, several pairs of socks, a good knife, some string, a flask with a little brandy, an air cushion to use as a water bottle, an electric torch and one or two minor articles completed the outfit. Edmondson and I had many anxious discussions as to how and where we should try to get out of the camp. After each former attempt to escape, an extra sentry had been put on at dark at that particular place, so we eventually decided to make an attempt in daylight. We were warned by a friend in the town however that we

#### **folio 29 recto**

had been noticed walking up and down a particular side very often and that the sentries had been instructed to keep their eyes upon us, so we had to change our original plan of campaign.

All these discussions and preparations had added a new interest to life, and by the time that we were ready we were both of us very fit. We had arranged with one of the Russians who used to work both inside and outside the camp to take some of our kit outside, and bury it at a spot which he was afterwards to point out to me & which I could see from my window. This man however was unfortunately drunk for several days and forgot where he had buried the kit. But after nearly a weeks delay he retrieved most of it and put it in the right spot pointing us out the place from our balcony. We were left however with a certain amount to carry through the wire. On two occasions at dusk we waited in the garden in the hopes that the sentry would walk up and down his beat, but he refused to move from the particular spot whence he could command a good view all down the wire.

On the third occasion one afternoon in the latter half of September we saw that one sentry was interested in the tennis and spent most of his time watching it, while the other one was quite friendly and always ready to talk and take a cigarette. We thereupon determined to seize the opportunity & make a dash for it. There was a space of about 100 yards between the two sentries and the obstacles that we had to surmount were one twelve foot barbed wire fence, then a space about three yards wide, and another barbed wire fence of equal height; eight inches to a foot beyond this was a feet white wooden palisade with three strands of barbed wire on the top, on the other side of which

### **folio 30 recto**

was the main road and beyond this again was a wooded hill. Once a few yards within the wood we should be out of sight.

So after arranging with Lord Farnham who was a fellow prisoner, that had arrived a short time previously from Clausthal, to do a few gymnastics to attract one of the sentries attention, we strolled down through the garden towards the spot we intended to make our attempt from. Edmundson had the wirecutters and was to do all the cutting, while I was to follow on behind with the Kit. On seeing that neither of the sentries were looking at the wire, we took off our coats and Edmundson started to cut two strands of the first fence. The wire cutters were very blunt, but he managed it all right and crept through the hole made to the next fence; I followed after with the kit, and lay down just behind him as he started cutting through the next fence. One of the officers that we had as a look out gave a gentle whistle, and we lay flat, as the sentry that had been watching the tennis started to walk in our direction. He did not go far however and then turned back again, allowing us to get on with the cutting of the wire. Owing to the bluntness of the wire cutters, this took much longer than we had anticipated, however at last the second fence was cut through and we just managed to squeeze through and stand up in the narrow space between the fence and the wooden palisade. It was a very tight fit indeed and our shirts were torn to ribbons in doing so. Up till now, we had been unseen but just as Edmundson was cutting the last of the three wires on the palisade, one of the sentries saw us and shouted. We jumped down onto the road and then ran across it and up the hill into the wood as fast as we could go. Five shots were fired at us as we ran, but the sentries were not good shots.

### **folio 31 recto**

We had unfortunately to cross the road some four hundred yards lower down and were of course seen doing so; we then ran into the wood on the far side of the road, but on trying to debouch from

it met some sentries coming back from leave who chased us into the wood again. We went on a little way and then lay down and waited, trying to regain our breath, but on hearing them start to beat the wood systematically with a line of men and dogs, we moved farther on, as there was no cover where we were. At the far end of the strip of wood which was only a couple of hundred yards wide was the town of Furstenberg, but between it and the town was a ditch with reeds in it, by the side of the path and adjoining a potato field. We got down into the water and then lay down under cover of some nettles and reeds at the bottom of the ditch. We could hear our pursuers beating the wood thoroughly and several times they passed within a couple of yards of us. At one time one of the wolf dogs started sniffing just over our heads and I thought we were bound to be found out; he parted the reeds and then came down to drink not three feet from us. We remained absolutely motionless and I thought they must have got our wind if he did not hear our hearts beating, but at length after what seemed hours he finished drinking and went off again. After this we were not disturbed, except by the nettles which were very troublesome.

