

Parcels sent to British Army Prisoners of War in Germany (1916-1918)



Compiled by volunteers from Warrington
University of the Third Age



Parcels to Germany (1916-1918)

The story of how food parcels were sent from Warrington to British Army prisoners held in German Camps during the First World War



Introduction

During the First World War many thousands of servicemen on both sides were captured and kept for the duration in Prison Camps, sometimes in very squalid conditions with inadequate food and clothing. This was particularly true of British Army personnel of non-commissioned rank who came to rely on parcels sent from the Home Front to supplement their meagre rations. Due to a very effective blockade by the British Navy Germany was short of food and had little to spare for their rather unwelcome guests.

Hand written records of supply of parcels for soldiers who mainly served in the South Lancashire Regiment were discovered in the 'Livewire' Warrington Library Archive and provide a fascinating record of the organisation set up to administer the supplies and of the donors and soldiers themselves. A relief committee was established in Warrington to coordinate the effort. It isn't known if the surviving volumes represent all the records of the committee from that period, but they appear to be reasonably comprehensive.

The transcription volunteers

Catherine Barker, Eileen Bennicke, Roger Coasby, Yvonne Dooley, Lesley Farrell, Doreen Hargreaves, Anna Head, Judith Hogg, Barbara Phoenix, Lynda Ralphson, Eileen Waddell, Wendy Wakefield.

In 2014 a group of twelve volunteers from the Warrington University of the Third Age Family History and Photography Groups, under the guidance of Local Studies Librarian Philip Jeffs, commenced the task; the volunteers worked in pairs, checking each other's transcriptions onto standardised format spread-sheets for accuracy and interpretation. The pages of the records were photographed and distributed by email to the group members so that they could undertake the transcription work at home. From time to time Group meetings were held to define transcription rules, discuss problem areas and agree an appropriate form of words where the original text left doubts.

Transcription Method

The use of electronic spreadsheets allows searching under different subject headings, such as name of prisoner, rank, military number, regiment, address of prison camp, donor or sponsor, relief committee reference number, adopter, dates of parcels and sometimes home address.

Where abbreviations occurred and the meaning was obvious, the full wording was added in square brackets after e.g. Pte [Private]. Some abbreviations like 'W' might indicate Warrington, but could also refer to Widnes, so these were left as they stood.

Crossings out were included as these might have significance for future researchers.

Where the wording was indistinct on the original page the best agreed interpretation was added with a question mark.

Where it wasn't possible to read the original a note was added to state that the original was illegible. Below is an illustration of one of the more difficult pages that were tackled.

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(310)	Barry Henry	Rk	9877	2.	9/4 Dollevitz			
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53	Bilton St				adopted by Mrs. P. S.			
Adopted by Lady J.								
70	B. Bennett's Terrace				Cottage; 1/2 Moorlands Lane, Dover			
77	Modes St				St Helens			
80	Bechtel St				St Helens			
6	Thorncliffe St				Merode Street, Liverpool			
20	Little Emma St				3 Anselm St, W. St. St. 1/2			
46	Hunter Street				Liverpool. W. Schilling 44 Rue de Collette, Paris.			
Adopted by Lady J.								
75	Parson St				Liverpool			
5	Regency Road				Seaham, Sunderland, Bramoro St. Queens Camp, Seaham			
6	W. West				87 Gables, Rd. Kalkens, Bideford			
36	Botanic Road				Glasnevin, Dublin			
10	Royal College				Hatfield, Warwick			
10	River View Villa				Bookham, Surrey, South West			
20	Alice Street				Paddington, Liverpool			

The meetings also enabled group members to share with their colleagues any relevant knowledge they had gleaned from previous experience, or additional research they undertook on related subjects. The following topics were covered and were presented as a talk to the Family History Group in March 2016.

- How the Project started and developed
- Life in a German Prisoner of War Camp
- Parcels and their sponsors
- Letters in the Warrington Guardian from South Lancashire Regiment
- Controls on correspondence & letters home from Prisoners
- Trawl of the Warrington Guardian Newspaper *
- German Prisoners of War in Britain
- Repatriation of Prisoners of War
- South Lancashire Regiment Resources at Warrington

The texts of the talks can be found below.

*A trawl was made of the Warrington Guardian newspapers for the war years (along with some editions of the Examiner) looking for any articles relating to Prisoners of War, the activities of the Relief Committees, fund raising in the town and reports of any individual South Lancashire Regiment prisoners. Photocopies of all the articles found have been compiled into a folder which is to be kept in the Archives Search Room.



Above: Distribution of Parcels

How the Project started and developed - by Judith Hogg

It's very hard to believe that it was back in the autumn of 2013, that Philip Jeffs, Local History Librarian, came to speak to The Warrington U3A Family History Group. It sounded as though they needed some help to properly catalogue and then digitise all the photographs & ephemera held by that department. Someone asked whether the Library's Local Studies section could use any volunteers (that person has a lot to answer for!!). Philip thought it was a brilliant idea, though of course it would need approving by his management, which could take a little while. Meanwhile at this end, Roger Coasby & I (joint leaders of the Warrington U3A Family History Group at the time) sought volunteers from that group & the Photography Group, resulting in a band of 15 people. As it seemed a bit tricky to keep tabs on 15 people going in & out of the Local Studies section, doing bits of work, logging where they were up to & making sure any queries were dealt with, Philip decided to start us off on a more manageable task. He had found some ledgers which contained details of soldiers from the local South Lancashire Regiment (which was based in Warrington) who were prisoners of war in Germany during World War One. They appeared to be the records of a relief committee who were putting together parcels for the prisoners. That's more or less all any of us knew, but we had our first meetings in March and April 2014 and devised a system of working.

At first, we were still thinking in terms of us all going into the Library, at times which suited us, but this again would have produced logistical difficulties, so we decided to try to devise a scheme whereby we could all work individually at home, but would be paired up to check each other's work. Philip would devise an Excel spreadsheet and send a copy to everyone. He would then photograph the pages of the ledgers and email them to Roger, who would enhance them if necessary (which is where the Photography skills came in). Roger would then distribute them to the members of the group, and they would attempt to decipher the entries and put them into the spreadsheet, send it to their buddy for checking, correct it & return it to Roger. Roger would then give it a final check for consistency, wait till he had a few completed sheets & then email them back to Philip. There was one volume which was typed and appeared to be a main alphabetical index of Soldiers' names, ranks & numbers, and one of our group members volunteered to go into the Library and enter all these names onto a master spreadsheet, which was again circulated to everyone to be used as a means of checking any unclear hand-written entries in the other volumes. A Query sheet was also devised which could be returned with the completed spreadsheet if any outstanding uncertainties remained.

I took on the role of recording all the procedural decisions we had made and the transcription guidelines we agreed with Philip (as we learned that there are proper ways to do these things!). These regularly needed adding to and updating as different types of entries appeared in the various volumes.





The group quickly settled down to a manageable group of 12 and has met regularly with Philip over the past two years, discussing transcription problems, taking the opportunity to look at the original ledgers, examining the writing which disappears into the creases between pages etc., and sharing bits of information we've come across. As little was known about the purpose of the ledgers, there were huge opportunities for anyone in the group to explore the story further and research any aspects in which they were interested. Gradually, the bigger picture began to emerge and we slowly made some sense of it all. It was decided that it was worth making this into a Shared Learning Project, so we contacted the SLP Advisor at the Third Age Trust and managed to get a brief article into the 'Third Age Matters' magazine. In practical terms, the aim of course is for the Library's Local Studies Department to have a digital and a hard copy resource, which members of the public can search to find details of ancestors who were South Lancashire Prisoners of War in WW1.

So, we started with the easiest volume, then moved onto more difficult ones, where there were records of soldiers who had moved camps, resulting in lots of crossings out!! You can see above the sort of records we were faced with. There were several things to contend with:- old-fashioned handwriting and letter formation; names and addresses of German Prisoner of War camps, guessed at by people who knew no German (and were now being second-guessed at by us!) crossings out, entries in pencil, with other details written over in ink, etc..

Somehow, and rather surprisingly, considering the complicated nature of the task, with 12 people all working separately, this all worked extremely well, and spreadsheets such as the example below have emerged.

