

POST-GREECE

Captain Malcolm Young, Royal Engineers, 292 Company

From the Daily Telegraph, 20 May 2010:

(From Salonika he was shipped) by cattle truck to Biberach Oflag V-B, near the Swiss border. The journey took a week. The windows were nailed up and the men were transported in darkness. Many died. In 1942 he was moved to Warburg-Dössel Oflag VI-B. Very soon he had only three boards under his bunk; the rest had been taken to make ladders for the mass escape which became known as the "Warburg Wire Job".

Another move took him to Eichstätt Oflag VII-B. He could play the violin and, after an instrument was found for him by one of the guards, took part in many of the concerts there. The orchestra practised a great deal to cover the noise of tunnelling.

The SOE had smuggled in a map concealed in the centre of a gramophone record and Young, reproducing this for escape attempts, developed an interest in cartography. It was then that, as a reprisal for the Allied raid on Dieppe, he was handcuffed for a year. So handicapped he took, and passed, the examination for the Institute of Secretaries (he was given an extra day to complete his submission). His final move was a 15-day march to Moosburg Oflag VIII-B, from which he was released by American forces in April 1945, after four years in captivity.

From Wikipedia:

Oflag V-B Biberach

The camp was originally built as barracks for German Army infantry early in 1939 and consisted of concrete single storey buildings on a plateau north-west of the town. It was named "*Lindele*". In good weather there was a fine view of the Alps to the south.

In May 1940 the first British and Commonwealth officers captured in the battle of France arrived. The Senior British Officer was Major-General V. M. Fortune. The camp was clean and living conditions were satisfactory. The first officers from the battle of Greece arrived on 16 June 1941. They were surprised at the good conditions after several weeks of travel and grim conditions in transit camps (Archivist's Note; this included Brigadier Parrington).

In October 1941 the British officers were transferred to Oflag VI-B in Warburg.

Oflag VI-B Warburg Dossel

The camp was opened in September 1940 on what had been originally intended to be a military airfield. At first French, and then British officers were housed there.

The camp was the setting for two remarkable escape attempts. On 1 December 1941 Flt Lt Peter Stevens RAFVR, disguised as a German *Unteroffizier*, led a party of 10 POWs disguised as orderlies, and two more disguised as guards complete with dummy rifles, up to the gates of the camp. The sentry was not satisfied with their gate pass, so Stevens marched his party back into the camp. As the sentry was apparently unaware that the party was not genuine, a second attempt was made a week later. This time the sentry demanded to see their Army paybooks, so the escape party fled, although two were arrested.

On 30 August 1942 the camp was the scene of "Operation Olympia", also known as the "Warburg Wire Job", another mass escape attempt. After RAOC officer Major B.D. Skelton ("Skelly") Ginn fused the perimeter floodlights, 41 prisoners carrying four 12-foot (3.7 m) scaling ladders made from bed slats rushed to the barbed-wire fence and clambered over. One ladder collapsed, so of the 41 involved, only 28 escaped the camp, and only three of those made it home.

In September 1942 the British prisoners were transferred to other camps, and were replaced with Polish officers, with 1,077 brought from Romania, where they had been interned since September 1939, and another 1,500 transferred from other camps in Germany.

The British had begun an escape tunnel, and the Poles continued working on it, and on 20 September 1943, 47 of them escaped. Within four days, 20 had been captured and returned to the camp. They were then transported to the Buchenwald concentration camp and executed. In the next few days 17 more were captured and taken to the Gestapo prison in Dortmund where they were killed. Only 10 managed to remain free, some returning to Poland, others finding their way to the Allied lines.

Oflag VII-B Eichstatt

In September 1942, British officers from Oflag VI-B Warburg Dossel, were transferred to VII-B after a mass escape (the "Warburg Wire Job"). Within months two officers from Dössel, Lieutenant Jock Hamilton-Baillie and Captain Frank Weldon, proposed digging a tunnel north from Block 2's latrine to a villager's chicken coop about 30 m (98 ft) away. Work began in December 1942, but the rocky ground made digging difficult. The Germans found spoil from the tunnel and searched the camp, but failed to find it. The tunnel was completed in May, and on the night of 3/4 June 1943 sixty-five men escaped. Most of them headed south, towards Switzerland, sleeping by day and travelling by night. Eventually, all 65 were recaptured, but had occupied over 50,000 police, soldiers, home guard and Hitler Youth for a week. After two weeks detention in nearby Willibaldsburg Castle, the escapees were sent to Oflag IV-C at Colditz Castle.

Stalag VIII-B Moosberg

15 day march to temporary accommodation awaiting liberation, eventually in April 1945.