### **folio 32 recto**

Here we remained for about two hours feeling very wet & uncomfortable, as our hands had been badly torn by the wire. We did not dare to move as the main road was not thirty yards away & people were passing by the whole time, but none thought of looking in the ditch for us. When it had been dark about an hour, we slowly sallied forth and crossed the wood, but under the Scotch firs, it was very dark & impossible to get along without making a noise. We emerged with much caution on the far side, in case there might be sentries there, and after going a yard or two, I saw what looked like a stump in front of me: on kneeling down quickly, I saw that it was a man not five yards away. Shouting to Edmundson that it was a man, I ran back into the wood, whereupon the sentry fired four shots with his revolver at me. Edmundson he had not seen, as he had lain perfectly still, & as the sentry followed me up by the noise that I made in the wood, he managed to slip past him into the open country. About this time I lost the bag with my biscuits for the journey, & after going rather noisily about a hundred yards in the wood, tried to debouch again, only to find the sentry waiting for me: I therefore crawled back very quietly to the point at which I had first slipped out & got into the open country. Edmundson & I were however separated, but I felt certain that I should meet him at the spot where the remainder of the Kit was buried, so that the next thing to do was to try & reach the buried kit. This was very close to the camp, but after making a detour, I found to my disgust that a line of sentries had been posted between me & the "cache". I succeeded never the less by using infinite caution in crawling past them & reaching the required spot. Here I waited for six hours, hidden among the young Scotch Firs, hoping that Edmundson would rejoin me. During that time I could hear our pursuers searching with lanterns & beating out the wood that I had just left, & I was able distinctly to recognise the voice of Lieutenant Schmidt, a German officer whom we all cordially disliked.

### **folio 33 recto**

At last fearing that Edmundson must have been caught, & not wishing to remain so close to camp when dawn broke, I crawled out through the potato fields past the sentries & reached once more the open country. On arrival at the football field, I took off my Khaki trousers under which I had been wearing an old pair of brown corduroy trousers & I hid the Khaki trousers under some bushes at a place where I had arranged for a friend to come the following day & take them back to camp.



My costume was a curious one, besides the farmers corduroy trousers, I had on an old German green felt hat: this with a khaki coloured waistcoat, an ordinary civilian black coat, that I had got from the Orderlies, a heavy pair of marching boots & a green ruck sac completed my disguise, together with a stick cut in the woods. As so much time had already been wasted, it was impossible to go far the first night & I lay up in a young plantation, close to a side along which we had arranged to go, only about five miles from camp. As I found out afterwards, Edmundson had been prevented for a long time by the sentries from getting near the "cache", & had eventually arrived there about half an hour after I had left. He had then hurried along to the football fields, where he found that I had already been, & missing in the dark the prearranged side in the woods, had eventually spent the day in another plantation not half a mile away from where I was. The next evening as soon as it was dark, I went back to the football field to see if there were any signs of Edmundson, but finding none, at midnight I started off again & covered a full twenty Kilometres before dawn. The road led through forests of Scotch fir all the way, & I spent the following day in a huge plantation of Scotch fir near Rheinsberg. The weather was unfortunately very unsettled & nearly every day there was heavy rain. The next evening I started before it was dark, meeting various persons on the way, one of whom was rather suspicious, but I dodged him in the woods. Then followed a long walk across heavy ploughed [ms damaged] order to avoid the town of Rheinsberg. The small vill [ms damaged] always to go boldly through, but I was afraid of towns. [ms damaged] The procedure was to walk all night & lie up [ms damaged] From the map I would pick out one or more [ms damaged] to reach about dawn, & in them I should be [me damaged] plantation, which I found to be the best [ms damaged]

### **folio 33a recto**

as no one ever came into them. The country was flat & for the most part wooded, chiefly with Scotch fir, but occasionally there were quite fine oak & beech forests, & through them the tracks were often hard to find. On the fourth night out, it was blowing such a gale with a driving rain, that I could scarcely walk against it, & on finding a nice little garden in a village with a thick yew hedge, I lay under it for a couple of hours until the fury of the storm had blown over.

Starting about five or six in most evenings, while it was still daylight, one could get a good start, & though I met many farmers & labourers returning from work, I used to pass the time of day with them, ask them about their crops & they never suspected anything. I saw a number of Russian French & Belgian prisoners of war working on the land, but as a rule these were fairly well treated.