Name of Data Inputter	Anna Head	Name of Data Checker	Yvonne Dooley	Relief Committee Number	Where Prisoner Held	Home Address	Details of "Adopter" sending Parcels	V	P
Kavenagh	Jos	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7586	80	II Bt VI Coy. 27 Sect No 678 Limburg (Lahn)	South Richmond Place, Portobello, Dublin (wife)	Mrs Egerton, Warburton, Arley Hall, Cheshire	46	
Keable	JH	Pte [Private] 2SLR	10109	523	9/4 Doberitz	Mowbray Bldgs, Red Cross St, Bow, SE	Mrs Ewing 29/9/16	46	
Kealy	Patk [Patrick]	Pte [Private] 2SLR	10095	18	6 Coy Barr 6 Giessen (in pencil) III Bt, VI Coy 28 Sect No 716 Limburg (Lahn) crossed out	Goose Hill St, Kilkenny	BRCS Miss Joynson	46	
Keenan	EP	Cpl [Corporal] 2SLR	8644	246	Barr E [D crossed out] Gp 4 [1936 crossed out] Z260 Zerfet illegible [707 V Giessen crossed out]		Lady B	46	
Kempson	WE	Pte [Private] 2SLR	9948	X484	Lichtenhorst Post Giltem Han [Lager I Barr 20 Soltau crossed out]	no home	Bickly St Mission, Mrs Carne Cambria, Landsdowne Road Finchley JB Dumbell, Lady Bective (fort) hdr Mrs Blackburne 12/2/16	46	
[Kennedy crossed out]	[Hugh crossed out]	Pte [Private] 2SLR	6662	103	Switzerland [3 B Comp Barr 10042 Friedrichfeld bei Wesel crossed out] Doberitz 4 (in pencil) [5 Comp Byrotz Bergeldamn b Ne? illegible Block 9/4 Gef Doberitz crossed out]	5/18 Prussia St, Highfield St Liverpool	Liverpool WWLB (fort)	46	
Kennish	JR	Pte [Private] 2SLR	6781	272	BA 255 Meiseburg (Meisenburg?) [3072 2 Comp Barr 7A 8A Quadlinburg a Hartz crossed out]	J R Kenish, 10 Bark Lane, Ramsey, I of M	Mrs L Blackburne (pencil)	46	
Kenny	Wm	Pte [Private] 2SLR	6982	213	Quadrinburg a Hartz crossed out Sect II Bt VI Coy 12 [19 crossed out] Sect 297 Limburg (Lahn)	Martha Kenny, 34 Armitage St, Belfast	Lady V Herbert	46	
Kelly	Anthony	Pte [Private]	6465	92	3773 Soltau Han [Rethemer Moor Post Ratham a Aleee Zweig 6 Uchter Moor FBG crossed out]	Greenane, Tabbykaniff P.O. Co Mayo	Mrs Ewing, Claydene, Edenbridge, Kent	46	
Kelly	Geo	Pte [Private] 3SLR	789	450	[Company 18, No 79 Mannheim Base 4 Det Ratugh Camp III Gef 3 Munster IW crossed out] 6 Battalion Camp III Gef 3 Munster	23 Vincent St, St Helens	Lady Bective (monthly) St Helens	46	
Kelly	JW	Cpl [Corporal]	6903	17	II Bt VI Comp 12 [11 crossed out] Sect 829 Limberurg (Lahn) Geissen (in pencil)	5 Princes St, Latchford	Mrs Stansfield	46	
Kelly	Wm	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7360	67	6327 Schessplatz Wahn bei Cologne Bk92 [60 crossed out] Fal? Surrey	Castle Strand, Carrick on Suir, Co Tipperary (wife)	Mrs Ewing, Claydene, Edenbridge, Kent	46	
Kemp	WE	Pte [Private] 2SLR	9881	510	[Lager 2 Blik 4 Room 10 Corvee 12 Gef 2 Rennbak Munster IW crossed out] Langenselta coy 32	Mrs K 11 Palmerston Tce, Park Rd, East Molesey, Surrey	Lucy Vaughan, Whittington Lodge, Worcester	46	
Kewin	Geo	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7544	400	EKI Coy 4 Friedrichsfeld [Hut 9/4 Gef Doberitz crossed out]	278 Beaufort St (? 12 Parliament St) Liverpool Mrs G Kewin 108 Capel St Langsett Rd, Hillsborough, Sheffield	Lpool WWLB (fort)	46	
Kirkwood	A	Pte [Private]	8594	323	Hameln		Lady B	46	
Knight	A	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7371	436	no fixed abode		Lpool WWLB (fort) weekly in pencil	46	
Knowlson	Hy	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7670	324	4364 Lager 2, Corvee 14, Kenn, Munster	K c/o Mrs Hawkins, 8 Albert St, Green Bank, Lower Easton, Bristol	Lady B Lady Bective	46	
Keogh	Dennis	Pte [Private] 2SLR	7438	85	II Bt VI Coy VI Sect 151 Giessen (Limburg (Lohn) crossed out)	Cahernony, Ballineety (Ballyneety) Co Limerick	Lady B Lady Bective	46	
Krasley	C	Pte [Private]	9109	200	EKI Comp 2 Friedrichsfeld [4382 Lager I 32 Munster 6 Vintemoor b Recke crossed out] IW	44 New Road, Stegney E	Lady B Lady Bective	46	
Kidd	T	Pte [Private] [East Lancs crossed out]	7496	322	Block 9/4 Doberitz			46	
Kidd	T	Pte [Private] [East Lancs crossed out]	7496	322	Block 9/4 Doberitz			46	
Kerslake	Wm	Pte [Private] 1st Cheshire	7099	476	Lager I Soltau			46	

Once Philip receives the completed sheets back from Roger, they're entered onto a master spreadsheet. Philip is helped in this task by student volunteers working in the department from time to time, and who also do the data entry of some of the really impossible pages, as they have easier access to the original ledgers and to Philip in order to ask for his advice.

So, what was it all about? What was the organisation? What exactly were they doing? Where did the money come from? There were names & addresses of 'Adopters' – what on earth were they? All these matters will be covered in the following sections.



Algerian, Russian, Belgian, French, British and Senegalese Prisoners Of War in Germany

Thousands of British troops were taken during the British expeditionary force retreats of August and September 1914 and by 1915 Germany had over a million prisoners of different nationalities. It was overwhelmed by the scale of the captures and hadn't adequately planned for housing, feeding and clothing such large numbers. The expectation was of a short war so little thought was given to housing prisoners during the winter of 1914. The Hague Conventions and 1864 Geneva Convention outlined a range of regulations to standardise prisoner of war treatment, but in 1915 the US ambassador, as protecting power for British prisoners of war, reported evidence that the German authorities in many cases entirely neglected the regulations and especially harsh treatment was reserved for British prisoners to create ill feeling between soldiers of different nationalities.

After capture, men were sent to camps in Germany in the area administrated by the corps that captured them, often with very little regard for the welfare of their prisoners. For some, accommodation was improvised in tents, military barracks or old fortresses but large numbers of prisoners were left in fields without shelter.

Different Types of Camps

- 1. Ordinary Soldiers' Camps**
- 2. Officer Camps**
- 3. Prisoner Labour/Reprisal Camps**
- 4. Civilian Detention Camps**

The contrast between camps was

"the difference between day and night, between heaven, relatively, and hell absolutely"

Camp Inspector

Conditions varied considerably both between and within the different categories of camp. One of the worst soldiers' camps was Wittenberg, where members of the South Lancashire Regiment were held,

which gained notoriety for atrocious conditions: insufficient food, no changes of clothing and insufficient sanitation. By contrast, men from the same regiment held at Doeberitz camp had no restriction on bathing and the prisoners had few complaints about the food except about its quantity. They could amuse themselves with various games, and have books from home. At Merseburge camp the prisoners were judged by the observers to be as well or better housed than labourers on public works in the United States.

1. Ordinary Soldiers' Camps

“Prisoners of war shall be treated as regards quarters on the same footing as troops of the Government which captured them” **Article 7 of the Hague Regulations**



Buchain Camp 1917



Group of British POWs at

Those soldiers who were fit were put to work building the prisoner of war camp which was to accommodate them and by 1916 prisoner of war camps were established in secure locations segregated from the civilian population.

Prisoners were confined using barbed wire, sentry towers and guards, and usually accommodated in wooden barracks for about 250 prisoners. A central corridor provided access on each side to straw or sawdust beds stacked two high. Furniture was kept to a minimum: a table, chairs or benches and a stove.

The size of camp varied. For example, Wittenburg held 8,000 men while Parchim held 25,000 men, and up to 45,000 more registered in work camps. Each had its own particular structures, sanitary arrangements, leisure areas and places of worship.

Most days started with a roll call, where the prisoners were counted; the high points invariably being the delivery of letters, the collection of parcels, and mealtimes.

Ordinary Soldiers' Camps

Food and Clothing

*“The Government into whose hands prisoners of war have fallen is charged with their maintenance... Prisoners of war shall be treated as regards rations . . . on the same footing as troops of the Government which captured them”
Article 7 of the Hague regulations*



British Prisoners Of War eating their mid-day meal at Doberitz Prison Camp

Despite The Hague regulations prisoners frequently suffered from hunger.

In the first eight months whilst not actually dying of starvation they could often only just keep themselves alive.

