

POST-GREECE

Sergeant Stan Prout, Royal Marines

From the "Stalag 18A" website:

Stan Prout



This is a transcript of part of the diary of Sgt. Stan Prout, R.M., who was captured on Crete in 1941. Details kindly supplied by his son, Geoffrey.

July 10th, 1941

Move to Marburg, Stalag XVIII D and have a thorough delousing, hot bath, the first for weeks, and an inoculation in my chest. I am now living in a long tent with 200 fellow POWs, sleeping on boards with but an overcoat I managed to cadge in Athens.

July 12th

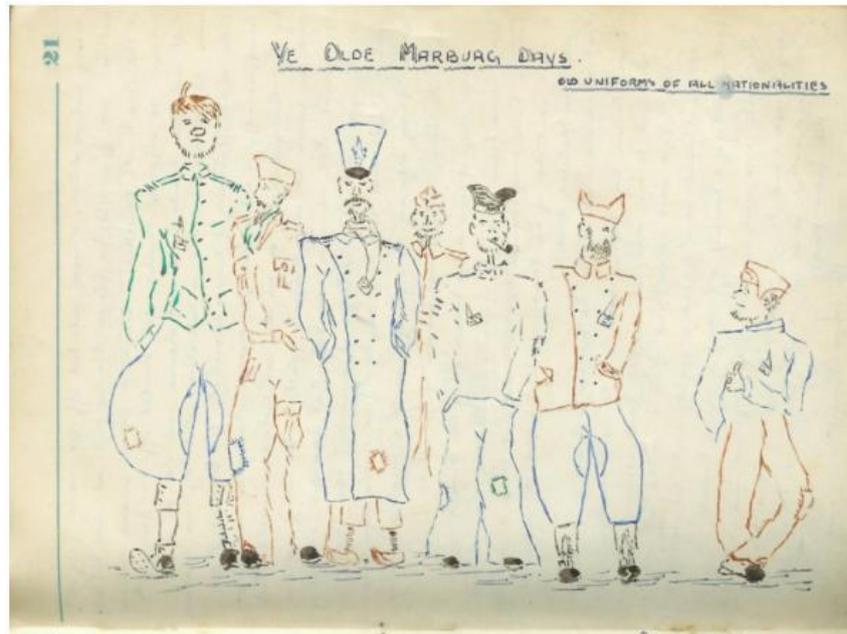
Started work at the Austria Barracks doing odd jobs. It was understood between Tom (Sgt Thomas Hawksworth RM) and I that all we got we shared and, if at any time one of us got a piece of bread, that one would ransack the grounds for the other, with a grin of rapturous delight. Tom could usually manage to put aside a little piece of bread for breakfast, but when I tried, I could not get to sleep and then would very quietly take off my dixie lid and eat it, all the time being scared of what Tom would say in the morning. The Stalag market was a very serious affair, chaps who were working out in town came back with half dozen apples, a piece of bread or other little tit-bits, and were instantly mobbed, then bartering began. How funny it seems now, when I think of no unbuckling our dixies half a mile from Stalag, ready for soup (?). Oh that luscious smell as we passed that custard powder factory.

July 27th

What a wonderful sight - a lorry, full of Red X parcels rolling thro' the gate to be immediately served out, plus a letter form, what a relief to be able to write to our wives and families. Everywhere there are chaps sucking pencil ends and with puckered brows. What could we say? I remember asking Muriel to send me

concentrated foods & toilet gear. Then on to the parcel and 50 Gold Flake. Everyone was happy and tons of smoke. I ate my chocolate straight away but after due consultation with Tom decided to go easy over the actual tin stuff. Oh that happy day, with chaps calling across to one another, "What did you get?", "I've got this" and "I've got that". We were all kids again in raptures of delight.

Next morning we were issued with old clothing of many nationalities and were detailed off for work.



"old clothing of many nationalities"

July 28th: 1600 hours. 200 of us left for farms (this we did not dare to believe at the time). We travelled in trucks & as we passed certain villages so different trucks were shunted off.