Going through villages, I usually had a bad limp as though I were a discharged soldier. Avoiding all main roads, I kept to the small tracks which were very difficult to find at night, but the maps that I had were accurate, & the compass would soon tell me if I were going in the wrong direction: there were plenty of sign posts at cross roads & here the electric torch came in very useful on the dark moonless nights. After going for five or six hours, I used to have a rest about midnight for an hour or an hour & a half, eating a little chocolate & sucking some Horlicks lozenges. At dawn, I would seek out some suitable plantation & settle down there for the day. The average nights march was between 25-35 Kilometres & very tired I was by the morning. Sleep however seldom came in the day time, as the weather was too cold or wet, so that for eight or nine days I had practically no sleep whatsoever.

During the night I used to dig up a turnip & a potato or two, with occasionally a small white cabbage, & these cut in thin slices & eaten raw with a little Oxo smeared on them were often the only meal I had & extraordinarily nasty they were too. Edmundson had unfortunately all the bacon with him &

our only canteen for cooking. On the fourth day my air cushion, which I used to fill with wa [ms damaged] it was the only substitute I could get for a water bottle [ms damaged] punctured among some thorns & had to be thrown a[ms damaged]

### **folio 34 recto**

Beech mast proved to be quite good as food and once I was lucky enough to find a small marrow. Most of the apples had unfortunately already been picked and the one or two orchards that I entered were much to my disgust already bare.

A great part of the country through which we travelled consisted of fine forests which were full of game: short as the Germans were of meat, they would not allow the game to be touched. It was the rutting season and all night long the stags were

folio 35 recto calling all around. Sometimes in the day-time I had quite fun with the hares who came up close and were very surprised to see a stranger there.

One evening I met a head forester, who stopped to talk, but I apparently deceived him alright, & he went on quite satisfied.

By the tenth night I had covered a very good distance. I was then in the country that lay between Schwerin and Kiel, but here my luck completely deserted me. I was resting between midnight and one o' clock under some trees in a very deserted part of the country and I must have dropped off to sleep, I woke to hear a dog barking in my ear and two soldiers standing over me. They had lanterns and guns, and shouted at me to get up. These were a road patrol looking for deserters and escaped prisoners. Pretending that I was a traveller who had lost his way and had lain down waiting for daylight or for someone to pass, I asked them to put me on the right road and they were very nearly letting me go when at the last moment one of them asked me for my papers, and I had to confess that I had left them at home. This made them at once very suspicious and they told me to come along with them. On arrival at the nearest village, they searched through my rucksac and of course found boxes of English food stuffs in it, which completely gave me away. I was then thrust into a shed where an antediluvian Fire-engine reposed, and after my boots and rucksac had been taken away from me, I was told to spend the night there. If only my boots had been left me I might have got away, as one of the windows could be opened.

### **folio 36 recto**

The floor was hard and draughty, and tired though I was, sleep would not come. At length the following morning, the two soldiers came backed and said they would take me to a man's camp near Schwerin.

One of them took me to his house and gave me a meal of bread and apple jam and a cup of coffee. Later on in the day we went to the nearest station and took the train to Schwerin. Hence I was taken on to Gorries, a Strafe camp for private soldiers and was thrust into a dark cell there, where I remained for 48 hours in solitary confinement until an escort from Furstenberg came to fetch me. The British interpreter however found out who I was and told some of the prisoners amongst whom, strange to say, there were some who belonged to my old Regular Battalion, and had served under me in India twelve years before. They were kindness itself, and bribing the guard they sent in food of

every description for me; I cannot feel grateful enough to them. A lantern was brought in for five minutes to enable me to see to eat it, but I was never allowed to thank them for their kindness.

The escort from Furstenberg, were very much amused at my appearance and did not recognize me at first. We went by train by a very roundabout way to Parchim, where there was a proper detention barrack for officers. We travelled in 2nd class carriages to the indignation of civilian travellers who edged away from me and I own that in my muddy clothes, I must have looked a pretty bad ruffian.

### **folio 36a recto**

The evening we arrived at Parchim, where there was a very large prisoners camp, which was capable I believe of holding nearly 20,000 soldiers. There was British, Russian French & Belgian soldiers there & one barrack in the centre of the camp was set apart as a place of punishment for officers of the ninth corps & to this we were conducted. Here I found Edmundson, who had been caught a short way to the South of me & who had been brought there the day before.