- Breakfast could be a thin soup or coffee
- Midday meal 1 pint of soup made of water, potatoes, vegetables, with very little meat or sundried fish.
- More thin soup in the evening perhaps with bread

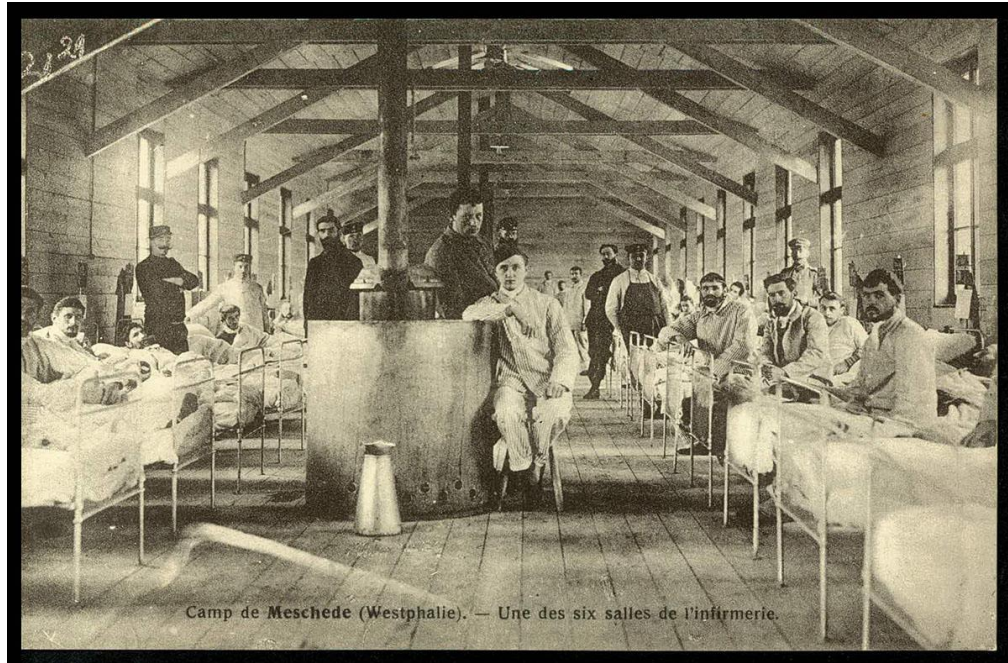
As the war went on, feeding prisoners proved increasingly difficult and was exacerbated by the naval blockade from November 1914. Germany had difficulty feeding its own troops and people. Malnutrition was common. For British prisoners receiving food parcels the impact of food shortages was relatively limited and they were often better fed than the civilian population. Those working in agriculture might also have their rations supplemented.

Prisoners were often inadequately clothed in the early stages of the war. They remained in the uniform which they brought with them or were given wooden clogs and shoddy trousers. There was no change of underwear and no means of washing their clothes. At some camps however, there was sufficient clothing.

MEDICAL CARE

Article 2 of Geneva Convention

“shall be respected and taken care of when wounded or sick without distinctions of nationality”



Regarding medical care, again camps varied and generally hospital accommodation and medical attendance was fairly satisfactory in line with the ideals of the Geneva Convention, but medical supplies were often very limited, with a shortage of cotton needed for dressings.

During the first six months of the war hygiene was a major problem, often with only one tap in a yard for thousands of prisoners, and a plank with a hole over a pit for a toilet which overflowed during powerful rains making an almost unbreathable atmosphere in the Camps. Diseases such as typhus and cholera appeared, with typhus epidemics in over 30 camps in Germany. They were used in allied propaganda as evidence of poor German prisoner of war treatment (*Warrington Guardian April 1915*).

In Wittenberg the German staff, military and medical, left the camp when the epidemic started in December 1914 and supplies were pushed into the camps. Because of the epidemic, Germany introduced better hygiene regulations, including better latrines, disinfecting prisoner's clothes and bodies to remove lice.

As the war continued, limited exchanges of seriously wounded prisoners were negotiated, as well as their internment in neutral Switzerland.

Prisoners died from a range of causes: old battle wounds, malnutrition, tuberculosis, typhus, beatings, overwork and the influenza epidemic at the end of the war being the most prominent culprits.

Ordinary Soldiers' Camps

Work

“...May employ the labour of prisoners of war, other than officers, according to their rank and capacity the work shall not be excessive and have no connection with the operations of the war” **Article 6 of the Hague Regulations**



Prisoners' labour was voluntary at the beginning but very quickly became mandatory. In Germany, 90 percent of prisoners [or 1,449,000 out of 1,625,000] were working mainly in mines, factories, forests and farms and were an indispensable part of the workforce.

Many were pleased to escape the boredom of life behind barbed wire in the parent camp and welcomed the change of scenery and the money they earned. They were assigned to labour detachments and would spend time away from the camp and be housed near their workplace.

Ordinary Soldiers' Camps

Camp Money



1 Mark note issued in Cottbus camp



5Pf note from Graudenz camp

Working prisoners were paid in Lagergeld (camp money) as it was thought they may bribe guards otherwise, and could only be used to purchase goods at the camp store or credited to a prison bank account. If they refused to work they could go to prison. Cases of “sabotage” were also reported, mainly in factories but also on farms. This could lead to being sent to reprisal camps or prison. However, the attitude most often adopted (and also the safest) was to work as little as possible.

Ordinary Soldiers' Camps

RECREATION

British Prisoners Taking Exercise In The Prison Camp At Munster

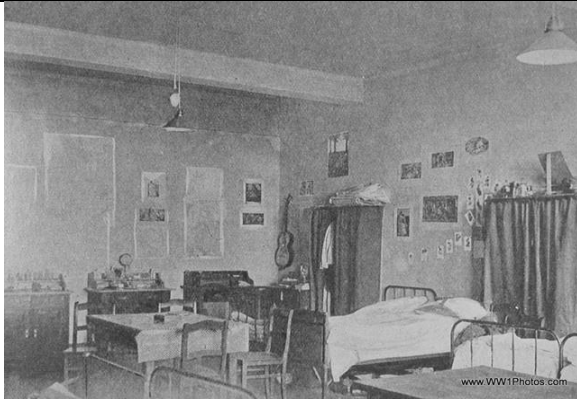


*“But, oh, it is monotonous; a continual round of sleeping, eating, carding, & walking
In a compound about 60 yards long in front of the huts”.*

The need for recreation and exercise was recognised for physical and mental health. In the better-run camps, prisoners organised concerts, sports tournaments and had libraries and art exhibitions. There was usually an exercise yard where prisoners could walk or play sports; some regimes allowed captives to go on escorted group walks outside the camp.

Even in the best run camps breakdowns and severe depression were relatively common, although suicides were rare.

Officers' Camps



Example of Officers' quarters

From 1915, officers were held in camps reserved for them, usually in requisitioned buildings such as castles, barracks or hotels rather than compounds of huts. They had beds instead of straw sacks, specific rooms were fitted out for their meals, and they were exempted from labour.

Class proved the most important common determinant as to a prisoner's individual overall chances of surviving captivity.

One of the main burdens of their life was tedium of their daily lives which tended to revolve around sport, amateur concerts and plays, lectures, debates, and reading. They had orderlies, whose role was to act as servants to the officers and to perform menial tasks around the camp.

Holzminden officers' camp

Escape tunnel – 10 officers escaped to the Netherlands and then on to Britain



Officers were more likely than other ranks to attempt to escape. They had more time and opportunity to plan and prepare and punishment on recapture was less severe, usually a period in solitary confinement. At Holzminden officers' camp in July 1918, 29 British officers escaped through a tunnel they had been excavating for nine months and ten made their way to neutral Netherlands and eventually back to Britain.

Prisoner of War Labour Companies/Reprisal Camps

Disregard of the Hague regulations and increasingly inhumane treatment of prisoners



Prisoners of war digging trenches in Germany

The development of Prisoner Labour Companies marked a shift during the First World War towards the increasing and more ruthless exploitation of captive labour and a disregard of the Hague regulation that work should have no connection with the operations of war.

They were permanent units made up of captives that remained at or near the battlefronts to do heavy manual work such as loading and unloading shells, road building and maintenance, and on occasion, trench construction work. Living conditions were harsh, beatings and malnutrition common.

Reprisal camps were also used to put pressure on enemy governments to force better treatment of German prisoners, and to punish prisoners. Britain started using German prisoner labour to unload and load cargo at French ports, Germany retaliated by sending British prisoners from Döberitz camp to work in sub-zero conditions behind the lines on the eastern front. Life for prisoners sent to reprisal camps was so harsh that many of them died.

Civilian Detention Camps



Ruhleben was a civilian detention camp

Ruhleben civilian detention camp had been a racecourse with stables to the west of Berlin. It held between 4,000 and 5,000 prisoners and was not a labour camp.

It included mainly British male citizens living, studying, working or on holiday in Germany at the outbreak of the war. Initially conditions were very poor without heat and bed clothing and just cold water taps.