July 30th: At last our truck door was opened and the 30 of us were told to get out - this is Rotenturm station, and marched with much clattering of tins & dixies, etc to Eisenzicken, Burgenland - 14 kilos from Hungary, where we were taken by the Burgermaster to an old converted cow-shed which was to serve as our sleeping quarters for many months. We learnt that we were now potential farmers. On sitting on the grass outside the lager, I remember how chuffy Tom & I felt and also him saying "Just think, Stan, these people going by, are now going home to a nice farmhouse tea". Oh how wrong he was proven to be after.

"Can any of you drive horses?" cries the Burgermaster. "Yes." came from a couple of chaps including Tom. I had been a POW long enough now to know that there is nothing a man can't do if he tries, so up I piped as well, but even then, not too sure.

1800 hours. We are lined up for the farmers to choose their slave. I was taken by Julius Heinisch to his farm and was introduced to his wife Alouise & the two children. Justine, 17 years, & Wilma, 13 years, were frightened of me and wouldn't come in. Of course I must have looked a sight, dirty old clothes, dirty face, wanting a haircut and having a grand beard.

The people were swell in their rough way, and fed me up well. Gee, it was grand to sit at a table again. After this, the old Grandmother, Rosa, 76 years old, came and took me on a tour of the farmyard.

On our return to the lager several chaps were sick through overloading but I was OK and quickly set to shaving and delousing for we had more of these pests now, from the cattle truck. Then down we got on real straw mattresses & with 2 blankets too, 21 of us in a room 18 ft x 14 ft. We slept on shelves, two on each side of the room.



The Heinisch Family

July 31st

05.30 the next morning, and in comes the guard, shouting "Gaymer, Auf-stehen, Arbeit" (Come on, get up & work) and away we go to our respective farms to start work at 6 o'clock. The meals and meal times were, 7 o'clock, coffee and dry bread, 10 o'clock, wine and dry bread, 12 o'clock, dinner, soup with some weird Austrian concoction, usually pretty vile, 4 o'clock dry bread & 9 o'clock, coffee and dry bread. I soon learnt to drop the bread into the coffee, thus making it more palatable. As the days went by, I had these times weighed off & used to get quite panicky if they were late & terribly hungry when missed. The first few weeks I was very weak, and looked just like a bag of bones but, on learning that I liked milk, the farmer's wife gave me as much as I wanted & often some cream.

Work - oh how we had to work and I staggered under loads that later I could laugh at. After 2 or 3 months I was quickly picking up the language and learning to plough, harrow, scythe & milk the cows, in fact everything on the farm and was soon being sent out to work by myself. I also taught the farmer's wife how to make several English dishes. These Austrian peasants were not too clean, have dirty habits and their manners leave much to be desired, eating from a communal bowl with much finger use, slobbering, laughing at us when we demanded a plate & knife & fork but soon they were copying us.

When farm-work was slack we were sent on the road that was being built by Hungarian Gypsies through the village. Farm-work 6 till 8, road 8 till 6, and then back to the farm till 9 o'clock. Many funny incidents happened on the road. Old Titz, the foreman, tearing his hair at our lack of interest and often in the cold weather we used to disappear into the farm kitchens for a warm. My wardrobe consisted at this time of my cut boots, 2 foot wrappers, a very thin cotton vest, battledress jacket, French cavalry breeches, Yugoslav overcoat and French cap.

Words cannot describe my joy when, arriving back to the farm, I found a letter from Muriel. I believe the Austrians were almost as happy as I was. The times every day, my thoughts turned to my wife & home.



"Road Making!"

1st October

Our 2nd food parcel. From then on they came through fairly regularly.

12th October

The first fall of snow and from then on, the weather became bitterly cold.

November . . .

. . . found me with 15 boils & by Geez, they were painful. Around this time we ran out of large stones for the road and were sent to Eisenburg in Hungary for 6 weeks to quarry more. We now left the lager at 5.30 for the station - train to Eisenburg and work begins 8 o'clock till 3.30 then back to the farm till 8, because we have now started winter times. It was about this time that I began feeling pretty fit, and also to get a full night's sleep, because when I was weak I used to work all night as well.

Xmas, 1941

Thick snow everywhere, I have never seen so much before and intensely cold. I had now risen from little over 10 stone to 13 stone 1½, and had a smashing potato stomach. Xmas night I was gloriously drunk with good wine and forgot all my troubles for a little while - till it wore off a little then I was worse still. We had a few bright times on the sledges & skis.