Our escort on the way was very conversational & said they much admired our escape, which they thought very sporting: they added that they had always thought we were going from another place! They told us that Lord Farnham, Ashbourne & Howitt had since escaped by fusing the electric lights. This had been done by another officer from one of the windows of the house: he had connected together two wires that were not insulated & so had short circuited all the lights. This not only put out all the lights round the camp, but also in the town & railway station. In the confusion caused by the sudden darkness, Farnham & the other two had cut the barbed wire & escaped. The sentries heard the noise but could do nothing & fired wildly into the dark without however hitting anyone.

They also told me that the whole of the camp was down with influenza. My lost biscuits had been found by some small children, who had taken them to Lieutenant Schmidt (Kerensky as we used to call him) by whom, much to their amusement, the biscuits had been sent on to his wife at Hamburg.

### **folio 37 recto**

At Parchim we were very thoroughly searched, and a compass & some German money that I had hidden in the walls of the room were found. The only thing that they did not find were two 50 Mark notes that were in the lining of my waistcoat.

After the energetic time that we had been having, we were very glad to have a few days complete rest. We were in a wooden barrack and each officer had a small room to himself, in which was a bed, table chair, basin and stove. We were not permitted to talk to one another, but we were allowed an hour's walking exercise in the mornings and afternoons up and down outside the barrack; this afforded an opportunity of which we were not slow to avail ourselves, for communications between the prisoners who happened to be standing at this barrack window & those who happened to be passing in front of it. Sometimes a particularly smart sentry would shout at us and say that he was not blind.

### **folio 38 recto**

There was an excellent British Help Committee in the camp and they used to send us over extra food and wood for the stove, so that we could make tea and do a little cooking on it. The German ration

was however not at all bad, a cup of coffee at seven, a bowl of soup at 1.30 p.m. with a large plate of vegetables and a slice of meat: it was in fact far better than the German ration at Karlsruhe or Furstenberg.

There was a library in the camp whence we could borrow books and we were also told that we could write letters, but none ever reached home from there.

### **folio 38a recto**

Among the officer prisoners were three Frenchmen, three Italians, one Belgian and five British Officers, as Lord Farnham, Ashbourne & Howitt who had escaped from Furstenberg also joined us there. Lord Farnham & Howitt – Ashbourne had become separated from them, had made a wonderful journey getting as far as the Kiel canal, but the coal train that they had relied upon to take them across the canal had taken off, & as they were too exhausted to go on, they had to give themselves up.

The time passed quickly enough at Parchim & we had only fourteen days to do. We were in the IXth Army Corps where the treatment was just, and the conditions very unlike those which prevailed in the Xth (Hanover) Command.

One night the Frenchman who was in the cell next to mine, cut the barbed wire that was fastened across his window and escaped. There was barbed wire across the window but no sentry stationed outside his window & the lights in the camp were few & far between, so that once outside there was a very good chance of getting away. I heard afterwards that he was recaptured near the Dutch frontier, having travelled most of the way in a Train-de-Luxe.

The next night besides having a sentry on duty outside my window, I was woken up nine times during the night by sentries that came into my room flashed a light into my face to see if I was really present. I protested against this treatment to the Commandant & was only visited twice the following nights.

Edmundson was able to get some eggs one day from a friendly sentry & he most nobly sent over half of them to me, - the first fresh eggs I had eaten in Germany.

Here we used to get hold of a Hamburg paper and

### **folio 39 recto**

the news every day provided the most thrilling reading, the great victories in Palestine, the change of the German Government and their offer of an Armistice.

At last we seemed to be properly winning the war and the German people was beginning to know it.

On the 15th day an escort came from Furstenberg with instructions to take us to Clausthal in the Harz mountains, where we arrived towards the end of October. Our journey was quite interesting, as we had a very friendly escort, who was ready to do anything for us. We had to drive through Berlin and passed Hindenburg's statue where the iron nails were hammered in. The populace did not seem to bear us any enmity and many were the smiles that we got on the way through. We had a good but

expensive meal in the waiting room and quite a comfortable journey. At Magdeburg some civilian munition makers were rude to us, for which an officer apologised, explaining that all those who had not been to the front were much more bitter against us than those who had fought. At Halberstadt, there were no more trains going on that night, so we went to a decent hotel and spent the night there. They gave us a very good meat dinner and a fair bottle of Bordeaux. The next morning we went on as far as Goslar but finding no more trains going on till the afternoon, we went into the town with our escort and had a look round. From Goslar a mountain railway took us up to Clausthal which lay 2000 feet up in the Harz mountains in very pretty surroundings. This

#### **folio 40 recto**

might have been the best and most comfortable camp in Germany but for the fact that there was a bad Commandant there the now notorious Captain Niemeyer. He and his brother were German Americans of the worst type, one was Commandant at Clausthal and the other at Holzminden. Ours went by the nickname of Mad Harry, while the other brother was known as Milwaukee Bill. Luckily Mad Harry was on leave when we arrived and so we had only a comparatively mild search. The camp was a larger one than Furstenberg, there being some 240 officers here, partly housed in a hotel building, and partly in three huts.