Ruhleben - British Civilians interned in Germany



Queuing for parcels

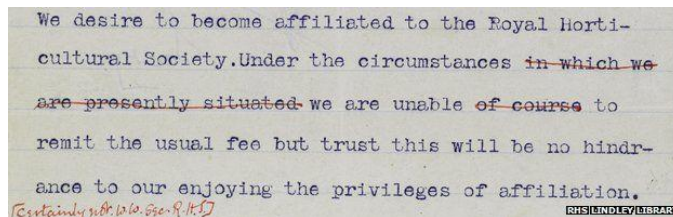


The "Gondoliers" Xmas 1917

Gradually a mini society evolved. Warm showers were built. Letters, books, sports equipment and a printing press were allowed into the camp and they organised their own police force, magazine, library and postal service. The 200 German guards stayed on the perimeter. They created a five-hole golf course and sports clubs and classes were run by teachers drawn from among the internees.

The camp applied to the royal horticultural society and was initially sent flowers, but then vegetables to grow which enabled them to supplement their diet.

Ruhleben application to the Royal Horticultural Society



We desire to become affiliated to the Royal Horticultural Society. Under the circumstances in which we are presently situated we are unable of course to remit the usual fee but trust this will be no hindrance to our enjoying the privileges of affiliation.

(Certainly not 10.10.60. See 9.11.17)

RHS LINDLEY LIBRARY

“The RHS got very excited about it and put out appeals to nurseries across the country to provide seeds and bulbs and we sent them out in Red Cross Parcels throughout the war on quite a large scale”

Conclusion

So although state intervention became the norm after 1915, conditions and regimes varied both between and within the different types of camps, i.e. ordinary soldier camps, officer's camps, prisoner labour camps and civilian detention camps, until the end of the war.

By Lesley Farrell

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Parcels and their Sponsors - by Lynda Ralphson

Distribution of food parcels to prisoners of war in the first half of WW1 was somewhat haphazard until 1917, when the work was taken over by the Red Cross.

Everyone was anxious to make sure that the boys in the POW camps were adequately fed.

Parcels were sent by individuals, regiments and committees large and small.

The process at first could be erratic, with some soldiers receiving plenty- one man is said to have been sent 13 parcels in one month - while others got by on the generosity of fellow prisoners.

By the end of 1915, some standardisation had come into being among the larger fund-raising groups. The British Prisoners of War Food Parcels and Clothing Fund was one of the largest. People would pay a subscription, either as individuals or groups. These included schools, churches, newspapers, workplaces and many more. To send a parcel cost 7 shillings at first, rising to 15 shillings by the end of the War. Each soldier was registered and would receive 3 parcels every two weeks, each of which contained basic foods and cigarettes or tobacco. Delivery normally took 2 to 3 days by rail and road and was, in most cases, very regular. Each parcel bore the name of the adopter, giving a more personal relationship for the men.

In 1915 the War Office set up the Prisoners of War Help Committee, which distributed posters asking for donations of food, clothing and comforts, as well as money. The women of Britain spent many hours knitting socks, hats, blankets etc. as their contribution to the fund. Cigarettes were considered essential, and boxes were placed in shops, cafes etc., asking customers to "spare one for the boys" when they lit up. Half a million smokes were collected and packaged up by this method.

Many committees at this time were run by upper class ladies who, with wealth, time and contacts at their disposal, worked tirelessly to help the cause. Two ladies whose names appeared frequently in our South Lancashire Records were Lady Bective and Lady Burghclere.



Lady Burghclere

Lady Bective was 72 at the start of WW1 and, with her daughter, was responsible for the provision of about 38 000 parcels, as reported in the Sketch newspaper in 1916. She kept proper records and co-

ordinated with other committees throughout the country from her house in London.

Lady Burghclere, born at Highclere Castle in 1870, established her own Prisoners' Fund and, like Lady Bective and many others, was at the forefront of the parcel distribution work before 1917, having set up the networks and standardisations in preparation for the National Scheme.

This was called the Central POW Committee, and was put in place at the start of that year. Thereafter, no parcels were allowed to be sent by individuals or groups. At first this was very unpopular with the general public, but was a necessary move to be fair to all.

Under the new scheme, registered committees e.g. Red Cross, Liverpool Civic Service League and the Salvation Army, as well as those in many towns like Warrington, would undertake the provision and packing of all goods. (Liverpool also had a large depot for blankets etc., from whence 100,000 items were sent. This regulation ensured that every prisoner received the same amount and balance of food and clothing.

Each man still had 3 parcels per fortnight but, to give variety, 4 different selections were provided in rotation. All contained meat, vegetables, milk, tea, sugar and the like, as well as tobacco and a few extras of biscuits or jam. Most of the food was tinned, but some camps forbade this, as they feared the empties would provide good tunnelling tools. In these camps the men were sent packets of sausages, bacon and cheese instead. There were alternative parcels for vegetarians and those of specified religions. A postcard was also included to be returned to the adopter via the packing committee, to keep a check on the whereabouts of each parcel.

Bread does not appear on the food lists from Britain. This was baked in Copenhagen at the Central POW Committee's bake houses. 3 kilos per week was sent from Denmark to each man.

By the end of 1917 it was agreed that individuals could again be allowed to send parcels, but not food. The Personal Parcel Scheme permitted the provision of clothing, toiletries and games like cards or chess every 3 months.

Most of the fundraising committees only ceased to function in 1919 or 1920. The war was over, but many thousands of men were still away from home; the camps needed clearing and a steady supply of rations was vital to maintain the mental and physical well-being of the soldiers.

Approximately 2 ½ million parcels were dispatched during WW1, an incredible feat considering the problems that had to be overcome.

An illustration of the typical contents of parcels is given below.

By Lynda Ralphson



Regimental Care Committee for Prisoners of War of the South Lancashire Regiment

Authorised by the Central Prisoners of War Committee
Registered under the War Charities Act, 1916

Hon. Secretary:
Rev. Irvine Lister.
Telephone 656.

PALMYRA SQUARE,
WARRINGTON,

CORRESPONDENCE.—It is requested that all correspondence be addressed to the Rev. IRVINE LISTER, Prisoners of War Depot, PALMYRA SQUARE, WARRINGTON.

Information respecting Prisoners of War in Germany

FOOD.—The above Committee sends to each Prisoner of War of the South Lancashire Regiment 1 food parcel every week, weighing 15 lbs. These parcels consist of good nutritive food, and are sufficient for the needs of a healthy man. The contents of the parcels are shown below, and these are sent in rotation.

STANDARD PARCELS OF FOOD to GERMANY

It may occasionally be necessary to alter the contents of these parcels in respect of certain items, because it is not always possible to secure a supply of the exact articles in time for despatch on any given date. The cost of each parcel is 15/-. Each parcel weighs approximately 15 lbs. when packed.

A Parcel.

2 lbs. Beef.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Vegetables.
1 lb. Tin Rations.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tea.
1 lb. Tin Milk.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Dripping or Margarine.
1 lb. Tin Jam.
 $1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Biscuits.
1 pkt. Quaker Oats, Grape Nuts, or Milk Pudding.
50 Cigarettes.
1 Tin Sardines.
1 Tablet Soap.
1 lb. Tin Herrings.
1 lb. Beans.
 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Cocoa.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Bacon.

C Parcel.

1 lb. Beef.
1 lb. Bacon.
1 lb. Beans.
 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Tea.
1 lb. Tin Milk.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Beef, Ham or Veal Loaf.
1 lb. Biscuits.
1 lb. Rations.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Dripping or Margarine.
1 lb. Tin Salmon or Pilchards.
1 lb. Rice, Sago or Tapioca.
1 lb. Tin Jam, Tinned Fruit or Dates.
1 Small Potted Meat.
100 Cigarettes.
1 Tablet Soap.

B Parcel.

$1\frac{1}{2}$ lbs. Biscuits.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Cocoa.
1 lb. Milk.
1 lb. Lyle's Syrup
1 lb. Rice or Dates.
1 Small Potted Meat.
1 Tablet Soap.
1 lb. Tin Rations.
1 lb. Tin Sausages.
1 lb. Sugar.
1 lb. Suet Pudding.
 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Chocolate.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Veal, Ham or Beef.
1 pkt. Quaker Oats, Grape Nuts, or Milk Pudding.
2 ozs. Tobacco.
1 lb. Corned Beef.

D Parcel.

1 lb. Tin Rations.
1 lb. Tin Beef.
1 lb. Tin Irish Stew or Haricot Mutton.
1 lb. Biscuits.
1 lb. Tin Jam.
1 lb. Tin Pork and Beans.
 $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. Tea.
1 lb. Sugar.
1 lb. Tin Meat and Potato Pudding, or Tripe and Onions.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Cheese.
1 Tin Sardines.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Margarine.
50 Cigarettes.
1 Tablet Soap.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Veal, Ham or Beef Loaf.
 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Bacon.

Soap is sent to the total weight of 12oz. per four weeks.

No food of any kind should be sent to the Committee.

BREAD.—The amount of Bread (or in Summer, biscuits) to be sent to each prisoner is 13lbs. per fortnight. Our men receive their bread from the Bureau of the British Red Cross and Order of St. John, Copenhagen, Denmark. The cost is charged to the above Committee.