Spring '42

Still working hard but absolutely homesick, convinced myself all along that war would end very very soon. Issued with English battledress & 1 shirt and received my first clothing parcel and put on a real pair of socks again. I can now speak German pretty well & help young Wilma with her homework. Wet weather

gave us no escape from work, being sent into the woodshed to chop wood. Sundays I worked for half an hour, feeding the cattle. I was just getting settled when . . .

June 17th

Draft chit to Oberwarth (*sic* – Oberwart). This was a bad blow having to leave Tom. We had been pals now right through all those hardships when first captured. If I had used some gumption & stood out against it, perhaps we should still be on the farm.

Oberwarth (Lager 522/L), - & the same slave market, this time I was out of luck, getting a Hungarian farmer, Johann Raba by name, and a swine of a man too. His wife was an invalid and there was a daughter of 19 - to her I must give some credit, for she used to sneak food to me & let me milk the cows so that I could get out of some of the dirty work. I now had to get up at 5 o'clock & leave for the farm at 5.15, arriving at 6. Finish at 9.15 and enter the lager at 10 o'clock at night, but we had all day Sunday off. Here I was not given the same food as the farmer, so refused to sit with them & had mine in the porch. Many times have I pinched eggs & if early in the day, eaten them raw. Once the son Giza came home on leave & work slackened for a few days - a decent chap. During the next few months I tried hard to return either to Eisenzicken or Marburg, but with no luck. I have just received my first cigarette and second clothing parcel. This Oberwarth has a population of 5000 a little different from Eisenzicken's 350. There were 30 of us at this Kommando and lived in a disused barn, all in one room but in double bunks and had more room.



L-R Back Row

- Tam Morrisey
- Eric Hipkiss (3)
- Joe Burke
- 'Wally' Walton
- Alex Hutchison
- Harry Highcroft?
- Albert Merrills
- Norman F Leeds
- Baf? Miliband
- ??? Jackson

L-R Middle Row

- Tom 'Taffy' Jones (2)
- 'Blondie' Foulstone
- 'Jock' Selfridge
- Ken Watts
- Cyril Brown
- Bill Johnson
- Eric Hiscox
- Anthony Thompson
- Dick Ballantine
- Jack Bisset

L-R Front Row

- Stan Prout (1)
- John R Gardner
- Stanley Radford
- 'Jock' Falconer
- Luke Robson (4)
- 'Taffy' Howels
- 'Gen'l' Jack Booth
- 'Titch' Swinlock
- Jack Halley

522/L at Oberwart, 1942

October 26th

On heavy work, carting sacks of potatoes, I sprained my shoulder & next day saw the doctor who gave me two days in the lager. By then it was OK, but I 'swung the lead' and was sent into Marburg on Nov. 1st.

November 3rd

What a difference to the Marburg of old, just a few chaps now (200) and life was very easy. On my second night I had a temperature & an abscess in the ear so was admitted into the sickbay for nearly a week - that poor little Russian - tons of sleep - this camp was running alive with bugs, lucky they don't bite me.

Whilst there, I put in to go to the Naval Camp near Bremen, but on . . .

November 13th

. . . was sent to Spittal in the Tyrol. What a fine little camp this was, the snow-capped mountains all around were very pretty. I really think this is the finest scenery in the world.

November 20th

7 naval ratings & myself sent to Leibnitz, Austria, a new camp, and with only 100 men - no parcels.

November 23rd

We are now starting out for Germany, stopping at Spittal the first night. We are now faced with a 5 day (*journey*) on 1 loaf apiece. After attempts at different stations we finally managed to get a bowl of soup off the Red X at Munich. The main towns we passed through were Salzburg, Munich, Nurnberg, Dresden, Eisenach, Leipzig, Magdeburg, Hanover, Hamburg & Bremen.

(Stan spent the rest of the war in the Marlag [No. 10M?] – possibly back in company with his pal Tom Hawksworth.)

Stan's first ArbeitsKommando was 223/L. This from "Stalag 18A" website:

Work Camp 223 L



Location: Eisenzicken (near Oberwart in Burgenland, East Austria)

Type of work: Farmwork

Man of Confidence: Unknown

Number of Men: 30 approx.