There was a roll call morning and afternoon, and twice during the course of the night we would be woken up by sentries coming into our rooms to see that we were present. There was a walk out for each half of the camp once a week and for some time we were only allowed along the high roads, but when it became evident that the allies were winning the war, many of the most vexatious restrictions were gradually relaxed.

There was always great trouble over parcels. At Furstenberg the parcels arrived very well and there were no complaints about them, but at Clausthal their arrival was most uncertain and an enormous number of them were stolen. Officers were not allowed within ten yards of the cart that brought them up from the Post Office, and the parcels were then unloaded into a room with white washed windows so that it was impossible to see what went on inside. Later on a list would be put up shewing what

#### **folio 41 recto**

officers had got parcels. Officers who had seen parcels addressed to them arrived in the cart often found that their names were not on the list. Complaints were discouraged by the imprisonment of the complainant. On going to draw a parcel the officer would stand in front of a grill, and a German would open his parcel, tell him how many tins there were in it; these would be at once put away in a locker in another locked room. Soap or bacon would be cut up into small pieces before being handing over. Bread likewise was cut up into four pieces before being given to us. In order to draw any of the tins, a list had to be put in shewing what tins were required, and you would then have to bring a number of plates or glass jars. The Germans would then open the tins and pour the contents onto the plates and if these were not sufficient everything would be poured in together. The Commandant came in one day and cursed one of the Germans for not cutting up the sardines before handing them over.

A miniature golf course, two tennis courts and two Squash racket courts had been built inside the wire in order to provide a certain amount of exercise and amusement, but for a long time during the summer the Commandant had shut all these up and prevented officers from using them.

The day after we arrived there an officer made a very gallant attempt to climb over the wire in broad daylight: he reached the top wire but it unfortunately gave way under his weight and he had to bolt back into the camp, where after an

#### **folio 42 recto**

exciting chase he was eventually caught. Here the penalty for an attempt to escape was usually a months imprisonment, as they added all kinds of extra charges such as being in possession of a compass for which they gave them 8 days. There were actually British orders in the camp at one time forbidding officers to escape, but these had lately been cancelled.

Owing to the frequency of searches many ingenious places were found for concealing contraband. There was a hollow bust of the Kaiser, high up on one of the walls in the dining room. We always looked upon it as a great insult to us, but meanwhile it was very useful to hide maps & compasses inside as the German authorities never thought of looking inside it. The notice board outside the Kommandatur was another good place & even inside the Kommandatur, places which of course were never searched. Our secret information was good & we always had good warning of a search coming off.

Soon after our arrival in the camp, events began to move with the most startling suddenness, and each day brought forth news of the greatest interest. We were only allowed certain of the German papers here, not like at Furstenberg where we could get any, and were even able to smuggle in "The Times" which proved a God-send to us and helped to keep up our spirits through all the dark days.

No German paper could hide the defection of Bulgaria, the Armistice with Turkey and then with Austria. This latter was a terrible and unexpected blow to the Germans, news of riots in Hamburg Kiel and Bremen kept filtering into the camp, and rumour had it that the German fleet had fraternized with the British fleet at Borkum, a story to us quite unbelievable, but the Commandant told it as a fact. Then came news of the arrest of our arch enemy the 10th Corps Commander, Von Hanisch, who had been primarily responsible for most of the illtreatment of British prisoners. The Soldiers and Sailors Council had apparently taken over command everywhere, and the sentries had all taken the rosettes off their caps and no longer saluted their officers.

Each day came news that several more Kings and princes had

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resigned or have been deposed: we are truly living through the most wonderful period of history.

The Commandant told us that the Revolution is was directed against the Upper Classes and that we should be in danger if we went out, but I did not think that this was the case, as German soldiers saluted us now rather than their own officers and as I told them, they ought to thank us for freeing their country for them.