COST OF FOOD.—The present price of each food parcel is 15/-. The present price of bread is 7/6 per month. Relatives or friends, who desire to have a parcel or parcels sent in their name, should send the necessary amount to the Fund, stating at the same time the regimental number and name of the man to whom the parcel is to be sent.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT CARDS.—A card for acknowledgment is placed in each parcel, and these are signed and returned by the men. Acknowledgment cards, after being checked, can be sent to the subscriber.

CENTRAL PRISONERS OF WAR COMMITTEE.

4, THURLOE PLACE,

LONDON, S.W.

March 19th, 1917.

STANDARD PARCELS OF FOOD. GERMANY.

As a result of the past three months' experience, the Central Prisoners of War Committee has decided to revise the contents of the Standard Parcels to be sent to Prisoners of War in Germany. As before, three of these parcels will ordinarily be sent per fortnight to each man. The serious rise in the cost of provisions has compelled us to raise the price of these parcels from 6s. to 7s., but we do not propose at present to charge 7s. to those "Adopters" who are already on our books or to Care Committees for whom we are packing. We recommend other Care Committees to adopt a similar standard, and we would bring to their notice the urgent necessity of providing parcels which contain at any rate the equivalent food value whatever the price may be.

A

- 1 lb. Beef
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Vegetables (Cabbage, Brussels Sprouts, Turnips or Carrots)
- 1 Tin Rations
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Cheese (Tin)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tea
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Nestlé's Milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Margarine
- 1 lb. Jam
- 1 lb. Biscuits
- 50 Cigarettes
- 1 Tin Sardines

B

- 1 Tin Sausages
- 1 Tin Herrings
- 1 Tin Oxo Cubes or Marmite
- 1 lb. Biscuits
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Cocoa
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Cooked Ham
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Dripping
- 1 Tin Baked Beans
- 50 Cigarettes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Nestlé's Milk
- 1 Tin Syrup
- Pepper, Salt, Mustard
- Knight's Carbolic Soap

C

- 1 Tin Beef
- 1 Tin Salmon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Ration Biscuits
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tea
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Sugar
- 1 Tin Fruit
- 1 Tin Oxo Cubes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Grape Nuts or Poros
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Figs, Chocolate or Dates
- 1 Tin Potted Meat
- Small Suet Pudding
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Margarine or Dripping
- 1 Tablet Soap

D

- 1 Tin Beef or Rations
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Ham (in tin)
- 1 Tin Sardines
- 1 Tin Baked Beans
- 5 Soup Squares
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tea
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Tin Nestlé's Milk
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Brawn Pie or Camp Pie
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Biscuits
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Dripping
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. Currant Biscuits
- 50 Cigarettes
- 1 lb. Tin Marmalade

It may occasionally be necessary to alter the contents of these parcels in respect of certain items, because it is not always possible to secure a supply of the exact articles in time for despatch on any given date.

Occasionally extra tablets of soap and a few toilet necessaries are included by us in these standard parcels.

Donor's Name and
Address.

Name und Wohnort
des Gebers.

Kriegsgefangenensendung.

Packed and despatched by Care Committee of the South Lincs. Regt., under authority granted by the Central Prisoners of War Committee of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England

Verpackt und versendet von dem Besorgungskomitee South Lincs. Regt., autorisiert von dem Central Komite für Kriegsgefangene des Britischen Roten Kreuzes und der Vereinigung St. Johannes von Jerusalem in England.

CONTENTS INHALT

C.

FRUIT
SALMON
BISCUITS
SYRUP
CAFE AU LAIT
BEEF
SOUP SQUARES
PRUNES
CHOCOLATE
MARGARINE

Parcel No. and Date of Despatch

BRITISCHER KRIEGSGEFANGENER

GERMANY.

I have received parcel dated **6 JUN 1918**
 on *20.7.18* (date) *09.7.18*

**Army Rations, Pork & Beans
 Biscuits, Tea, Sugar, Salmon
 Sausage & Potat Pudding,
 Marmalade, Jam Pudding,
 Milk
 Cigs. or Tobacco.**

1. Have you received your parcels regularly?
Yes
2. Were contents in good condition and complete?
Yes
3. Have you received your bread regularly?
No
4. Please write your name and address below.
*4121 Pk. B. Smith
 5 Sherwood Foresters
 Colfangenlager
 Menden SW
 Germany*

26 AUG 1918

POST CARD

LONDON... **PAID** KRIEGSGEFANGENEN SENDUNG **PAID**

104 1918 *JAN 1918*

Miss CHRISTINE KNOWLES,
 BRITISH PRISONERS OF WAR FOOD PARCELS
 AND CLOTHING FUND,
 25, TREVOR SQUARE,
 LONDON, S.W.-7,
 ENGLAND.

11

KRIEGSGEFANGENENSENDUNG

LONDON... **PAID**

(Here enter NAME ONLY of donor.)

SEP 16 18 *SEP 16 18*

**c/o Sherwood Foresters Prisoners of War
 Regimental Care Committee,
 21, Park Street,
 ENGLAND. DERBY**

W.A.A.F. REGIMENTAL CARE COMMITTEE

Receipts sent back to Britain for parcels received

Letters in the Warrington Guardian from South Lancashire Regiment - by Barbara Phoenix

W. G. Jan 13th, 1917 (written December 30th, 1916)

To the Editor

Sir, - Will you kindly allow a few lines in our local paper to thank our little friends at Warrington and those who subscribed to our Christmas parcels and sent them out to us? We are sure that if they could have seen us enjoying our parcels it would have given them great pleasure, and they would have thought their money well spent. We all received a parcel, and I, along with the other boys of the South Lancashire Transport Section send our heartiest thanks and good wishes for the coming year. – Yours, etc

J.T.Chadwick, Corporal

On behalf of the South Lancashire Regiment Transport Section.

Jan 18th 1917

Private T Heaton wrote from Munster “All parcels have up to date arrived safely”.

Jan 25th 1917

Bandsman H. Buck wrote from Hameln, Hanover that he is receiving the parcels regularly and in the best of condition. “Many thanks to one and all for the kind assistance rendered.”

Jan 26th 1917

Private J. Corfield wrote “Just a few lines, thanking you and your kind committee for their great and sincere kindness to me in sending me parcels. I am pleased to tell you I received five parcels from your committee in December.”

Feb 5th 1917

Lance-Corporal Jones from Saltau, “I now take great pleasure in writing you these few lines in answer to the parcels I have received, and also the clothing parcels and boots, for which I thank you very much.The articles I have received up to the present are very good, and are the comforts we are very much in need of. They are a very neatly-packed parcel.”

W.G. Feb 10th, 1917

Interned in Switzerland: Letter from a Warrington Prisoner of War.

After over two years' captivity in Germany, Lance-Corporal John Webb, son of Mrs Webb, 20, Tilley Street, Warrington, has been transferred to Switzerland, and his relatives have this week received an interesting letter from him.

Jan 23rd 1917

Now about your letters and parcels. The last letter I had was in June, 1916, and your last parcel was the one sent on June 14th, 1916. But do not worry, I will explain to you.

“For my last 15 days in Germany I was in the fortress of Bastrart, and it was a place! Not fit for a dog to be in. I was in bad condition when I got here, as I had been living on bread and water and fish that were not fit for any human being. The soup was made of meat of all sorts. I think if you had seen me then you would not have known me, as I was just starting to look worried. But I have come on grand since I came here. We do not want for anything – plenty to eat and all the best that money can buy.....I must tell you that I passed the Swiss doctors on the 3rd July, 1916, to come, but I did not get here until 16th December, 1916. They kept telling us in Germany we were going any day, but they do not trouble about you in Germany. If you are ill or well, it's just the same to them. You must work or lie down and die.

Feb 10th 1917

Private William Hamblin, a prisoner at Munster wrote “I am receiving some of the new parcels up to now and everything is in good condition. But there is one thing we want – that is some soap for washing.”

Feb 12th 1917

Private R Johnson from Soltau suggests that tea, milk and cigarettes should be included in all future parcels. “I am now having my tea with nothing to drink. The remainder of the contents have been most satisfactory and very acceptable.”

Feb 19th 1917

Private J Coppock wrote acknowledging the receipt of “parcel containing groceries in good condition”

W.G. June 30th 1917

Signed statement from an escaped prisoner

“During the time I have been a prisoner of war I have received food parcels regularly from the South Lancs Prisoners of War Fund. These have generally arrived in good condition. The food supplied by the German authorities is far below what is necessary to keep a man from starvation, and had it not been for the parcels of food which I received from your fund I should not have been able to live. I state also on

behalf of all the prisoners with whom I have associated that the food which you are sending is absolutely necessary for them, inasmuch as they are receiving practically nothing from the German authorities.”

