

The Dieppe Party are Chained —8 Oct 42

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From [*Detour: The Story of OFLAG IVC*](#)

Oh hell! There goes a "Sonderappell"(special or surprise parade). We fell in. Many were in" sports kit. Few if any had jackets on. Word passed for the Dieppe party to fall out in front. Names were checked. The air seemed tense. Guards and officers were obviously excited.

We marched up the incline to the Lagerstrasse. Here the guards seemed to be unduly numerous. We moved through the gate to the highway where we embussed in two large lorries. Guards galore in front, behind, Bren guns, Tommy guns all over the place. A movie Revolutionary scene of a cartload of condemned going through the streets of Paris flitted through my mind. Too nice a day for that. This time I enjoyed the trip through the village. Apparently, it

had been a religious centre from away back. Convex window panes of 17th Century glass were to be seen in many of the convents and church buildings.

The convoy passed the railroad station. Then we couldn't be going to another camp.

A short distance outside the village we debussed and commenced marching up a rather steep incline. Shortly we passed through the outer wall tunnel of WiUibaldsburg Schloss. Perhaps it was an interrogation? The party finished up in a small grass courtyard completely surrounded by buildings.

The gate was shut. We still had an abnormal number of guards, who seemed to be stationed about every two feet. A Sonderfuhrer took the names of those who wanted their jackets. How long would we be here? "I don't know."

Four officers were led through the gate.

Somebody facetiously cracked, "I didn't hear any shots, boys".



Lt J.E.R. "Jerry Wood, MC

From then on groups went out by fours. It surely must be an interrogation. Four of us whose curiosity got the better of us elbowed our way to the head of the queue. We crossed a largish area to a set of newer buildings, along a corridor into a washroom.

In a few minutes, we were motioned into and along the hall. I observed the Kommandant, the Camp Doctor, and several officers.

Each of us was directed into a separate room. There I saw two Postens (Private soldiers) a Hauptmann, and our old friend Big Nig. Several strands of rope lay on a bed against the wall.

Nig started reading something. "Dieppe . . . prisoners bound . . .to be bound until ..." ("Holy God! They're going to tie me to the bed !").

I rapped, "What's that?" He re-read the screeed.

"This is shocking! treatment! I can't imagine your men in Canada being treated this way!"

"I cannot discuss it," said Big Nig. "I can only do my duty."

My wrists were bound with a piece of rope stout enough to tie up a horse. Quite obviously Herr Hauptmann, the soldiers, and he loathed every part of it. I was led into the field, then down a passageway into a large, barnlike, shadowy room. Palliasses were laid in rows. Along the wall officers sat on stools, heads bowed. This time I thought I was to be tied to one. I wasn't. The boys were just ruminating o'er their sins.

So quickly did all this happen, it was a case of "imagine my surprise!"

The German Doctor then examined our binding. He complained about most of them. A Stabsfeldwebel (R.S.M.) rebound those that were too tight. We formed up along a wall. A sonderfuhrer then read a terrific screeed from the O.K.W. (Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, the German War Office) outlining how bound Germans had been found dead at Dieppe, detail of our captured operation orders instructing prisoners would be bound, the British denial and



**The cords cut into prisoners' wrists, so they were swapped for shackles.
(The Canadian War Museum)**

assurance of a non-repetition, and then the binding of Germans by Commandos on a Channel Island attack.

On that somebody yelled "Hooray!"

We were to remain tied up until our Government should give satisfactory assurances prisoners would not be bound, and an apology.

The affair seemed distasteful to the German officers, but being "Goon", they were arrogant in their attitude.

The Kommandant edged away from the Brigadier as if he were Ed. "Strangler" Lewis avoiding "Dynamite Gus" Sonnenburg and his flying tackle.

It was sort of "You have no toothbrushes. What are you going to do about it?"

When the other guy has a Betsie and you haven't, there isn't much. But were we burning! We had not thought very much in the first place of that amateurish order which instructed that prisoners "would be bound to prevent them destroying their papers". Now were we disgusted with that unknown whose failure to destroy his orders placed the enemy in such a strong position?

One officer quietly observed, "This should convince certain people that these are our enemies and not our hosts".

All these goings on had taken us well beyond mealtime. We filed outside to a field kitchen for our best lunch since becoming Kriegies, two big bowlfuls of porridge, lashings of milk, and two big pieces of bread slathered with German margarine (at the time much better than British.) A year later it was so lousy we called it "train oil".

Our-bad humour soon passed off and the whole proposition became a joke. We perambulated around and around the large room. Major Brian McCool (Royal Regt. Toronto) started a bridge school with a tiny pack of cards the Germans had left in his pants pocket. The rest of us had been frisked of whatever we had.

That afternoon our greatcoats were brought down, the next day our toilet articles.

Plumbing was of the "box latrine" type in an adjoining room, where you fumbled with your trousers with bound hands under the bun-faced gaze of the Goon guards.

Lieut. Archibald, E.C.A. (Toronto) enterprisingly organized two "sweeps" on when we should return to camp, one for "Lagermarks" and one for chocolate; won quite fittingly by the Brigadier, and—the little rascal himself!