Large numbers of deserters were constantly arriving back from the front, and in Clausthal the Red Flag was flying over the Government buildings. I went down to the Sulphur baths and there got hold

of the Armistice terms which I brought back to the Camp. The terms seemed very stiff, but they ensured the disarmament of the country and prevented the Germans from renewing the war. The old Military party would never have accepted them, but the peoples Government will have to do so, as they have no other alternative.

One of the terms stated that all prisoners of war in this country were to be sent back, so that we may yet be back before Christmas.

The news that the Armistice had been accepted was taken very quietly by the camp, and the Germans were much astonished at our self-restraint. The sentries had now become so friendly that they actually allowed an officer to take a shot with one of their rifles at a fox that was crossing a neighbouring field. Needless to say, that he missed!

In November the weather became very much colder and we had snow and ice. For some days there was quite good skating & the canteen made a fortune selling skates as we

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were now allowed much more freedom, & could roam about the country, though towns and villages were out of bounds. There were one or two inns where it was possible on the quiet to get quite a good meal without meal tickets, but the proprietors had to be very careful about doing so, as they were liable to heavy penalties. It was lucky that we could occasionally get a good meal this way, as after the armistice scarcely any parcels arrived at all. They were stolen wholesale en route. Some parcels to my knowledge arrived containing only empty tins and straw; in one case they had gone so far as to eat all the dates, and put back the stones into the parcel.

All through November the camp was getting more and more restless, as after the Armistice, we were all hoping to get back very soon, and time dragged dreadfully slowly. We were always expecting that orders might come at any instant for us to go away, but in vain.

Mad Harry left us under the pretext of bad health. He left in civilian clothes and we were told that he tried to get across into a neutral country, but was stopped on the way and sent back to Hanover. The Germans disliked him nearly as much as we did, and I hope he will yet be brought to justice.

He was succeeded as commandant by an officer, who had already been at Clausthal, but had been sent away for striking a British Officer. The camp however protested against this appointment by not coming on Appel and he was sent away two days afterwards and a Captain Rautmann

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sent in his place; he proved very fair and just in his dealings to us. He had not been on the Staff, but had been a fighting soldier all his service, having fought in the war on every front and so was quite reasonable, allowing us much more freedom. In many ways however he was very powerless, as he told me that he could not order a fatigue party, without first getting permission from one of his N.C.O's who was a member of the local Soldaten Rat.

The first week in December was a most depressing one for us: the sun never shone and we remained the whole time in a thick fog. Prospects of departure seemed as remote as ever, when suddenly a telegram came on the 9th to say that we were to be at Warnemunde on the 12th. It did not take us long to get everything down to the station, though among the miscellaneous luggage were dogs

canaries and parrots. On the 11th December a special train came up to Clausthal to take the whole camp away. The Commandant came down to the station to wish us goodbye and good luck, and turning to me he said "For you and for your country the future is full of hope and happiness, but for us in Germany there is nothing to look forward to.

We arrived at Warnemunde the following afternoon, after quite a comfortable journey with plenty of meals on the way. There we were met by three Danish Red Cross ships that were to take us across to Copenhagen. We were welcomed on board by the

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Danish officers, who thanked us for all that we had done for their country and made us feel absolutely at home at once. Everyone on board spoke English and their only object seemed to be to make us comfortable.

We anchored for the night outside the harbour as it was blowing hard with driving snow and they dared not go through the German minefields in the dark. The following morning we passed safely through the mine fields and after a very rough passage arrived at Copenhagen in the afternoon.

Here we were distributed among the Hotels in and around Copenhagen, and were entertained the whole time free of cost. The hospitality and kindness that we received at the hands of the Danes from the highest to the lowest passes all descriptions and there is not a British Officer who passed through Copenhagen and who will not always treasure a warm corner in his heart for the Danes.

The comforts of civilization, the good food and above all the sense of freedom and the ability to meet with and to talk to different people of the opposite sex proved of the greatest pleasure to us. I do not think that I have ever seen a happier or more contented lot of faces than I saw in Copenhagen.

Our stay there was only for four days, after which we were shipped on board a British transport. On the way through the Katregat and the Skagetack we passed through many floating mines, some of which our escorting cruiser blew up, but the sea they say will

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will not be altogether clear of them for at least two years.

On the fourth day we landed at Leith, thankful to find ourselves once more on British soil.