W.G. June 30th 1917

Private J H Gibbs, a prisoner since the retreat from Mons in 1914

“Thank you very much for all the trouble you have taken, and are putting yourself to on my behalf. I do not know how I should go on if it were not for you and the girls. But I am getting the bread all right now. Please will you let them know at the Parr Hall that I am receiving all the parcels quite safe now, also the bread....Since this new system came out we have not been able to find out what the rules are. But we are being treated grand by the people at home. The parcels I get are just what is wanted, and could not be better if I packed them for myself.”

W. G. Jan 5th, 1918

The honorary secretary of the Regimental Care Committee for Prisoners of War of the South Lancashire Regiment (the Rev Irvine Lister) has received the following letter from Private A. Jackson 99735), of the South Lancashire Regiment, dated A.S.A. Hospital, Fribourg, Switzerland, December 15:-

“Sir, - I am writing to thank you, also the ladies of the St Helens Committee for the kindness I have received whilst a prisoner in Germany. I must say that the parcels which the South Lancashire men receive are among the best sent out. I only wish that other regiments would send the same, and then there would be no reason for complaint.

“You could always hear fellows say, “I wish I was in the South Lancashire’s; just look at their parcels.” Of course I know that some would never be satisfied if they received a parcel a day. I arrived in Switzerland on the 28th November. I must say I am very lucky, as there are quite a lot wounded worse than I am left at the camp, but they may go to England. I was wounded on the 24th August, 1914, also taken prisoner the same day, and I have had some very trying times, but they say ”all’s fair in love and war”. I am hoping to get my hand all right now as I am at present in hospital awaiting an operation....I must close now, hoping to hear from you shortly.”

-----W.G.
Feb 2nd, 1918

Food Queues in Germany: A returned Soldiers Story

Private John Joseph Leigh, of the South Lancashire Regiment, has recently returned to Warrington after 15 months as a prisoner of war in Germany.

In October, 1916, when one of our trenches was about to be evacuated, he was severely wounded, and fell into the hands of the enemy along with others. Later he was taken to Thuringen. Here he underwent an operation.

Private Leigh met one or two Warrington men while he was a prisoner, but, unfortunately, does not recollect their names. The English soldiers' daily diet consisted mainly of a few inches of black bread. He relates that a party of Italian soldiers arrived one day and were subjected to most harsh treatment. During the whole of the first twelve days of their captivity they received less than half-a-dozen meals. Speaking of the food queues in Warrington, he compared them with queues he had seen in Germany. From the Camp one or two streets in the town were visible and he saw soldiers with fixed bayonets supervising the people waiting for food. Whether men, women, or children, the butt end of the rifle was freely applied should there be any slight disorder.

They also received numerous letters expressing thanks for the food parcels and other comforts.

One prisoner wrote: "So you can see that the men have to rely entirely on the parcels sent from England. I regret to state that the bread which we received during last summer was in such a state that we could not eat it, but it was on account of the hot weather; but during autumn and up to the time I left Germany, it arrived regular and in very good condition.

"I must say that the parcels that I received were very good and to my knowledge I don't think they need any alteration, as I was quite satisfied with the parcels, although many of the parcels which I received there was some item or other missing, but where it is done we cannot say, only it is somewhere in Germany".

By Barbara Phoenix

Mail in Prison Camps 1914-1918 - by Cath Barker

Writing letters was one way of fighting off boredom in the prison camps and at the front in war, as the soldiers had a lot of waiting around with little action or stimulation. The letters were used for propaganda by both the British and the Germans. All letters sent or received by soldiers were always censored at the camps and in England. In the camps the letters were held back for weeks and sometimes months.

The Royal Mail was a very big organisation even before the War and during the War millions of letters and parcels were sent across the Channel. A large sorting office was built in Alexandra Park for the sole purpose of censored mail being sent to France and Germany; it only took two days for letters and parcels to arrive in France. At Christmas 1917 there were 550,000 sacks a day crossing the Channel and it took 100 freight trains and then 6,000 lorry loads to take them to field offices and camps across France. At the height of the war 375,000 letters were censored each day, by the end of the war two billion letters and 114 million parcels had been sent to soldiers and prisoners around the world.

With the censoring many letters were very hard for the prisoners to read; as anything that might be thought to tell the receiver something about what was going on in England, or at the front, or in the

camps was blacked out. The camps also marked the outside of letters with all sorts of stamps to say where they had come from and who had censored it.



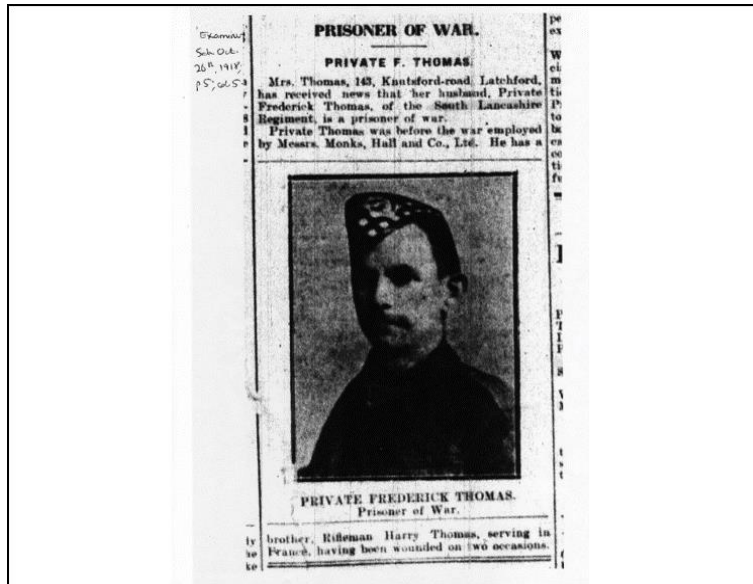
Alexandra Palace

By Cath Barker

Trawl of Warrington Guardian Newspaper - By Judith Hogg

My aim was to look through the Warrington Guardian to try to find out more about what exactly was going on in Warrington & what was being reported about prisoners. I started looking from August 1914, & Barbara Phoenix started in 1917, and then I've taken it up again towards the end of 1918.

Often families reported to the newspapers when they'd received a letter from a relative letting them know they were a Prisoner of War. Prior to that, the family may well have been informed that they were missing & may well have presumed them dead, so it was probably often good news to hear that a loved one was being held prisoner. Some mentioned how important the food parcels were.



Saturday October 2nd, 1915; p. 7; right hand column.

WAR PRISONERS FUND.	
	£ s. d.
Amount previously acknowledged	465 13 10
Peter Walker and Sons Ltd	29 0 0
Warrington and District Licensed Victuallers' Association	3 3 0
Mrs. Coome	2 3 0
Edwin Richardson and Son, Ltd.	1 6 0
Local Members of Brainers and Shaws Metal Workers' Union	1 6 0
Staff and Pupils Secondary School	1 1 0
Geo. E. Finch	1 1 0
J. Rymer Young	1 1 0
L. & N.W. Ry. Co., Goods Dept. (5th con.)	1 1 0
W. A. Leslie	1 1 0
The Scholars, Padgate C.E. Schools	1 0 0
Mrs. E. Short	1 0 0
Emp. Union Tanneries, Ltd. (2nd con.)	0 12 0
John Cann	0 12 0
Star Kinema (additional)	0 11 4
Emp. Longford Gas Works	0 10 0
J. H. Southurst and Employees (5th con.)	0 10 0
L. and N.W. Ry. Telegraph Staff	0 10 0
Constance Broadbent	0 10 0
Mrs. Edgerton	0 10 0
Staff, Robert Davies and Co. (11th con.)	0 10 0
Anonymous	0 5 0
Classes 4 and 7, Beaumont Girls' School (3rd con.)	0 3 6
A. O.	0 3 0
No. 1 Collecting Box, Market Gate	0 2 0
No. 2 Collecting Box, Bridge-street	0 10 2
Total	590 3 6

Wash's contributions to Oct. 1st, 47s 10s 6d.
Mr. T. Crampton, provisions; Mrs. E. Heron, coffee; J. Crossfield and Sons, Ltd., 2 gross soap tablets.

One early article is a letter from a Prisoner of War to the newspaper, listing men from the South Lancashire Regiment who are with him in the same camp, asking for “money, underclothing, tobacco & cigarettes”, saying if they were sent to him, he would see that they were delivered! I only found one other list of Prisoners, although they were apparently regularly supplied by the German Government. While there were frequent reports and pictures of the dead & wounded, a prisoner was only occasionally featured, despite the fact that by September 1915, the South Lancashire Regiment had 400 Prisoners of War in Germany, mainly captured on the retreat from Mons.

The other very regular item each week was a list of people, organisations, employers, Unions, schools etc. who had subscribed to the Prisoner of War fund, also known as the Mayor’s fund (see picture above). There were many reports of events being held to raise money for the fund, especially concerts at the Star Kinema, probably partly because its manager was actually a Prisoner of War. As well as people giving substantial sums, there were collecting boxes at Market Gate for those who could just occasionally give

small amounts of money, and 'thank you' cards from the Prisoners were also displayed there. Towards the end of 1918, the Mayor launched an appeal to raise 250,000 shillings, and the subscription lists were substantially longer than this one from late 1915.