One can't say it was exactly tropical. Boards and wire on the paneless windows provided little hindrance to the windy atmosphere. We bedded down, still bound, for the night. Of course we slipped 'em off under the covers.

Late that night, perhaps 0200, the Doctor and "Flossie" arrived in quite a flap. The old Doctor had discovered some wounded chaps were tied up, while the O.K.W. had telephoned prisoners were to be unbound at night. Several of the boys were sprung. Jack Taylor, that perennial galloping ghost of Toronto Argo's backfield, collected a rocket for being wounded and tied up. He wittily cracked back "You guys didn't ask me!" Neither had they.

We were front page news splash headlines for the next few days. "Ain't it a fright?" mimicked one of the boys, "That a peaceful nation of such paragons of virtue should have the visitation of having such enemies as the barbarous British?"

Our local destiny lay in the hands of a half-pint Hauptmann, "Little Willie." English-speaking, he had spent most of the last war as a prisoner in England. Shortly after lunch of the third day, he announced good news. We would return to the camp! He did not know if we were to remain bound. In the early evening, we marched back.

There was a tremendous crowd to greet us at the gate. "Look at the reception committee, boys. Must have been expecting us." They certainly were. That morning the last 20 on parade of each company had been arbitrarily packed off to Block I, fenced in with wire, and handcuffed. Mr Churchill to our delight had banged an equivalent number of German prisoners into chains. Hitler replied by tying up twice as many again. Our side took no further action and there the matter rested.

Clarkie, one of my mess-mates greeted me with an enthusiastic "Hi, Jerry, Old Boy, we're having fun." He convoyed me upstairs to the second floor. Their cuffs had been removed.

Unteroffiziere (N.C.O.'s—Cpls and Sgts) came along with jewellery to tie up Dieppers for the afternoon. It was all a hell of a joke. They were in good humour, and so were we, trying to play possum and look "English" . .

"Ha! Ha! Dieppe!" and I was in cuffs.

The Goons cleared out.

"Do you want to keep those things on?" I saw a blond youth, slim, Eton and Oxford in appearance (he was both).

"Not particularly," I said. "I'll get you out, old Boy."

Before I could wink twice he had manoeuvred my wrist against the table edge, inserted a funny looking piece of metal against the ratchet which he had earlier in the day wrenched from the wall. One smack with a wooden clog¹ and "Presto!" It was Lieut. John Paton a direct descendant of the 'great British statesman, William Pitt, Earl of Chatham.

Meanwhile, chaps were fiddling with pen knives and bits of wires "springing" tougher varieties of cuffs. I'm confident those boys would have cracked any kind of lock. At a former camp, some of them did pick their way whenever it pleased them into the Kommandant's booze cellar!

John insisted on, sharing with us tasty bits and "Brew" ingredients his mess would "bootleg" in via the orderlies.

Officially we were "incommunicado" but, as usual, the restrictions were artfully evaded. The block sorted itself into messes and settled in for a long hitch. The Goons took the whole business very seriously. Appel and handcuffing at 0800, released at 1200, handcuffed again after a noon Appel at 1300 and released at 2100, all a very tedious business. They couldn't count us, they couldn't count the handcuffs—they just couldn't count.

Wandering patrols in each staircase, they'd stroll through your room every few minutes, saw to it we kept them on—for about five days. By then the boys had sabotaged the scheme with smokes and "brews". While a Posten was always very grateful for a cup of tea or cocoa, one of coffee would make his eye dance like a child with a new toy. At first, we'd treat one and stooge him for the rest. Later on, most were exceedingly tame, with only one or two- "holdouts," when we all became boys together.

A brisk "black market" developed—matches, cigarette lighters, flints and fluid, notebooks, pencils, penknives, celluloid photograph holders, all stuff the canteen should have sold anyway, were traded for smokes and soap The latter aided the Posten's love life immeasurably.

A fast and furious poker school got underway. I lasted on that two days, then returned to study German from a grammar one of the evicted officers had left behind. I didn't learn much German, but I did get my noggin into a book again. Never a book-worm by inclination, I had hardly opened a book since leaving school some 12 years previously. Were it not for that combination of handcuffs and prison I probably never would have.

After a bit over two weeks, the whole Brigade was turned out for a noon-day parade. We were compelled to endure a loudspeaker account of the German press view of the whole "chaining affair". Of course, they were very justified and we British were frightful.

By taking a firm stand Mr Churchill had left the Germans on a hook looking very, very foolish, from where they hardly knew how to get down. Our local authorities were feeling silly, while the Postens frankly said it was political, and certainly no way for soldiers to act.

The Kommandant's attitude, whose behaviour towards the S.B.O. had hitherto been unforgivably rude, took a decided turn for the better. He was profoundly impressed by the way we all "took it" with no incidents and no fireworks. It transpired they had machine guns and mortars mounted on the hillside in case of rioting.

The Swiss later advised that in Canada "weapons had to be used but there was no loss of life".