Known to be present

Forename	Surname	Rank	Unit	POW	Comments
R	Ballentine	Dvr	RASC	8225	Also 522/L
J	Bassit				
R (P?)	Bell	Spr	RE	3003	
Stuart H.	Blofeld	Tpr	RAC	5805	
Joseph P	Burke	Dvr	RASC	5768	Billingham
A.J.	Clarke	Pte	2/2 Fd. Pk. Coy.	5197	
A.M.	Connell	L/Cpl	RE	5724	possible
W	Davis				
K.D	Dennis	Pte	2/2 Fd. Pk. Coy	5198	
J.R.	Gardner	Pte	2/4 Inf. Bn.	3002	
R	Graham				
John	Halley	Pte	2/11 Inf. Bn.	7053	Also 110/L
Thomas	Hawksworth	Sgt	R Marines	5879	Also Stalag 383, Marlag
Eric	Hipkiss	Dvr	RASC	5723	Also 522/L
J	Hogg				
Mervyn P.	Martin	Pte	2NZEF	3001	
T.F.	Morrissy	Pte	2/6 Inf. Bn.	5154	
Les P.	Parfitt	Sgt	RA	6216	
D	Patterson				
E.W.	Pierce	Pte	2/8 Inf. Bn.	5153	
Stan	Prout	Sgt	R Marines		Also 522/L & Stalag 383
L	Radford		RAC		
J	Revans				
Luke	Robson				Also 522/L
A.D.	Thompson	A/Sgt	2/6 Inf. Bn.	5152	Also Stalag 383
K	Watts				
J.F.	Welsh	Sgt	RA	6215	
Frank	Wright	Pte	2/4 Inf. Bn.	2997	
A Nelson					



Part of 223/L (including Stan & Tom)



1. L Parfitt
2. J Bassit
3. S Prout
4. K Dennis
5. A.J. Clarke
6. T Hawksworth
7. J Revans
8. T Morrisey
9. J Burke
10. S Blofeld

11. A Connell
12. R Ballentine
13. W Davis
14. K Watts
15. R Graham
16. R Bell
17. E Hipkiss
18. L Radford
19. A Thompson

20. W Pierce
21. J Halley
22. L Robson
23. F Wright
24. J Gardner
25. D Patterson
26. M Martin
27. J Hogg
28. J Welsh
29. A Nelson

223/L full complement

Stan



The following photograph montage was included in a collection of memorabilia belonging to Private Joe Burke, RASC and some-time fellow inmate of Arb Kdo 233/L Eisenziecken and 522/L Oberwart.

Stan Prout



Joe Burke





Joe

1ST OFFICIAL PHOTO UNIFORM CAME FROM
RED CROSS (NOTE EXTREME RIGHT CHAP
WAS A BIG LAD STILL HAD YUGOSLAVIAN
OUR INITIAL ISSUE OF CLOTHES FROM
THE HUN WE WERE ALL NUMBERED
1ST WORKING LAAGER.
189 RIZEN ZIEKEN 1941