The gist of many articles was to stress that the parcels **were** getting through to the prisoners, as there was clearly much suspicion that this was not happening and therefore people were reluctant to give money to the fund.

Other articles explained how many parcels were being sent out. By the time the scheme changed on 1st December 1916, over 9,000 parcels had been sent out from Warrington, weighing a total of 35 tons, as well as over 10 tons of clothing & boots each winter. The cost of this was about £40 per week, for Warrington men. St. Helens & other towns had taken on responsibility for their own men. The cost was heavily subsidised by the "adopters" who had either sent out parcels themselves or paid for them to be sent to their "adoptees".

In the early years, relatives etc. often sent parcels themselves, but when the scheme changed, and parcels could only be sent out by authorised organisations, Warrington had to decide whether to let the Central Committee send the parcels, or whether it wanted to continue as the Regimental Care Committee for the South Lancashire Regiment.

If it had been decided to let the Central Care Committee take over, the expenditure for the men on their lists would have shot up to £200 & Warrington would have had to hand over the whole of the subscriptions collected in the district to the Central Committee. As there was concern that the adopters wouldn't want to send their money to the Central Committee, and because they felt a moral obligation to the Regiment, they decided that they should continue the work themselves. Warrington would be the authorised packing association, but St Helens and Widnes would continue to support a certain number of soldiers each. The articles say that, at that time, only 20 of the Prisoners were actually Warrington men, and 35 came from St Helens. The total number of Prisoners being held in Germany from the Regiment at that time was not disclosed, but St Helens agreed to provide 300 parcels a week, which would cover 200 men. Widnes promised too to do their part. The Liverpool Civic Service League assumed responsibility for some of the men and there was the association in London under Lady Burghclere, who was mentioned earlier.

It was estimated that 20 or 30 more ladies would be required to do the packing. Each packer had to be guaranteed by the chairman of the committee, and no unauthorised persons were allowed in the room, in case any banned objects found their way into the parcels. Packing was done on three days every fortnight.

At first, there was a lot of suspicion about this new scheme from relatives who still wanted to send parcels themselves. The Warrington Guardian however, in March 1917, stressed that this was only happening in other parts of the country; the "chaps" on the books of the South Lancashire Regimental Care Committee were reported to be very satisfied.

During the remainder of 1917, articles referred mainly to fund-raising events, culminating in a three-day fete in September of that year, held in Bank Park. This was in aid of various war funds, but special efforts were made to bring the claims of the Prisoner of War Fund to the notice of the public. There were numerous stalls, refreshment tents, bands playing, concerts etc. A magnificent total of £2,453.14s 8d was raised, £2,000 of which was to go to the Prisoner of War Fund, which at that stage was in debt to the tune of £400, with very large commitments before it.

The other main feature during 1917 was the number of letters published from prisoners, the majority being very complimentary about the parcels and expressing their gratitude. One reason for reporting

these was clearly to allay worries and suspicions that parcels were not getting through to prisoners and thereby to encourage people to give more generously to the fund. (Please see later section concerning of these letters.)

By late 1918, things were clearly becoming pretty desperate in terms of funding the parcels. At the beginning of September 1918, the Mayor convened a public meeting at the Town Hall to decide how to raise the £6,000 needed to continue sending parcels out for the remainder of the year. The people of Warrington had been asked for larger subscriptions for the previous few months, but the average amount raised was still only £320 a week, when the amount required was £620 per week. If the money couldn't be found, they would have no choice but to transfer the whole of the responsibility for the fund to headquarters in London, and they clearly felt that this would be shameful & embarrassing. He commented that outside of Warrington, Widnes & St Helens, the response to the appeal had been 'disgraceful'. Interestingly, it says that the Mayor gave the numbers of Prisoners belonging to the S Lancs. Regiment who were POWs but this figure was not reported. (A later article, however, states that 850 13lb parcels were being packed and sent to camps in Germany each week.) The Mayor suggested that plans for another 3-day fete to be held later in the month should be abandoned, partly because it would be too late in the year but also because of the shortages of labour, gas, electricity. He announced that the firms of Greenall, Whitley & Co. and Peter Walker & Son had already written to offer substantial sums (£500 & £250 respectively). A vote agreed that the fete should not go ahead, but instead there should be a 'terrific' appeal made to all employers & others, a flag day, whist drives, raffles etc., along with an appeal to the churches of the town & district. At this stage, the Mayor also launched his 250,000 shilling appeal, and there were regular reports as to its progress and of the many fund-raising events taking place. There was apparently a 'clock' in Bridge-street to demonstrate the growth (it is stated at this time that the parcels were being packed in the 'Gymnasium')

Various organisations of trades people, licensees, farmers, Postal Service, clergy & ministers took place where they encouraged their members to hold events and made organisation-wide plans to raise funds; e.g. regular weekly or monthly giving by employees was encouraged, and house collecting boxes given out; all the town centre trades people were to be canvassed and designated people were appointed to cover certain streets & the market; churches would donate all their collections on one Sunday in November. Notices were placed in the new ration books giving reasons why people should subscribe, one of which being that it was their 'duty to mitigate their (the PoWs) suffering as much as 'possible'.

At this stage, and for the first time there are several mentions of parcels also being sent to 'Warrington men in other Regiments' who were POWs.

At the beginning of October, 1918, there was a report of 'glorious news from the battle fronts'. This seems to have produced a swelling of the subscription list, but then lead to an exhortation not to stop giving as the prisoners would not be released straight away & still needed the parcels. Many 'thank you' letters continued to be reported, partly as proof that the parcels were getting through (there was a claim that 90 – 95% were being received).

Although by late October, £600 a week was coming into the fund, it was still declared to be insufficient. Additional prisoners were continually being allocated to the South Lancs. Committee; 900 parcels had been sent out that week at a cost of £782. There was also an overdraft at the bank, and an account had just been received for over £2,000 from Holland for bread supplied to prisoners. The Mayor was trying to get the headquarters in London to meet the latter liability!

In November 1918, appeals for money to wipe off the bank overdraft continued to be made. Indeed, on 23rd November, when it was stated that parcels had ceased to be sent to prisoners in Germany &

elsewhere, the fund was in debt to the extent of £3,000 to £4,000, including the bank overdraft of £2,467; the Mayor therefore hoped that the public would continue to subscribe. The school children of Warrington rose to the occasion by raising over £1000 for the Fund in the last three months of 1918.

By this time, 434 of the Lancashire PoWs had returned (it doesn't say out of how many), and the December 1918 newspapers contained several articles concerning these returned prisoners, giving detailed accounts of how they had been taken prisoner and how they were treated – usually badly, in very poor conditions. They again stressed how welcome the parcels had been to them.

In January 1919, a 'tea and social evening', including a concert, was put on at the Parr Hall to entertain the repatriated POWs; subscribers were able to obtain complimentary tickets. On 25th of that month the Prisoner of War Fund was closed.

By Judith Hogg

German Prisoners of War in Britain by Eileen Bennicke

A Local Warrington Story

War was declared on 28 July 1914 and Warrington Guardian of Sat 8 August reports: "German vessel captured at Walton – A German cargo vessel was seized in the Manchester Ship Canal where it was unloading with 14 Germans aboard. They calmly accepted the inevitable and have since been kept under surveillance by police officers."

Three weeks later the Guardian tells us they were receiving the hospitality of the Workhouse and were being given a No.2 diet usually given to aged and infirm inmates and 1 oz tobacco each week. Interestingly they were also allowed one day's leave of absence from the workhouse per week.

However two weeks later they were deemed to be prisoners of war and handed over to military authorities, leaving by train from Bank Quay to go an internment camp at Queensferry.

Against a background of xenophobia this became the fate of many male civilians (about 23,000) with German-sounding names living in Britain – who after questioning were deemed to be enemy aliens rather than friendly aliens. Many had lived in Britain for years or even had a son in the British Army. Civilian prisoners were exempt from forced labour but that did not mean life in the camps was comfortable but it did mean that Britain was determined to protect its reputation as a civilised nation.

As the war proceeded, combatant soldiers, sailors, U-boat, Zeppelin crews and airman fighting for Germany and its allies were captured. Large numbers were brought to Britain; had they been held in France, for instance, there was always the danger that they would attempt to escape and re-join their units. The majority were held in the Isle of Man – Radwitz and Landau amongst them.



German Prisoners of War at Dorchester Camp

Civilians and combatants alike imprisoned as a consequence of the war were termed Prisoners of War. They were sent to Concentration Camps - a term then without its WW2 meanings. These camps were all over the country – the War Office utilised the British Army Command structure, establishing a major camp in each command area.

The main problem for all POWs was boredom leading to ‘barbed wire disease’ or neurasthenia, so they were encouraged to participate in sports, theatricals, model making and gardening. They made model ships, kept pet rabbits (I did wonder if these got eaten!).



Not a lot to do



Supplementary rations?

After a while there were labour shortages as the men had gone to fight and whilst women filled some slots brawn was needed for ploughing and sowing the fields, harvesting, felling much-needed timber, dredging rivers, building roads and helping out with construction. After overcoming union objections POWs were used. Small groups under armed escort could meet daily local needs.

There were unlimited amounts of incoming mail from home and they were allowed to write two letters a week on semi-glossy paper having 23 ruled lines. Most mail was understandably censored.

Depending on the camp, they were often housed in large huts of about 60 men. Some were short-term under canvas. All had mains water and proper sewerage. Most of my information is concerning camps in Dorchester where the huts all had heating and electricity but initially there was much overcrowding. Like our soldiers they did get parcels from home but I do not know what the organisation of this was like.



Huts at Dorchester Camp



Being given parcels

Class distinctions were respected amongst enemy aliens based on social standing rather than ranks which were observed for military personnel.

I didn't find anything about what food was like but there was one quote from a local inspector in Dorset who had shared a meal of bread and margarine but was so ill during the night that he could not resume his inspection the next day.

POWs often favoured agricultural work since they often got better food provided by the farmers. Mind you the authorities tried to keep the Land Girls apart. They went out in gangs of about ten with two guards (who could also work if they wanted for money paid by the farmer). Often they were housed in barns or similar.

Over 2,000 died during the war and were firstly buried locally and later some exhumed and buried near Cannock Chase at a formal War Graves site. A lot died of influenza – Spanish flu.

Whether everyone got the same treatment I do not know but at one camp in Dorset it seems all had a military funeral usually early in morning as this account from Dorchester Camp shows.

“The first prisoner to die was Bernhard Schneider, whose funeral set a pattern for others that followed. After a service at the camp a solemn procession marched to the churchyard, led by two policemen, behind which the coffin was carried on a gun carriage. A firing party followed, with the prison warders’ brass band behind them. There was an open carriage filled with wreaths, and a contingent of fifty prisoners was in attendance, accompanied by prison guards. A Fordington woman quoted in the Dorset County Chronicle of 2 September 1915 said: “I only hope that in Germany they treat our men as well and pay as much respect to those who die.”

A few prisoners inevitably tried to escape but I think the saddest was Franz Radgowski who was shot in the process in May 1919 after the end of the war and when asked as he was dying why he attempted to escape he said “I just wanted to go home”.

The Western Front Association – Wessex Branch – relates the following:

“The most audacious escape was carried out by Oberlieutenant Otto Koehn, who had been taken prisoner off a German freighter on route from the USA to Germany. After arriving in Dorchester Otto was soon planning his escape, which centred on the fact that some of the older prisoners were being repatriated to Germany. On the day of their departure, among their luggage was a matchbox packing case, measuring 3ft x 2ft x 2t. Inside was the six foot plus Otto, three champagne bottles full of water, some malt extract and a dozen bananas. There was also a rubber pillow filled with oxygen. The party’s immediate destination was Tilbury, where the SS Batavier lay offshore waiting to take Otto to Hamburg. He might have made it, had not some stevedores decided to roll the heavy packing case along the jetty. Its occupant had had enough, and Otto broke out of his box, head first. He was returned to Dorchester, but there is no record of his punishment. The Dorset County Chronicle’s report on the matter was headed ‘German Jack in the Box!’

The famous author Thomas Hardy had a POW to help in the garden and in 1916 he wrote “At the German prisoners’ camp, including the hospital, operating room, etc., were many sufferers. One Prussian, in much pain, died whilst I was with him – to my great relief, and his own. Men lie helpless here from wounds: in the hospital a hundred yards off other men, English, lie helpless from wounds – each scene of suffering caused by the other!”

By Eileen Bennicke



- Warrington Guardian
- Warrington Examiner

They differed in editorial attitudes and readership, so it's well worth looking in both.

Warrington's Great War Heroes (series of pamphlets referring to dates of reports in Warrington Guardian)

David Forrest (W8084)

Sick and Injured, SLR, Sick and Injured excluding SLR, Medals and Awards, SLR, Medals and Awards excluding SLR, Fatalities, SLR, Fatalities, excluding SLR

“Ich Dien. The Prince of Wales’ Volunteers 1914-1934” –

Captain H. Whalley-Kelly (R355.09K)

History of the SLR, mainly 1914-1919

Arranged by battalion, engagements described on N.W. Frontier, Middle East and Western Front (including Messines, Somme, Aisne, Ypres)

Includes Order of Battle 1914-19 and list of those receiving Honours and Awards, 1914-21

“The South Lancashire Regiment.”

By Mullaly, Colonel B.R.

History of the Regiment from 1717 to Second World War. (W5360)

Part 2, pages 157-347 deals with 1914-1918

Detailed account of battles, some analysis, references to individual soldiers.

A Short History of the Prince of Wales's Volunteers

F.E. Whitton *W 53191*

Part 2 "The Great War" pages 43-53

Contains paintings portraying two medals being won

DCM at Mons, VC at Messines

British Regiments 1914-18

Brigadier James, E. A.

W 8364 (Open shelves)

Lists WW1 posting locations for various infantry, yeomanry, cavalry regiments, details are given for each battalion.

Soldiers who died in the Great War, 1914-19

Part 44: the Prince of Wales' Volunteers (SLR) *W8217*

Alphabetical listing of other ranks:

Gives: birthplace, place of enlistment, army number, rank

Also whether, killed in action, died of wounds, theatre of war in which death occurred and date of death.

Regimental Chronicle, the Prince of Wales' Volunteers (Orford Barracks) WS/PRI (GFS 42/4)

12 volumes 1925-1937, *but* also contain, memorials, memories, commemoration services, births, marriages and deaths, promotions, appointments, re-engagements, long Service and a list of current officers.

POW details card for the Care Committee –

To be filled out with details of a POW from SLR and sent to Relief Committee

W942.099 BS148. BS 149 Box 7. Photocopy here to view.

Flier: "Information Respecting German Prisoners" - Regimental Care Committee

List of contents of food and non-food items for parcels.

Flier: Personal Parcel – contents permitted – Central POW Committee

W940.9 BS 159 Box 7. Photocopy here to view

Bilingual label, stating contents of parcel

Card to be filled in by POW in Germany on receipt of parcel.

W942.099 BS148. Box 7. Photocopy here to view.

Local War Funds

(including Prisoners of War Fund)

Sale by Auction

Printed letter from Town Hall, 1915, appealing for saleable items. *Photocopy here to view.*

Warrington Guardian Yearbook 1926 p48

- Brief biography of Mrs Ethel Fairclough; Her work with her husband's battalion during the Great War, the Infirmary and the Guild of Help

(Photocopy here to view)

The Story of a Military Hospital during the War – Mary Gornall- Published 1920 – (Wp2315)

An account of the work of a military hospital at Orford Barracks HQ of SLR, latterly her work as Acting Matron

Includes newspaper articles, letters, a portrait of Miss Gornall, photos of ward, nurses and patients
Christmas 1915

By Barbara Phoenix



Warrington's Territorial's, the 4th Battalion South Lancashire Regiment, wait to entrain after mobilisation. Five months later they were in the trenches.



British army prisoners being marched to a prison camp in Germany.

Note the assortment of clothing and belongs



Repatriation of Prisoners of War by Judith Hogg

In the November 2011 issue of the genealogy magazine 'Who do you think you are' there is an article, by Phil Tomaselli, about the Armistice at the end of WW1. This makes quite a few references to the POWs. In summary, he says that it was part of the armistice agreement that all Allied Prisoners must be released. (On the other hand, all 800,000 German PoWs were to be kept by the Allies.) As the Allied troops entered Germany on 1 December 1918, they met thousands of POWs released by the Germans. Many POWs were working as labourers close to the Front, and they just marched west until they met the Army. Many men were transported to German ports and picked up by Red Cross-commissioned ships. On arrival in Britain, they were interviewed at reception camps & demobilised rapidly. Even wounded POWs were home by Jan 1919.

We should remember, though, that the Sarah Paterson, in her book 'Tracing your POW ancestors' paints a much more chaotic picture, with men leaving the POW camps before they were meant to, often suffering from illness & lack of food; those remaining in the camps and camp hospitals were often abandoned by the Germans in very bad conditions. Without up to date lists, the Red Cross no longer knew who was where, or how many parcels were needed, but they apparently made an enormous effort to establish the whereabouts of each man. Paterson states that by Christmas Eve 1918, 70% of British POW's in Germany had been repatriated, but in early January 1919, more than 22,000 British PoWs were still unaccounted for (not all being held in Germany, of course); some would have re-appeared during the repatriation, but many would have died.

By Judith Hogg





Maps of German Prisoner of War Camps

Provided by Anna Head