Stan's second Work Camp was 522/L

Work Camp 522 L



Location: Oberwart

Type of work: Farmwork

Man of Confidence: Unknown

Number of Men: Approx 30

Known to be present

Forename	Surname	Rank	Unit	POW	Comments
R	Ballentine	Dvr	RASC	8225	Manchester; also 223/L
Ernest	Bearcroft	Cfmn	REME	6949	Middlesborough; <i>(possible)</i>
Gilbert	Bell	Pte	RAOC	5961	Gateshead; also 2018/L
Joseph	Black				Glos. UK
Stuart H.	Blofeld	Tpr	RAC	5805	Birmingham; also 223/L
Jack	Booth	Dvr	RASC	5593	
W.J.	Brewer				Kent; <i>(possible)</i>
Cyril	Brown				
James Henry	Burnham	Dvr	RASC		Died 5.12.42 <i>(possible)</i>
Patrick H	Cairns	Tpr	RAC	5391	Stockton-on-Tees; <i>(possible)</i>
J	Clark				Glos; <i>(possible)</i>
Herbert	Collier	Tpr	RAC	5322	Oldham; <i>(possible)</i>
Robert T	Connors	Sgt	2/2 Inf. Bn.	7109	Sydney, Austria; <i>(possible)</i>
Fred ('Jeep')	Coulter	Bdsm	RAC	5846	Lincolnshire; also 99/L
R.E.	Crisp	Cpl	RASC	7820	Aldershot <i>(possible)</i>
George	Dick	Tpr	RAC	5633	Northumberland
Bob J	Divehall	Gnr		7220	New Zealand
Andrew	Falcolner	Dvr	RASC	5548	Peebles
Ron	Harvey	Dvr	RASC	6999	Middlesex; also 99/L
Eric ('Essen')	Hipkiss	Dvr	RASC	5723	Birmingham; also 223/L
S ('Pop')	Hibbard	L/Bdr	RA	5671	Sheffield
Frank G.	Howells	Pte	RAOC	5639	
William	Johnson	Gnr	RA	5562	Worcester
Thomas L ('Taffy')	Jones	Dvr	RASC	5597	Glamorgan
Thomas	Kirkwood	Tpr	RAC	7835	Glasgow; <i>(possible)</i>
Fred	Laughton				West Hartlepool
N.F.	Leeds	Cfmn	REME	5668	Margate
B	McDonald				Epsom, UK
A	Merrills	Spr	RE	5659	Lincs.
J	Nichols	Dvr	RASC	3932	Waikato, NZ; <i>(possible)</i>
Alec ('Slim')	Pearson	Pte	RAOC	5967	Manchester
Stan	Prouit	Sgt	R Marines		trans. Stal 383; also 223/L
J.A.	Radford	Tpr	RAC	5735	Notts; 3RTR; <i>(possible)</i>
William	Read	Tpr		4041	New Zealand
J	Robertson				London; <i>(possible)</i>
Luke	Robson	Dvr	RASC	5831	Co Durham; also 233/L
Robert	Rowan	Cfmn	REME	7542	Belfast
J.E.	Selfridge	Tpr	RAC	5645	Fife; <i>(possible)</i>
Edward G.	Smith	SQMS	RASC	7819	London
Joseph B	Smith	Marine	RM		Kent; <i>(possible)</i>

James	Staley	L/Cpl	RASC		Died 19.12.43
T	Swinlock				Co. Durham; <i>(possible)</i>
H. (Jumie)	Te Rore	Pte		4540	New Zealand
A.D.	Thompson	A/Sgt	2/6 Inf. Bn.	5152	Australia; trans 383
S.J.	Williams		RASC		Portsmouth; <i>(possible)</i>
Jack Carter	Wilson				London; <i>(possible)</i>

There must have been close connections between this Work Camp at Oberwart and 99/L at Bernstein, where (the website owner Ian Brown's) father George was held. (Bernstein and Oberwart are only a few miles apart.) The two photo montages are in the same style as one in my possession brought back from Bernstein by my father. Fred Coulter and Frank Hardy also appear in photographs from Bernstein. Similar montages can be seen at 148/GW.

Some of the men in this Work Camp were transferred from another nearby camp: 223/L at Eisenzicken, sometime in 1942.

		
Christmas montage	Large Group	Christmas montage
		
Alex 'Slim' Pearson	Gilbert Bell	S 'Pop' Hibbard
		
Group	Merrills, Coulter, Leeds	Group in snow
		
Eric 'Essen' Hipkiss	Christmas 1943	Thomas 'Taffy' Jones
		
Frank Hardy?	Unknown	Unknown

		
Unknown	Read, Te Rore, Divehall	Unknown
		
Falconer & Johnson	Large Group	Ernie
		
Joe Black? + unknown	George Dick	2 unknowns
		
Unknown	A.D. Thompson?	Unknown boxers
		
James Staley	Grave of James Staley	Patrick Cairns
		
Jack Carter Wilson		Jack Booth group

Many thanks to Jack Booth, son of Jack Booth, Linda Watson, daughter of Gilbert Bell, Pamela Cox, daughter of Thomas Hawksworth, Graham Yee-King, whose wife's grandfather was Taffy Jones, and Vanessa Hicking, daughter of Sgt Ron Tudor (of Work Party 99/L) for the photographs and the information.

(Ian Brown)